

BAD LEADERSHIP: AN EXAMINATION OF SKILL, DESIRE, AND ADAPTABILITY IN THE QUR'AN

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Abstract

Bad leadership is a relatively new complex topic. It has been an understudied theme in academic literature and an underappreciated topic among practitioners. The Qur'an support the seven types of bad leadership as suggested by Kellerman and the Qur'an deepen our understanding of this topic. Qur'an speaks about good and bad leadership. Probably, that is the first study to speak about the different kinds of bad leadership and to analyze it under the shade of Qur'an such as: incompetent, rigid, intemperate, callous, corrupt, insular, wicked. Bad leadership in the Qur'an is a new subject in this study. Leaders may be bad in terms of skill or morality. And it is possible to be bad in both. The Qur'an looks at the ongoing costs of bad leadership and the benefits of its study. It argues quite convincingly that bad leadership has a lingering and multigenerational effect. The aim of this study to define bad leadership in Western and Islamic perspectives, to analyze and discuss the Qur'anic verses related to the subject of bad leadership, to extract lessons from the different types of bad leadership in the Qur'an. This study uses textual analysis of the Qur'an and Western literature and discourse analysis to draw parallels between both as well as conclusions on the way to successful leadership.

Keywords: Incompetent Leadership, Rigid Leadership, Intemperate Leadership, Bad Leadership

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Abstrak

Kepimpinan yang buruk adalah satu topik kompleks yang baru. Topik ini kurang dikaji di dalam literatur akademik and kurang dihargai oleh para pengamal kepimpinan. Menurut Kellerman, terdapat tujuh jenis kepimpinan buruk yang disebut di dalam al-Quran. Al-Quran juga mendalamkan kefahaman kita tentang kepimpinan yang baik dan yang buruk. Barangkali, ini adalah kajian pertama mengenai jenis-jenis kepimpinan dan analisa di bawah bayangan al-Quran seperti: ketidakupayaan, ketat, keras, keterlaluan, korup, sempit dan jahat. Kepimpinan yang buruk di dalam al-Quran merupakan subjek baru di dalam kajian ini. Pemimpin mungkin tidak bagus dari segi kemahiran atau moral. Dan mungkin juga tidak bagus dalam kedua-dua aspek. Al-Quran melihat kepada bahana kepimpinan yang buruk dan manfaatnya. Al-Quran juga telah menyakinkan bahawa kepimpinan yang buruk memiliki kesan berlarutan dan bergenerasi. Tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk mendefinisikan kepimpinan buruk melalui perspektif Barat dan Islam. Seterusnya menganalisa dan membincangkan ayat-ayat al-Quran yang berkaitan mengenainya serta mengambil pelajaran daripada kepelbagaian jenis kepimpinan. Kajian ini menggunakan analisa tekstual daripada al-Quran dan literatur Barat serta analisis wacana untuk menselarikan kedua-dua sumber lantas membawa konklusi kepada kaedah kepimpinan yang berjaya.

Kata kunci: Kepimpinan Tidak Cekap, Kepimpinan Tegar, Kepimpinan Keterlaluan, Kepimpinan Buruk

INTRODUCTION

When a companion, Aba Dhar Al-Gaffari,² expressed a wish to be in a position of leadership, the Prophet Muhammad peace be upon him refused saying: “You have a weak personality and I like for you what I like for myself. But you can not be a leader in a group of two

2 Aba Dhar Al-Gaffari was the fourth or fifth person who embraced Islam. He belonged to the Banu Ghifar, the Kinanah tribe. No date of birth is known. He died in 652 CE, at Al-Rabadha, in the desert east of Madina. Prophet Muhammad peace be upon him is reported to have said, “Neither has the sky shaded one more truthful and honest than Abu Dhar nor has the earth had anyone walk over it like him. (In these matters) he is like Isa bin Maryam.”(Sunan Ibn Majah 1/55 and also in Mustadrak Al-Hakm 3:342).

and you can not be responsible of the orphan's money."³ Prophet Muhammad peace be upon him advised thusly because he was very gentle and weak, and a position of leadership is a great responsibility. For him, on the day of resurrection, it could become a position of immense disgrace and humiliation.

When the Prophet Muhammad peace be upon him was asked about the Hour (Last Day), he answered: "When the matter is entrusted to those who are unqualified to implement its duties, then wait for the Hour."⁴ It is absurd that a man should rule others, who cannot rule himself.

The greatest crisis in the Muslim world today resides in the notion that people can change a dictator while allowing bad followers to stay in power. These modern "revolutions" cannot be successful so long as they attempt to change the oppressor while the oppression remains. It is only possible to change what people know, not what they do. In her primary contribution, *The Art of Followership*, Jean Lipman-Blumen discusses followership in relation to toxic leaders. She believes the follower fall victim to the toxic leader: "The majority of followers acquiesce to toxic leaders because the ticket to escape is too costly, whether the coinage by psychological, existential, financial, political, or social- or, in the worst of all cases, an overflowing mix of these currencies."⁵

3 I. A. Z. An-Nawawi. 1999. *Riyadh As-Salleheen* (Gardens of the Righteous People). Limassol, Cyprus: Al-Jaffan & Al-Jabi, Ch. 81, No. 675. p. 285.

4 On the authority of Abu Hurairah (may Allah be pleased with him) who said that the companions were sitting with the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) when a Bedouin came to the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) and asked him about the exact date of the Hour. The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) however proceeded with his speech to the audience. Some of the audience thought that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) heard what the man said but disliked his question and some others thought that he did not hear it. When the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) finished his talk, he said: "Where is the one who asked about the date of the Hour? The man informed him of his existence. The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) then said: "If the trust is betrayed and neglected, then expect the coming of the Hour". The man further asked about the trust and how it can be wasted or betrayed. The Messenger of Allah peace be upon him said: "When the matter is entrusted to those who are unqualified to implement its duties, then wait for the Hour". (Narrated by Al-Bukhari, Hadith no. 59, 6496)

5 Jean Lipman-Blumen. 2008. *The Art of Followership*. Jossey-Bass. p. 193.

The Qur'an contains information about toxic leadership. Toxic leadership is the mother lode of bad ideas. The modern world suffers from rampant unethical and toxic leadership. This leadership style is also commonly known as the little Hitler, the manager from Hell, the toxic boss and the boss from Hell. According to John Reh, a toxic leader is a person who has responsibility over a group of people or an organization and who abuses the leader-follower relationship by leaving the group or organization in a worse-off condition than when he first found them.⁶ Bad leaders who initially charm, but ultimately manipulate, mistreat, and undermine their followers, engage in a wide range of destructive behaviors. Karen Starks believes toxic leaders receive a certain level of ego gratification from over-controlling, and toxic leaders may have unresolved psychological issues (such as fear of the unknown, fear of failure, mistrust of people, feelings of inadequacy, lack of confidence, or extreme overconfidence) that they avoid by exercising toxic leadership.⁷

According to Lipman-Blumen, "toxic leaders are those individuals who by dint of their destructive behaviors and dysfunctional personal qualities generate serious and enduring poisonous effects."⁸

TYPES OF BAD LEADERSHIP

In *Bad Leadership: What It Is, how it Happens, Why It Matters*, Barbara Keller man tries to answer the following questions: What is bad leadership? How does it happen? Why does it matter? What are the symptoms of bad leadership? She questions why bad leaders get to the top and overstay their welcome. She does not just blame leaders, because followers have to be responsible for their own actions. She challenges the conventional idea that holds that leading requires goodness, competence, and courage. She proposes that all leaders must be studied, whether they use their power and authority for good

6 John Reh is a senior business executive whose broad management and a published author, most recently as a contributing author to *Business: The Ultimate Resource*. <http://management.about.com/cs/generalmanagement/a/ToxicBoss082697.htm>.

7 Karen Y. Wilson Starks. Ph.d dissertation. *Toxic Leadership*. p. 3. He is a President and Eco transleadership. Inc. <http://www.transleadership.com/ToxicLeadership.pdf>.

8 Jean Lipman-Blumen. "Toxic Leadership: When Grand Illusion Masquerade as Noble Visions," *Leader to Leader*. 2005, no. 36 (2005): 29.

or whether they are “power wielders” who serve their own purpose and greed. Keller man focuses on not only defining leadership as an art, but also on highlighting the leadership industry’s current focus on teaching leadership with no regard for the examination of bad leaders and bad leadership. Thus, in *The End of Leadership* she intends as a wake up call to the leadership industry. “Humankind writ large is suffering from crisis of confidence in those who are charged with leading wisely and well, and from a surfeit of mostly well-intentional but finally false promises made by those supposed to make things better⁹.” She suggests four minimal steps that the leadership industry must take to become relevant to the learning needed for leadership in the 21st century: 1- Subject itself to critical analysis; 2- Reflect the changes that have occurred; 3- Transcend the situation specifics that make it so myopic 4- End its leader-centrism.

Bad leadership surrounds us because we allow it. As followers, we have a choice to either squeeze it or crush it. Keller man explains how the exercise of power, authority and influence can cause harm. Though not deliberate, this does not make it less injurious. A person who presented himself as an authority would be able to produce obedience, even to the extent of leading people to cause harm to others. A powerful person particularly the German dictator Adolf Hitler who ordered the killing of millions of people during the World War II.

Kellerman claims that her book can be used to improve leadership, not by just ignoring bad leadership, but rather by attacking it at the root before it becomes a fatal disease. She explains how to maximize good leadership and minimize bad leadership. Kellerman suggests that toxicity in leadership (or simply, “bad leadership”) may be grouped into seven different types “incompetent, rigid, intemperate, callous, corrupt, insular, and evil.”¹⁰ For Keller man, the first three types are ineffective and the rest are unethical. She believes “bad” means either ineffective, in the sense of “fails to produce desired change,” or unethical, or both. She extends a broad definition of the

9 Barbara Kellerman. 2012. *The End of Leadership*, New York: Harper Business. p. xiv.

10 Barbara Kellerman B. (2004) *Bad Leadership: What It Is, How It Happens, Why It Matters*, Boston: Harvard Business School Press. p.38.

term “unethical” to include violating common codes of decency and good conduct. She defines the unethical leader as one who “fails to distinguish between right and wrong.”¹¹ She believes one cannot have a bad leader without bad followers, followers who either collude with the leader or refuse to acknowledge their bad leadership or do anything about it.¹²

A toxic leader may weave impressive and inspirational speeches in a bid to persuade his nation. Allah SWT Says:

And of the people is he whose speech pleases you in worldly life, and he calls Allah to witness as to what is in his heart, yet he is the fiercest of opponents. In addition, when he goes away, he strives throughout the land to cause corruption therein and destroy crops and animals. In addition, Allah does not like corruption. Moreover, he was told to, “Fear Allah,” pride in the sin takes hold of him. Sufficient for him is Hellfire, and how wretched is the resting place.¹³

According to the Qur’an, there are three kinds of bad leaders: one- Those who have bad goals; two- Those with bad ethics; and three- Those who are inefficient. Bad leaders exhibit symptoms that are easy to identify: 1- Unresponsiveness; 2- Doubt; 3- Secretiveness; 4-Intimidation; 5- Bad temper; 6- Self-centeredness; 7- Indecisiveness; 8- Assignment of blames; 9- Arrogance; and 10- Mistrust. The following is a detailed classification of Barbara Keller man’s seven types of bad leadership with supporting ideas from the Qur’an.

INCOMPETENT LEADERSHIP

The leader and at least some followers lacking the will or skill (or both) to sustain effective action characterize this type of leadership. These leaders do not create positive change.¹⁴ Keller man admits that

11 Ibid., p.3-34.

12 Ibid., p.3.

13 The Holy Qur’an Al-Baqarah 204-206.

14 Barbara Keller man B. (2004) *Bad Leadership: What It Is, How It Happens, Why It Matters*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press. p. 41.

typing leadership opens the door for argument and debate and openly admits to the wideness of the range, subjectivity, and differing views her typologies.¹⁵

Jalut,¹⁶ also known as Goliath, is mentioned three times in the Qur'an as being an incompetent army leader. Jalut had an ardent desire to lead. However, he had little skill to drive positive change or win the war.

The Qur'an only recounts the narration of Talut and Jalut once. That narration service as an example of a competent leader (Talut who carried the flag of truth) and an incompetent one (Jalut, who carried the flag of falsehood). Talut was a good manager and was aware of the skill sets of all the people below him. He allocated work accordingly while trying to enhance everyone's skills to enhance productivity. Jalut delegated work rather than balance workloads and boasted that his armies were greater in number than the army of the enemy.

Allah SWT Says:

And when Saul went forth with the soldiers, he said, "Indeed, Allah will be testing you with a river. So whoever drinks from it is not of me, and whoever does not taste it is indeed of me, excepting one who takes [from it] in the hollow of his hand." However, they drank from it, except a [very] few of them. Then when he had crossed it along with those who believed with him, they said, "There is no power for us today against Goliath and his soldiers." Nevertheless, those who were certain that they would meet Allah said, "How

15 Ibid. pp. 38-39.

16 Goliath appears in second *Surah* (Al-Baqara) of the Qur'an (II: 247-252), in the narrative of David and Saul's battle against the Philistines. Called "Jalut" in Arabic, Goliath's mention in the Qur'an is concise, though it remains a parallel to the account in the Hebrew Bible. Muslim scholars have tried to trace Goliath's origins, most commonly with the Amalekites. Goliath, in early scholarly tradition, became a kind of byword or collective name for the oppressors of the Israelite nation before Prophet David. Muslim tradition sees the battle with the Philistines as a prefiguration of Prophet Muhammad's battle of Badr, and sees Goliath as parallel to the enemies that the Prophet faced. *Hughes Dictionary of Islam*, T.P. Hughes, *Goliath*. http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/48/48-4/JETS_48-4_701-714.pdf

many a small company has overcome a large company by permission of Allah. And Allah is with the patient.¹⁷

One of the causes of Jilt's defeat is that, he could not manage the crisis, which created an environment where mistakes were unacceptable. His followers could no longer stand when their leader was killed, because their leader did not give them a chance to develop their leadership skills. Jalut judged the situation solely on his number of followers rather than on their qualities and their performance. The conflict between right and wrong will continue. Incompetent leaders are those who cause the wars of corruption and injustice in the world. The Qur'an teaches useful lessons on leadership and followership in the narration of Jalut and Talut. Humans must learn to:

1. Filter cowardice;
2. Filter selfishness;
3. Become more loyal, especially through supplication as a tool to maintain a connection with Allah SWT;
4. Favor quality over quantity; and
5. Recognize that toxic leaders enjoy moments of glory but finally fail.

In *Can War Be Eliminated*, internationally renowned philosopher of war Christopher Coker argues that throughout history, war seems to have had an iron grip on humanity. He challenges the view that war is an idea that can be cashed in for a better one – peace. War, he argues, is central to the human condition. It is part of the evolutionary inheritance, which has allowed humans to survive and thrive. New technologies and new geopolitical battles may transform the face and purpose of war in the 21st century, but the capacity for war remains undiminished. The inconvenient truth is that we will not see the end of war until it exhausts its own evolutionary possibilities.¹⁸ The Qur'an strikes the perfect balance between idealism and realism. On the one hand, the Qur'an asks the individual to strive for the ideal,

¹⁷ The Holy Qur'an Al-Baqarah 2:249.

¹⁸ Christopher Coker is Professor of International Relations at the London School of Economics and Head of Department. He is also Adjunct Professor at the Norwegian Staff College. His latest book *Can War Be Eliminated*, published in 2014. <http://www.lse.ac.uk/IDEAS/people/bios/cokerChristopher.aspx>

whether in spiritual or worldly affairs, while providing him with the tools to deal with the reality of it all.

RIGID LEADERSHIP

The leader and at least some followers are stiff and unyielding. Although they may be competent, they are unable or unwilling to adapt to new ideas, new information, or changing times.¹⁹ The rigid leader only accepts his own way. He is inflexible. There is therefore no room for invention under his leadership. The rigid leader has very limited knowledge and his vision is exceptionally narrow.

Abu Lahab²⁰ was a rigid leader. One of the *Surah* of the Qur'an was revealed because of this. In traditional Arabian society, it was customary for the responsibility of an orphaned child to go to the uncle. However, the rigid behavior of Abu Lahab did not follow the norms of that society. In fact, his original name was Abd al-Uzza, but his father called him Abu Lahab (Father of Flame) "because of his beauty and charm" due to his red (inflamed) cheeks. He is described as an artful spruce fellow with two locks of hair, wearing an Aden cloak.²¹ When Prophet Muhammad peace be upon him started preaching publicly, Abu Lahab and other neighbors did everything they could to pester him.

In his *Tafseer*, Ibn Kathir speaks about the reason for *Surah Al-Masad* being revealed: "Al-Bukhari recorded from Ibn Abbas that the Prophet Muhammad peace be upon him went out to the valley of *Al-Batha* and he ascended the mountain. Then he cried out, (If I told you all that the enemy was going to attack you in the morning, or in the evening, would you all believe me), they replied, "Yes." Then he said, (Verily, I am a warner (sent) to you all before the coming of a severe torment). Then, Abu Lahab said, "Have you gathered us for

19 Barbara Kellerman B. 2004. *Bad Leadership: What It Is, How It Happens, Why It Matters*, Boston: Harvard Business School Press. p. 41.

20 Abu Lahab (c.563-624) was Prophet Muhammad's peace be upon him paternal uncle. Because of his open opposition to Islam, he is condemned by name in the Qur'an in *Surah Al-Masad*. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ab%C5%AB_Lahab.

21 Muhammad ibn Ishaq 1955. *Sirat Rasul Allah*. Translated by Guillaume, A. *The Life of Muhammad*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p. 195.

this may you perish!” Thus, Allah revealed *Surah Al-Masad*. The first part is a supplication against him and the second is information about him. He was only called Abu Lahab because of the brightness of his face.²² Allah SWT Says:

Perish the hands of the Father of Flame! Perish he! No profit to him from all his wealth, and all his gains! Burnt soon will he be in a Fire of Blazing Flame!²³

Had Allah SWT willed it, it would have been excessively easy for Abu Lahab to prove the Qur'an a hoax; when *Surah Al-Masad* was revealed, all he had to do to contradict the verses, or appear to do so, was recite the testimony of faith. His rigidity prevented him even from this opportunity.

Lahab had a rigid view against Muslims and supported boycotts against them between 619 and 624. He never gave up his rigid leadership style against Muslims. He was killed at the battle of Badr in the second year of *Hijra*.²⁴

INTEMPERATE LEADER

The leader lacks self-control and is aided and abetted by followers who are unwilling or unable to effectively intervene.²⁵ The intemperate leader is an extravagant leader drowning in his lust and with very bad habits. His behavior is reprehensible. Avarice drives this leader to put money and what money can buy at the top of his list. According to Kusy and Holloway, “it is very difficult to deal with toxic people when they are good producers.”²⁶ Historically, many kings were intemperate leaders because their absolute power

22 Tafseer Ibn Katheer. http://www.qtafsir.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1063&Itemid=167/.

23 The Holy Qur'an Al-Masad 111:1-3 Sahih International

24 Safi ur-Rahman Al Mubarakpury. 2002. *ArRaheeq Al-Makhtum (The Sealed Nectar)*. Darussalam. p. 104.

25 Barbara Kellerman B. 2004. *Bad Leadership: What It Is, How It Happens, Why It Matters*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press. p. 42.

26 Kusy and Holloway. 2009. *Toxic Workplace!: Managing Toxic Personalities and Their Systems of Power*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, p. 77.

led them to become extravagant. Their followers could therefore not make any positive change. According to Kellerman, followers are more responsible for what happens than the leader.²⁷ Gretchen Jewell believes that when leaders are badly impaired, for whatever reason, their followers pay the price. The consequences are the loss of progress achieved “jail time, irreparable damage, damage to personal life, procrastination, excess in food and drink, excess in technology, overspending/lacking the control to save money, desiring more power than is needed, passive followership, encouraging intemperate behaviors, and double standards.”²⁸

The story of King Namrud is only mentioned once in the Qur'an. King Namrud had a radical and extreme leadership style. In regards to the argument between King Namrud and Prophet Ibrahim peace be upon him, Allah SWT Says:

“Have you not considered the one who argued with Abraham about his Lord [merely] because Allah had given him kingship? When Abraham said, “My Lord is the one who gives life and causes death,” he said, “I give life and cause death.” Abraham said, “Indeed, Allah brings up the sun from the east, so bring it up from the west.” So the disbeliever was overwhelmed [by astonishment], and Allah does not guide the wrongdoing people.”²⁹

Namrud's claim was based on the absolute power that he had over his subjects, over their lives and property. That is why he demanded that Prophet Ibrahim should serve and obey him. Namrud denied the existence of Allah SWT other than himself. This claim to godhood, which Pharaoh and Namrud put forth, is by no means peculiar to them. Most rulers all over the world in the past, as in the present, have made such claims. What caused Namrud to commit transgressions, remain in utter disbelief and be rebellious were his tyranny and

27 Barbara Kellerman B. 2004. *Bad Leadership: What It Is, How It Happens, Why It Matters*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press. p. 116.

28 Gretchen Jewell. *Intemperate leadership*. 5 November 2012.
http://prezi.com/l-7dnqgsb92_/intemperate-leadership/.

29 The Holy Qur'an Al-Baqarah 2:258.

the fact that he ruled for a long time. It appears that Namrud asked Prophet Ibrahim to produce proof that Allah exists.³⁰

CALLOUS LEADERSHIP

The uncaring or unkind approach of a leader and at least some of his followers characterize this type of leadership. Ignored and discounted are the needs, wants, and wishes of most members of the group or organization, especially subordinates.³¹ The heart of the callous leader is hardened to the extent that killing innocent people becomes normal. An example of the callous leadership in the Qur'an is Haman who was close to Pharaoh at the time of Prophet Musa peace be upon him, who was a toxic leader. The callous leader is rude, merciless, and selfish. He does not nurture emotional relations with others.

The name Haman appears six times throughout the Qur'an, four times with Pharaoh and twice by itself. Allah SWT sent both Prophets Musa and his brother Harun peace be upon them to invite Pharaoh and Haman to monotheism, and to seek protection for the Israelites that Haman and Pharaoh were tormenting. Pharaoh and Haman accused Prophet Musa of being a sorcerer and a liar, they rejected Prophet Musa's call to worship Allah, and refused to set the children of Israel free.

30 Tafseer Ibn Kathir. Qatadah, Muhammad bin Ishaq and As-Suddi said that he meant, "Two men who deserved execution were to be brought before me, and I would command that one of them be killed, and he would be killed. I would command that the second man be pardoned, and he would be pardoned. This is how I bring life and death." However, it appears that since Namrud did not deny the existence of a Creator, his statement did not mean what Qatadah said it meant. This explanation does not provide an answer to what Prophet Ibrahim said. Namrud arrogantly and defiantly claimed that he was the creator and pretended that it was he who brings life and death. This verse means, "You claim that it is you who brings life and death. He who brings life and death controls the existence and creates whatever is in it, including controlling the planets and their movements. For instance, the sun rises everyday from the East. Therefore, if you were god, as you claimed, bringing life and death, then bring the sun from the West." Since the King was aware of his weakness and was not able to reply to Prophet Ibrahim's request, he was idle, silent and unable to comment. Therefore, the proof was established against him. http://www.qtafsir.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=136

31 Barbara Kellerman B. 2004. *Bad Leadership: What It Is, How It Happens, Why It Matters*, Boston: Harvard Business School Press. p. 43.

Prophet Musa peace be upon him was specifically sent to Pharaoh, Haman and Quran, in that sequence. This is a further indication that Haman is understood to be the second in command in Egypt. Moreover, Haman's counsel is asked for in the question of how Egypt should respond to the challenge of Prophet Musa's message. Haman's opinion is relevant in the matter of a religious challenge to the state, i.e. in matters of state security, since a challenge to the religion of the State is also a challenge to the stability of the state. He is named as being responsible (together with Pharaoh and Qarun) for recommending or even commanding infanticide against the Israelites by killing their newborn boys. He is therefore the top advisor of Pharaoh's government, not just a military man, Allah SWT Says:

Then, when he brought them the Truth from Us, they said: "Kill the sons of those who believe with him and let their women live", but the plots of disbelievers are nothing but errors!³²

The Qur'an speaks of the sudden violent death of Haman (and Pharaoh and Quran):

(Remember also) Quran, Pharaoh, and Haman: there came to them Moses with Clear Signs, but they behaved with insolence on the earth; yet they could not overreach (Us).³³

Haman was uncaring, detached, uninspired, psychotic, mean-spirited as well as clueless. He was a military leader who did not apply a single law unto himself, and saw nothing wrong with the decisions he made that brought little or no benefit to the nation Haman was uncaring, detached, uninspired, psychotic, mean-spirited and clueless. He was a military leader who did not apply a single law unto himself, and saw nothing wrong with the decisions he made that brought little or no benefit to the nation.

32 The Holy Qur'an Gafir 40:25.

33 The Holy Qur'an Al-Ankaboot 29:39.

CORRUPT LEADERSHIP

Corruption is the major cause of poverty. Poverty is the mother of revolution and terrorism. Left unchecked and unchallenged corruption leads to failed state status and with that the further exacerbation of poverty.³⁴ Leaders pretend to fight corruption and mischief. However, most leaders are the cause of corruption and mischief. Allah SWT Says:

And when it is said to them, “Do not corrupt in the earth,” they say, “Surely we are only doers of righteousness.” (I.e. reformers, peacemakers) Verily, they, (only) they, are surely the corruptors, but they are not aware.³⁵

The corrupt leader is well known for cheating his people. Lying is second nature. The leader and at least some followers routinely lie, cheat, or steal excessively. They put self-interest ahead of the public interest.³⁶ The corrupt leader lacks of integrity, which reveals him cynical, corrupt or untrustworthy. The word corruption in Arabic is ‘*Fasad*’, a term that implies theft. The Qur’an provides an example in the story of the brothers of Prophet Yusuf peace be upon him:

They said, “By Allah, you have certainly known that we did not come to cause corruption in the land, and we have not been thieves”.³⁷

Corrupt leadership follows an approach that harms people and eventually poisons enthusiasm, creativity, and innovative expression. It disseminates its poison through over-control. Corrupt leaders define their leadership as being in control. They are indeed rampant in the political, corporate and charitable world of business. One of the

34 This paper was presented at “Towards Carnegie III”, a conference held at the University of Cape Town from 3 to 7 September 2012. http://carnegie3.org.za/docs/papers/113_Hoffman_The%20Effect%20of%20Corruption%20on%20Poverty.pdf.

35 The Holy Qur’an Al-Baqarah 2: 11-12.

36 Barbara Kellerman. 2004. *Bad Leadership: What It Is, How It Happens, Why It Matters*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press, p. 44.

37 The Holy Qur’an Yusuf 12:73.

narrations about corrupt leadership in the Qur'an related to Qarun,³⁸ a corrupted financial leader at the time of Prophet Musa peace be upon him. Wealth is a terrible master without Islamic values and these values make the wealth to be an excellent servant. Allah SWT Says:

Nay! Verily, man does transgress all bounds (in disbelief and evil deed, etc.). Because he considers himself self-sufficient.³⁹

Qarun was a man of great wealth, but his wealth did not prevent him from being misguided. One of the lessons to be learned from this is that wealthy people today are not necessarily people that Allah SWT approves of. It also shows that Allah can bestow more wealth upon a disbeliever, not because He loves him, but rather to test him.

The great fortune and status Qarun possessed in Egypt, due to his closeness to Pharaoh, made him arrogant and insolent towards his own people. He was a puppet follower to Pharaoh who took advantage of and betrayed his nation. He refused to accept Prophet Musa's message, and boasted about his possessions to make the Children of Israel feel attachment to the life of this world. In fact, his great fortune and status became the envy of some of the people from Prophet Musa's tribe. Qarun became corrupt and selfish, turning a blind eye to the dire needs of those around him while he revelled in his wealth. Allah SWT relates the arrogance of Qarun and the envy of those poor in faith among the Children of Israel:

Qarun was doubtless of the people of Moses; but he acted insolently towards them: such were the treasures We had bestowed on him that their very keys would have been a

38 The name Qarun is mentioned 4 times in the Qur'an (in *Surah Ghafir*, *Al-Ankaboot* and twice in *Al-Qasas*). Qarun and reference to his wealth is mentioned in the Qur'an in verse 28:76 to 28:82. In Persian mythology, the *Qarun Treasure* is a treasure said to be in perpetual motion under the ground. The phrase *harta karun* (literally Croesus' Wealth) also worked into the Malay language as the word for *treasure* and is synonymous with the term buried treasure. *Ganj-e-Qarun* (Croesus Treasure). http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karun_Treasure

39 The Holy Qur'an Al'alaq 96:6-7.

burden to a body of strong men, behold, his people said to him: “Exult not, for Allah loveth not those who exult (in riches)”⁴⁰.

Quran’s leadership position gave him a means to be a corrupt leader and he excelled in his corruption.

INSULAR LEADERSHIP

Insular leaders may operate from a desire to preserve the integrity of their organization at any cost, but the final cost may be delivering the organization into the hands of a known toxic leader. Although this type of leadership behavior can garner approval from a select few, this type of toxic culture may result in negative organizational outcomes that compromise the quality of life for all constituents. Toxic leaders create toxic climates by changing the content of culture.⁴¹ The resulting damage to the organization’s culture and climate may last for many years after the toxic leader has gone.

When a good strong leader leaves, the community is at risk of falling into the hands of a bad strong leader. In the case of the golden calf, Samiri exploited the situation when Prophet Musa left and Prophet Harun took over as their delegate leader in his absence, but he was too gentle:

We appointed for Moses thirty nights, and completed (the period) with ten (more): thus was completed the term (of communion) with his Lord, forty nights. And Moses had charged his brother Aaron (before he went up): “Act for me amongst my people: Do right, and follow not the way of those who do mischief”⁴².

40 The Holy Qur’an Al-Qasas 28:76.

41 Tomas Giberson and al., 2009. Leadership and Organizational Culture: Linking CEO Characteristics to Culture Values,” *Journal of Business & Psychology*. 24, no. 2: 125.

42 The Holy Qur’an Al-A’raf 7:142. Prophet Musa peace be upon him had been gone for thirty days and his people were becoming restless, for they did not know that Allah SWT had extended his time by a further ten days. Samiri, a man who was inclined towards evil, suggested that they find themselves another guide, as Prophet Musa had broken his promise.

Prophet Musa⁴³ delegated power to his brother for achieving and exercising positions of governance and organized control over a community.

The point of that insular leadership is the second worst leadership in a series of bad leadership is arguable. Some may see it as protecting the followers where the followers are the first priority. Kellerman describes insular leadership as an approach that minimizes or disregards the health and welfare of those outside the group or organization for which it is directly responsible.⁴⁴ The insular leader takes care of himself first, then his followers, but he does not actually care about his people.

Samiri⁴⁵ is an insular leader whose name is mentioned three times in *Surah Taha*. In the Qur'an, it is the name provided as the maker of the golden calf. In addition, the narration of the golden calf points to the importance of understanding insular leadership.

When a good strong leader leaves, the community is at risk of falling into the hands of a bad strong leader. In the case of the golden calf, Samiri exploited the situation when Prophet Musa left and Prophet Harun took over as their delegate leader in his absence, but he was too gentle.

Samiri created a problem, then offered a solution. This method is also called “problem-reaction-solution.” The leader creates a problem, a “situation”, in order to cause some reaction in the audience.⁴⁶ Samiri fashioned the gold into a golden calf along with the dust on which

43 The name of Prophet Musa appears in the Qur'an 136 times and the story of his message is the most important one; it is mentioned in more than 100 times over the span of more than 30 *Surah*. *Surah Taha* speaks about several moral values of leadership: functions as fluency, asking the help of God for easiness, having fluent speech for efficient communication with fellows, the art of group working, participatory management, and authority delegation and so on. http://www.ipedr.com/vol173/013-ICWIS2014_A10026.pdf

44 Barbara Kellerman. *How Bad Leadership Happens, Leader to Leader*. no. 35 (2005): 44.

45 The Ancient Hebrew word Samirim comes from the Hebrew root verb S-M-R which means: “to watch”, or “to guard”. Ibn Manzur. *Lisan al Arab* 21. *Al-dar al-Misriya li-l-talif wa-l-taryamar*.

46 Noam Chomsky. *10 Strategies of Manipulation by the Media*. <http://noam-chomsky.tumblr.com/post/13867896307/noam-chomsky-10-strategies-of-manipulation-by-the>.

the angel Gabriel had treaded on, which he proclaimed to be the god of Musa and the God who had guided them out of Egypt.⁴⁷

Although Prophet Harun tried to stop them, they were too arrogant to obey him:

And Aaron had already told them before [the return of Moses], “O my people, you are only being tested by it, and indeed, your Lord is the Most Merciful, so follow me and obey my order.” They said, “We will never cease being devoted to the calf until Moses returns to us.” [Moses] said, “O Aaron, what prevented you, when you saw them going astray, from following me? Then have you disobeyed my order?” [Aaron] said, “O son of my mother, do not seize [me] by my beard or by my head. Indeed, I feared that you would say, ‘You caused division among the Children of Israel, and you did not observe [or await] my word’.”⁴⁸

Insular leaders establish boundaries between themselves and their followers on the one side, and everyone else on the other. To insular leaders, human rights in general are less important than the rights, and even the needs and wants, of their specific constituencies.

WICKED (EVIL) LEADERSHIP

The wicked leader is known for his crimes and for torturing others for pleasure. The wicked leader seeks to control his people. This type of leader and at least some of his followers are known to commit atrocities; they use pain as an instrument of power. The harm they inflict can be physical, psychological or both.⁴⁹ Lipman-Blumen discusses some of the destructive behaviors of wicked leaders. Those behaviors are 1- Subverting ethical organization structures and process; 2- Engaging in unethical, illegal and criminal acts; 3- Failing to nurture followers, including successors; 4- Setting

47 Abdul-Sahib Al-Hasani Al-'amili. *The Prophets, Their Lives and Their Stories*. p. 354.

48 The Holy Qur'an Taha 20:90-94.

49 Barbara Kellerman. 2004. *Bad Leadership: What It Is, How It Happens, Why It Matters*, Boston: Harvard Business School Press. p. 46..

constituents against one another; 5 Encouraging followers to hate or destroy others; 6- Making themselves indispensable; and 7- Ignoring or promoting incompetence, cronyism, and corruption.⁵⁰

When wicked leaders commit atrocities and remain in power for years, their followers become anesthetized, inflamed, or terrorized or they are in some way rewarded. When leaders are wicked, at least some followers are also wicked. The wicked leader attempts to abuse the power he has by using self-defense as an excuse. This allows his nation to act: 1- Against an actual use of force or hostile act; 2- In a preemptive manner against the imminent use of force; or 3- Against a continuing threat. In a wicked leadership environment, people are rewarded for agreeing with the leader and punished for thinking freely and independently. "Yes" people are rewarded and are promoted to leadership roles, while people who fully engage their mental resources, critical thinking and questioning skills are shut out from decision-making and positions of influence. Allah SWT Says:

Thus have We placed leaders in every town, its wicked men, to plot (and burrow) therein: but they only plot against their own souls, and they perceive it not. When there comes to them a sign (from Allah), they say: "We shall not believe until we receive one (exactly) like those received by Allah's messengers." Allah knoweth best where (and how) to carry out His mission. Soon will the wicked be overtaken by humiliation before Allah, and a severe punishment, for all their plots.⁵¹

This type of wicked leadership often causes a high turnover rate, a decline in productivity, less innovation, and interdepartmental conflict. One of the most wicked leaders in history was Pharaoh. The Qur'an describes Pharaoh as a ruthless and despotic leader of Egypt whose sadistic misrule plunged his followers into avoidable turmoil and destruction. The narration of Prophet Musa peace be

50 Jean Lipman-Blumen. 2005. *The Allure of Toxic Leaders: Why We Follow Destructive Bosses and Corrupt Politicians – and How We Can Survive Them*. (New York: Oxford University Press). pp. 19-23.

51 The Holy Qur'an Al-An'am 6:123-124..

upon him and Pharaoh is quite lengthy and spread out in the Qur'an. It is the longest story in the Qur'an, provided as a lesson for Prophet Muhammad peace be upon him and his followers. History is bound to repeat itself – there are many similarities between the life of these two Prophets, Muhammad and Musa peace be upon them. According to Crollius, “Moses is considered to be a prophetic predecessor to Muhammad. Generally attributed the tale of Moses as a spiritual parallel to the life of Muhammad, considering many aspects of their lives to be shared.”⁵²

This research provides example of Pharaoh's leadership style according to the Qur'an. One of the bad habits of the wicked leader is his obsession with winning – the need to win at all costs and in all situation, when it matters and even when it does not. After losing to Prophet Musa peace be upon him, Pharaoh continued to plot against him and the Israelites. According to the Qur'an, Pharaoh is reported to have ordered his minister, Haman, to build a tower. Allah SWT Says:

Pharaoh said: “O Chiefs! no god do I know for you but myself: therefore, O Haman! Light me a (kiln to bake bricks) out of clay, and build me a lofty palace, that I may mount up to the god of Moses: but as far as I am concerned, I think (Moses) is a liar!”⁵³

Gradually, Pharaoh began to fear that Prophet Musa peace be upon him might convince the people that he was not the true God, so he wanted him killed. Allah SWT Says:

And he was arrogant and insolent in the land, beyond reason,
- He and his hosts: they thought that they would not have to return to Us! So We seized him and his hosts, and We flung them into the sea: Now behold what was the end of those who did wrong!⁵⁴

52 Arij A. Roest Crollius. 1974. *Documenta Missionalia - The Word in the Experience of Revelation in the Qur'an and Hindu scriptures*. Gregorian & Biblical BookShop. p. 120.

53 The Holy Qur'an Al-Qasas 28:37.

54 The Holy Qur'an Al-Qasas 28:39-40.

The experience of the Israelites and Pharaoh's tragic end indicate that with faith, prayer and perseverance, the oppressed can be liberated and evil leadership can be terminated.

FINAL ANALYSIS

The bad leaders do not serve the people. They serve only their best interests. They always work to be popular and people praise them. They rule with the desire for personal glory rather than loving concern to their people. They are ready to pay any price to stay in power. There are several examples of bad leadership in Qur'an: Jalut, Namrud, Abu Lahab, Haman, Qarun, Samiri and Pharaoh.

In Islam, leadership is the capacity to morally and ethically translate vision into reality. Good leaders are an alternative to bad leaders. A good leader leads the people from above them. A great leader leads the people from within them. The Qur'an puts two conditions forward in order for good leaders to succeed in replacing bad ones: patience and certainty about Allah's promise. Allah SWT Says:

And We certainly gave Moses the Scripture, so do not be in doubt over his meeting. In addition, we made the Torah guidance for the Children of Israel. And We made from among them leaders guiding by Our command when they were patient and [when] they were certain of Our signs.⁵⁵

Kouzes and Posner describe the characteristics of good Contemporary leaders:⁵⁶ "leaders we admire do not place themselves at the center; they place others there. They do not seek the attention of people; they give it to others. They do not focus on satisfying their own aims and desires; they look for ways to respond to the needs and interests of their constituents. They are not self-centered, they concentrate on the constituent [...] Leaders serve a purpose and the people who have made it possible for them to lead [...] In serving a purpose, leaders strengthen credibility by demonstrating that they are not in

55 The Holy Qur'an As-Sajdah 32:23-24.

56 J. M. Kouzes and B. Z. Posner. 1993. *Credibility: How Leaders Gain and Lose It, Why People Demand It*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. p. 185.

it for themselves; instead, they have the interests of the institution, department or team and its constituents at heart. Being a servant may not be what many leaders had in mind when they choose to take responsibility for the vision and direction of their organization or team, but serving others is the most glorious and rewarding of all leadership tasks.” Great leadership is not about making speeches or being liked; great leadership is defined by results.

The Qur’an offers concrete suggestions for leaders and followers to consider in order avoiding the perils of bad leadership. Prophet Muhammad peace be upon him said the following words which perfectly describe the current global leadership crisis: “There will come to the people years of treachery, when the liar will be regarded as honest, and the honest man will be regarded as a liar; the traitor will be regarded as faithful, and the faithful man will be regarded as a traitor; and the ‘*Ruwaibidhah*’ will decide matters.” It was said, “Who are the ‘*Ruwaibidhah*’?” The Prophet replied: “Vile and base men who will speak in the affairs of the people.”⁵⁷ This noble speech explains to Muslim:

1. The dangers of speaking without the foundation of knowledge.
2. The importance of being sincere and the dangers of deception.
3. The importance of fostering trust and the dangers of betraying it.

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57 Shaikh al-Albaanee graded it as ‘*Hasan li Shawaahidhee*’ (Good due to other supporting chains) in ‘*al-Saheehah*’ (1887). Shaikh Muqbil also graded it as ‘*Hasan li Ghairhee*’ in ‘*Saheeh Dalaail al-Nubuwwah*’ (568).

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