

TAWHID, SUNNAH & THE SALAFI PATH TO REVIVAL

A CALL TO RECTIFICATION IN OUR TIME

Compiled by Abū Muhammad Yaḥyā

FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT: TAWHID, SUNNAH & THE SALAFI PATH TO REVIVAL

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The course of human history is punctuated by cycles of darkness and divine illumination. At the time of the Prophet Muhammad's birth in 570 CE, humanity languished in a state of profound spiritual and moral darkness. Across Arabia, Rome, Persia, India, and Africa, societies were gripped by shirk (polytheism), oppression, superstition, and injustice. This period is known as Jāhiliyyah—not mere ignorance or lack of education, but a profound state of misguidance due to the abandonment of Tawḥīd (pure monotheism).

The Arabian Peninsula, descended from Prophets Ibrāhīm and Ismā'īl (عليهما السلام), had degraded to idol worship, tribal warfare, oppression of women, and rampant moral corruption. The sacred Ka'bah itself housed over 360 idols, and pagan rituals such as naked tawāf, blood sacrifices, and reliance on talismans and soothsayers dominated society. Similarly, the Byzantine Empire distorted Christianity through the doctrine of the Trinity and church-state tyranny, while the Persian Empire, under Zoroastrianism, divided divinity between conflicting forces of light and darkness. India suffered under oppressive idol worship and the rigid caste system, while East Africa, despite the presence of a righteous King in Ethiopia, fell victim to tribal animism and corrupted beliefs.

It was in this darkness that Allah sent the final Prophet, Muhammad s, born in the Year of the Elephant ('Ām al-Fīl), when Abrahah's army was miraculously destroyed attempting to desecrate the Ka'bah. This event heralded divine intervention and the coming prophetic message. Revelation commenced when the Prophet was forty, beginning in the Cave of Ḥirā' with the verses of Sūrah al-'Alaq, initiating a 23-year transformative period that shifted humanity's trajectory forever.

During the Makkan period, the Prophet called privately then openly to Tawḥīd, enduring persecution, exile, and economic boycott. His steadfastness established the foundations of a new Islamic society grounded in monotheism, justice, and ethical conduct. The migration (Hijrah) to Madinah marked the establishment of the first Islamic state, introducing laws

based solely on revelation. The Prophet successfully navigated conflicts, such as the Battles of Badr, Uḥud, and al-Khandaq, culminating in the peaceful conquest of Makkah, purifying the Kaʿbah, and firmly establishing Islam as the way of life.

Following the Prophet's death in 632 CE, the Ummah faced immediate challenges, yet the leadership of the Rightly Guided Caliphs (al-Khulafāʾ ar-Rāshidūn) upheld the prophetic methodology for thirty years. Abū Bakr aṣ-Ṣiddīq unified the Arabian Peninsula against apostasy. 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb expanded the Islamic state profoundly, institutionalizing justice and governance. 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān standardized the Qur'ān, while 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib confronted internal strife, preserving unity through tumultuous times.

With the transition from Caliphate to monarchy under the Umayyads, Islamic governance expanded militarily but gradually began to depart from the purity of the early generation. Sectarian divisions emerged, initiating lasting theological splits. The subsequent 'Abbāsid era saw great intellectual prosperity but also destructive philosophical deviations, epitomized by the Miḥnah (Inquisition) enforcing Mu'tazilah doctrines. Nonetheless, scholars like Imām Ahmad ibn Hanbal courageously preserved authentic Islam.

The fragmentation during the Crusades and Mongol invasions illustrated severe consequences when the Ummah abandoned Tawḥīd and Sunnah and striving in it's cause. Yet, figures like Ṣalāḥuddīn al-Ayyūbī symbolized resurgence through unity upon authentic belief. Later eras, including the Mamluk and Ottoman Empires, demonstrated mixed legacies—political strength without spiritual integrity ultimately leading to internal decay.

Colonial intrusion exacerbated the Ummah's condition, fragmenting it into secular nation-states, imposing foreign ideologies, and eroding adherence to Sharī'ah. Amid this turmoil, Allah raised reformers such as Shaykh Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb, whose alliance with the Saudi state revitalized Tawḥīd, laying foundations for future revivals. Contemporary Saudi Arabia, though established upon these foundations, now navigates modern challenges through controversial reforms (e.g., Vision 2030), posing new risks to authentic Islamic identity.

Today, the Muslim Ummah finds itself fragmented and weakened—afflicted by innovations and desires, distorted understandings and interpretations, secular nationalism, worldly attachments, and relentless external aggression by the non-Muslims, particularly from the Zionist occupations of Palestine (and now beyond). History has repeatedly illustrated the consequences of turning away from Tawhīd and the authentic Sunnah, as understood and practiced by the Salaf. Yet, history equally offers a clear roadmap to revival: a firm return to pure monotheism (Tawhīd), authentic knowledge, steadfast adherence to the Salafi methodology, sincere purification of the soul (tazkiyah), and complete separation from every form of kufr, shirk, and innovation.

The Prophet prophesied the Ummah's trials, urging adherence to his Sunnah and the way of the rightly guided predecessors. True revival emerges when individuals, families, and communities sincerely return to these core principles. Only through unwavering commitment to Tawhīd and adherence to divine revelation, as clearly articulated by generations of righteous scholars, can the Muslim Ummah reclaim its rightful dignity and divinely promised success.

This work has been compiled and presented to illuminate critical lessons from history, meticulously drawn from authentic sources, scholarly insights, and the unaltered methodology of the Salaf. It chronicles key historical events, highlighting the rise and fall of the Muslim Ummah as directly linked to its adherence to, or deviation from, the guidance of the Messengers of Allah. This comprehensive exploration serves as a practical guide for those seeking clarity in times of confusion, strength in moments of weakness, and light amid prevailing darkness—ultimately aspiring to attain the pleasure and mercy of Allah.



The Condition Of The World Before Islam

At the time of the Prophet's birth in 570 CE, the known world including Rome, Persia, India, and Arabia — was plunged into spiritual darkness; kufr, shirk, oppression, transgression, moral decline and Misguided customs and laws



The term Jāhiliyyah (ignorance) refers not to a lack of education, but to the absence of divine guidance and widespread deviation from Tawḥīd.

Allah ﷺ says: أَفَحُكُم ٱلْجَلهلِيَّةِ يَبْغُونَ

"Is it the judgment of Jāhiliyyah that they seek?"1

Ibn Kathīr رحمه الله said: "This refers to ruling by desires, customs, and laws not revealed by Allāh."

Furthermore, Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah رحمه الله said: "Jāhiliyyah is not limited to a time before Islam. It applies to any era, place, or people that turn away from the guidance of the Messenger , no matter how 'civilized' they appear."²

And Shaykh Ṣāliḥ al-Fawzān حفظه الله said: "Jāhiliyyah is not simply being uneducated. Rather, it is living in heedlessness, misguidance, and opposition to the revelation."

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¹ Surah al-Mā'idah 5:50

² Iqtida' aş-Şirāt al-Mustaqīm

These Pre-Islamic Civilizations and Societies Included:

- Arabia: Before Islām, the Arabian Peninsula was steeped in ignorance (Jāhiliyyah), fragmented into rival tribes consumed by endless cycles of warfare, vengeance, and tribal loyalty. Although the Arabs were descendants of Ibrāhīm and Ismā'īl (عليهما السلام), they had abandoned Tawḥīd and corrupted the Ka'bah, filling it with over 360 idols and performing pagan rituals including tawāf while naked, blood sacrifices, and invoking talismans, jinn, and omens. Society was plagued by oppression: tribal justice replaced moral truth, women were dishonored and female infants buried alive, and superstition shaped every aspect of life. There was no divine law to guide them only chaos, pride, and spiritual darkness.
- The Byzantine Empire: the Eastern branch of the former Roman Empire, upheld a corrupted version of Christianity deviating from pure monotheism by affirming the Trinity and deifying 'Īsā ibn Maryam (عليه السلام), despite clear warnings in the Qur'ān (5:77) against such exaggerations. Their religion had become entangled with imperial politics, leading to widespread church-state tyranny, persecution of dissenters, and internal theological conflicts. Lavish churches stood in contrast to the moral decay and spiritual emptiness that permeated the empire. Obsessed with power, the Byzantines were frequently at war both externally with the Persians and internally through sectarian schisms all while claiming to represent divine authority.
- The Persian Empire: was the stronghold of Zoroastrianism, a religion built on dualism the belief in two opposing deities: Ahura Mazda (god of light) and Ahriman (god of darkness). This worldview directly contradicted Tawhīd, the pure monotheism of Islam, by attributing divine power to more than one source. Fire temples were central to their worship, symbolizing the supposed purity of light, and their religious elite; the Magi wielded immense control over both state and society. Corruption, superstition, oppression of religious minorities were rampant. Like Byzantium, Persia was steeped in arrogance, consumed by worldly power, and entrenched in an imperial legacy that was both politically ruthless and spiritually void.

- India: was a land steeped in idol worship, with temples housing countless deities crafted from stone, wood, and metal. Polytheism was deeply entrenched in society accompanied by rituals that often contradicted reason and revelation. The caste system a rigid hierarchy dividing people by birth ensured systemic oppression, where the Brahmins (priestly caste) ruled over the lower castes, especially the untouchables, who were denied basic human dignity. Religion was weaponized to control, exploit, and subjugate, creating a spiritual landscape in which divine truth was obscured by myths, class tyranny, and empty tradition. It was a society in desperate need of the light of Tawhīd and the justice of divine revelation.
- East Africa & Abyssinia: While Abyssinia was a Christian kingdom, much of the surrounding region was engulfed in tribal conflict, animism, and superstition. Though Najāshī the just king mentioned in the Sunnah ruled fairly, Christianity in the region had also been altered from its original message, mixing with local beliefs and suffering from theological corruption (Qur'ān 5:72–77). In other parts of East Africa, ancestor worship, spirit possession, and the use of charms and omens dominated people's lives. Islam's arrival brought the message of Tawḥīd, justice, and brotherhood influencing trade routes, uplifting the moral fabric of society, and eventually producing Muslim communities that upheld knowledge, worship, and dignity.

"And verily, you were on the edge of a pit of the Fire, and He saved you from it."

³ Surah ali-Imran 3:103

Pre-Islamic Arabia: Tribalism & Idolatry

Arabia, particularly Hijāz (Makkah, Yathrib, Ṭā'if), was in a state of social, religious, and political disorder:

- **Religion:** The Kaʿbah built by Ibrāhīm and Ismāʿīl (عليهما السلام) was filled with over 360 idols.⁴ Pagan rituals were practiced including tawāf while naked,⁵ blood sacrifices,⁶ and talismans.⁷
- **Superstition:** Soothsayers (kāhin),⁸ jinn worship,⁹ and omen-based decisions were common.¹⁰

⁴ It is narrated in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī (4287) that Ibn Masʿūd رضي الله عنه said: "When the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ entered Makkah on the day of the Conquest, there were 360 idols around the Kaʿbah. He started striking them with a stick in his hand while reciting:

(وَقُلْ جَاءَ الْحَقُّ وَزَهَقَ الْبَاطِلُ إِنَّ الْبَاطِلُ كَانَ زَهُوقًا (Truth has come, and falsehood has perished. Indeed, falsehood is bound to perish.' [Sūrat al-Isrā' 17:81]

⁵ Jābir ibn 'Abdillāh رضي الله عنه said: "The Quraysh used to perform Tawāf naked, unless they could afford a garment. Women would also do tawāf naked at night..." Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim (1347)

⁶ The pagans would slaughter their children or offer blood sacrifices to idols, believing it would please their gods. Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī (on Sūrah al-Anʿām 6:137). And Ibn Kathīr said in his Tafsīr regarding the verse 6:137 "They would kill their children and offer bloody rituals near the Kaʿbah, or to their gods like Lāt, 'Uzzā, or Manāt'"

⁷ Refers to their superstitious practices at sea and on land, including talismans, charms, and invoking false gods. Tafsīr al-Qurtubī (on 10:22)

⁸ The Prophet strongly prohibited belief in soothsayers: "Whoever goes to a kāhin (soothsayer) and believes what he says has disbelieved in what was revealed to Muḥammad." Musnad Aḥmad (9532), Abū Dāwūd (3904), graded Ṣaḥīḥ by al-Albānī رحمه الله

 9 Allāh said: {وَأَنَّهُ كَانَ رِجَالٌ مِّنَ ٱلْإِنسِ يَعُوذُونَ بِرِجَالٌ مِّنَ ٱلْجِنِّ فَزَادُو هُمْ رَهَقًا ''And there were men from mankind who sought refuge in men from the jinn, so they [the jinn] only increased them in burden.'' [Sūrat al-Jinn 72:6]

Ibn Kathīr رحمه الله said: "This was a practice of the Arabs — they would seek protection from the jinn when arriving in desolate areas, thinking it would keep them safe."

¹º The Prophet ■ said: "There is no 'adwā, no tiyarah, no hāmmah, and no ṣafar." Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī (5707), Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim (2220). These were all superstitious beliefs held by the pre-Islamic Arabs:

- **Morality:** Burying daughters alive,¹¹ rampant fornication,¹² alcohol abuse,¹³ tribal warfare.¹⁴
- **Economics:** Exploitation in trade, ¹⁵ riba (usury), ¹⁶ and slavery were normalized. ¹⁷

'Adwā – contagious diseases spreading without Allāh's will

■ Hāmmah – belief that the soul of the dead bird returns

Şafar – a superstition about the month of Şafar being cursed

اً Allāh said: {وَإِذَا ٱلْمَوْءُودَةُ سُئِلَتْ تَّـ بِأَيِّ ذَنْبُ قُتِلَتْ} "And when the girl [who was] buried alive is asked: For what sin was she killed?" [Sūrat at-Takwīr 81:8–9]

Ibn Kathīr رحمه الله explains that "al-maw'ūdah" refers to girls buried alive due to shame or fear of poverty. This barbaric practice was normalized in parts of Arabia.

12 "There were four types of marriage during Jāhiliyyah... and prostitution was widespread." Narrated 'Ā'ishah رضي الله عنها Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī (5127).

The Prophet * abolished all such practices and reinstated the marriage of Islam based on chastity and guardianship.

13 The Arabs glorified drinking wine and intoxication in poetry. Allāh revealed gradually against this: {الله يَسْتُونَكُ عَنِ ٱلْخَمْرِ وَٱلْمَيْسِرُ ۚ قُلْ فِيهِمَا إِنَّجٌ كَبِيرٌ "They ask you about wine and gambling. Say: In them is great sin…" [Sūrat al-Baqarah 2:219] Later, complete prohibition was revealed in [5:90]. The companions immediately spilled their wine.

 $^{\rm 14}$ Pre-Islamic Arabia was rife with blood feuds like the Basūs War which lasted 40 years over a minor tribal insult.

15 Merchants often used deceit and dishonest weights to maximize profits. The Prophet said: "Whoever cheats is not one of us." Şaḥīḥ Muslim (102)

And Allāh warned: {وَيْلِيُّ لِّلْمُطَوِّفِينَ} "Woe to those who give less in measure." [Sūrat al-Muṭaffifīn 83:1]. The early Meccan economy thrived on exploitation—Islam introduced justice, transparency, and trust.

Tiyarah – evil omens based on birds or events

• **Society:** Women had little to no rights. ¹⁸ Power and protection were based on tribal lineage, not justice. ¹⁹

Allah said: "Indeed, they found their fathers astray. And they hastened to follow in their footsteps."²⁰

The Year of the Elephant ('Am al-Fīl)

In 570 CE, the same year the Prophet was born, Allah demonstrated His power in an event that shook Arabia: the destruction of Abrahah's army.

- Abrahah, the Christian governor of Yemen (under Abyssinian rule), attempted to destroy the Ka'bah to redirect pilgrimage to his cathedral in San'ā'.
- He marched with a massive army including elephants to attack Makkah.
- As they approached, Allah sent flocks of birds (tayran abābīl), pelting them with stones of baked clay.

"Have you not seen how your Lord dealt with the companions of the elephant?"²¹

This event was witnessed and preserved in collective memory, signifying the sacredness of the Ka'bah and the power of Allah — even before Revelation.

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¹⁸ Society was harsh and male-dominated. A woman's worth was tied to her tribe, and she was often treated as property. Some men inherited women as part of estate transfers, and female infants were buried alive out of shame or poverty.

¹⁹ Tribalism replaced justice with favoritism. Power flowed from lineage, not truth. The Prophet ²⁸ condemned this, saying: "He is not of us who calls to 'aṣabiyyah (tribalism), or fights for 'aṣabiyyah, or dies upon 'aṣabiyyah." Abū Dāwūd (5119, Ṣaḥīḥ). Society was held together not by law or ethics, but by allegiance to one's tribe—leading to endless cycles of revenge killings, pride, and class division. Islam came to uphold justice and equality based on taqwā, not bloodline: "Indeed, the most honorable of you in the sight of Allāh is the most righteous of you." [Sūrat al-Ḥujurāt 49:13]

²⁰ Surah as-Saffat 37:69-70

²¹ Sūrah al-Fīl, 105:1