

Tafseer Al-Baqarah (2: 215)

From the book, Introduction to the Tafseer of the Quran,
by the Ameer of Hizb ut Tahrir, the eminent jurist and statesman, Ata Bin
Khalil Abu Al-Rashtah:

﴿يَسْأَلُونَكَ مَاذَا يُنْفِقُونَ قُلْ مَا أَنْفَقْتُمْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَلِلْوَالِدَيْنِ وَالْأَقْرَبِينَ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسَاكِينِ وَابْنِ السَّبِيلِ وَمَا تَفْعَلُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ بِهِ عَلِيمٌ﴾

“They ask you, [O Muhammad], what they should spend. Say, “Whatever you spend of good is [to be] for parents and relatives and orphans and the needy (miskeen) and the traveler. And whatever you do of good - indeed, Allah is Knowing of it.” [TMQ Surah Al-Baqarah: 215]

Allah (swt) has made this great Surah a collection of many forms of goodness. Thus, Allah (swt) mentions in this Surah regarding believers, disbelievers (kaafirs) and hypocrites (munafiqs). Then Allah (swt) mentions the Jews, their deviation, books, their dispute over their Prophets (as), their killing of some of the Prophets (as), their arguments with falsehood and their conspiracies against the Messenger of Allah (saw) and the believers. He (swt) then mentions the 'Aqeedah and its related matters, in order for a believer to be strong in Iman and aware of the plots of Kufr and its people.

Allah (swt) then mentions the types of Ahkaam Shariah (Islamic Legal Rulings) that are based on the Islamic Aqeedah. He then mentions the House of Makkah, al-Ka'aba, and its construction by Ibrahim (as) and Ismail (as). Then He (swt) mentions the change of the Qibla towards Makkah and the Hajj towards it. And He (swt) mentions siyaam (fasting), jihad, various Ahkam Shariah related to *Dawah* to Islam, the intense conflict between the truth and falsehood, people's disputes over their Messengers (as), the burden of affliction faced by believers, patience upon the harm in the Path of Allah (swt) and then the nearness of support and victory.

All these are to straighten the matter of the Muslim in his Iman and his actions of enjoining the good and forbidding the evil, where he will not be harmed by those who oppose him. RasulAllah (saw) said, «لَا تَزَالُ طَائِفَةٌ مِنْ أُمَّتِي عَلَى الْحَقِّ ظَاهِرِينَ لَا يَضُرُّهُمْ مَنْ خَدَلَهُمْ حَتَّىٰ يَأْتِيَ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ وَهُمْ عَلَىٰ ذَلِكَ» “A group of people from my Ummah will continue to be triumphant on the truth and will not be harmed by those who oppose them. They will continue to be on this until Allah's Command comes (until the day of judgment)” [Bukhari: 2884, Muslim: 3544]

In this context of clarifying many of the Islamic Legal Rulings after Allah (swt) has mentioned previously the Islamic Aqeedah, the questioning and answering comes in this noble verse, which is then followed by questions related to many of the Legal Rulings that are clarified in this great Surah.

As reported by Ibn Abbas (ra), Amr bin Jumuh (ra) asked the Messenger of Allah (saw) about the spending of his wealth. Amr bin Jumuh (ra) was a very old man with a lot of money. So he asked: ‘Oh Messenger of Allah! How can we spend our wealth?’ So the noble verse was revealed clarifying the following:

1. It appears in the verse that the question was about the wealth to be spent. However, Allah (swt) answers about whom the money is to be spent (الْمُنْفَق) upon, in general, by saying, ﴿قُلْ مَا أَنْفَقْتُمْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ﴾ “Whatever you spend of good is...” i.e. whatever you spend in terms of halal and pure. Then Allah (swt) clarifies about whom the spending is prioritized for by saying ﴿فَلِلْوَالِدَيْنِ وَالْأَقْرَبِينَ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسَاكِينِ وَابْنِ السَّبِيلِ﴾ “for parents and relatives and orphans and the needy and the traveler.” This is an evidencing (dalaalah) that the spending (nafaqah) is recognized and accepted only when it occurs in the right place i.e. when the money is spent upon the deserving (mustaHiq).

2. The verse is about the recommended (mandoob) sadaqah and not about the obligatory (farD) sadaqah which is Zakah. This is due to the contextualization (qareenah) in the saying ﴿قُلْ مَا أَنْفَقْتُمْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ﴾ **“Say, “Whatever you spend in terms of goodness.”** This is because Allah (swt) has made this spending conditionally dependent (mutawaqifah) upon those who spend. And He (swt) did not command, ‘Spend the goodness to so and so’, in such case there is a possibility of inclusion of the obligatory (fard) spending. However, Allah (swt) says, ﴿مَا أَنْفَقْتُمْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَلِلْوَالِدَيْنِ﴾ **“whatever you spend in terms of goodness, then it is for parents...”** i.e. if you choose to spend, then let the spending be of goodness and let it be for the parents and closed ones (relatives).

This means that the spending is conditionally dependent (mutawaqifah) upon those who spend, as such the spending is sadaqah to draw closer towards Allah (swt). Thus the spending mentioned here is the recommended (mandoob) one.

This is affirmed by the ending of the noble verse, as it says ﴿وَمَا تَفْعَلُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ بِهِ عَلِيمٌ﴾ **“And whatever you do of good - indeed, Allah is Knowing of it.”** The word (مَا) **“whatever,”** here is conditional (shareTah) and so the spending is conditionally dependent (mutawaqifah) on the one who spends it. Accordingly the saying, by its negation (nasakh), is not included from the verses related to Zakah. So, this verse is about the recommended sadaqah, whilst the verses of Zakah are obligatory.

3. The verse clarifies the prioritization for Sadaqah. Thus it is spent first on the parents and then on blood relatives (arHaam) and then to close relatives (aqaarib) and so on. RasulAllah (saw) said, «إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُوصِيكُم بِأُمَّهَاتِكُمْ ثُمَّ بِأَبَائِكُمْ، ثُمَّ بِأَقْرَبِ الْأَقْرَبِ» **“Allah enjoins you to be dutiful to your mothers. Then He enjoins you to be dutiful to your fathers and then to your next closest relative and then to your next closest relative.”** [Ibn Majah: 3661, Ahmad: 4/131, 132]. It was asked of the Messenger of Allah (saw): “Oh Messenger of Allah! To whom should I show kindness?” He (saw) said, «أُمَّكَ وَأَبَاكَ وَأَخْتَكَ وَأَخَاكَ» **“Your mother, your father, your sister, your brother and the slave whom you set free. It is a due obligation (on you), and a tie of relationship which should be joined.”** i.e. blood relatives. [Abu Dawood: 4474, al-Tirmidhi: 2532, al-Dur al-Manthur: 2/611].

A man came to the Prophet (saw) and said: “I have one Dinar”. The Prophet (saw) said, «أَنْفِقْهُ عَلَى نَفْسِكَ» **“Spend it on yourself”**. The man said, “I have two dinars.” The Prophet (saw) said, «أَنْفِقْهُ عَلَى زَوْجَتِكَ» **“Spend it on your wife”**. The man said, “I have three dinars.” The Prophet (saw) said, «أَنْفِقْهُ عَلَى خَادِمِكَ» **“Spend it on your servant.”** The man said, “I have four dinars.” The Prophet (saw) said, «أَنْفِقْهَا عَلَى وَالِدَيْكَ» **“Spend it on your parents.”** The man said, “I have five dinars.” The Prophet (saw) said, «أَنْفِقْهَا عَلَى قَرَابَتِكَ» **“Spend it on your relatives.”** The man said, “I have six dinars.” The Prophet (saw) said, «أَنْفِقْهَا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى» **“Spend it in the path of Allah.”** [Ahmad 3/369, Ibn Hibban 828, Al-Bayhaqi 7/466, 477].

It has been narrated in a hadith, «الصدقة على الفقير صدقة، وهي على الرحم صلة وصدقة» **“Giving charity to the poor is Sadaqah, and giving Saqah to the blood relatives is both Sadaqah and upholding the ties of relationship.”** [Al-Nasa’i 2535, Ibn Majah 1834, Ahmad 4/17, 218]. After parents and relatives, Sadaqah is for the needy and the priority is the orphan who is young and lost his father. Then Sadaqah is for Miskeen (poor needy) and Faqeer (poor) who are other than orphans. Then Sadaqah is for the one who lost his means for income. This is how the priority of spending is and former are better than the latter. Allah (swt) will not let any goodness go to waste, even if it were only the weight of an atom. Thus every spending that is spent on pure halal wealth with sincerity (ikhlaaS) to Allah (swt) is upon its right place i.e. upon the deserving (mustaHiq) even if it were little, for Allah (swt) will accept it in goodness. Allah (swt) knows in what condition the wealth is spent. Allah (swt) said, ﴿وَمَا تَفْعَلُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ بِهِ عَلِيمٌ﴾ **“And whatever you do of good - indeed, Allah is Knowing of it.”**