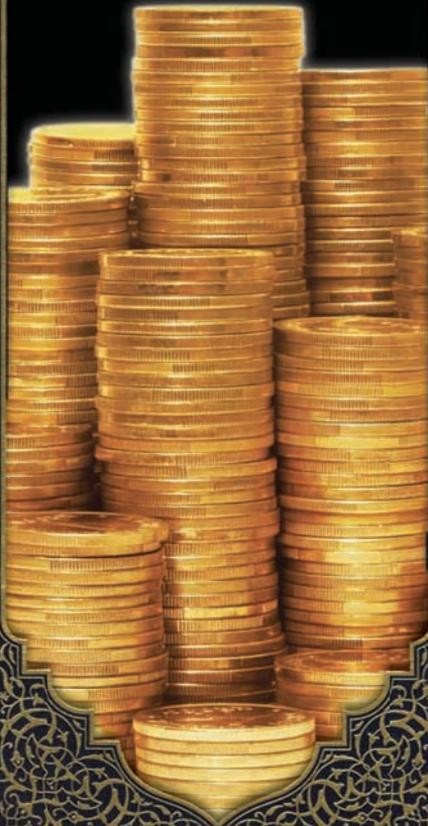


THE QUR'ANIC CONCEPT of WEALTH



In the name of Allah,
the Compassionate, the Merciful

“And you love wealth with immense love”.

[al-Fajr, 89:20]

Islam offers a very unique concept regarding wealth and material possessions.

Many people strive to become financially secure and independent. Loving wealth is one of the many passions man possesses. It is part of our nature, or fitra. This notion is explained in many places in the Qur'an.

Recently, and particularly with the advent of unrestrained capitalism in the West, it would be safe to describe man as becoming an economic animal. Working to be self-sufficient and independent is no longer man's ambition. Man has become infatuated with wealth and material possessions. This obsession has led many individuals and corporations to usurp the wealth of common people and the poor. This exploitation made common and poor people subservient to the wealthy individuals, thus becoming economic slaves to their wealthy masters.

It is safe to assume that greed is among the leading motives behind the present global economic collapse. The financial meltdown we have experienced is partially due to the present unchecked and uncontrolled capitalism that allows the gap between the haves and the have-nots to grow and partially due to a lack of adhering to divine guidance.

Thankfully, Islam, through its primary source, al-Qur'an, offers solutions to this ailment and disease that affects societies.

The Islamic concept of wealth; if understood, accepted, and adhered to, may raise man above a mere economic animal to become a decent,

honored, and dignified human being.

If one studies the subject of wealth objectively from the lenses of the Qur'an, one may conclude that there are at least five general principles. They are: 1) ownership is negated ; 2) our wealth is not our earning; 3) man may claim his basic needs only; 4) others have a legitimate right over one's wealth; and 5) the wealth man has is a test from Allah (SWT).

The Main Principle

The main principle of the Islamic concept of wealth is negation of ownership. Unlike Western capitalistic ideology, which believes that man owns what he possesses, Islam teaches the exact opposite. Man owns nothing. He doesn't own his own body limbs, let alone any worldly possessions. This point is made clear in many places in the Qur'an. The following ayah, for instance, supports such a claim, "...and to Allah are the treasures of the heavens and the earth..." [al-Munafiqun, 67:7] Although the wealth we have is acknowledged by Allah (SWT) to belong to us, He (SWT) makes it clear that in fact it is His. He (SWT) instructed, "...and give them from the wealth of Allah that He has given you..." [al-Nur, 24:33] Therefore, man being a vicegerent of Allah (SWT) on earth, is considered to be a trustee and what he has is only a trust from Allah (SWT). Hence, one needs to be faithful to the owner of that trust.

The Second Principle

The second principle is the notion that what we have is not really our earnings (Kasb), rather it is a gift or bounty (Fadl) from Allah (SWT). The Qur'an does mention in a couple of places the word Kasb referring to earning money. There are, however, numerous ayat which stress that the word kasb or earning means earning either a sin or

a good deed. The last ayah of surah al-Baqarah demonstrates this second principle. "On no soul does Allah place a burden greater than it can bear. It gets every good that it earns, and it suffers every ill that it earns..." Another example, and in more explicit terms, can be found in surah al-Nisa', "And if any one earns (yaksibu) sin, he earns it (yaksibuhu) against His own soul: for Allah is full of knowledge and wisdom." [al-Nisa', 4:111] One may ask, "If what we have is not our earning, then what is it?" Allah (SWT) informs us that it is a gift or fadl, according to the Qur'an. Surah al-Jumu'ah explains this view, "And when the (Jumu'ah) prayer has been concluded, disperse within the land and seek from the bounty (fadl) of Allah, and remember Allah often that you may succeed." [al-Jumu'ah, 62:11] This view is supported by many ayat in the Qur'an.

The Third Principle

The third principle explains that out of one's wealth, man's legitimate right is his basic needs. One may enjoy according to his social status the basic needs of shelter, food, clothing, etc. Man, on the other hand, is discouraged to go beyond his needs lest he fall into wasteful spending. Allah (SWT) encourages man to eat good and healthy food, to wear good clothes, and to have a comfortable home, but cautions against spending wastefully. "O Children of Adam! Wear your beautiful apparel at every time and place of prayer, eat, and drink, but waste not by excess, for Allah loves not the wasters." [al-'Araf, 7:31]

Excessive spending often times leads to squandering one's wealth. Allah (SWT) warns against such behavior. He (SWT) called them brothers of the devils, "...and squander not (your wealth) in extravagance. Verily, the squanderers were ever brothers of the devils, and the devil was ever ungrateful to his Lord." [al-Isra', 17:26,27] Squan

dering one's wealth is a sign of ingratitude to Allah (SWT), who has bestowed upon him a great bounty and trust.

The Fourth Principle

The fourth principle is the fact that others may have a legitimate right over one's wealth and property. This idea is explained in an explicit way in the Qur'an. "And those in whose wealth is a recognized right, for the beggar and the deprived." [al-Ma'arij, 70:24-25] It is the right of the needy and poor people to demand their portions of one's wealth.

Mu'az Bin Jabal was clearly instructed by the Prophet (SAW) before he was dispatched to Yemen. He (SAW) told him, "Mu'az, first teach them that, there is no god but Allah. If they accept that, then teach them the daily regular prayers. If they accept that, then take money from the wealthy and distribute it among their poor." This is what is called zakah, the main engine behind the Islamic economic system.

The Fifth Principle

The fifth and final principle is that wealth is a test from Allah. Man, regardless of how much material possessions and wealth he acquires, is being tested by his Master. This point is made very clear in several passages in the Qur'an. "And know that your wealth and your children are but a trial, and with Him is a great reward." [al-Anfal, 8:28] The same caution was repeated in sura al-Taghabun, chapter 64, ayah 15 for emphasis. In reality, both wealth and poverty are a trial for mankind (89:15-16). We are responsible for what we have, and we will surely be held accountable on the Day of Judgment. It is only through understanding and implementation of the Qur'anic concept of wealth that one may pass such a great trial.

In conclusion, the concept of wealth in Islam is quite unique. The divine guidance is meant to purify the individual and to help him overcome the fears of financial insecurity. It guides man to rise above his passions of worldly pleasures and to seek the pleasure of his Lord. It underscores the Man-God relationship. These concepts make a person grateful and appreciative for what he has or does not have. They purify one's heart from greed and stinginess and allow him to create a true bond of brotherhood/sisterhood with people by closing the gap of the haves and the have-nots. These principles teach us that spending for the sake of Allah (SWT) is a way to purify one's wealth, just as zikr is a means to purify one's heart. People naturally love wealth, but the sign of true faith is to sacrifice what is loved for the sake of Allah (SWT). "Never shall you attain righteousness unless you give (freely) of that which you love; and whatever you give, Allah knows it well." [Aal Imran, 3:92]

If we pay attention to what our Master has taught us about wealth, accept it, and adhere to it, man will be transformed from being a slave of dinar (or dollar) to becoming a slave of al-Rahman, the most Compassionate, the ever Merciful.



About IONA

The Islamic Organization of North America, IONA, is an organization dedicated to reviving the Qur'an in the hearts of Muslims while bringing its message to non-Muslims.

The obligations of a Muslim, as ordained by the Qur'an and Sunnah, can be understood as having four levels:

1. A Muslim is required to develop real faith and conviction in one's heart – **Iman.**
2. A Muslim is required to live a life of complete submission to the will of Allah (SWT) – **Ibadah.**
3. A Muslim is required to propagate and disseminate the message of Islam to humanity as a whole – **Shahada 'alan-Nas.**
4. A Muslim is required to try his/her utmost to promote and struggle for the establishment of justice – **Iqamat-ud-Deen.**

The objective of IONA is to assist North American Muslims in fulfilling the above obligations as well as inviting non-Muslims toward Islam, for the sake of our salvation in the hereafter and for seeking the love and mercy of God Almighty.



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IONA is a non-violent movement whose aim is to promote and struggle for the establishment of justice.