

# AS-SABIQUN

*“The vanguard of Islam—the first of those who forsook their homes, and of those who gave them aid, and also those who follow them in all good deeds—well-pleased is Allah with them, as are they with Him: For them hath He prepared Gardens under which rivers flow, to dwell therein forever: that is the supreme Felicity.” (al Tawbah, 9:100)*

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## REVELATION AND REVOLUTION

*“And fight them on until there is no more tumult or oppression, and there prevails justice and faith in Allah altogether and everywhere; but if they cease, verily Allah doth see all that they do.” (al Anfāl, 8:39)*

In this issue, we will, *insha’Allāh*, introduce the connection between revelation and revolution by examining the lives, missions, characters, roles, struggles, and achievements of the prophet-revolutionaries who appeared in the midst of chaos, and review their response to human suffering and degradation. In our time, these two concepts have mistakenly been seen as being on two opposing ends of the human experience.

*Revelation* can be defined as “something revealed by God to humans.” *Revolution* is defined as “a sudden, radical, or complete change; a fundamental change in political organization.” Revelation is the ultimate spiritual connection with our Creator while revolution is seen as the ultimate expression of human will.

Human history has shown the fallacy of revolution without revelation. If revolution is indeed change, then what we have seen in most cases is the changing of the guard of one group or gang over another; the exchange of one man-made system for another, each flawed and bringing with it its own contradictions which invariably bring about its downfall. This century has witnessed the revolution of communism being replaced by capitalism. The socialist Soviet Union in a short time period became the emerging capitalist state of Russia. Poland, a former Soviet satellite, became one of the first to embrace capitalism, only to discover that this “new approach” would not bring about the justice and equality of opportunity that the people craved. The United States itself—the lone superpower and bastion of capitalism—has evolved into a mix of capitalism and socialism, neither of which is working.

As Muslims, we believe that the Qur’ān is the ultimate revelation and as such, it gives us complete guidance for all human activity; a guidance that is pure of all contradiction and

dichotomy. The Straight Path (*Sirāt al-Mustaqīm*) is treaded upon only when revelation is the foundation for all political, social, and economic endeavors. Unlike those imprisoned with a Western thinking who consider Allah (*swt*) as a mere spectator of human activity, to be only ceremonially acknowledged, we believe Allah (*swt*) to be at the very center of all activity. If we do not, we are at risk of following a Western model in which revolution is a mere capture of power in order to manage people and resources; in short, the establishment of man's worship of man (brought about by adhering to his own will, desires, guidelines, etc.)—*SHIRK*!<sup>1</sup>

In Islam, revelation seeks to change the heart of man. If the heart is correct, then the human being will be able to establish a just social, political, and economic order. However, lest some think that by these statements we see revolution as being a soft, quiet process, we state here that we see it as just the opposite. Revelation is a **dynamic force** with revolution as its outgrowth. The Prophets of Allah, with His help, have stirred up revolutions which were all based in revelation. Instead of *shirk* and oppression—the natural counterpart of *shirk*—the Prophets (may Allah's peace be on them) put forward revolutions resulting in true freedom and justice, based on surrender to the absolute primacy of Allah (*swt*). Oppressors have always known of the tremendous threat posed by Allah's revelation; their acknowledgement is noted in the Qur'an itself. What follows is one example of their fear of revolution stimulated by and in the service of revelation:

*"They said: 'These two are certainly (expert) magicians: Their object is to drive you out from your land with their magic, and to do away with your most cherished institutions.'" (Tā Hā, 20:63)*

#### Commentary:

The two mentioned here are Mūsa and Harūn, upon whom be peace, who threatened Pharaoh's oppressive status quo. The institutions which are

referred to are those established in accordance with man-made arrogance, which could be replaced by institutions built on the foundation of revelation.

*"And We wished to be gracious to those who were being depressed on the land (astudh'ifū fil ardh). To make them leaders (in faith) and make them heirs; To establish a firm place for them in the land, and to show Pharaoh, Hāmān, and their hosts, at their hands, the very things against which they were taking precautions." (al Qasas, 28:5-6)*

#### Commentary:

*Mustadh'afin fil ardh* are those who are considered weak, abased, and oppressed. Through revelation, Allah (*swt*) wanted to change their condition of weakness to one of strength. It is these people—the most despised and oppressed, without seemingly any resources or strength—which would prove to bring about the demise of Pharaoh and his associates, or as the *āyah* reads, "the very things against which they were taking precautions." The fear of the oppressors was justified, and continues to be so.

Prophet Mūsa (*as*) tells the oppressed masses:

*"... 'O my people! If ye do (really) believe in Allah, then in Him put your trust if ye submit (your will to His).' They said: 'In Allah do we put our trust. Our Lord! Make us not a trial for those who practise oppression; And deliver us by Thy Mercy from those who reject (Thee).'" (Yūnus, 10:84-86)*

#### Commentary:

Here, we glimpse at a revolution of heart, of mind, of material worldview. In this moment of history, a population ceases to be captives and victims of the despot Pharaoh and becomes free of fear, self-doubt, and victimization. Upon hearing a revolutionary teaching, they become true *Muslims*.

It is important to note that the aforementioned *āyah* shows that in the acceptance of revolution founded on revelation, the oppressed *do not* become the new oppressors. This is in strong contrast to the normal historical examples of non-revelation-based revolutions. Historically, one group would acquire power and control of the basic means of production (land, water, mines, food, etc.), subduing and enslaving some group of people under their rule. Eventually, these “winners” were overthrown and replaced, but while the revolution against them might have encompassed a strong desire to right their wrongs, the newly-empowered would invariably become the corrupt prisoners of their own man-made system.

In the lives of the Prophets of Allah (*swt*), on the other hand, we find a radically different phenomenon. These men, in whose footsteps we try to follow, saw a humanity which labored hard under the yoke of evil and oppression. Following the guidance of Allah (*swt*), they took on the role of revolutionaries as an *īmān*- and *taqwa*-based methodology was laid down to change the sad state of affairs that surrounded them. Only through this framework is the role of the revolutionary most successfully manifested.

Unfortunately, today some Muslims see Islam as too “primitive” to be used as a methodology for liberation. An analysis of liberation movements—those considered successful *or* unsuccessful at the time of their occurrence—show the ultimate failure of revolution without revelation. Some recent examples of “successful” liberation movements in Africa: In Zimbabwe, blacks were promised land and power and have received neither under black leadership. In South Africa, after a long, protracted struggle resulting in the murder of large numbers of people, one of the first actions of the new “government of liberation” was to recognize the most oppressive regime outside of the United States—Israel. This

was the very state that trained the forces against which the struggling people had fought.

The prophet-revolutionaries faced similar problems. They also had to deal with tribalism, nationalism, and other groups of people who had antagonistic interests and purposes. The God-denying god-kings, pharaohs, oppressors, and slave-owners<sup>2</sup> of pre-capitalist ancient societies relied on brute force, material possessions, and manpower to keep others oppressed. Prophet-revolutionaries, in their struggles against such evil and oppression, defined for humanity the nature of real Truth and revolution in their most pristine forms.

*“To every people (was sent) a Messenger: when their Messenger comes (before them), the matter will be judged between them with justice, and they will not be wronged.” (Yūnus, 10:47)*

*“For We assuredly sent amongst every People a messenger, (with the Command), ‘Serve Allah, and eschew Evil’: Of the people were some whom Allah guided, and some on whom Error became inevitably (established). So travel through the earth, and see what was the end of those who denied (the Truth).” (al Nahl, 16:36)*

*“We did aforesend Messengers before thee: of them there are some whose story We have related to thee, and some whose story We have not related to thee. It was not (possible) for any messenger to bring a Sign except by the leave of Allah: But when the Command of Allah issued, the matter was decided in truth and justice, and there perished, there and then, those who stood on Falsehoods.” (al Mu’min, 40:78)*

Some would like to confine the emergence of prophet-revolutionaries to particular cultures and regions, but the Qur’ān tells us that they were active among all peoples and in all places. Some are mentioned in the Qur’ān, but many others are not. The Qur’ān generally deals with those Prophets who appeared in or around the vast

Arabian Peninsula, most likely so that those who were first to hear the Qur'ān could relate to it; nevertheless, the Qur'ān provides a *universal* message.

The common and most crucial trait of the prophet-revolutionaries was their total and complete embrace of Allah's Message and their revolt against the community of oppressors which was guided by and rooted in this Message. They guided, mobilized, and organized the poor and the weak into a rebel force who believed in Truth, sincerity, social equality, brotherhood, and justice, aspiring to establish a just and egalitarian social order in place of a status quo of corruption and injustice.

Nūh, Hūd, Sālih, Ibrāhīm, Shu'ayb, Mūsa, 'Īsa, Muhammad, and others were all initially rejected by people in general and branded as madmen, sorcerers, soothsayers, poets, idealists, liars, and agents of foreign elements. These charges were levied against them because they threatened not only the established order, but also the entire universe of logic which created these societies.

In the lives of most prophet-revolutionaries, they and their followers—both men and women—sacrificed *everything* (the comfort of their families and homes, wealth, possessions, tribal affiliations, personal and race privileges, etc.) for the cause of Allah (*swt*) and His just system. In some cases, they migrated to places of safety and security from which they fought in wars against oppression and for the brotherhood of humanity, as is found in the *Seerah* (life history) of our beloved Prophet (*saw*). The Qur'ān declares that the believers (Muslim revolutionaries) who fought righteously in the way of Allah struck a bargain:

***“Allah hath purchased of the Believers their persons and their goods; For theirs (in return) is the Garden (of Paradise): They fight in His Cause, and slay and are slain: a promise binding on Him in Truth, through the Law, the Gospel, and the***

***Qur'ān: And who is more faithful to his Covenant than Allah? Then rejoice in the bargain which ye have concluded: That is the achievement supreme.” (al Tawbah, 9:111)***

The history of the world bears witness to the success of this bargain. These exalted believers combined the light of Allah with the fire of faith (*īmān*) to create a society which has been unparalleled in the history of humanity. Their victories are all the more enthralling because they were carried out not by angels but by human beings like ourselves. The Qur'ān conveys to us the words exchanged between some prophet-revolutionaries and their respective peoples:

***“...They said: 'Ah! Ye are no more than human, like ourselves! Ye wish to turn us away from the (gods) our fathers used to worship: then bring us some clear authority.' Their messengers said to them: 'True, we are humans like yourselves, but Allah doth grant His grace to such of His servants as He pleases. It is not for us to bring you an authority except as Allah permits. And on Allah let all men of faith put their trust.'”***  
(Ibrāhīm, 14:10-11)

Our challenge is slightly different than those of previous ages, since in our own time Allah (*swt*) has been consigned in the West (and increasingly in the East) as some sort of spiritual Santa Claus. Islam has become an empty vessel used to express our different cultures, rather than a dynamic force that encompasses true worship of our Creator in all spheres of life. This pathetic devolution of the believers' will has resulted in an oppression of the heart as well as the body, as opposed to the uplift of humanity, which true Islam is capable of.

In this issue, we have made a modest attempt to underscore the role of prophet-revolutionaries, what the Qur'ān says about them, their social missions, and their struggles against the forces of oppression. This will, *insha'Allāh*, be only the beginning of our writing on this topic, since we

believe it to be crucial in the development of our appreciation for the mechanics of true liberation (Islam).

On a final note, we want to express that our chief source, as always, is the Qur’ān. The Qur’ān, complemented by the *Seerah*, is not only an objective record of the development of Prophet Muhammad’s (*saw*) mission as a prophet-revolutionary, but it is a guide for all revolutionary believers. While the *Seerah* is specific to the life of Prophet Muhammad (*saw*), the Qur’ān contains a wealth of information on the lives and struggles of several prophet-revolutionaries. Some of them include: Sālih, who led the people of Thamūd in a revolution for social equality; Ibrāhīm, who proclaimed Truth and justice and is now called the “father of monotheism”; Mūsa, who liberated the slaves of Egypt; ‘Īsa, who called his people back from legalistic, technical worship to real faith and obedience to Allah; and Muhammad, the last and final prophet-revolutionary who proclaimed the “perfected *Deen*” – Islam – and established it.

*“...This day have I perfected your religion for you, completed My favour upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion (Deen)...”*  
(*al Mā’idah*, 5:3)

We implore you to examine Allah’s (*swt*) prescriptions, as implemented in the struggles of

the prophet-revolutionaries, and to apply them in your own lives and in your communities.

<sup>1</sup> *Shirk* is the practice of revering anything other than Allah (God) as an object(s) of worship.

<sup>2</sup> The Qur’ān provides us with broad appellations and categories for such groups of people: oppressors and exploiters (*az-zālimūn*); rich and powerful (*al-mutraḫūn*); arrogant and insolent (*al-mustakbarūn*); lords and chiefs (*al-mala’ā*); god-kings or pharaohs (*fara’īna; fir’awn*). It also employs terminology for those who are oppressed and exploited (*al-mustadh’afūn*); and the weak, humble, and lowly (*al-ardhalūn*).

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### ACTIVITIES AT MASJID AL-ISLAM

*Salātul Jumu’ah*.....Fridays @ 12:30 pm  
**Family Night**.....first Saturday of every month

### REGULAR CLASS SCHEDULE

*Ta’lim*..... Sundays after *Salātul Zuhr*  
**Islamic Studies** .....Mondays @ 7:00 pm  
**Brotherhood/Leadership Class**.....Tuesdays @ 7:00 pm  
**Prayer/Basics of Islam Class**....Wednesdays @ 7:00 pm  
**Sisterhood (An-Nisā’) Class**..... Saturdays @ 11:00 am

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### THINGS TO DO NOW!

1. Spend at least thirty minutes a day reading the Book of Allah (the Qur’ān). The early morning, before or after *Salāt ul-Fajr*, is the best time for framing the Word of Allah.
2. Not only learn to read and recite the Qur’ān and *Hadīth*, but ponder and reflect over its deeper meanings. Also study the life of the

Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, and the history of Islam and Muslims.

3. Be very conscious about physical fitness and exercise. Diet, and abstain completely from alcohol, drugs, and smoking.
4. Be neat, clean, and well-groomed, for Islam was founded on cleanliness.
5. Always be truthful, and never tell lies.

6. Fulfill your promises and agreements. Never breach a contract, regardless of circumstances.
7. Be courageous and enduring. The highest degree of courage is telling the truth in your own disfavor, keeping secrets, admitting mistakes, and controlling yourself when angry.
8. Always be serious and dignified; however, this should not prevent you from smiling or engaging in truthful jesting.
9. Always be equitable and of sound judgement in all situations. Never allow your anger to make you forget merits, nor let affection and pleasure blind you to defects. Don't allow disputes to make you ungrateful. Always speak the truth, no matter how painful it is, even if it is against yourself or against the people dearest to you.
10. Be active, energetic, and skilled in public services. You should feel happy when you offer a service to another person. You should feel compelled to visit the sick, assist the needy, support the weak, and give relief to the ill-fated, even if it is only a kind word of sympathy. Always rush to do good deeds.
11. Be compassionate, graciously excusing and forgiving others. Be tender, forbearing, and clement to people and animals and observe good manners with everyone. Observe Islamic social injunctions. Be merciful to the young and respectful to the old. Make room for your brother and sister in meetings and gatherings. Don't be noisy. Always seek permission before entering non-public places and make a courteous exit.
12. Be proficient in reading and writing. Establish a private library, no matter how small. Become familiar with the general Islamic subjects to such a degree that you are capable of forming judgements concerning day to day problems.
13. Undertake some economic enterprise. Try to establish a private business regardless of how small it might be.
14. Perform your job in the best manner you can and stay away from dishonesty and cheating. Observe your appointments and be on time.
15. Foster Islamic wealth in general by encouraging and helping Islamic economic institutions. Be careful about your money; don't let it fall into un-Islamic hands regardless of the circumstances. Eat and wear products of Islamic enterprises.
16. Contribute a portion of your wealth to the Islamic community. Pay *Zakāt*, no matter how small your income; only Allah knows what the future will bring.
17. Save a portion of your income; only Allah knows what the future will bring.
18. Strive to make your daily life Islamic in every aspect—legal, educational, economic, in your greetings and language, etc.
19. Perfect your prayers and strive to perform them within their proper time periods. Also try to pray in congregation in the masjid as often as possible.
20. Strive hard against your own soul until it is under your full control. Lower your gaze, control your emotions, and direct your sexual urge to decent and legal outlets.
21. Always cherish the intention of *jihād* and the desire for martyrdom in the way of Allah and actually prepare yourself for that.
22. Spend some time every night before going to bed on self-criticism, reflecting upon the good or bad things you have done throughout the day.
23. Avoid unnecessary luxury and all aspects of softness and laxity.
24. Know all your brothers and sisters. Love them, respect them, and help them in any way possible. Be at all meeting and seminars, being absent only when absolutely necessary.

25. Call others to Islam. Familiarize your leadership with your activities, and never undertake any action without first consulting your leadership. Keep yourself in constant spiritual and physical contact with your community and always consider yourself a soldier in the barracks awaiting a command.

