

In the Name of Allah, The Most Merciful and the Source of mercy and peace. In reflecting on the spiritual foundations of Sadaqa, I will offer a few thoughts based on Suratul Maun of the Quran.

“Small kindnesses, Almsgiving. 1. Seeing though one who denies the Judgment (to come)? 2. Then such is the (man) who repulses the orphan (with harshness), 3. And encourages not the feeding of the indigent. 4. So woe to the worshippers 5. Who are neglectful of their prayers, 6. Those who (want but) to be seen (of men), 7. But refuse (to supply even) neighborly needs.’ (Surah 107)

This surah was revealed to the society with a mix of beliefs and values, much like our own, where Muslims were a minority and the majority of society is of another belief. Therefore the Quran came to connect faith with the social responsibility and moral values. The Arabs of that time have seen the Quran challenging the status quo of neglecting the poor and the needy as well as calling for advocacy on behalf of those who are less fortunate in society. The Quran therefore connects the life to come with the physical world. The action of the individual determines his or her life to come, specifically in terms of how they dealt with their fellow human beings.

This surah also connects rituals and acts of worship such as prayer with the concept of giving and sharing because one of the aspects of Islam in terms of belief system is that the relationship with God is absolutely connected with the relationship of His creations. As the Prophet, peace be upon him, explained to us that people are the dependants of Allah and the best among them are the ore beneficial to His creation. There fore we are being judged in our moral character with how we relate to the suffering of others. This One Sadaqa campaign brings back out moral responsibility as Muslims to call upon ourselves first and our communities as well as the community at large to respond to call of Allah to serve humanity through education and promoting awareness on issue s of poverty and hunger. As you see in Suratul Ma’un, the Quran has used the word **hadda-yahaddu** which means more than ‘to encourage’; rather, it means to advocate, or to petition on behalf of those who are in need. In the matter of fact, God Almighty has told us in the Quran that He holds people accountable for not fulfilling their duty of encouraging and advocating the feeding of the poor. “Nor do you encourage one another to feed the poor!” (The Dawn 89:18); “And would not encourage the feeding of the indigent!” (The Reality 69:34).

This surah has used the word Ma’un, which means the sharing of resources. Ibn Kathir’s commentary says the word Ma’un means the tools people use to maintain a living. Thus implying our advocacy should not only be to feed the needy but to teach them how to grow their own food and to share their tools with others and enable them to service. This concept is similar to the adage “Give a man a fish and he will eat for a day, or teach a man to fish and he will eat for a lifetime.”

Umar ibn Al-Khattab (May God be pleased with him), the companion of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of God be upon him) and khalifah, governed at a time

were there was a severe drought. He used his authority and understanding of the spirit of the Law and gave amnesty to those who transgressed the law during the time of drought or of hunger as they were considered to be in survival mode. Umar (May Allah be pleased with him) felt that the society had a responsibility to the less fortunate and therefore held the society accountable for their actions rather than the individuals.

One of the major problems that humanity is facing today is the inability to share provisions and natural resources. The Quran indicates, in many verses, that God, Almighty, has put enough resources on the planet earth that if humanity were indeed to share it, no person would go hungry. All of the above verses indicate that God created this earth in a way that there is enough for every single human being. Now it is our responsibility of humanity to find a way to take care of one and the other and to provide for one and other. Yasin 36:47 explains how Allah condemns those who use the excuse that Allah could have provided the food for those He wants to feed. They use this excuse as a means to remove the responsibility of helping others from their own selves. God also gives parables and examples of people who have failed to do their responsibility. God, for example, blesses the man described in Surah Kahf with two gardens full of fruits, crops, and flowing water. He engages in a dialogue with a man less fortunate than himself and refuses to share his recourse thereby leading to the loss of the bounty God had bestowed upon him.

Today as Muslims, we must celebrate the bounties of God Almighty. Each time we sit at the dinner table, take a bite to eat, or take a sip of water, we must remember those who are struggling daily to make ends meet. We should join together with the community of faith to stand up and speak on behalf of those who are suffering from hunger or malnutrition. The Prophet of God (May God be please with him) joined the alliances of justice prior to his Prophethood. He expressed that if he were to be called again to the same alliances in Islam he would have responded again. Therefore we understand from this that we are being called as Muslims to join this alliance to help our fellow human beings who are suffering. It is a must and an obligation on us to fulfill these obligations.

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