

a guarantee. The way I saw it, the check is a payment tool; whereas he saw it as sufficient substitute for a bank guarantee. So I asked him to clarify: "If someone gives you 50 checks as a guarantee, but then he loses his job, is he going to be able to pay you back?" Of course, he said no. So I continued: "Then what is the use of accepting these checks?!" His reply struck me. "Then we'll put him in jail and make him an example!" "What about his family?" I asked sharply. "You lend money without threatening the man's freedom, but if he isn't able to pay, you toss him in jail and take his freedom away? What's the difference between you and the Merchant of Venice?" He got offended, of course, and snapped back, "This is a business, not Zakat Al-Othman!"

The improper use of prison shows clearly here. Unfortunately, in the last few years the legislature has also been widely including imprisonment as a punishment for people guilty of relatively minor offenses. I suggest that the legislature should consider implementing a more moderate form of punishment following the principle of the "naughty corner." Penalties might include community service, house arrest, or restricting his movement to his property or even his neighborhood. These same methods are applied in Western countries and can be monitored and enforced electronically. This is a far better punishment and deterrent than tossing criminals in jail and then pushing them back into society after they've turned into terrifying criminals!