Religious Obligations On Lenders And Borrowers: An Analysis Of Jewish, Christian And Muslim Revealed Sources

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Abstract

In present scenario, the banking system of non-Muslim countries is based on interest and this practice is also common in Muslim countries. The prime objective of loan is to do welfare of poor, but interest on debt is creating economic downturn of poor and needy. The prevailing unjust system is making humans slaves in modern times. On the other hand, people who lend money are negligent in returning it to owners in time. This study will explore the teachings of Judaism, Christianity and Islam about the religious obligations on lenders and borrowers. This is qualitative research and data is gathered from books, articles and online sources. The study shows that interest is Haram (Prohibited) in Abrahamic faiths. Moreover, there is great reward for the one who provides loan to needy. The lender should be lenient in demanding money and should give time extension to borrower. Furthermore, if the lender forgives his debt to poor, he will get great reward from Allah. On the other hand, the borrower should not get loan on interest as well as unnecessary loan. The borrower should return the loan as early as possible if he can. Interest based banking has no link with the teachings of Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

Keywords: Debt; Interest; Poor Welfare; Christianity; Judaism; Islam; Interest based banking; Lender; Borrower

Introduction

Banking system in the most of world countries is interest based, however the teachings of Abrahamic religions prohibit and motivate for the welfare of poor. It is important to acknowledge
that the principles governing the Islamic Shari'a are very similar to those that apply to the preaching and practice of Judaism and Christianity, as well as other religions. Both Judaism and Christianity, for example, have banned the collection and payment of interest for a certain period of time, although each had a slightly different interpretation of what it was like to be allowed to lend at interest (Schoon & Nuri, 2012). These faiths stop all kinds of immoralities and corruption. Lewis and Kaleem emphasize that at the grassroots level, the financial crisis is rooted in fraud, greed, misleading agreements, excessive speculation, disproportionate incentives, usurious behavior, lack of leadership and governance, and financial. In short, the immoral and moral failure of those involved is real. It has brought religion to the forefront because all three agree on Abraham's position that ethics and morality cannot be separated from economic and financial theories (Lewis & Kaleem, 2019). There are some religious obligations on both lenders and borrowers which should be fulfilled for the benefit of weaker sections of the community and to eradicate the unjust interest based system in the world. Present study highlights the religious teachings of Judaism, Christianity and Islam about the principles of giving and taking back loans.

**Jewish Teachings**

The Jewish tradition describes about the importance of the welfare of poor. In fact, in Maimonides, the popular definition is highest level of charity from eight level is to lend to a poor person, or to partner with him so that he can become self-sufficient. In Bible times, Sabbath years and Jubilee laws were made. Debts were to be forgiven in the (seventh) year of the Sabbath, and in Jubilee 50th year, the land that was sold to pay off debts was to give back to its rightful owners and slaves were to be set free (Jewish Values, 2022). Those people who are in debt for a variety of reasons, mostly without their own weakness and it is obligation of a moral society to make sure that those people are not permanently excluded.

The great academies of the time acknowledged that the poor needed access to credit, but also that lenders were right to expect it in return. According to the Bible and Rebekah, it is apparent that one aspect of borrowing and lending was forbidden as well as interest charges.

The scriptures show that to forgive debt is not only humanly significant but also a duty from God: "The Spirit of God is upon me, because God has anointed me; the Eternal has sent me to preach the gospel to the poor, to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim the release of the captives, and to release the captives, one year to proclaim grace from eternity" (Isaiah 61). Moreover Jewish teachings motivate to forgive loan: "At the end of each seven-year period, you will see a softening of the debt, which will be observed below. Relatives should not be pressured, because reverence for the holy has been declared." (Exception 15)

The following commandments of the Torah protect a debtor from the most severe accumulating deeds; "When you lend to my people, to the poor man among you, do not pressure him to repay. Do not take interest from him" (Exodus 22:24). Similarly, at another place, "If you take your neighbor's clothing as collateral (for a loan), you should return it to him before sunset, Will he sleep? Therefore, if he cries out to me, I will listen, for I am merciful "(Exodus 22: 25-26).
Moreover, the scripture commands to be patient in collection of loan: "When you give a loan of some kind to your neighbor, do not go to his house to take anything as collateral will come" (Deuteronomy 24: 10-11). Exodus commands to celebrate years of forgiveness at the end of every 7th year. The idea for year of forgiveness is that lender will forgive the debt of his neighbor and brother as the year of God's forgiveness draws near. (Exodus 15: 1-2)

Jewish teachings motivate to put less burden on the poor. The Talmud represent that lender laws, in general, are more lenient with donor lovers. Therefore, any kind of leniency applied to a poor person involved in temple donations is applied to "even a poor person" (Swanson, 2022). Mashna offers lenders discounts on food, apparel, home furnishings and furnishings, and trade tools: "Although the weakness of diagnostic lenders is possible, they should eat enough to eat three meals a day, and leave a bed and Teflin for twelve months" (Mashna Archin 6: 3). The Torah also offers a discount for trade: “The upper or lower letter for a loan is tantamount to a guarantee, because it is tantamount to taking a life for security” (Deuteronomy 24: 6).

The law of the Torah provides when the lender demands, the debtor retains the necessary assets and the rest is delivered to the lender. The sum of such a price is to permit a defaulting debtor for holding the basic and necessary assets that incur incalculable or repayable actions to those responsible for repaying the debts to the best of his ability.

The Torah also provides for the payment of debts. After every 7th year, you should celebrate year of forgiveness. As time goes on, rules are made for the repayment of debts, excessive relaxation ultimately leads to the loss of a debtor - for example, credit is not available.

**Christian Teachings**

According to the Bible, the borrowers are expected to pay their loans (Leviticus 25:39). No one is exception or argue about this common proposition. This legal and moral obligation to pay loans alone, as for empathy and the demand for intermittent debt cancellation. The Bible's basis for these reservations is Jubilee years and Sabbath. This doctrine to legally cancel a loan is implemented by an even more strong biblical command that prohibits interest on any sum of money, instead of just interest or excess interest (Gardner, 2022).

In the fields of economic stability and justice, the experiment is filled with instances of empathetic treatment with poor and protection of family. It outweighs the material obligation to repay the loan. For example, Deuteronomy (15: 7-10) is specifically powerful. It presents that if any of your brothers are poor, do not grieve for them. Be careful not to keep this bad idea to yourself. The seventh year, the year of debt forgiveness, is near when you will be suspicious of your needy brother and give him nothing.

Debt cancellation legislation in the Old Testament allows for complete breaks in legislation Exceptions 15: 1-2 explicitly provides for the release of such legislation with commandments, the Old Testament lenders were urged to be compassionate, loans were to cancel every 7th year regardless they liked it or not (Gardner, 2022).
Deuteronomy prohibits interest from anyone. Other books illustrate this prohibition of interest. For instance, Psalm 15: 5 describes a wayward person as a person who gives to gain power without interest (Ezekiel 22:12 and Nehemiah 5: 0-11).

The prohibition of usury bases on God's relationship with Israelis. Based on this principle, sympathetic treatment of various oppressed groups was considered widow, orphan and the law of the Exodus 22: 25-27 is clearly stated if you lend to my people who are in need of you, do not be like the moneylender. There is no interest in it. If you mortgage your neighbor's chador, give it back to him at sunset because his chador covers his body.

The teachings of both new and old testaments are to eliminate debts. The main theme is stability, a vibrant society that guarantees financial security for every family. The wealth was seen as a blessing from creator (Deuteronomy 8: 11-18, 28). This blessing is the result of grace and is based on God's mercy. In addition to income management programs, biblical laws provided a mechanism, such as the Sabbath Year and the Jubilee to support the weaker sections of the society.

**Islamic Teachings**

Islam comprehensively deals about the obligations on lenders and borrowers. Moreover, Qur’an and Hadith strictly prohibit from giving and taking interest based loan. Although entire books have been written on the subject of Islamic financial system, the Qur’an in one verse (Qur’an 2: 282) details the basic principles of lending and lending in Islam.

The Holy Qur’an commands that when money is borrowed, whether it is large or small, it needs to be written in the contract. Moreover, the transaction should be done in the presence of two witnesses to avoid any kind of dispute later on. Some scholars say that it is better and some say that it is necessary to write down the loan transaction. If there is a dispute in the future for any reason, this written document can be presented as evidence. It is not a sin to take out a loan when needed. However, not repaying the loan is cruelty and sin.

The Prophet (PBUH) said: “A Muslim is the brother of another Muslim. He should not oppress his brother or hand him over to the enemy. Whoever fulfills the need of his Muslim brother, Allah fulfills his need. Whoever removes the problem of his Muslim brother, Allah will remove his problem on the Day of Resurrection.” (Sunan Abu Dawud Volume 2, Page 314)

Borrowing is not something that an honorable person does unnecessarily to create a burden on him. When needed, people should help their relatives and Muslim brothers as much as they can. According to Anas bin Malik (RA) that the Prophet (PBUH) said: “In the journey of Ascension, I saw the inscription on the way to Paradise: The one who gives charity gets ten rewards. The lender gets rewarded 18 lenders, I Gabriel asked: Why does the lender get more reward? Gabriel replied: The one who gives alms (usually he already has the money) and one. The borrower does it only when he is in dire need” (Sunan Ibn Majah, n.d.).

When borrowing, the borrower should really be concerned about repaying the loan on time. If the person who takes debt cannot pay in one time, it must be stated in advance how he intends to return the loan. In this way the lender will not have any problem. The person who borrows with these terms, remember that his debt will be paid on time and he will be free from
this burden, God willing. They whoever borrows with bad intentions, Allah will disgrace him in this world and in the Hereafter.

Abu Hurayrah (RA) narrated that the Prophet (PBUH) said: “The one who takes wealth from people with the intention of repaying it, Allah will help him to repay this debt. The person who he takes it from people with the intention of consuming wealth, Allah will destroy him” (Sahih Bukhari, vol. 3).

Allama Abdul Aziz Kholiullah argues that: “Beware! Don’t borrow unnecessarily. If you ever have to take out a loan, then be determined and try to repay it. Do not dare to borrow from people with intention to waste their wealth and consume it. It will only bring you destruction and disgrace in this world and in the Hereafter” (Al Adab un Nabawi, p49).

It is important for borrower to try to settle this debt as soon as possible (Fatah al-Bari Sharh Bukhari, vol. 10, p. 128). The Hadiths contain stern warnings against those who knowingly misuse the property of other people. The merchants, who do businesses, take out loans from bank to raise their wealth. Then they declare for bankruptcy should avoid from such practices. The companions of Holy Prophet (PBUH) were aware about the warnings issued by the Prophet (PBUH) for not being careful in repaying debts. Therefore, they were anxious to pay off their debts as early as possible. In case they found them unable to pay in their life time, they bequeathed to their relatives to pay a certain loan as soon as possible after death. Abdullah bin Umar (RA) narrated that the Prophet (PBUH) said: “The martyr has all his sins, in addition to his debts, he was forgiven” (Sahih Muslim p. 254). The life of Umar (RA) after going to Masjid-e-Nabawi in the last moments, Omar (RA) called his son Abdullah bin Umar (RA) and said: First of all pay attention to my debts. Settle them in my house, if it is not settled. He should seek help from Uday bin Ka'b, if he could not help then he should seek help from Quraysh (Sahih Bukhari, vol. 1).

When Syedna Zubair (RA) was in the camel fight, he called his son Abdullah bin Zubair, and he said: "My biggest concern is settling my debts." If I want to be beautiful, sell it borrowing our land and mine. If you are in need, ask Allah for help. Abdullah bin Zubair carried out this order to the best of his ability, to the extent that he made four consecutive announcements. Year of Hajj time: "Whoever owes something from my father let him come and try to return it” (Sahih Bukhari, vol. 1).

Abdullah ibn Amr ibn Haram (RA) during the battle of Uhud, called his son Jabir (RA), and he said: I am going to be martyred in this war, give me what I owe. When Jabir (RA) complied with his father's request, he (Jabir) said: If I do that, it makes me happy and after paying off, his father's debt, he did not have a single date near his house” (Sahih Bukhari, Volume 2).

Allah Almighty has said in the Qur'an: “And if the debtor is in difficulty, then respite him till that time. It is easy for him to repay the loan, but forgive him as charity, it is better for you if you only knew” (Qur’an 2: 280). Moreover, the Qur'an says that if the debtor cannot repay the debt easily then forgive him. Syedna Hassan bin Ali (RA) forgave the entire debt of a person (Sahih Bukhari, Vol. 1). The Prophet (PBUH) encouraged Kaab ibn Malik to be lenient with the debtor. Due to which Kaab has halved the debt of the debtors (Sahih Muslim, vol. 2).
If the debtor is unable to pay the loan on specific time, he should not strive to get out of debt. Lenders will lose confidence in repayment which can be detrimental. Abu Qatadah narrated that Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said: “The Day of Judgment is difficult and give him respite or forgive the debt” (Sahih Muslim, Volume 2). The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said: “Whoever gives respite to one in difficulty, he will have (the reward of) an act of charity for each day. Whoever gives him respite after payment becomes due, will have (the reward of) an act of charity equal to (the amount of the loan) for each day.” (Sunan Ibn Majah, n.d.).

Allah says in the Qur'an: “May the curse of Allah be upon the wrongdoers” (Qur'an 7: 44). Those who do not do so in spite of the full extent of debt repayment commit a grave sin. The money earned from this unholy savings will be cursed and thus will be a source of destruction. The Prophet (PBUH) said: “The person who has the capacity to pay the debt but does not do so, is this oppression” (Sahih Bukhari, Vol. 1). Paying debt is necessary for offering funeral prayer, according to a part of Hadith: “Then a third dead man was brought and the people said (to the Prophet), Please lead his funeral prayer.” He said, "Has he left any wealth?" They said, "No." He asked, "Is he in debt?" They said, ("Yes! He has to pay) three Diners.’. He (refused to pray and) said, "Then pray for your (dead) companion." Abu Qatada said, "O Allah's Apostle! Lead his funeral prayer, and I will pay his debt." So, he led the prayer” (Sahih Bukhari, Vol 3).

Hazrat Abu Hurayrah (RA) narrated that the Prophet (PBUH)said: “The soul of a believer is restrained until repayment of his debt” (Musnad Ahmad, Volume 3, Page 442). Shaykh Ahmad Abd al-Rahman al-Banna Allah (may Allah have mercy on him) explained about the above that it shows that the soul does not reach paradise until the due debt is paid” (Al-Fath Rabbani, Volume 15, Page 91). Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said: “The creditor has the right to be steadfast in his promise to get his property back” (Bukhari, vol. 1). It is unethical for a borrower to fight with lender, the person who has favored him. The most appropriate is when the time comes, ask the lender for respite, and explain to him (the debtors) the situation.

Abu Rafi ’narrates that the Prophet (PBUH) took a camel. By borrowing from an individual, the Prophet (PBUH) gave him a better camel. Which he had taken away from her, the Prophet (PBUH)said: The best person is the one who pays off the debt in beautiful style” (Sunan Abu Dawood, Volume 2, Page 119). Ibn ’Umar (RA) borrowed a few dirhams from a man. When he paid this loan, he repaid a large sum of money. He (the debtor) said: You are repaying me more than me. Ibn ’Umar (RA) said: “I know it but I have gladly given it to you, you did not ask me for it” (Mota Imam Muhammad, n.d.).

Interest is absolutely forbidden in Islam. There is no denying this order as a detailed statement. This matter is mentioned in the Holy Qur'an (from Surah Al-Baqarah 2, 275-280). So take care. We need to take it like our time; there are many liars who mislead by giving the status of scholars. To the people by making false speculations and misrepresentations on this order even today, if the creditor and debtor in accordance with Qur’an & Sunnah fix their ways and
are clean as well as honest in their dealing than surely they will be saved from the curse of interest (Yousaf, 2010). Islamic sources describe in depth the obligations on lenders and borrowers for the economic peace of the society as well as prohibit interest in its all forms. Islamic economic system is based on the welfare of poor.

Conclusion
Judaism, Christianity and Islam have almost similar teachings about lenders and borrowers. The scriptures commandments show that interest based loan are Haram (Prohibited) in the Abrahamic faiths. These religions talk about the poor welfare regarding every aspect of life. The religious obligation on lender is that he should take care of poor and needy. He should relax the poor so that he could pay easily his debts even in installments. Moreover, the lender should forgive his debt if he can. On the other hand, to get interest based loan is also prohibited. The borrower should avoid from taking unnecessary loans. Hadith of Holy Prophet Muhammad PBUH states that the delay in payment of a capable person is cruelty. Islam comprehensively describes the obligations on lenders and borrowers, strictly prohibits from interest based loan. Islam talks about the welfare of poor and needy through Zakat (charity), giving loan, giving relax in time for taking it back, and forgiving loans to get great reward from Allah. Moreover, interest banking is baseless and has no link with the teachings of Christianity, Judaism and Islam. The ultimate result of interest banking is economic turndown of poor and needy. The need of time is to connect banking systems with religious teachings which are based on poor welfare.

References


