

Man and Ignorance

Publisher(s): Al-Balagh Foundation

www.alhassanain.org/english

Table of Contents

Preface3
What does Jahiliyah mean?4
Essential Centers 12
 1. Ideological Deviation 12
 2. Emotional and Psychological Deviation..... 12
 3. Behavioral Deviation 13
 The Results of Ignorant Deviation 14
How can we get rid of ignorant backgrounds? 17
The Methods of Salvation 19
The Nature of Conflict between Jahiliyah and Islam 21

Preface

In the Name of Allah, The Most Gracious, The Most Merciful

“Is it then the judgment of (the times of) ignorance that they desire? And who is better than Allah to judge for a people who are sure? Holy Quran (5:50)

“Judgment is of two kinds -the judgment of Allah- the Great and Almighty - and the judgment of the people of the ignorance (jahiliyah). So, whoever misses Allah's judgment, surely will judge according to the judgment of the people of jahiliyah.” Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (a.s)

What does Jahiliyah mean?

1. Islam calls the pagan life of Arabs 'Jahiliyah' (ignorance). This label specifically identified the lifestyle to be found in the land of the Arabs before the Islamic Mission began. It included the beliefs and customs of the pagan Arabs who lived in a most decadent and perverse manner.

This stage in history was full of chaos and corruption, and witnessed a decline in the sociology and ideology of the age. This was because the signs of truth had disappeared in that dark historical stage.

The aspects of deviation from truth and justice had become embodied in the society, much in the same manner as the perverse practices of Sodom and Gomorrah in the time of Prophet Lot, so that evil was acknowledged as good and good was acknowledged as evil.

2. Islam calls this lifestyle of the Arabs desert dwellers, 'Jahiliyah', to identify the ideological and social nature of that age and to compare it to general 'jahiliyah' of nations and peoples that have arisen during man's evolution. Therefore, where we have written 'jahiliyah' with a capital "J" we mean specifically the Age of Ignorance of the Arabs in the pre-Islamic age, and when it is specified with a "j" it refers to global ignorance at any stage in man's evolution where ignorance has buried truth, as is found in our social and ideological values today.

3. Islam calls that miserable historical period of Arab lifestyle 'Jahiliyah' because it is a word which represents ignorant beliefs, practices, rules, laws, customs, values and behavior of a perverse society.

4. Islam does not call the Arabs, 'Jahiliyah', before the emergence of its blessed mission because of academic ignorance, nor does it call them ignorant 'jahilin' because of illiteracy nor for backwardness in the areas of sciences, so we understand that 'Jahiliyah' had a specific and special meaning.

5. Islam called the Arabs of that age 'jahiliyah' because even in the presence of academic and artistic knowledge, the social manner and behavior of the people and its acceptable lifestyle were such that the word, 'Jahiliyah', is suitable for them. The Holy Qur'an has told us about other nations with capabilities in science, engineering, and skills. Still, it regarded them as 'jahiliyah' (ignorant).

6. The Qur'an describes nature as equal among nations of 'jahiliyah'. In the Qur'anic viewpoint, all of these nations were ignorant. We are able to understand this equality clearly through the comparison which the Qur'an has made between the backward state of Arabs and the developed state of nations before them.

7. Allah, the Exalted, says:

"Have they not then journeyed in the land and seen how was the end of those before them? They were more (in numbers) than these and greater in strength and in fortifications in the land, but what they earned did not avail them. Then when their messengers came to them with clear arguments, they exulted in what they had with them of knowledge, and there beset them that which they used to mock". Holy Quran (40:82-83)

"Have they not travelled in the earth and seen how was the end of those before them? They were stronger than these in prowess, and dug up the

earth, and built on it in greater abundance than these have built on it, and there came to them their messengers with clear arguments; so it was not beseeming for Allah that He should deal with them unjustly, but they dealt unjustly with their own souls. Then evil was the end of those who did evil, because they rejected the communications of Allah and used to mock them". Holy Quran (30:9-10)

"And how many of the generations have We destroyed before them who were better in respect of goods and outward appearance! Say: (O Our Apostle Muhammad) As for him who remains in error, the Beneficent Allah will surely prolong his length of days, until they see what they were threatened with, either the punishment or the hour; then they shall know who is in more evil plight and weaker in forces". Holy Qur'an (19:74-75)

In this manner, the Qur'an has revealed the depth and content of those nations to stress that scientific development of man and his civil advancement are not able to save him from the claws of deviation and take him out of the fangs of ignorance as long as he embellishes ignorant faith and embodies the same abnormal ignorant behavior of the general society.

Although these ignorant deviated nations are scattered throughout history and are different in scientific and civil levels, they share common factors. One mental state combines them together and unifies their deviated course. Allah, the Exalted, says:

"And those who have no knowledge say: Why does not Allah speak to us or a sign come to us? Even thus said those before them, the like of what they say; their hearts are all alike. Indeed We have made the communications clear for a people who are sure". Holy Qur'an (2:118)

This similarity among the hearts of the deviated nations and peoples and the unity of the mental trend, which the Qur'an has revealed, is the common line which identifies all aspects of the pre-Islamic period of ignorance and is the center from which all activities of the ignorant man begins.

This similarity is the factor forming the identity and personality of this pre-Islamic nation. Also this description may be applied to all stages of human history whose generations have evolved into a devious and deviated system and refused to follow the straight path of truth and peace-the straight path of Allah, the law of the Lord, and the message of salvation.

When we examine Islamic texts and phrases about identifying and describing the life of (pre-Islamic period) ignorance, we are able to understand the meaning of the idiom 'Jahiliyah' and the reason why the Qur'an has used it. Also we are able to understand why the same idiom has been applied to other nations throughout history.

We are able to understand this terminology and labelling once we learn of the ignorance in the history of past nations and its connected parts, when we follow the unity of the line and trends which associated 'Jahiliyah' through its effects and remains, and when we study the description of the Qur'an about the most important aspects of 'Jahiliyah', its ways of thinking, and its psychological and behavioral trends.

When we reach this awareness, we find that 'jahiliyah' means error, going astray, deviation from Allah's straight path, and negligence in His worship. That is because 'jahiliyah', in the Qur'anic viewpoint, means a

religion and lifestyle that follows a line contrary to the line of Islam in nature and aim.

It follows the line of deviation from the path of true religion and Allah's `shari'ah' (law) which guides man.

`Jahiliyah' (ignorance) is a way of life. It has its own faith, way of thinking, and lifestyle including social manners, worship, values and concepts, viewpoint towards life, method to create civilization, and a direction for human activities in areas such as culture, art, literature, politics, economy, power, law and order, etc.

8. In order to unveil the ugly face of `jahiliyah' and discover the thread that entwines current ignorant international thoughts, it is better to return to the Holy Qur'an which describes `Jahiliyah', and its people, and the dimensions of their lifestyle and the features of their civilization and social system.

Also it denotes their general framework and the basic rules of their formation. The Qur'an says:

“And none but the guilty led us astray;” Holy Qur'an (26:99)

“And indeed they have led astray many, and do not increase the unjust in aught but error.”

Holy Qur'an (71:24)

“But if they do not answer you, then know that they only follow their low desires; and who is more erring than he who follows his low desires without any guidance from Allah? Surely Allah does not guide the unjust people”. Holy Qur'an (28:50)

“But they rejected him, so We delivered him and those with him in the ark...” Holy Qur'an (10:73)

“Then did We raise up after him messengers to their people, so they came to them with clear arguments, but they would not believe in what they had rejected before; thus it is that We set seals upon the hearts of those who exceed the limits”. Holy Qur'an (10:74)

“Then did We send up after them Musa and Haroun to Firon and his chiefs with Our signs, but they showed pride and they were a guilty people”. Holy Qur'an (10:75)

“But none believed in Musa except the offspring of his people, on account of the fear of Firon and their chiefs, lest he should persecute them; and most surely Firon was lofty in the land; and most surely he was of the extravagant”. Holy Qur'an (10:83)

“They said: O Hud! you have not brought to us any clear argument and we are not going to desert our gods for your word, and we are not believers in you:”. Holy Qur'an (11:53)

“Say: O people! if you are in doubt as to my religion, then (know that) I do not serve those whom you serve besides Allah but I do serve Allah...”. Holy Qur'an (10:104)

“And when he turns back, he runs along in the land that he may cause mischief in it and destroy the tilth and the stock, and Allah does not love mischief-making”. Holy Qur'an (2:205)

“The life of this world is made to seem fair to those who disbelieve, and they mock those who believe...” Holy Qur'an (2:212)

“And they shall say: O our Lord! Surely we obeyed our leaders and our great men, so they led us astray from the path”. Holy Qur'an (33:67)

9. If we want more clarity about this collapsed civil situation, let's consider carefully the sermons of Imam Ali (a.s) from Nahjul- Balagha, in which he explains the formation of 'Jahiliyah' and analyses the form of its life and faith as follows: “Allah sent Muhammad (saw.) as a warner (against vice) for all the worlds and a trustee of His revelation, while you people of Arabia were following the worst religion and you resided among rough stones and venomous serpents. You drank dirty water and ate filthy food. You shed blood of each other and cared not for relationship. Idols are fixed among you and sins are clinging to you.”

Then, he (a.s) speaks about the situations and conditions that preceded the Holy Prophetic mission as follows: “At that time people had fallen into vices whereby the rope of religion had been broken, the pillars of belief had been shaken, principles had been sacrilegied, the system had become topsy turvy, openings were narrow, passages were dark, guidance was unknown and darkness prevailed.

Allah, The Most Beneficent, was being disobeyed. Satan was given support and belief had been forsaken. As a result, the pillars of religion fell down, its traces could not be discerned, its passages had been destroyed and its streets had fallen into decay.

People obeyed Satan and tread his paths. They sought water from his watering places. Through them Satan's emblems were flying and his standard was raised in vices which trampled the people under their hoofs, and treaded upon them with their feet.

The vices stood on their toes (in full stature) and the people immersed in them were astrayed, perplexed, ignorant and seduced as though in a good house with bad neighbors. Instead of sleep they had wakefulness and for antimony they had tears in the eyes. They were in a land where the learned were bridled (mouths forced shut) while the ignorant were honored.”

In another place, he (a.s) says:

“Allah sent the Prophet at a time when the people were going astray in perplexity and were moving here and there in mischief. Desires had deflected them and self-conceit had swerved them. Extreme ignorance had made them foolish. They were confounded by the unsteadiness of matters and the evils of ignorance. Then the Prophet (saw) did his best in giving them sincere advice, himself trotting on the right path and called (them) towards wisdom and good counsel.”

“I bear witness that Muhammad is His servant and His Messenger whom He deputized when the people were collecting in the abyss and moving in bewilderment. The reins of destruction were dragging them and the locks of malice lay fixed on their hearts.”

In another place of his sermons and sayings, we read another analysis of the nature of the ignorant man and his moral and psychological character. Imam Ali (a.s) sheds bright light on the nature of this man in each period and stage and makes these sick symptoms as distinguishing qualities for the ignorant man and society.

Imam Ali (a.s) speaks about evil, deviation and the call of Satan. He (a.s) denotes that the followers of this call are ignorant:

“And the followers of fanaticism, the brothers of fanaticism and the horsemen of haughtiness and ignorance proved him (Prophet Muhammad, (saw) to be true.”

In another speech concerning `Jahiliyah', we read another analysis of this restless social situation and discover another dimension in its structure. He (a.s) says:

“The conditions were full of distress. The hands were scattered. The majority was divided. They were in great anguish and under layers of ignorance. They buried their daughters alive, worshipped idols, disregarded kinship and practiced robbery.”

Imam Ali (a.s) is not satisfied with speaking about `Jahiliyah', analyzing its structure, and discovering the meanings of civilization and life therein. Rather, he warns people against the bad background of those ignorant thoughts. He says:

“Do not be like those rude people of `Jahiliyah' who did not exert themselves in religion nor use their intellects in the matter of Allah. They are like the breaking of eggs in the nest of a dangerous bird, because their breaking looks bad but keeping them intact would mean production of dangerous young ones.”

Through contemplating deeply on these Islamic analyses and texts-the verses and sermons-and analyzing their ideas, one will know the features of `Jahiliyah' society, recognize the clearest characteristics of the life in it, and know the most common elements among the various `jahiliyah' nations.

These texts altogether denote that the society of `jahiliyah' is deviated from what is right; it does not follow the teachings of religion, nor it seeks light from its system, nor it conforms to the principles of its law.

Besides, they (the texts and verses) focus on the aspects and the common features among the international beliefs in the attitude towards the Divine Messages, in behavior, and the psychological situation of these ignorant beliefs.

These ignorant beliefs refuse and doubt the messages of Prophets, and insist on disbelief, going astray, and following low desires.

The definite result of this rejection is that the refusing person has followed a material, animalistic direction. Thus, lust overcomes him; pleasures lead him, because he has broken off his relation with Allah. So he has inclined to the earth, deified the volatile world of lust, and worshipped the turns of the self.

It is natural that this material and ignorant life is full of corruption, crimes, and vanity.

We have read that the Qur'an describes these ignorant thoughts and noted their diseases and corrupt aspects. The Qur'an has shown the most prominent, sick aspects of those ignorant thoughts as: oppression, crime, haughtiness, extravagance, arrogance, deviation, doubt, corruption and destruction on earth, blood shedding, sneering at truth, blindly following the leaders of deviation and corruption, and following lusts and low desires.

After this Qur'anic discussion, we have read that Imam Ali (a.s) has analyzed the most prominent aspects of `Jahiliyah' life. He (a.s) has stressed those aspects which the Qur'an has stressed such as: decline, degradation, behavioral and ideological fall.

He (a.s) refers to blood shedding, disbelieving in Allah, refusing the messages of the Prophets, ignorance in religion, shaky pillars of religion, going astray, bewilderment, haughtiness, spite, fanaticism, victory of lust and low desires, and so on.

With this Islamic analysis which we have read in the Qur'anic texts and Imam Ali's sermons, we are able to know that the pre-Islamic society is the one which refuses to believe in Allah and deviates in its behavior and life system from Allah's right path, irrespective of being an ignorant society like the Bedouins and pastorals or being a society which lives in the age of the atom, computer, space travel, etc.

`Jahiliyah' is a civil situation having behavioral, psychological, and physical elements. It has no relation to the degree of science and knowledge existing in the society. It is just as Imam Ali (a.s) says:

“The worst religion; and the worst house.”

Whenever this mark of evil and corruption, is found in faith, the social system and the method of life, then we are able to call the person who lives in its shade as ignorant `jahil', and we are able to describe the human life following it as `jahiliyah'.

For this reason, the Holy Qur'an calls the deviated person, `dhal' (one who has gone astray), and those who deviate `dhaloon'. `Dhal' is the person who does not know the way and blunders far away from the truth and guidance whether in his thinking and faith or in his worship, life system, and way of his dealings.

Describing the ignorant life and society, Imam Ali (a.s) has often used the word `hayara' (bewildered) in his sermons. That is because bewilderment, worry, estrangement, uneasiness, etc., are the most prominent morbid symptoms from which the ignorant person suffers. All these diseases hit him because he is deviated from Allah's path and His law.

Thus estrangement, bewilderment, going astray, and uneasiness are the distinguishing and essential marks of the ignorant society which is full of vanity, oppression, corruption, and low desires.

Islam has shown that the ignorant person is deviated, lost, bewildered and restless, for such a person suffers from mental disorders. This condition has an influence on all aspects of his life.

So, man finds himself standing before two ways in every period or age. These two ways are: 1) The way of guidance and belief; and, 2) The way of ignorance and misguidance.

The Qur'an highlights this in the following verse:

“Is it then the judgment of (the times of) ignorance that they desire? And who is better than Allah to judge for a people who are sure?” Holy Qur'an (5:50)

Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (a.s) has stated:

“Judgment is two kinds: the judgment of Allah, the Great and Almighty, and the judgment of the people of ignorance `Jahiliyah'. So, whoever misses

Allah's judgment, surely will judge according to the judgment of 'Jahiliyah'." To give man a clear idea of the aims and purposes which Islam strives to achieve, the Qur'an tells him about these aims and purposes:

"And thus did We reveal to you an inspired book by Our command. You did not know what the Book was, nor (what) the faith (was), but We made it a light, guiding thereby whom We please of Our servants;" Holy Qur'an (42:52)

"-- and We have revealed the Book to you explaining clearly everything, and a guidance and mercy and good news for those who submit." Holy Qur'an (16:89)

The Qur'an also describes the faithful believers, those who follow the way of faith and know the right path. It has shown that they are guided aright and live in safety, security, and peace:

"Those who believe and mix not up their faith with iniquity -those are they for whom is security and they are (the ones) guided aright." Holy Qur'an (6:83)

That is because they have believed in Allah and the light that has come from Him. They have followed the way of righteousness and have not mixed their belief with oppression nor deviated from Allah's path and His 'shari'ah'. Rather they have conformed to Allah's laws, commands and teachings. Therefore, they are rightly guided, safe, and happy here and in the Hereafter.

Unlike the true believers, those who have led themselves towards error, deviation and misguidance and turned away from Allah's remembrance have turned their lives into an inferno and a torment. The Qur'an describes their life and end as follows:

"And whoever turns away from My reminder, his shall be a straitened life, and We will raise him on the day of resurrection, blind. He shall say: My Lord! why hast Thou raised me blind and I was a seeing one indeed?. He will say: Even so, Our communications came to you but you neglected them; even thus shall you be forsaken this day". Holy Qur'an (20:124-126)

Because of their turning away from Allah's remembrance, refusing and disobeying the true will, they have gone astray. They have blundered in the darkness of ignorance and deviation. Allah, the Exalted, says:

"...and whoever disobeys Allah and His Messenger, he surely strays off a manifest straying". Holy Qur'an (33:36)

"Have you then considered him who takes his low desire for his god, and Allah has made him err having knowledge and has set a seal upon his ear and his heart and put a covering upon his eye. Who can then guide him after Allah? Will you not then be mindful?" Holy Qur'an (45:23)

So, this is the reality of 'jahiliyah', i.e., deviation from the religion of Allah, refusing His message, disobeying His Apostles, adoring lusts and temptations, and obeying the tyrants and the aggressors. Finally, if we study similar ideas of ignorant life, we will reach the following conclusions:

'Jahiliyah' (Global ignorance) was a social disease. It was a psychological state afflicting individuals, peoples, and nations in each period and generation. The aspects of this ignorant life are quite similar regardless of time and place. Allah, the Exalted, says:

“There is a disease in their hearts, so Allah added to their disease...”
Holy Qur'an (2:10)

“And those who have no knowledge say: Why does not Allah speak to us or a sign come to us? Even thus said those before them, the like of what they say; their hearts are all alike. Indeed we have made the communications clear for a people who are sure”. Holy Qur'an (2:118)

The evidence to this similarity is the long history of mankind, the succession of nations and offspring's, the appearance of the symptoms of the ignorant life in many generations and nations in each period of history, and the deviation from the right path and the call to guidance and the Prophets.

On the pages of history and life's stage, we see standing examples belonging to the past and present life of mankind-we see atheism, oppression, tyranny, terrorism, blood shedding, loss of truth, persecution of the oppressed, exploiting the poor and widespread vices.

These are the reflections of the ignorant current on the life of mankind. This current represents deviation from the truth, justice, belief.

Consequently, bewilderment, going astray, and deviation from the straight path are the most important marks of `Jahiliyah' from which man suffered too much crises and endured their pains.

Essential Centers

If we carefully study the patterns of `jahiliyah' life throughout history, we find that `jahiliyah' society has many morbid symptoms and phenomena, from which the lights of belief, religion and guidance have been extinguished.

Also we discover the main centers on which human and social construction of the ignorant societies stand. These basic centers can be summed up as follows:

1. Ideological Deviation

The history of civilizations and their ideology, throughout the stages of the `jahiliyah' life, tell us that there is an ideological abnormality and deviation from the faith of monotheism.

This problem is regarded as the basic center and general rule for all ignorant beliefs beginning from the ancient nations, mentioned by the Holy Qur'an and ending with the ignorance of Arabs, Greeks, and including our modern, material civilization.

Therefore, man, in these ignorant societies, is abnormal and deviated in his thinking, understanding, and even in his explanation of existence and life. This ignorant man always thinks about material things, while he refuses moral and spiritual values. That is because ignorant thinking concerning the universe and life is simple and primitive.

This kind of thinking has made ignorant societies unable to recognize the existence of Allah and believe in His Apostles. Also this material thinking has made them unable to believe in One Allah, having perfect attributes and being far above the qualities of the created world.

Therefore, these ignorant societies turn to inactivity, refusing belief in the Creator, and believing in primitive images as idols to be worshipped instead of Allah. These images take on the cloak of godhood in these societies, and all morals are based upon satisfying the requirements of these images.

2. Emotional and Psychological Deviation

Throughout its different periods, `jahiliyah' (global ignorance) stood on devious emotional and psychological principles. That is because the pure innate and sound psychological trends do not accept abnormality and deviation. Rather they accept the idea of righteousness and behavioral balance, and they help belief to flourish.

However, an ill and complicated personality always inclines towards straying from the line of psychological righteousness and balance which belief follows. So, the corrupt personality, which suffers from schizophrenia and weak will, or the personality which suffers from self-conceit, spite, haughtiness, selfishness, and sexual perversion always follows the ignorant system to express its ill complexes and psychological deviation. The Holy Qur'an often speaks about this ill personality.

It analyses its construction and depicts its inner content to make man aware and to teach social understanding which, in turn, make him avoid falling into this deep abyss. Allah, the Exalted, says:

“There is a disease in their hearts, so Allah added to their disease and they shall have a painful chastisement because they lied”. Holy Qur'an (2:10)

“And they denied them unjustly and proudly while their soul had been convinced of them; consider, then how was the end of the mischief-makers”. Holy Qur'an (27:14)

Through its diagnosis and analysis, the Qur'an points to the place of the illness and the starting point of the deviation bringing about a `jahiliyah' in various stages of man's evolution. It is emotional deviation and psychological disease from which the `jahili' (ignorant) person suffers.

He turns away from truth and guidance because of the influence of this disease. Although the truth is clear, the ignorant person refuses it and tries to get rid of the rules of psychological righteousness and rational beliefs and behavior.

Imam Ali (a.s) deeply analyses and describes this ill, ignorant, immoral and psychological situation by saying: “Desires had deflected them and self-conceit had swerved them. Extreme ignorance had made them foolish.” “The sons of vanity, the brothers of fanaticism, and the horsemen of ignorance proved him to be true.”

“So, they put out what was hidden in their hearts from the fires of fanaticism and the spites of ignorance.” Consequently, in every period and generation, `jahiliyah' (global ignorance) is distinguished by fanaticism, haughtiness, deviation, and psychological and moral abnormality.

3. Behavioral Deviation

Among the basic center which contributes in creating and distinguishing the `jahiliyah' society and individual is the state of behavioral abnormality and deviation. Deviation from righteousness and absorption in abnormal practices and habits are the most prominent marks among all ignorant societies.

In addition, these habits are the most visible social forms which show deviant, ignorant content. In our time we see marital and child abuse, child pornography, drug addiction, alcoholism, prostitution, homosexuality, political oppression and arrogance, and the coveting of wealth and power as signs of our modern day `jahiliyah'.

The Qur'an speaks about this ignorant deviation by unveiling this common feature among all ignorant societies. It says:

:So surely those who are unjust shall have a portion like the portion of their companions, therefore let them not ask Me to hasten on”. Holy Qur'an (51:59)

“Soon will I (allow to) turn away from my signs those (who) unjustly are proud in the earth; while (even) if they see all the signs they will not believe in it; and (even) if they see the right way, they will not adopt it for a way; and if they see the way of error, they will adopt it for a way; this is because they belied Our signs and were heedless of them.” Holy Qur'an (6:146)

“... and hinder (others) from the path of Allah and seek it to be crooked; these are in error far away (from the right path).” Holy Qur'an (14:3)

“So the roots of the people who were unjust were cut off; and all praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the worlds.” Holy Qur'an (6:45)

In this manner, the devious behavioral society is constructed and is a distinguishing mark of the ignorant individual throughout different periods and the succession of his generations until Allah inherits the earth and what is on it.

In other words, everywhere and every time the ignorant person plays, corrupts, commits crimes, spreads ruin and destruction, goes deeply into evil, and scorns all human values and life principles without any concern or sanction, he is guilty of `jahiliyah`.

This ignorant person reaches this definite, inescapable result because he feels no sense of responsibility to the Almighty, Just Creator, and refuses to believe in the reward and punishment due on the Day of Judgment.

The Results of Ignorant Deviation

Throughout history, mankind has been the scapegoat and the victim of ignorant deviation in his life. Mankind is responsible for the sins of its crimes and the results of its deviation.

The Qur'an refers to this fact and explains the results of such deviation and ignorant corruption which despoils life and turns it into an inferno and torture. Allah, the Exalted, says:

“... O mankind! your rebellion is against your own selves,...” Holy Qur'an (10:23)

“Mischievous has appeared in the land and the sea on account of what the hands of people have wrought, that He may make them taste a part of what they have done, so that they may turn (away from evil).” Holy Qur'an (30:41)

The Qur'an has given this warning and shown the danger of it in order to urge man to resist `jahiliyah` and face its crimes and deviation so that each person will be able to play his role and shoulder his responsibility in resisting jahiliyah and defending the will of life and the welfare of mankind.

Ignorant regimes like communism, capitalism, existentialism, racism, etc., and their corrupt influences on man are clear evidences of man's sufferings and misery. A closer look at the past and present history of `jahiliyah`; will show:

1. The prevalence of materialism, and the absence of rational thought, which rises above material things and greedy selfishness and self-interest and balances the moral, material, and spiritual powers of man, respecting the interests of others, and honoring their rights in life.

This stonehearted material current has led to the death of moral values and victory for the opportunist selfish criteria. It has deadened the conscience of man and made him lazy in his awareness and sensitivity.

2. The appearance of conflict and crimes among men instead of love, peace, agreement, and cooperation. Chaos and social alienation have replaced stability, moral discipline, and balanced law. Thus, life becomes a jungle of conflict and an oasis of blood, hidden behind the bars of oppression, terrorism, and deviation.

The analysis of Imam Ali (a.s) for this awful phenomenon in the ignorant life is very accurate when he said: “And idols were worshipped, kinship was disregarded, and raids were made.” “In vices which trampled the people under their hoofs, and trod upon them with their feet, and stood on their

toes.” “You ate filthy food. You shed blood of each other, and you disregarded your kinship”

So, this phenomenon of wars, destruction, and bloodshed, is the great common trait among all ignorant societies of the earth. And it is the terrible matter from which the angels asked in astonishment:

“... will You (O Our Lord) appoint therein one who will cause mischief and shed blood...” Holy Qur'an (2:30)

The modern materialistic `jahiliyah' sheds more blood than in the past. We have the power of mass death and destruction to the point of “overkill”.

We have learned and used the most diabolic methods of torture, murder, cannibalism, sexual perversity, violent crimes, and abuse. For this reason, peace has disappeared from the earth and the beating of peace and love has stopped in every heart.

3. The collapse of the individual's personality, and the absence of personal sanction-the death of the human conscience-which the Qur'an describes through its words:

“Thenceforth were your hearts hardened as stones or harder still...” Holy Qur'an (2:74)

When the conscience has died, human feeling has also disappeared along with the feeling of sympathy, justice and responsibility toward the humanity of others.

Thus, man has withdrawn into the darkness far away from the circle of light. He has lost the criteria, dispelled the will of good, mixed the values, and refused guidance and awareness.

These definite results of the `jahiliyah' trends, which man has reached, are the bitter results caused by deviation and distance from the straight path of Allah and the call of the Prophets.

They are the results about which the Qur'an speaks and has put man face to face with them in order that he may know his responsibility and choose his role in life. The Qur'an describes these results as oppression, crimes, tyranny, going astray, deviation, cruelty, and animalistic. It says:

“...but they behaved haughtily and they were a guilty people.” Holy Qur'an (7:133)

“... while (even) if they see the right way they will not adopt it for a way...” Holy Qur'an (7:146)

“... and if they see the way of error, they will take it for a way...” Holy Qur'an (7:146)

“...who went astray before and led many astray and went astray from the right path” Holy Qur'an (5:77)

“Corruption has appeared in the land and the sea on account of what the hands of men have wrought...” Holy Qur'an (30:41)

“...and We did them no injustice, but they were unjust to themselves”. Holy Qur'an (16:118)

When the Qur'an places these facts before man and describes for him such phenomena, it wants him to rise against his ignorant reality and change the form of life and civilization so that he will be able to build his life according to the guidance of belief and his society according to its rules and message.

This process begins by building his personality and changing his own psychological content.

How can we get rid of ignorant backgrounds?

Generally, nations and peoples suffer from deep-rooted pagan `jahiliyah', which is regarded as the most dangerous one in history. It is the source of ignorant thoughts and the ill deviations from which the ancient nations suffered.

Today, the disease of ignorance and phenomena that afflicts the different nations and cause them to live in the ugliest scenarios in modern material civilization. In other words, modern man naturally and usually practices unbelief, atheism, moral corruption, oppression, aggression, greed, domination, exploitation, wars, destruction, and social chaos.

Even the Muslims, who believe in Islam, are forced or satisfied to follow these ignorant currents and decline into their deep abysses with the exception of those true believers who have understood this destructive danger, and who avoided it and refused to follow it.

Therefore, if we analyze society and its modern civilization, we will be able to divide both the individuals and their societies into three parts:

1. An ignorant society whose life embodies all ignorant aspects such as communism, capitalism, materialism, deviated religions, idol worship...etc.
2. Society in which individuals believe in Islam, but do not embody its beliefs in their lives nor apply it to their actions. Their society is also deviated and lost. It has no Islamic identity nor does it represent the original ideology. It imitates others in laws, art, literature, concepts, and method of life, in a manner which makes the social aspects and the form of general life similar to the ignorant form and the lost life which does not know originality and discipline.

Therefore, in such a society, it is usual to see nightclubs, bars, dissolute women, prostitution houses, usury banks, the system of the material life, the patterns of art, and the kinds of material culture, immoral literature, etc.

3. The faithful individuals who conform to Islamic beliefs, but are too few to form a social current to enable them to change the regime of life and mark Islam on the personality of the civilization stand apart and isolated in their society. They are deprived of the legitimate benefits of a healthy society.

Therefore, the total application and the full conforming to Islam, as a faith, a way of life, law, and behavior in order to achieve the sincere worship for Allah, the Glorified, are not naturally applied in the life of our societies nor embodied in our public life.

For this reason, in our life, concepts, behavior, regime, and laws, there are many ignorant foundations and non-Islamic concepts which came to us from both Eastern and Western ignorant and material thoughts. Such thoughts feed our own thoughts, our life, and our concepts.

Regarding this cultural invasion and influence, Muslims should sincerely do their best and devote their efforts in order to make essential changes, uproot `jahiliyah' (global ignorance) and demolish its rules and pillars.

Therefore, Muslims should build their personalities and their society according to Islamic values, ideas, and principles. The following Qur'anic verse should be their example in life:

“And from among you there should be a party who invite to good and enjoin what is right and forbid the wrong, and these it is that shall be successful.”Holy Qur'an (3:104)

The Methods of Salvation

To save a Muslim from spreading the infection of `jahiliyah' and to help Muslims uproot its foundations in their society and civilization, and to achieve prevention and fortification against foreign, civil, and mental invasions, it is necessary for them to follow the following steps:

1. Achieving a full understanding for life according to original Islamic methods so that a Muslim knows the value of his life. He should ask himself:

What does existence in life mean?

What is the value of all beings with whom I deal?

How should my psychological relation be with life?

And how do I organize my relations in it?

A Muslim should consider these questions and take them into account in order to build his life on original Islamic teachings. Islam will guide him in all aspects including his possessions, rule, power, fame, life, death, pleasure, pain, and the human relations.

These teachings differ completely from an ignorant understanding and its material viewpoint towards things, the world, and life.

Therefore, the first step to get rid of ignorant concepts is to achieve an aware understanding of existence and life on the basis of Islam and to make a general, psychological change to turn ignorant awareness and understanding, entering our societies, into a believing mental system and believing civil awareness which revolves around the axis of servitude to Allah, sincere loyalty to Him, and going directly toward Him.

When a Muslim understands the meaning of life and its value, and recognizes the same right in it for others on the basis of these values and principles, he will see that all aspects of misery and aggression on the earth, such as poverty, aggression, terrorism, corruption, exploitation, enslavement, vanity, haughtiness, making light of man's values and rights, will disappear. Man will live a life of purity and dignity.

2. After this understanding is achieved, the reconstruction of both the Muslim's personality and the society will fit together. It will cause the purification of the conscience and awareness of a Muslim against ignorant backgrounds and motives hidden in his depths, so that he may achieve the reconstruction and reorganization of the human personality from its inner side on the basis of sound, Islamic understanding.

Thus, a Muslim will become honest, self-purified, a lover of good, ready to practice the Islamic life, and ready to accept its teaching.

3. The third method of uprooting ignorant backgrounds is to establish an Islamic society which unifies its individuals within the framework of an organized human unity full of believing spirit and truthful, believing direction and in which a Muslim will practice Islam as a living fact and as a social system, thought, behavior, life, and pure servitude to Allah only under the shade of a lawful authority which believes in Islam and stands on its principles in order to build the society with its foundations, activities, and the aspects of life based on original Islamic rules.

With this method, we are able to get rid of ignorant backgrounds and keep the course of the Muslim individual and society within the boundaries of Islam.

However, if we are satisfied with mere theoretic belief, while all, or most, of our behavior, life system, dealings, and laws of our society are far and deviated from Islam, we will not achieve full belief nor raise ourselves to the level of true Islam as Allah desires for us.

Rather our belief will bend toward `jahiliyah' and servitude at random, though many of us do not feel this contrast, duplicity, and collapse.

The Nature of Conflict between Jahiliyah and Islam

The real meaning of `jahiliyah' is:

“Refusing the obedience of Allah and deviation from the system of religion.”

While Islam means:

“The surrendering and obedience to Allah's cosmic order, and conforming to His system of religion in life.”

We have to know that the conflict between various ignorant ideologies and Islam-the religion of prophets and mankind-is permanent and continuous. We have to be aware that they are two opposite facts, and have been so since the beginning of human history and will continue to be so until the disappearance of the torch of life from the earth.

This conflict will continue and take various forms and slogans, but it will last as a conflict between guidance and misguidance, truth and falsehood, justice and injustice, and between righteousness and corruption.

This conflict is the conflict of oppositions in the theater of thought and society. It is the `jihad' (holy struggle) of goodness against the call of evil and deviation.

Throughout human history, prophets and the faithful have recorded wonderful chapters in it. With strength and enthusiasm they faced the might of tyrants, rulers and the callers to deviation and misguidance who are the true enemies of all mankind.

These wonderful attitudes of `jihad' are living phenomena of the law regarding human conflict and change which is described by the Qur'an as follows:

“And were it not for Allah's repelling some men with others, the earth would certainly be in a state of disorder; but Allah is Gracious to the creatures.”Holy Qur'an (2:251)

“... and had repelled not Allah some people by others, verily had been pulled down the cloisters and the churches and the synagogues, and the mosques in which Allah's name is much mentioned; and verily Allah will help him who helps Him (His cause); for verily Allah is All-Strong, Almighty.” Holy Qur'an (21:40)

This is the law of life, the logic of history, and the law of events and change. On the basis of these facts, the bloody fights of conflict happened, and the events of history were written.

So, each party of this conflict has taken its portion and shouldered its responsibility. In this connection, Allah, the Exalted, says:

“(All) people are a single nation; so Allah raised prophets as bearers of good news and as warners, and He revealed with them the Book with truth, that it might judge between people in that in which they differed; and none but the very people who were given it differed about it after clear arguments had come to them, revolting among themselves; so Allah has guided by His will those who believe to the truth about which they differed and Allah guides whom He pleases to the right path.”Holy Qur'an (2:213)

Whoever follows the Qur'an's descriptions of the nature of conflict and how it pictures the scenes of rebellion against the prophets, and tells about the battles which were waged against the prophets and who reads how

Qur'an honors the followers who believed in truth and the message of Allah, who defended truth in `jihad' against the callers to `jahiliyah', oppression and despotism, will be able to identify and recognize the conflict and that its confrontation and `jihad', followed by the believers in Allah's religion and the truth of His prophets is the only way to pursue the enemy's annihilation.

It is the way which must be followed by the callers to Islam. This conflict is the continuity of the line of the believing, brave confrontation against the callers to apostasy and `jahiliyah'.

Whoever chooses the way of prophets and calls to Islam should accept what the prophets accepted and should endure what they endured.

How wonderful the true words of Allah are! They simplify this plain truth and explain to us the experience of the conflict and the difficult test which lies before us:

“Or do you think that you would enter the garden while yet the state of those who have passed away before you has not come upon you; distress and affliction befell them and they were shaken violently, so that the Messenger and those who believed with him said: When will the help of Allah come? Now surely the help of Allah is nigh!” Holy Qur'an (2:214)

“Alif Lam Mim. Do men think that they will be left alone on saying, We believe, and not be tried? And certainly We tried those before them, so Allah will certainly know those who are true and He will certainly know the liars.” Holy Qur'an (29:1-3)

Conflict and the Divine trial are necessities in order to discover the extent of truthfulness and sincerity in the heart of the faithful believer and his belief in the Divine message in his life.

Furthermore, this conflict is a historical phenomenon which takes place according to the laws of action and reaction and social change.

Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds.

www.alhassanain.org/english