

## Tafseer Al-Baqarah [2:272-274]

From the Book, Introduction to the Tafseer of the Quran,  
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﴿لَيْسَ عَلَيْكَ هُدَاهُمْ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ يَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ ۗ وَمَا تُنْفِقُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَلَأَنْفُسِكُمْ ۗ وَمَا تُنْفِقُونَ إِلَّا ابْتِغَاءَ وَجْهِ اللَّهِ ۗ وَمَا تُنْفِقُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ يُوَفَّ إِلَيْكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تُظْلَمُونَ \* لِلْفُقَرَاءِ الَّذِينَ أُحْصِرُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ لَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ ضَرْبًا فِي الْأَرْضِ يَحْسَبُهُمُ الْجَاهِلُ أَغْنِيَاءَ مِنَ التَّعَفُّفِ تَعْرِفُهُمْ بِسِيمَاهُمْ لَا يَسْأَلُونَ النَّاسَ إِحْقَافًا وَمَا تُنْفِقُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ بِهِ عَلِيمٌ \* الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُم بِاللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ سِرًّا وَعَلَانِيَةً فَلَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ﴾

“You are not responsible for guiding them, but it is Allah (swt) Who guides whoever He wills. Whatever you spend of good is for your own benefit. You do not spend except to seek the Countenance of Allah (swt). So, whatever you spend of good will be repaid to you in full and you shall not be wronged (272) Those needy ones who are engaged in the Path of Allah (swt), and who are hindered from moving about the earth. The unaware considers them wealthy because of their abstinence (from asking). You will know them by their features, although they do not ask the people with insistence. Whatever you spend of charity, Allah (swt) will know of it. (273) Those who spend their wealth by night and by day, secretly and publicly, will find that their reward is with their Lord. There is neither fear for them nor do they grief.” [TMQ Surah Al-Baqarah 2:272-274]

1. The ayaat continue discussing spending in charity, but Allah (swt) Almighty mentions during this a part of the verse that, on the surface, seems unrelated to charity. In the Arabic language, it is known that eloquent Arabs do not use disjointed speech. If they begin with a part of speech that appears disconnected from what comes before and after, it is intentional. The speaker may have hidden the connection between this part and the rest of the speech, not making it explicitly clear, to prompt reflection and deeper exploration of this link, drawing attention to it through this style of creative order.

This noble verse is such, as the ayaat preceding and following it discuss spending in charity, yet the apparent meaning of its words seems unrelated. This encourages focusing on it, and pausing upon it, to discover and contemplate this connection deeply, which is intended by Allah (swt) Almighty.

Through contemplating this noble ayah, it becomes clear that we are not responsible (mukalif) for forcing people to follow guidance and to enter Islam, as this is not in our power. Instead, Allah (swt) guides whom He wills. As for us, we must make the Dawah to Islam, enjoin all that is right (ma'roof), and forbid all that is evil (munkar). If they respond positively, it is a fadl (blessing) from Allah (swt), for He (swt) Alone is Capable of guiding all the people. Allah (swt) said, ﴿وَلَوْ شِئْنَا لَآتَيْنَا كُلَّ نَفْسٍ هُدَاهَا﴾ “**And if We had willed, We could have given every soul its guidance.**” [TMQ Surah As-Sajdah:13].

Reflecting on this meaning, we now question the connection of this part of the noble ayah to what came before it, which is about spending of charity, and what follows it, also related to charity.

The eagerness of a person over guiding one they love, and over his Islam, from a relative or friend, pushes them to pressure that person, or compel them to enter Islam. One of the styles is using wealth for this. If they are spending on him, they might withhold financial maintenance, so that they accept Islam, or they may make Islam a condition for financial maintenance. Thus, Allah (swt) has preventing Muslims from using financial maintenance as a style of coercing their relatives, or those they have relations with, to enter Islam.

Reflecting on this noble verse, and pausing over it, brings out two important points:

**Firstly:** entering Islam, or guidance, requires conviction, satisfaction, and free choice, not coercion or compulsion.

**Secondly:** one should not exploit financial maintenance for relatives, or whoever has relations, to coerce them to embrace Islam. This is reinforced by a report from some Companions on the reason for the revelation of this ayah. Ibn Jarir narrated from Abdullah Ibn Abbas, may Allah be pleased with them both, that he said, كانوا، أي المسلمون، لا يرضخون، لا يرضخون لعرباتهم من المشركين فنزلت ﴿أَلَيْسَ عَلَيْكَ هُدَاهُمْ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ يَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ﴾ يرضخون يعطون شيئاً من أموالهم، أي كانوا لا ينفقون على قراباتهم لأنهم مشركون حتى يسلموا. “The Muslims would refrain from spending on their relatives from amongst the mushrikeen, so the ayah was revealed, ﴿أَلَيْسَ عَلَيْكَ هُدَاهُمْ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ يَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ﴾ **“It is not for you to guide them, but Allah (swt) guides whom He wills.”** The word yardakhoon (يرضخون) is giving a portion of their wealth. So, they would not spend on their relatives because they were mushrikeen until they accepted Islam. In another narration from Ibn Abbas, he said, كان أناس من الأنصار لهم أنساب وقرابة من قريظة والنضير وكانوا يتفقون أن يتصدقوا ﴿أَلَيْسَ عَلَيْكَ هُدَاهُمْ﴾ ويريدونهم أن يسلموا فنزلت ﴿أَلَيْسَ عَلَيْكَ هُدَاهُمْ﴾ **“There were people among the Ansar who had kinship and relations with the tribes of Qurayzah and Nadir. They hesitated to give charity, hoping their relatives would accept Islam. Then the ayah was revealed, ﴿أَلَيْسَ عَلَيْكَ هُدَاهُمْ﴾ **“It is not for you to guide them.”****

Here, ﴿يتصدقوا﴾ **“to give charity”** mentioned in this narration means relation and spending, because charity is for achieving closeness (qurbah) to Allah (swt), and is not allowed for other than a Muslim.

Ibn Jarir also narrated on the authority of Saeed bin Jubair, كانوا يتفقون أن يرضخوا لعرباتهم من المشركين حتى نزلت ﴿أَلَيْسَ عَلَيْكَ هُدَاهُمْ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ يَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ﴾ **“They were afraid to spend on their relatives from the mushrikeen, until the following ayah was revealed, ﴿أَلَيْسَ عَلَيْكَ هُدَاهُمْ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ يَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ﴾ **“You are not responsible for their guidance, but it is Allah Who guides whom He wills.”****

Al-Qurtubi mentioned on the authority of some of the commentators that Asma', the daughter of Abu Bakr al-Siddiq, wanted to connect with her grandfather Abu Quhafah, but she refrained from doing so because he was a kafir, so the ayah was revealed about that.

Therefore, the context of the verses continues in one order with a focus on not using, or preventing, spending to force people to enter Islam.

It is worth mentioning that not forcing people to enter Islam does not mean not forcing them to submit before the Shariah rulings and the application of the Shariah rulings upon them by the Islamic state, as that is a fard (obligation).

We have already mentioned this in the interpretation of the ayah, ﴿لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ﴾ **“There is no compulsion in Deen.”** [TMQ Surah Al-Baqarah 2:256], so do refer to it.

Then Allah (swt) completes His ayaat on spending, and in this noble verse He explains other Shariah rulings on spending. Allah (swt) has previously explained that spending must be free of reminding of favors and the harm, and that there must not be riyaa' (showing off to be seen as pious), and it is not from the defective, inferior, wealth.

In this noble verse, Allah (swt) clarifies that whoever spends maintenance, there is good for him. He is the one who will be rewarded for it. It will be paid back to him both in this world and the hereafter, since he spends maintenance seeking the pleasure of Allah (swt).

As for, ﴿أَلَيْسَ عَلَيْكَ هُدَاهُمْ﴾ **“You are not responsible for their guidance,”** this is an address (khitaab) to the Messenger (saw) which therefore is an address to his Ummah. The meaning is, 'you are not charged with (mukalif), forcing them to follow guidance. The meaning of the charge (takleef) comes from, ﴿أَلَيْسَ عَلَيْكَ﴾ **“You are not responsible.”** The guidance is Islam.

As for ﴿وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ يَهْدِي مَن يَشَاءُ﴾ **“But Allah guides whom He wills,”** Allah (swt) is Capable of guiding all people, but His Wisdom, glory be to Him, determined that He leave them to choose. Allah (swt) said, ﴿فَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ آمَنَ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ كَفَرَ﴾ **“And among them are those who believed, and among them are those who disbelieved.”** [TMQ Surah Al-Baqarah: 253].

As for, ﴿وَمَا تُنْفِقُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَلِأَنْفُسِكُمْ﴾ **“Whatever you spend of good is for yourselves.”** “Whatever (maa)” is conditional upon “of (min)” of separating into part (tab’eed), meaning the part of “good” (khair) is money. This is because if good is contextualized with spending, then it means money. If it is not contextualized with spending, then it is not necessarily money, but it may be something else, such as when Allah (swt) said, ﴿فَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ خَيْرًا يَرَهُ﴾ **“So whoever does an atom’s weight of good will see it.”** [TMQ Surah Al-Zalzalah: 7].

As for, ﴿فَلِأَنْفُسِكُمْ﴾ **“For yourselves (fa-l-anfusukum)”** it means it is for yourselves, and no one will benefit from it in the Hereafter except you. The “fa” is included as the answer to the condition (jawaab ush-shart).

As for, ﴿وَمَا تُنْفِقُونَ إِلَّا ابْتِغَاءَ وَجْهِ اللَّهِ﴾ **“You do not spend except to seek the Countenance of Allah (swt)”** means that its reward is for yourselves if you spend it seeking the Countenance of Allah (swt).

As for, ﴿وَمَا تُنْفِقُونَ﴾ **“do not spend,”** it means you do not spend. The “and (waw)” is for the state (haal) and the sentence is a state. As for, ﴿ابْتِغَاءَ﴾ **“to seek”** is the object, for whose sake of.

As for, ﴿وَجْهِ اللَّهِ﴾ **“the Countenance of Allah (swt)”** is a kinayah metonym for the Essence of Allah (swt). In this usage, it is pure sincerity (al-ikhlaas al-khaalis) for Allah. So if you were to say, “I did this for the sake of Zaid” may mean that you did it for him alone, or you did it for him and someone else, that is, it has the meaning of partnership. So if you say, “I did it for the countenance of Zaid,” it would be purely for Zaid alone.

Accordingly, ﴿إِلَّا ابْتِغَاءَ وَجْهِ اللَّهِ﴾ **“except seeking the Countenance of Allah (swt)”** meaning sincerely for Allah Alone.

As for, ﴿وَمَا تُنْفِقُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ يُؤَفَّ إِلَيْكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تُظْلَمُونَ﴾ **“And whatever you spend in good will be repaid to you, and you will not be wronged.”** It is the explanation of the conditional (sharteeyah) sentence, ﴿وَمَا تُنْفِقُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَلِأَنْفُسِكُمْ﴾ **“And whatever you spend in good will be for yourselves.”** So it is a clarification of ﴿فَلِأَنْفُسِكُمْ﴾ **“for yourselves”** that it will be repaid to you in this world and the Hereafter, without you being wronged. So it is without you having anything reduced from the repayment. For Allah (swt) is the One who repays and He is the Best of Judges, in this world with putting blessing in the money, and in the Hereafter with the great ajr reward. As the Messenger of Allah (saw) said, «اللهم اجعل لمنفق خلفاً ولممسك تلفاً» **“Allah, make a replacement for the one who spends, and a loss for the one who withholds.”** [Bukhari and Muslim]

2. Then Allah (swt) explains that priority in charity is given to those who are devoted to Jihad, and are too busy with it for striving (sa’ee) on earth for seeking Rizq sustenance, and those who do not insist on asking people, as if they were rich, due to their refraining from asking. If it were not apparent upon them from the effect of hunger on their bodies, and the shabbiness of their clothing, no one would know their need.

The reward for spending on these is great. Allah (swt) is All-Knowing of the sincerity of intention in charity for them.

As for, ﴿لِلْفُقَرَاءِ﴾ **“For the poor (lil-fuqara’)”** is a predicate (mubtada’) for an omitted subject (khabar), meaning your charity is for the poor. The lam (for) is for transitivity (ta’diyah), meaning that the charity giver should be keen that his charity is given to the poor.

As for, ﴿الَّذِينَ أُحْصِرُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ﴾ **“those who are restricted in the Path of Allah”** it is those who are devoted for Jihad, meaning that Jihad in the Path of Allah has restricted them. As for ﴿لَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ ضَرْبًا فِي الْأَرْضِ﴾ **“They are unable to travel throughout the land”** meaning that they are unable to move around the land to seek a livelihood because they are busy with Jihad.

As for الحصر “restriction” it means prevention. So whoever is too busy in Jihad to seek a livelihood, or whoever is injured in Jihad that makes him unable to seek a livelihood, this ayah applies to him. So there is a great reward in spending on him.

It also applies to those who were called “the people of the Suffah” during the time of the Messenger of Allah (saw), who were prevented by illness and Jihad from seeking a livelihood, and who went out on every expedition sent by the Messenger of Allah (saw), as Ibn Abbas (ra) narrated.

These and those have priority in spending upon, over other poor people, who are not held back by Jihad, and who are able to strive on the earth seeking Rizq sustenance.

As for ﴿يَحْسِبُهُمُ الْجَاهِلُ أَعْيَاءَ مِنَ التَّعَفُّفِ﴾ **“The unaware thinks them to be rich because of their abstinence (ta’taffuf)”** means because of their abstinence from asking. So from is for explanation, whilst abstinence is leaving something, and turning away from it, while being able to do it.

As for ﴿تَعْرِفُهُمْ بِسِيمَاهُمْ﴾ **“You will recognize them by their features,”** it is the effect of hunger on their bodies, and the poor condition.

As for ﴿لَا يَسْأَلُونَ النَّاسَ إِحْكَافًا﴾ **“They do not ask people insistently”** means with persistence, which is with commitment and not leaving except with something that is given to him. It is from the saying, لحفني من فضل لحافه أي أعطاني من فضل ما عنده. “he covered me from the excess of his covering, meaning he gave me from the excess of what he had.” The origin of the ishtiqaaq (derivation) of insistence is from the word covering. It was named thus because it includes the aspects of the asking in the issue. It is like the covering includes coverage, meaning the one who asks for money includes, or covers, all the people, persisting with them until they give him. It is as if he is insisting on doing so.

As for, ﴿وَمَا تُنْفِقُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ بِهِ عَلِيمٌ﴾ **“And whatever good you spend - indeed, Allah is Knowing of it,”** it means He (swt) will reward you with good for it. It is an encouragement to spend.

**3.** Then Allah (swt) shows the great reward and high status of those who do not withhold their wealth for the sake of Allah (swt), at all times and in all circumstances. They will have their reward with their Lord, and they will have no fear, nor will they grieve.

As for, ﴿بِاللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ سِرًّا وَعَلَانِيَةً﴾ **“By night and by day, secretly and openly”** means at all times, and in all circumstances. He mentioned night before day, and secretly before openly, as an indication of the virtue of concealment over disclosure.

As for, ﴿فَلَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ﴾ **“Then they will have their reward with their Lord, and there will be no fear concerning them, nor will they grieve.”** This was explained previously.

Ibn Saad mentioned in Al-Tabaqat that this verse was revealed regarding the fodder of horses, linked to the Path of Allah.

Ibn Saad narrated in Al-Tabaqat on the authority of Yazid bin Abdullah bin ‘Areeb, on the authority of his father on the authority of his grandfather, on the authority of Areeb that the Messenger of Allah (swt) was asked about the words of Allah Almighty, ﴿الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ بِاللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ سِرًّا وَعَلَانِيَةً﴾ **“Those who spend their wealth by night and by day, secretly and publicly”** He said, **“They are the owners of horses.”**” (References Al-Durr al-Manthur

(2/100): Ibn Sa'd, Tabaqat (7/433) narrates from Yazid ibn Abdullah ibn 'Areeb, from his father, from his grandfather 'Areeb)

A final word on this subject, Allah (swt) explained in the previous ayahs the reward for spending in the Path of Allah, and that it is up to seven hundred times. Allah multiplies for whom He wills, and Allah is all-Encompassing, All-Knowing.

Then Allah (swt) explains the conditions for spending that are acceptable to Allah (swt),

= It must be without reminders or harm. He (swt) says, ﴿لَا تُبْطِلُوا صَدَقَاتِكُمْ بِالْمَنِّ وَالْأَذَى﴾ **“Do not invalidate your charities with reminders or injury.”**

= And that it is not riyaa' (showing off to be seen as pious). Allah (swt) said, ﴿كَأَنِّي بِنَفْسِي مَالُهُ رِئَاءَ النَّاسِ وَلَا يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ فَمَثَلُهُ كَمَثَلِ صَفْوَانٍ عَلَيْهِ تُرَابٌ فَأَصَابَهُ وَابِلٌ فَتَرَكَهُ صَلْدًا ۖ لَا يَقْدِرُونَ عَلَى شَيْءٍ مِّمَّا كَسَبُوا ۗ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْكَافِرِينَ﴾ **“Like one who spends his wealth to be seen by people and does not believe in Allah and the Last Day. His example is like that of a smooth rock upon which is dust, then a downpour strikes it and leaves it bare. They have no power over anything they have earned. And Allah does not guide the disbelieving people.”**

= And that it is not from the defective and inferior wealth. Allah (swt) said, ﴿وَلَا تَيَمَّمُوا الْخَبِيثَ﴾ **“And do not aim toward the defective therefrom, spending [from that].”**

Then Allah (swt) explained that spending money and maintaining ties with relatives, and those related to them, must not be exploited to force them to enter Islam. Instead, the entry is through persuasion and choice. You are not responsible for their guidance.

Similarly, the Almighty has made clear that spending brings good to the one who gives charity, if it is purely for Allah. So let him increase it in order to attain the fullest reward, Allah (swt) said, ﴿وَمَا تُنْفِقُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَلَأَنفُسِكُمْ ۖ وَمَا تُنْفِقُونَ إِلَّا ابْتِغَاءَ وَجْهِ اللَّهِ ۗ وَمَا تُنْفِقُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ يُوَفَّ إِلَيْكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تُظْلَمُونَ﴾ **“And whatever you spend of good is for yourselves. And you do not spend except seeking the countenance of Allah. And whatever you spend of good will be fully repaid to you, and you will not be wronged.”**

Allah (swt) concludes the ayaat with good spending in the Path of Allah in all situations and times, so that a person may obtain a great reward from the Lord of the Worlds, be secure about his future until the Day of Resurrection, and be reassured of Allah's Forgiveness for his past days. This is so that he will be within the success of both worlds, and that is the great victory. Allah (swt) said, ﴿فَلَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ﴾ **“So they will have their reward with their Lord, and no fear will there be concerning them, nor will they grieve.”**

All of that is in spending in the Path of Allah that is lawful, good, and purely for His sake, the Almighty.