

Civilization-Building Strategies of the Holy Quran with Emphasis on Surah Yusuf (Joseph)*

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Abstract

Human beings are social creatures, and their social life necessitates civil laws, which are partly derived from human reason and partly from divine revelation. The stories in the Quran, aimed at imparting lessons and playing a role in civilization-building, fulfill the second part of this necessity. This research, organized using a descriptive-analytical method, seeks to extract the civilization-building strategies of the Quran based on the story of Prophet Yusuf (Joseph). According to the findings of this study, the civilizational strategies in Surah Yusuf can be identified in three main areas: strategies for self and family education, and political management of society. These three areas include the following: 1. Self and Family Education Strategies – Depicting the role of life – Concealing secrets – Resorting to and trusting in God – Trustworthiness – Patience and piety 2. Family Strategies – Love and affection among family members – Patience with children's adversities – Not considering physical ability as a criterion for superiority – Forgiveness and leniency. 3. Political Management Strategies – Meritocracy – Social justice – Foreign relations with an economic focus – Selection system of officials – Centrality of law. Accordingly, the components of a civilized society include self-made citizens possessing moral and human virtues, patience in family and social interactions, deep compassion and connection, free from prejudices, and conducive to a civilized, devout city based on monotheism and its centrality. Additionally, the ruler of such a society is the outcome of the votes

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of these citizens, and the officials of that government are specialists, committed, and trustworthy individuals selected based on meritocracy. The governance is based on divine laws, and traitors are punished with justice and fairness.

Keywords: Civilization, Islamic Civilization, Strategy, Quranic Stories, Story of Yusuf (Joseph).



Introduction

Human beings are social creatures, and living in a society necessitates civil laws, some of which stem from human reason and others from divine revelation. The stories in the Quran, aimed at providing moral lessons and contributing to civilization-building, serve the latter purpose. Out of the total Quranic verses, 1,657 verses (over a quarter of the Quran) are dedicated to the stories of past peoples, their prophets, and various individuals, with the most frequent references being to the people of Israel and their prophets, especially Prophet Moses (peace be upon him). The story of Prophet Joseph (peace be upon him) is considered the most complete in terms of having a coherent beginning and end within a single Surah, which God has described as “the best of stories” (Yusuf: 3). Clearly, the extensive presentation of these verses as stories by God pursues a significant purpose, explicitly mentioned in verse 111 of Surah Yusuf. Thus, the stories in the Quran serve as a source of lessons for intellectuals and thinkers, are not mere fabrications or falsehoods, but rather affirm and corroborate other unaltered heavenly books, elucidating and detailing everything that requires explanation in this world. Moreover, this elucidation is accompanied by guidance and mercy, leading to the eternal success of believers.

Research Methodology

This research, conducted using a descriptive-analytical method, aims to extract civilization-building strategies from the story of Prophet Joseph (peace be upon him) as presented in the Quran. The goal of this study is to uncover teachings articulated as civilization-building strategies by the Almighty in the Quran, especially in Surah Yusuf, aimed at creating a society where humans live peacefully, worship God, engage in collective righteous conduct, and achieve spiritual elevation.

Findings

According to the findings of the research, the civilization-building strategies in Surah Yusuf can be identified under three main axes: strategies for personal and familial development and the political management of society. These axes include:

1. Personal and Familial Development:

- Life Planning: Understanding and planning for one’s role in life.
- Secrecy: Keeping confidences and seeking refuge and trust in God.
- Integrity: Upholding honesty and avoiding betrayal.
- Patience and Piety: Exhibiting patience and piety in all aspects of life.
- Family Affection: Demonstrating kindness and patience within the family, and valuing moral qualities over physical abilities.

2. Political Management:

- Meritocracy: Promoting the selection of qualified and trustworthy individuals for positions of authority.
- Social Justice: Upholding justice in society and managing external relations with



an emphasis on economic affairs.

- Governance: Establishing a legal system where betrayal is punished justly and governance is based on divine laws.

These strategies outline a vision of a civilized society characterized by self-disciplined citizens endowed with moral and ethical virtues, patient in social interactions, and forming compassionate family units. This society, devoid of irrational biases and detrimental behaviors, paves the way for a pious and unified community based on monotheism.

Conclusion

1. Civilized Society: A civilized society first and foremost consists of self-disciplined citizens who possess ethical virtues, distinguishing them from those in other human communities. These virtues foster a virtuous society where the foundation for moral and ethical growth is established, leading to collective progression towards God and attaining the divine vicegerency, the ultimate goal of creation. Surah Yusuf presents numerous strategies for nurturing such citizens, who have clear life goals, are known for keeping divine and others' secrets, and demonstrate trustworthiness and avoidance of betrayal.

These citizens show patience and piety in all life's ups and downs, forming the basis of a cohesive family unit marked by love and compassion.

2. Governance and Society: For managing economic and social affairs, resolving potential disputes among citizens, ensuring public and private security, and addressing common needs, a society requires an optimal governance system. In a society with such self-disciplined citizens, governance begins with the identification and selection of qualified, committed individuals who safeguard public wealth, uphold trust, and maintain integrity, leading to a system of meritocracy and justice-based governance.

3. State and International Relations: A civilized state advances its citizens' interests with wisdom and dignity, focusing on economic enhancement while respecting international agreements and upholding a lawful society. In such a government, there is no place for traitors, who are justly punished for their betrayals. These strategies from the story of Yusuf (peace be upon him) offer a framework for establishing a pious and civilized society based on monotheism.

In summary, by utilizing a civilization-building framework based on monotheism and divine worship derived from the Quran, particularly the stories and interpretive narrations of the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them), and relying on the innate God-seeking nature of righteous individuals, it is possible to guide the world towards an ideal society and pave the way for the emergence of the final divine savior.

How to cite

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