

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Khutbah 7/7/17 – credit and debt

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَخَلَقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا وَبَثَّ مِنْهُمَا رِجَالًا كَثِيرًا وَنِسَاءً وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَسَاءَلُونَ بِهِ وَالْأَرْحَامَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ رَقِيبًا

*O mankind, have taqwa of your Lord who created you from a single self and created its mate from it and then disseminated many men and women from the two of them. Have taqwa of Allah in whose name you make demands on one another and also in respect of your families. Allah watches over you continually.*

{ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ تَقَاتِهِ وَلَا تَمُوتُنَّ إِلَّا وَأَنْتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ }

*You who believe! have taqwa of Allah with the taqwa due to Him and do not die except as Muslims.*

{ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَقُولُوا قَوْلًا سَدِيدًا يُصْلِحْ لَكُمْ أَعْمَالَكُمْ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ وَمَنْ يُطِيعِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَقَدْ فَازَ فَوْزًا عَظِيمًا }

*You who believe! have taqwa of Allah and speak words which hit the mark. He will put your actions right for you and forgive you your wrong deeds. All who obey Allah and His Messenger have won a mighty victory.*

تاريخ اليوم الثاني عشر من شهر شوال، في السنة ألف وأربع مائة وثمانية وثلاثين

Today is the 12th of Shawwal 1438

Few have not noticed that the Arabic word *dīn*, which we refuse to translate as ‘religion’ preferring instead ‘life-transaction’, is intimately related to the word from the same root *dayn*, which means debt and indeed credit.

As to the debts implicit in *dīn*, we owe a debt of gratitude to Allah for giving us existence, giving us our bodies, our senses and our intellects, provision and our families, and we owe many debts to His creation, first of all our parents and then many others.

While it is important to understand the importance of due respect for debt and credit in our *dīn*, we must also grasp that the modern world has taken debt and made it an important pillar of a new *dīn*. In essence, the banks lend you something they haven’t got. Then they charge you interest for it and finally take your real property when you can no longer pay. This is as true of the corner bank as it is of supra-national institutions such as the IMF.

Thus we are caught in such a situation that we live in a world deluged in debt and yet we are obliged to take debt seriously and repay what we owe.

وَعَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ: مَنْ أَخَذَ أَمْوَالَ النَّاسِ يُرِيدُ أَدَاءَهَا أَدَّى اللَّهُ عَنْهُ، وَمَنْ أَخَذَ أَمْوَالَ النَّاسِ يُرِيدُ إِتْلَافَهَا أَتْلَفَهُ اللَّهُ.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> رواه البخاري، وابن ماجه.

Abū Hurayrah رضي الله عنه said: “The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, ‘If someone receives people’s property intending to repay it, Allah will repay it for him, but if someone receives it intending to waste it, Allah will cause him to perish.’”<sup>2</sup>

Yet our right-acting first generations (*salaf*) often had very substantial debts. If you ask the question: what did the Muslims have before banks, and from whom did they borrow? then we would have to say that they had each other and borrowed from – and lent to – each other. For that reason, one of the very last *āyats* revealed concerning matters of the *sharī‘ah* was the *āyat* about recording debt, the longest *āyat* in the Qur’ān:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا تَدَايَنْتُمْ بِدِينٍ إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى فَاكْتُبُوهُ...

*You who believe, when you take on a debt for a specified period, write it down.* (Sūrat al-Baqarah 2:282)

Al-Bukhārī said that Ibn ‘Abbās رضي الله عنه said the *āyat* was revealed about the *salam* contracts of the people of Madīnah in which they paid in advance for harvests.

عَنْ ابْنِ عَبَّاسٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا قَالَ قَالَ قَدِمَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ الْمَدِينَةَ وَهُمْ يُسْلِفُونَ فِي الثَّمَارِ السَّنَتَيْنِ وَالثَّلَاثَ فَقَالَ أَسْلَفُوا فِي الثَّمَارِ فِي كَيْلٍ مَعْلُومٍ إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ مَعْلُومٍ<sup>3</sup>

Ibn ‘Abbās رضي الله عنه said, “The Prophet ﷺ came to Madīnah when they used to pay two and three years in advance for fruits, and so he said, ‘Pay in advance for a known measure of fruits and for a known period of time.’”<sup>4</sup>

‘Fruits’ here means the produce of trees and other things and not necessarily those that are sweet.

Thus the purchaser secured the crops, and his funds helped the cultivator finance his work and pay for his living expenses. What is prohibited is for that person who has paid in advance for something to sell that purchase of his to another before taking possession of it. In other words, futures contracts are impermissible.

Our Muslim society was an intricate web of interconnected finance of this nature that obviated the need for institutions and removed the opportunity for usurers to take advantage of people’s neediness. Muslims were paying in advance for goods to be delivered later and they were buying goods on credit to be paid for later at a specific time. And they wrote it down.

This produced a very extensive and sophisticated commercial civilisation that traded globally, until Muslims were beguiled and deceived into adopting bank loans in order to gain new technologies and using debt-based monetary systems employing paper- and later digital-currencies.

But for such a thing to work again as it did for centuries, two elements are needed in addition to knowledge of the *fiqh* of *buyū‘* commercial transactions: trustworthiness and legal redress when people fail to be trustworthy. The latter is readily achievable today through the legal systems we have, since most of our commercial transactions would be enforceable by modern courts if the contract is drawn up correctly.

<sup>2</sup> Al-Bukhārī and Ibn Mājah.

<sup>3</sup> البخاري

<sup>4</sup> Al-Bukhārī.

Not only were credit transactions widespread but people had a positive attitude to debts that were undertaken with a serious intention to repay them.

وَعَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ جَعْفَرٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ: إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الدَّائِنِ حَتَّى يَقْضِيَ دَيْنَهُ مَا لَمْ يَكُنْ فِيمَا يَكْرَهُهُ اللَّهُ.

فَكَانَ عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ جَعْفَرٍ يَقُولُ لِنَخَّازِنِهِ: اذْهَبْ نَخْذُ لِي بِدَيْنٍ فَإِنِّي أَكْرَهُ أَنْ أَبِيتَ لَيْلَةً إِلَّا وَاللَّهِ مَعِي.<sup>5</sup>

‘Abdullāh ibn Ja‘far [ibn Abī Tālib] رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ said: “The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, ‘Allah is *with* the debtor until he settles his debt as long as it is not for something which Allah dislikes.’”

Abdullah ibn Ja‘far used to say to his treasurer, “Go and get something for me on credit, for I dislike to spend a night without Allah being *with* me.”<sup>6</sup>

أَقُولُ قَوْلِي هَذَا وَأَسْتَغْفِرُ اللَّهَ لِي وَلَكُمْ وَلِسَائِرِ الْمُسْلِمِينَ فَاسْتَغْفِرُوهُ إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْعَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ

The weight of debts can, however, be burdensome even when they are entirely *halāl* and non-usurious. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ gave some advice to people who feel oppressed by their debts and worldly commitments:

عَنْ عَلِيِّ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ: أَنَّ مُكَاتِبًا جَاءَهُ فَقَالَ: إِنِّي قَدْ عَجَزْتُ عَنْ مُكَاتِبَتِي فَأَعْنِي، فَقَالَ: أَلَا أُعْلِمُكَ كَلِمَاتٍ عَلَّمَنِيَنَّ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ، لَوْ كَانَ عَلَيْكَ مِثْلُ جَبَلٍ صَبِيرٍ دَيْنًا آدَاهُ اللَّهُ عَنْكَ، قُلْ: اللَّهُمَّ اكْفِنِي بِحَلَالِكَ عَنْ حَرَامِكَ، وَأَغْنِنِي بِفَضْلِكَ عَمَّنْ سِوَاكَ.<sup>7</sup>

‘Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ reported that: A slave with a contract to buy his freedom came to him and said, “I am unable to fulfil my contract to buy my freedom. Please help me.” He said, “Shall I teach you some words which the Messenger of Allah ﷺ taught me? Even if you had a debt the size of the mountain of Ṣabīr, Allah would pay it for you. Say: ‘O Allah, give me enough of what You have made lawful to suffice me from what You have made unlawful, and give me independence by Your bounty from all other than You.’”<sup>8</sup>

وَعَنْ أَبِي سَعِيدٍ الْخُدْرِيِّ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ: دَخَلَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ الْمَسْجِدَ، فَإِذَا هُوَ بِرَجُلٍ مِنَ الْأَنْصَارِ يُقَالُ لَهُ «أَبُو أُمَامَةَ» جَالِسًا فِيهِ. فَقَالَ: يَا أَبَا أُمَامَةَ، مَا لِي أَرَاكَ جَالِسًا فِي الْمَسْجِدِ فِي غَيْرِ وَقْتِ الصَّلَاةِ؟ قَالَ: هُمُومٌ لَزِمَتْنِي وَدِيُونٌ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ. قَالَ: أَلَا أُعْلِمُكَ كَلِمًا إِذَا قُلْتَهُ أَذْهَبَ اللَّهُ ﷻ هَمَّكَ وَقَضَى عَنْكَ دَيْنَكَ؟ فَقَالَ: بَلَى يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ، قَالَ: قُلْ إِذَا أَصْبَحْتَ وَإِذَا أَمْسَيْتَ:

<sup>5</sup> رواه ابن ماجه بسند حسن. وصححه الحاكم.

<sup>6</sup> Ibn Mājah with a ḥasan isnād. Al-Ḥākim says it is ṣaḥīḥ.

<sup>7</sup> رواه الترمذي وحسنه، والحاكم وصححه.

<sup>8</sup> At-Tirmidhī who says it is ḥasan and al-Ḥākim who says it is ṣaḥīḥ.

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنَ الْهَمِّ وَالْحَزَنِ، وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنَ الْعَجْزِ وَالْكَسَلِ، وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنَ الْجُبْنِ وَالْبُخْلِ، وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ غَلَبَةِ الدَّيْنِ وَقَهْرِ الرِّجَالِ. قَالَ: فَقُلْتُ ذَلِكَ، فَأَذْهَبَ اللَّهُ هَمِّي، وَقَضَى عَنِّي دَيْنِي.<sup>9</sup>

Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī رضي الله عنه said: “The Messenger of Allah ﷺ entered the mosque and there was a man of the Anṣār called Abū Umāmah sitting in it. He asked, ‘Abū Umāmah, why do I see you sitting in the mosque outside of the times of prayer?’ He replied, ‘Worries which cling to me and debts, Messenger of Allah.’

He asked, ‘Shall I teach you some words such that when you say them, Allah ﷻ will remove your worries and settle your debts for you?’ He said, ‘Yes, Messenger of Allah!’ He said, ‘Say in the morning and evening:

“O Allah, I seek refuge with You from worry and sorrow. I seek refuge with You from powerlessness and laziness. I seek refuge with You from cowardice and meanness. I seek refuge with You from being overcome by debt and overpowered by men.”

He said, ‘I said that and Allah removed my cares and settled my debts for me.’”<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> رواه أبو داود.

<sup>10</sup> Abū Dāwūd.