

# **Work and Production In Islam**

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This text analyses verses of the Holy Qur'an and narrations showing how it honors labour and the labourers, condemns ineptitude, dependence on others, and laziness, placing human beings' value in the measurement of their own accomplishments in every aspect of their life.

At the same time, though, Islam warns against focusing too much on work and amassing wealth, as all the existing things on earth as means to satisfy legitimate human needs, and no more and the rest should be used to help the less fortunate and to be shared for the improvement of communities, and no one should monopolize profits and wealth, or get rich at the expense of impoverished, downtrodden people.

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# Introduction

*"He who strives to support his own family is like the one who fights for the sake of Allah."*

Imam Al-Sadiq ('a)

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All praise is due to Allah. Peace and the blessings of Allah be on Muhammad, master of all generations; the present one, the generations that passed away before it, on the righteous guides, his pure household, and on those who follow them, until the Day of Judgment.

Axiomatically, concepts differ as intellectual schools, practical systems differ, and grave consequences emerge from such differences. These consequences shape human connection and relationships, and regulate rights and duties.

One point that distinguishes the Islamic school of thought, regarding the definition of its concepts, from other schools of thought, is the comprehensiveness and accommodation that mark its laws.

A close look at the Islamic law reveals a cohesive and strong link, with no contradictions or conflicts. The 'Shari'ah' takes into consideration all human needs and tendencies, as well as the factors of place and time, in making its values, principles and teachings seen in the social, political and economic relations it adopts.

In the field of work and production, for example, Islam regulates the relative relationship between human energy and nature, as it is the prime source of wealth on the one hand, and production and the right of

ownership on the other. It makes the product the property of the producer, and not the exploiter, thereby forbidding all forms of exploitation.

It also encourages the use of all talents and abilities, not only by enabling the worker to own what he produces, but also by considering work as an honour, a duty and a kind of 'jihad'. This is not mere theory; the great men of Islam, the Messenger of Allah (S) and his household, Ahl-ul-Bait (a.s) themselves, worked in agriculture and other fields.

As for the unemployed, including the disabled, Islam introduced a social security system to meet their demands.

Legally owned wealth, Islam decided, has a social function and it should serve both man and society; without serving one at the expense of the other.

Islam forbids the production, circulation and consumption of commodities and services, which bring about evil and debauchery in society or man, in order to prevent the emergence of social, psychological and hygienic problems and diseases, and all other practices that will have a passive impact on social, economic, and security conditions.

By such measures Islam identifies the concept of "work and production" in a way that produces benefits and wards off evil, within the context of preserving man's dignity.

As Al-Balagha Foundation presents this booklet to its dear readers, we pray to Allah to fulfill His promise of granting victory to the faithful, so that these great laws may be implemented under the rule of Islam, everywhere on earth.

Certainly, victory comes only from Allah.

## **Concept Of Work And Production**

Work is the energy or muscular effort exerted by man to acquire or produce what will satisfy a certain lawful demands<sup>1</sup>.

Production is the commodities or service which human effort helps to produce in order to satisfy a certain need.

Man may produce a commodity or a service and man employs his energy to produce those commodities and services. Doctors, carpenters, workers, porters...all use their human energies to satisfy a certain need.

Work is, virtually, the human force or effort, which reacts with diverse crude elements so as to create a

material product, or meet an intellectual or psychological need, such as production of chairs, shirts, books, medical treatment, poems... etc.

Islam outlines the meaning of needs, work and production, and identifies their components in many texts and concepts. It makes it plain that human energy Produces' by reacting with natural resources, the commodities by which man satisfies his different material needs like food, clothing, medication... etc.

The Noble Qur'an points out, explicitly and implicitly, the fact that nature is the source of wealth, and the depository of human needs. This natural wealth cannot be exploited, or put to good use without exerting a needed effort on the part of man. That is when the interaction between human effort and energy, on the one hand, and natural resources, on the other, takes place. Before this process, natural resources remain free and intact in or on the earth.

Allah, the Most High, says in the Qur'an:

***"And He made in it mountains above its surface, and He blessed therein and ordained therein its foods, in four days, alike for (all) seekers." (Holy Qur'an, [41:10](#))***

***"He it is Who created for you all that is on the earth. And He directed Himself to the heaven, so He made them complete seven heavens; and He is All-Knowing of all things." (Holy Qur'an, [2:29](#))***

***"See they not that We have created cattle for them, out of what Our hands have wrought, so they are their masters? And We have subjected them to them, so some of them they ride, and some they eat. And therein they have advantages and drinks. Will they not then give thanks?" (Holy Qur'an, [36:71](#), [36:72](#), [36:73](#))***

***"Allah is He Who created the heavens and the earth and sent down water from the clouds, then brought forth with its fruits as a sustenance for you, and He has made the ships subservient to you to run their course in the sea by His command, and He has made the rivers subservient to you. And He has made subservient to you the sun and the moon, pursuing their courses; and He has made subservient to you the night and the day. And He gives you of all you ask of Him. And if you count Allah's favours, you will not be able to number them. Surely man is very unjust, very ungrateful". (Holy Qur'an, [42:32](#), [42:33](#), [42:34](#))***

***"And the earth - We have spread it out and made in it firm mountains and caused to grow in it of every suitable thing. And We have made it means of subsistence for you and for him for whom you provide not. And there is not a thing but with Us are the treasures of it, and We send it not down but in a known measure." (Holy Qur'an, [15:19](#), [15:20](#), [15:21](#))***

These noble Qur'anic quotes present a number of basic concepts and thoughts, which accurately express Islam's view concerning natural resources. They are the key source of wealth and were created for man to make use of.

***"And the earth, He has set it for (His) creature; therein is fruit and palms having sheathed clusters; and the grain with (its) husk and fragrance." (Holy Qur'an, [55:10](#), [55:11](#), [55:12](#))***

The following are other Qur'anic verses, which express the same concept in a few words:

***"...and He blessed therein and ordained therein its foods..." (Holy Qur'an, [41:10](#))***

***"He it is Who created for you all that is on the earth..." (Holy Qur'an, [2:29](#))***

***"See they not that We have created cattle for them, out of what Our hands have wrought, . (Holy Qur'an, [36:71](#))***

***"...so some of them they ride, and some they eat." (Holy Qur'an, [36:72](#))***

***"And therein they have advances and drinks..." (Holy Qur'an, [36:73](#))***

***"...and sends down rain from the clouds then brings forth with it fruits for your sustenance..." (Holy Qur'an, [2:22](#))***

***"...and He has made the rivers subservient to you." (Holy Qur'an, [14:32](#))***

***"And He has made subservient to you the sun and the moon, pursuing their courses; and He has made subservient to you the night and the day." (Holy Qur'an, [14:33](#))***

***"And He gives you of all you ask of Him..." (Holy Qur'an, [14:34](#))***

***"And We have made in its means of subsistence for you..." (Holy Qur'an, [15:20](#))***

The above-mentioned verses state that the universe, including the earth, sun, moon, water, air, animals, plants, seas...etc., is put under man's control, and was created for his own benefit.

***"...and the ordained therein its food, ." (Holy Qur'an, [41:10](#))***

***"And We have made in it means of subsistence for you..."(Holy Qur'an, [15:20](#))***

Then, the Qur'an goes on to define the second stage, that of the production, and utilization of these sources. It explains that these riches, deposited on the earth, can only be useful if they are sought by man exerting some effort to acquire them.

This can be done directly, as in hunting animals, logging, obtaining oil from the oil fields, getting water from river, or indirectly, by transforming them from one form to another more suitable to meet man's demands. This applies to all manufactured goods like textiles, electrical equipment of transportation, medical tools and apparatus...etc.

In the following Islamic texts, human effort is plainly referred to as a second element that enters the

process of production:

1. Allah, the Almighty says:

***"...so go about in the spacious sides thereof, and eat of His sustenance. And to Him is the rising (after death)." (Holy Qur'an, [67:15](#))***

2. The Almighty also says:

***But when the prayer is ended, disperse abroad in the land and seek of Allah's grace, .." (Holy Qur'an, [52:10](#))***

3. Imam Ali ('a) is reported to have said:

*"When things are paired together, laziness and sloth united and begot poverty."*[2](#)

4. Imam Ja'far bin Muhammad al-Sadiq (a.s) said:

*"He who hires himself out, blocks the flow of his sustenance. He certainly does this, because whatever he obtains by his work goes to his employer who has hired him."*[3](#)

5. Aqabah bin Nafi' is reported to have said, "I asked Abu-Abdullah al-Sadiq (a.s) about a man who uses another man's land for agriculture without his prior permission. When harvest time comes, he goes to the owner of the land, who says to him, 'You planted my land without my permission, so your crop is mine, and you will get back the money you spend on the land'. Is he right or not?"

*"The farmer owns what he has grown",* replied the Imam ('a),

*"and the owner of the land should be paid rent for the use of his land".*[4](#)

By examining the afore-mentioned two verses closely, we conclude that 'walking about the earth' and "dispersion on it' emphasize the fact that search, and the exertion of human effort, are the two ways of obtaining earth's resources, and satisfying human needs.

The three traditions, cited above, point out that human effort is the means to ownership and production, whether it is made by directly utilizing nature's riches, or by indirectly changing natural resources into useful commodities.

The tradition handed down from Imam Ali bin Abi-Talib ('a) clearly explains that human effort is the origin of production and satisfaction of human needs. That is why the Imam (a.s) says that laziness and sloth, two causes behind the paralysis of human energy, unite and beget poverty.

Poverty, economically speaking, is the shortage of commodities and services necessary to meet human demands. So, the exertion of human effort and human activity generate wealth, while laziness and

disability yield poverty and destitution.

Both statements transmitted from Imam Ali ('a) and Imam Ja'far bin Muhammad al-Sadiq ('a), shed light on important aspects of the law of work and production laid down by Islam.

The statement, "He who hires himself out, blocks the flow of his sustenance", clarifies the fact that human effort is the deeper origin of the production of human wealth and the meeting of human requirements.

The third quotation stresses the fact that the farmer, himself, produced the crop. The crop is an interaction between two elements: human effort and nature. The human effort changes natural resources into useful goods.

That is why the land deserves the utilization costs, i.e. the farmer deserves to own the whole crop, because it is the results that deserves to own the whole crop, because it is the result of the result of the sowing of the seed, thanks to the human effort while utilizing nature.

This effort is, in fact, the force that gave the raw material a new shape, making it a useful article. This leads, naturally, to attributing this growth to the cause of its creation which is the farmer's effort. Without it, the agricultural crude elements would have remained untouched, and there would have been no crop. Considering this, the text regards the crop the legitimate property of the farmer, as Islam considers the effort the producer of the crop.

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Let us go back to statement No.4. By examining it, we will notice that it bears a very important economic concept. The one who works for others for a certain, fixed amount of money deprives himself of a large portion of the fruit of his effort, which goes to the employer.

Islam views man as an independent unit of life. He needs certain services and commodities, which he, himself, can provide by making use of his stored energy and reacting with the key, basic tools of production.

Man, who spends this energy has the right to possess the surplus product. No one else has the right to confiscate it. However, man certainly has the right to use his energy any way he deems appropriate. He is certainly has the right to use his energy any way he deems appropriate.

He is certainly free to make a contract with the employer to hire his energy in return for a certain wage. By so doing, the employee gives up a portion of his produce and the effort he exerts for the benefits of the employer, in accordance with the contract and mutual approval of both sides.

This contract is the legal justification for the proprietor to secure the surplus produce from the employee in return for providing him a job.

It is clear in the text that Islam discourages such contracts, and urges workers to avoid them. It calls for the liberation of the worker from the control of the employer, so that he can get all the produce of his work, as it is the continuation of his self, whether in the first stage, the production of goods and articles, or the second one, the marketing, transferring or trading of them.

Islam decides that there are only two elements that enter the process of production. They are:

1. Nature (raw material).
2. Human efforts.

"If someone hires out a horse, and another a camel to a man to use in irrigating some land, and the three agree to share the profits, their agreement is null or void. The profits go to the man, who should give a certain sum of money to the owners of the horse and camel, in return for the run of their animals".[5](#)

Close examination of this text reveals to us that the effort is the element that creates the new spirit of production, which reacts with the basic elements. As for capital and production materials, they are only auxiliary in the process of production, and deserve suitable compensation.

From the same text we can, also, conclude that the one responsible for the process of production is the man who owns what he produces. When the basic material used in the process is the natural resource, untouched before, like the crop in the example of the land planted without the consent of its proprietor, or the irrigator of the land and the participants who hired their animals out to him.

On this economic basis, we set very critical laws that govern economic relations, distribution, and ownership, and specify the wages in the fields of production and ownership.

It is this view on which the followings are based: the evaluation of human effort, the assessment of its worthiness and its output restoration of the output to it, with the exception of what the producer, of his own free will, gives up by means of a contract, mutual consent...etc.

Therefore, the product, all of it, belongs to the producer (the human effort). That is why Islamic law regards the agreement between the producer and those who participate with only production factors, as null and void. Islam believes that all factors of production employed by man in the process of production are by no means equal sharers in the process, nor are they equal to man's effort.

According to this view, the policies of work encouragement and the pushing of the worker, the actual producer, to employ all his physical and mental abilities should improve his production. In this way, economic equity is achieved and Divine Will concerning the relationship between human energy and nature, production, and ownership, is respected. In nature huge productional energies and abilities, like plants, water, petroleum, Sun, iron, animals... etc.

Within man himself, there are artistic, mental and muscular abilities of great size and importance that can interact with natural elements and provide what man needs. They are capable of driving poverty, hunger, and deprivation away from all people living on this planet. Allah, may His Name be hallowed, gave every individual an ability which makes him capable of providing himself with the necessities of life, provided that he is given the freedom to act, and relieved of injustice, unfair control, and exploitation.

1. "Need is lacking something with a desire to acquire it", al-Rahgib al-Asfahani, Mu'jam Mufradat Alfadh Al-Quran. Need then, is lacking commodities and services with the feeling of a desire to obtain them. Need may be material, like the need for food, clothing, medical treatment, transportation or immaterial like the need for knowledge, security...etc.
2. Al-Kulaini, Al-Furoo' min al-Kafi (Minot Questions of al-Kafi), vol.5; Kitab al-Ma'ishah (Book of Living), p.86.
3. Al-Kulaini, Ibid, p.86.
4. Al-Kulaini, Ibid, p.297
5. Abul-Qasim Najmuddin Ja'far bin al-Hassan al-Hilli, Shara'i al-Islam (Islamic Laws), vol.2, p.377.

## Need And Its Satisfaction

Man's need for a certain thing spurs him on to invent and produce it. Without being needed, there is no point in producing it. Such an act of production is deemed a waste of energy, money and precious time, and Islam forbids useless activities.

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The Holy Qur'an expresses its attitude in a sentence of disapproval and protest and scolds those who built and construct for the sake of playfulness and extravagance.

***"Do you built on every height a monument? You (only) sport."* (Holy Qur'an, [26: 128](#))**

As the Qur'an severely forbids this waste of energy, money and time, without any logical justification, it forbids, in the same manner, wastefulness, which is used of something to satisfy a need, which is already satisfied.

***"...and eat and drink and be not prodigal; surely He loves not the prodigals."* (Holy Qur'an, [7:31](#))**

No one denies that departing from this abnormal conduct, i.e. frivolousness and wastefulness, has a positive impact on economic life and preservation of human wealth.

When Islam forbids wastefulness, and extravagance in food, clothing, residence, ornamentation, expenditure...it virtually calls man to control and wisely manage his economic life, and achieve a balance between need and gratification.

Islam views human needs as fact, which must be satisfied to the saturation point, without underestimating or overestimating them.

***“...And everything with Him has a measure.” (Holy Qur’an, [13:8](#))***

***“...and Who created everything, then ordained for it a measure.” (Holy Qur’an, [25:2](#))***

***“And they who, when they spend are neither extravagant nor parsimonious, and the just mean is ever between these.” (Holy Qur’an, [25:67](#))***

***“Surely the squanderers are the devil’s brethren. And the devil is ever ungrateful to his Lord.” (Holy Qur’an, [17:27](#))***

***“And make not your hand to be shackled to your neck, nor stretch it forth to the utmost (limit) of its stretching forth, lest you sit down blamed, stripped off.” (Holy Qur’an, [17:29](#))***

In a lengthy tradition reported by Imam al-Sadiq (‘a) from Messenger of Allah (S), the prophet says:

*“There are certain people among my ‘ummah’ whose prayers will not be answered”.*

Then, he named these people...until he said:

*“...and a man whom Allah has favored with lot of money spend all of it and come asking Allah: ‘O lord! Support me with your sustenance’, to which Allah responded by saying: ‘Have I not lavished a much on you? Why did you not manage it with economy, as I ordered you, without wasting it unwisely? Did I not forbid you to spend your money extravagantly?’”<sup>[1](#)</sup>*

Islam calls for the gratification of all human needs, of all kinds, whether they are material needs and services, like medical treatment, education, food drink, clothing, residence...or psychological and intellectual ones like literature, art, ornamentation, entertainment...etc.<sup>[2](#)</sup>

As we have noticed, Islam makes the need the origin of the production, expenditure and consumption, so as to create a balance between the need, the production and the consumption.

In this way, economic risks and ethical dangers, emanating from frivolousness, extravagance and excessiveness, are prevented. The individual and the community, under Islam, are raised upright and honest, in conduct and mentality. With honesty, people can manage the processes of need – gratification, consumption, and ownership properly and will be able to establish healthy, sound links with each other.

<sup>1</sup>. Al-Kulaini, Ibid p.67.

<sup>2</sup>. In our booklet (Islam and Physical care) we elaborated in details on how Islam satisfies human physical needs.

# Abnormal Satisfaction Reflects Real Need

Man, being an independent unit, with many needs to be satisfied for a suitable way of life in the sight of Islam, has the right to meet all his needs that are part of his entity; but of course, there are limits to be observed. Islam deems every gratification, outside the natural needs of man, a sort of psychological and instinctive abnormality.

Such behavior usually emanates from perverted individuals under certain usual conditions. This abnormality cannot express the satisfaction of a need since it goes beyond the acceptable limits. It is simply a perverted catharsis of the deviation complex suffered by such people.

Islam does not condone the corrupted, who further promote such abnormal trends in the midst of the Islamic community, as legitimate acceptable phenomena. Should it approve of them, it would certainly tear down the system of life. When deviation and perversion take the place of the natural, sound law, anarchy prevails, and the law recedes.

As Islam is the Message of discipline, it forbids the production, circulation, consumption and utilization of any commodity that spreads perversion or encourages social diseases, such as alcohol – drinking, adultery, sodomy, gambling, dancing, monopoly, usury ... etc.

It inhibits the production of the instruments, articles, or services, and the establishment of institutions that create an encouraging atmosphere for abnormal practices. Man, if sound and natural, has no need to think alcohol, or dance. It is incorrect and unhealthy for him to shun a lawful matrimonial relationship and give himself up to adultery and sodomy.

Naturally, man has to work and obtain his sustenance. He should not think of resorting to gambling and monopoly to live off other people's labors, leading a lazy, idle life.

It is clear that unnatural production and consumption, as well as senseless activities and extravagance, are expressions of the wrongful use of human wealth and efforts, is harmful to humanity and leads to ruin.

Thousands of billions of dollars are now being spend on worthless entertainment, gambling, dancing, alcohol–drinking, deviant practices, the production of the means of destruction and annihilation, and in addition, there are recurring scenes of destitution, hunger, deprivation, fatigue, and epidemic diseases.

Millions of people are suffering endlessly from starvation, while still others are dying from wars and diseases. All these tragedies are direct result of such economic systems as capitalism and communism, which wreak havoc on humanity.

If the wealth lost on futile activities and extravagance was employed to serve humanity, and channeled

to meet the needs of tortured, downtrodden people, there would be no hungry or impoverished man on earth.

## Islam Encourages Work And Production

Islam sanctifies labour and honours workers and producers. It considers labour an honour, 'jihad', and a vivid picture of man's entity and abilities. By work, man can carry out his constructive mission on earth. By work, he responds to the call of the Holy Qur'an to cultivate the earth and make it inhabitable.

***"...He brought you forth from the earth and made you dwell on it..." (Holy Qur'an, [11:61](#))***

On this basis, Islam exhorts man to work, avoiding laziness and dependence on others. It calls on him to do his best in order to earn his sustenance, lead a pure and honest life, and improve his conditions on earth.

The Prophet (S) and his trustees, themselves set the most glorious examples of working, in different areas of life. They did not make light of labour, nor did they despise the labourers.

On the contrary, they honored labour and the labourers, condemned ineptitude, dependence on others, and laziness. They knew that work, in Islam, is the exertion of efforts aimed at gratifying a certain, legitimate human need is a kind of worship. It is a manifestation of submission to Allah's will and wisdom; Who orders us to live an honorable, clean life.

In order to implement its concept of a better, comfortable life, Islam makes it compulsory on every man to work, depending on his abilities to satisfy his needs. [1](#)

But if he fails to completely meet his own demands, the responsibility of doing this shift to his close relatives, like his parents or sons who should assist on him. But if these also fail to secure his needs, the responsibility falls on the Islamic society and state.

To make it clear to the dear reader that Islam pays special attention to work and production, we cite here a collection of texts. Man, we see, is urged to invest his wealth, construct and develop his civilization, and enjoy the lawful pleasures of life without forgetting to thank Allah for all His favors.

Allah, the Most High, says:

***"But when the prayer is ended, disperse abroad in the land and seek of Allah's grace..." (Holy Qur'an, [62:10](#))***

***"...so go about in the spacious sides thereof, and eat of His sustenance. And to Him is the rising (after death)." (Holy Qur'an, [67:15](#))***

The Prophet of Allah (S) is reported to have said:

*“Certain groups among my ‘ummah’ pray but their prayers will not be accepted: (they are) a man who invokes evil upon his parents; a man who curses an in debtor after the latter has made away with his money, when no written document was made away with his money, when no written document was made or witnesses called in; a man who invokes evil upon his wife whereas Allah, the Mighty and Exalted, has given him the right to divorce her; a man who sits in his house and says:*

*‘O Lord! Grant me my sustenance, without going out in search of his fortune. Allah, the Mighty and Exalted, says, in response: “My servant did I not point out to you the way to go, moving about the earth in quest of sustenance, gifted with sound senses and a healthy body?’*

*If you had done so, you could not be blamed, for you behaved according to my relatives. But when you fail to seek your share of sustenance, it is up to Me to give you your sustenance or withhold it, and I cannot find a way to excuse you.”<sup>2</sup>*

The Messenger of Allah (S) is also reported to have said:

*“Cursed be he who relies on other people for his living.”<sup>3</sup>*

He is also quoted to have said:

*“Worship consists of seventy parts, the best of which is seeking one’s livelihood by lawful means.”<sup>4</sup>*

Imam al-Sadiq (‘a) is quoted to have said:

*“He is worthless who does not like to lawfully earn money, so as to be independent of people, able to pay back his debts, and to keep good relations with his relatives.”<sup>5</sup>*

Imam Abul-Hassan Ali bin Musa al-Rida (‘a) said on the authority of his father:

*“My father said to a son of his: Beware of laziness and ennui, for they derive you of your fortune in this life and the next”.<sup>6</sup>*

Imam al-Sadiq (‘a) said:

*“He who strives to support his own family is like the one who fights for the sake of Allah.”<sup>7</sup>*

And, he is reported to have said:

*“When the soul guaranteed with an honorable living it feels secure (quiet).”*

These statements which put great emphasis on work, and view it on the same footing with ‘jihad’ and worship, are mere slogans and words written in the depths of books, or kept in the memories of people.

They are rather, religious and moral laws and principles grounded in a solid religious and moral laws and principles grounded in a solid religious base and on them every day economic life and Islam's culture are established. In its light, Islam's perception of work, wealth, money, land cultivation...is formed.

Eminent figures of Islam implemented these principles in their everyday life and labored with their hands. They tilled, cultivated and harvested their lands. They collected firewood and never despised and lawful work, even if it was simple and menial in the sight of some people.

They did not give the nature of the work much notice. Man's value, they knew well, was measured by his own accomplishments. They understood lawful work as a source of living, a method of continuing and bettering life.

They became good examples for the Muslim 'Ummah', which Allah wanted to be a- productive, noble 'Ummah' that knew no laziness, dependency, or hopelessness. If these diseases befall any 'Ummah', it will certainly lose its position among other nations, and decline.

The following are some examples, taken from history, as good lessons for us, but, certainly, the best among these examples are those of the Prophet of Allah (S). He worked in trade and during his adulthood, he was a shepherd.

After being raised to Prophethood, he worked planting young date palms. Prophet Musa (Moses) ('a), the Holy Qur'an narrates, was hired, for eight years by Shu'aib ('a). Throughout that period, he worked for him.

"The Commander of the Faithful used to leave his house, carrying sacks of date-palm stones. 'O Abul-Hassan!', someone asked him, 'What are these?'. Date-palms, God willing; he would reply. He used to sow all the seeds without leaving a single one out."<sup>8</sup>

A companion of Imam Ali bin Musa al-Ridha ('a) is quoted to have said:

*"I saw Abul-Hassan working on his land, the sweat running down to his feet. 'May I be your ransom; said I to him, 'Where are your men?' The Imam replied, 'The Prophet of Allah and the Commander of the Faithful (S), and my father and grandfathers ('a), all worked with their own hands. This was the habit of the prophets, messengers, trustees and the faithfully pious people'."*<sup>9</sup>

Abdul-A'la, a disciple of Imam al-Sadiq is reported to have said:

*"One sweltering day, I met Abu-Abdullah (Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq) in an alley in the city of Madinah and said: 'May I be your ransom. With so lofty a position in the sight of Allah, the Mighty and Exalted, and your closeness to the Prophet of Allah (S), why are you tiring yourself out on such a hot day?'*

*'O Abdul-A'la!', said he: I have come out seeking my sustenance to spare myself from begging to you and other for help."*<sup>10</sup>

It is reported that Imam Ali ('a) used to work, earn his living, and emancipate slaves. He emancipated one thousand slaves with the money he earned from his work. [11](#)

*"I saw Abu-Abdullah ('a), carrying a spade, with a thick on. He was working on a wall and sweat was rolling down his back. May I be your ransom, give the spade to me and I will spare you this task', I said offering my help.*

*'I would like for a man to work in search of his sustenance, suffering under the heat of the sun', was his response."* [12](#)

[1.](#) That is why Islam prevents giving support (from the tax of 'zakat') to the able-bodied poor, unless they go after work but find none.

[2.](#) Al-Kulaini, Ibid, p.67.

[3.](#) Al-Kulaini, Ibid ,p.72.

[4.](#) Al-Kulaini, Ibid, p.72-78.

[5.](#) Al-Kulaini, Ibid, p.85

[6.](#) Al-Kulaini, Ibid, p.88.

[7.](#) Al-Kulaini, Ibid, p.89.

[8.](#) Al-Kulaini, Ibid, p.75.

[9.](#) Al-Kulaini, Ibid, p.75.

[10.](#) Al-Kulaini, Ibid, p.74.

[11.](#) Al-Kulaini, Ibid, p.74-76.

[12.](#) Al-Kulaini, Ibid. p.76.

## Wealth In Man's Service

Whoever examines the verses of the Qur'an, trying to find out Islam's perception of wealth, money, goods, and all which is of use to man, will certainly conclude that the Qur'an regards all the existing things on earth as means to satisfy legitimate human needs, and no more.

The Qur'an always urges man to cut off his ties with them. That is why it dispraises the Jove of money, the accumulation of wealth, and the collection of property for no justified reason. It forbids these harmful practices and decides that money, wealth and products have an economic role, which they should play in order to keep life going on.

It is unacceptable that these things become a target, to which man directs all his efforts and energies. Islam strictly forbids amassing wealth without investing it in profitable and honorable projects.

Employing all available means, Islam emphasizes this critical economic concept. It works to instill it in man, so as to weaken greediness and large-scale amassing of wealth, and to face up to exploitation and economic inequity.

Islam wants wealth and money to play their natural role in man's life, gratifying all his natural needs. No group of people should monopolize profits and wealth, or get rich at the expense of impoverished, downtrodden people.

The Most High says:

***"No, man is surely inordinate, because he looks upon himself as self-sufficient." (Holy Qur'an, [96:6](#), [96:7](#))***

***"No, but you honour not the orphan, nor do you urge one another to feed the poor, and you devour heritage, devouring all, and you love wealth with exceeding love." (Holy Qur'an, [89:17](#), [89:18](#), [89:19](#), [89:20](#))***

***"Woe to every slanderer, defamer. Who amasses wealth and counts it – He thinks that his wealth will make him abide. No, he will certainly be hurled into the crushing disaster." (Holy Qur'an, [104:1](#), [104:2](#), [104:3](#), [104:4](#))***

***"...and those who hoard up gold and silver and spend it not in Allah's way – announce to them a painful punishment." (Holy Qur'an, [9:34](#))***

***"So keep your duty to Allah as much as you can, and hear and obey and spend; it is better for your souls. And whoever is saved from greediness of his soul, these it is that are the successful." (Holy Qur'an, [64:16](#))***

***"Whatever Allah restored to His Messenger from the people of the town, it is for Allah and for the Messenger, and for the near of kin and the orphans and needy and the wayfarer, so that it be not taken by turns by the rich among you. And whatever the Messenger gives you, accept it, and whatever he forbids you, abstain (therefrom); and keep your duty to Allah. Surely, Allah is Severe in punishment. " (Holy Qur'an, [59:7](#))***

***"And devour not your property among yourselves by false means, nor seek to gain access thereby to the judges, so that you may swallow up a part of the property of people wrongfully while you know." (Holy Qur'an, [2:188](#))***

***"Tell My servants who have faith to keep up prayer and spend out of what We have given them, secretly and openly..." (Holy Qur'an, [14:31](#))***

***"And in whose wealth there is a known right. For the beggar and the destitute " (Holy Qur'an, [70:24](#), [70:25](#))***

Besides these holy verses, we find in the 'Sunnah' explanation of the Qur'anic teachings, which broaden the horizons of economic thought. These texts can be adopted as principles and key bases for the economic system in Islam.

The quotes we cite below are only a part of hundreds of Qur'anic verses, traditions and statements, which deal with themes on money, wealth, production, and distribution. They make clear Islam's view concerning each one of these items.

The following are a few traditions dealing with money and wealth:

“Poor-rates (zakat) were certainly ordained to test the wealthy and help the poor. If all people pay the ‘zakat’ on their wealth, no single Muslim will remain poor or needy. He will rather, be independent of people, to this Allah-ordained tax. People will certainly not be impoverished, hungry, and clothless, if the wealthy do not commit sins..”[1](#)

“All has certainly given the people a share of the wealth of the well-to-do, for the paying of which they deserve no praise. It is ‘zakat’. Thanks to ‘zakat’, the blood of Muslims was spared, and they were called Muslims. But, next to zakat, Allah has made a portion of wealth of the rich dues belonging to the poor.

Allah, the Exalted, says: **“And in whose wealth there is a known right....(Holy Qur’an, 70:24)”**[2](#)

Allah, the Mighty and Exalted, assessed the wealth of the well-to-do, and evaluated the needs of the poor. He set an adequate portion of the wealth of the rich to be given to the poor. If it were not satisfactory, Allah would certainly have made that portion greater.”[3](#)

“Allah has certainly ordered a sufficient portion of the affluent’s wealth set aside on behalf of the poor. If He knew that what had been set apart on their behalf was not adequate, He would certainly have increased that share. It is the refraining, on the part of the well-to-do, from paying the poor’s dues that makes the latter suffer from poverty. The portion Allah ordained on their behalf from the wealthy is undeniably enough.”[4](#)

In his letter to Malik al-Ashtar, Imam Ali (‘a), outlines the responsibilities of the Islamic state. Concerning the poor and destitute, the Imam (‘a) writes:

*“Then I want to caution you about the poor. Fear Allah about their conditions and your attitude towards them. They have no support, no resources and no opportunities. They are poor, they are destitute and many of them are crippled and unfit for work. Some of them, come out begging and some (who maintain self-respect), do not beg – but their condition screams about their distress, poverty, destitution and wants. For the sake of God, Malik, protect them and their rights. He has laid the responsibility of this up on your shoulders. You must fix a share for them from the government treasury.*

*Besides this reservation in cash, you must also reserve a share in kind of crops etc., from government grains go down in cities, in which such grains are collected as are cultivated on state owned lands. Because in this collected the share of those living far away from particular city is equal to the share of those living nearby.”*[5](#)

From putting these quotes together and examining them in depth, we can conclude the following:

1. Wealth as Islam views, it, belongs to Allah. Man is allowed to use it within what is lawful in Islam. The Most High says:

***“Believe in Allah and His Messenger, and spend of that whereof He has made you heirs. So those of you who have faith and spend for them is a great reward.” (Holy Qur’an, [57:7](#))***

***“And certainly you have come to Us one by one as We created you first, and you have left behind your back what We gave you.” (Holy Qur’an, [6:95](#))***

2. The relationship between man and wealth is that of gratification of human needs. It should never be transformed into fervent relationship of love and greed. Wealth is a means to serve life, but it is not a goal in itself. Islam condemns obsession in covetousness of money, and in amazing it out of mere avarice.

***“...and you love wealth with exceeding love.” (Holy Qur’an, [89:20](#))***

***“He (man) thinks that his wealth will make him abide.” (Holy Qur’an, [104:3](#))***

3. Wealth should be distributed among all people and everyone should take what satisfies his needs. It should not be withdrawn from the field of economic investment and circulation, amassed and refused to others. Some people do this out of overpowering tendency towards monopolization and greediness. Allah, the Most High, says:

***“...and those who hoard up gold and silver and spend it not in Allah’s way- announce to them a painful punishment.” (Holy Qur’an, [9:34](#))***

***“...and spend; it is better for your souls. And whoever is saved from the greediness of his soul, these it is that are the successful.” (Holy Qur’an, [64:16](#))***

4. The lower social classes, and the disabled, who are either unable to work because of age, or disease, and those whose incomes cannot satisfy all their needs, have a share in the wealth of the well-to do, ordained by Allah. Should they procrastinate, or refuse to pay, the state must take it from them by force.

In so doing, economic equity is achieved in accordance with this call of the Qur’an:

***“...so that it be not taken by turns by the rich among you.” (Holy Qur’an, [59:7](#))***

The Qur’an rejects the misappropriation of the nation’s wealth by the upper classes and states that it must reach every Muslim individual. He should take his share, and the rest of the money, the surplus money, should be invested in useful economic activities, even if it belongs to certain individuals, or is known to be the property of them. Money, thus, will not be stored away, like any other treasured article.

5. Economic balance and financial laws, in Islam, are enacted so as to meet people’s needs, establish economic equality, and achieve an honorable kind of living for every individual in the Muslim society.

“Allah has certainly ordered a sufficient portion of the affluent’s wealth set aside on behalf of the poor. If He knew that what had been set apart on their behalf were not adequate, He would certainly have increased that share”.

“If all people pay the ‘zakat’ on their wealth, no single Muslim will remain poor or needy. He will, rather, be independent of people, thanks to this Allah–ordained tax.”

6. The cause of the economic crisis that is plaguing mankind lies in bad distribution, and the greediness of the exploiting classes. Man’s self–centeredness is the prime cause of this problem. The system of distribution and man–made economic laws, which are linked to man’s selfishness, are the second effective cause of the problem.

The two statements communicated from Imam al–Sadiq (‘a), make this point clear:[6](#)

*“People will certainly not be impoverished, hungry, and clotheless, if the wealthy do not commit sins.”*

*“It is the refraining, on the part of the well–to–do, from paying the poor’s dues that make the latter suffer from poverty. The portion Allah ordained on their behalf from the wealthy is undeniably enough.”*

7. So as to achieve equity in distribution, or fight poverty, Islam makes it obligatory on the Islamic state to implement all financial laws it has laid down. Such laws forbid usury, monopoly, freezing of money, greediness, exploitation, and immoderate hoarding of assets, so as to put an end to excessive accumulation of wealth and deprivation of the destitute.

8. The economic system in Islam binds the Islamic state to allocate a certain amount of money, included in the budget, to fight poverty and meet the needs of the destitute. This is clearly stated in these words, quoted from a letter sent by Imam Ali (‘a) to Malik al–Ashtar, the then governor of Egypt:

*“You must fix a share for them from the government treasury. Besides this reservation in cash, you must also reserve a share in kind of crops etc., from government grains go downs in cities, in which such grains are collected as are cultivated on state owned lands...”*

## **And Praise is due to Allah, Lord of the Worlds**

[1.](#) Al–Naraqī, Jami’ al–Sa’adat (Collector of Felicities) ,vol. 2,p. 124, from Imam al–Sadiq (a.s.).

[2.](#) Al–Naraqī, Ibid ,p.15

[3.](#) Mirza Hussein al–Noori al–Tabrasi, Mustadrak al–Wasa’il (The Book, which collected the Traditions Left out by Wasa’il al–Shi’iah), Bab al–Zakat (Chapter of ‘Zakat’).

[4.](#) Al–Naraqī, Jami’ al–Sa’adat (Collector of Felicities)

[5.](#) Imam Ali bin Abi–Talib (a.s.), Nahjul–Balagha (Peaks of Eloquence) Collated by Dr. Subhi al–Salih, p.438.

[6.](#) Sometimes an economic crisis is blamed on a decline in production as a result of bad conditions.

## Links

[1] <https://www.al-islam.org/printpdf/book/export/html/107495>

[2] <https://www.al-islam.org/printepub/book/export/html/107495>

[3] <https://www.al-islam.org/printmobi/book/export/html/107495>

[4] <https://www.al-islam.org/tags/islamic-economics>

[5] <https://www.al-islam.org/tags/wealth>