SOME MANAGEMENT LESSONS IN *SŪRAH AL- BAQARAH* BASED ON THE WORKS OF KHALED (N.D.) AND KHAN (2012)

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ABSTRACT

This study explores some of the management lessons in *Sūrah Al-Baqarah* by referring to the explanations of Khaled (n.d.) and Khan (2012, 2016). Five management lessons were derived from Khaled (n.d.) and six management lessons were derived from Khan (2012, 2016). Khan (2012, 2016) was more detailed than Khaled (n.d.) and highlighted the problem of corrupt leadership. Leaders can became "*spiritual people with a worldly mind-set*" (Khan, 2012). The psychological and organizational processes that enable leaders to mislead their followers are then explored. Although one assumes that bad leaders are deliberately unethical, social psychology shows that good leaders can become bad unintentionally over time. Muslim business leaders can build one of three types of organizations. One with a positive organizational culture, one with a neutral organizational culture and one with a negative organizational culture. Similarly, Muslim employees have an ethical responsibility to seek employment in an organization whose corporate culture does not clash with Islamic values. As the Qur'ān provides timeless guidance, one can conclude that good and ethical leadership is an eternal challenge.

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1. INTRODUCTION

This study explores what it means to be a good Muslim business leader and good Muslim subordinate. Outside of work, individuals are independent. Their actions reflect their values and their goals. At work, individuals become employees. Their behavior becomes subordinated to the organization's values and goals. This clash

sometimes leads to workplace violence, stress, aggression, discrimination, sexual harassment, politics, side deals, careerism, bullying, drug abuse, retaliation, incivility, and theft (Linstead, Marechal, & Griffen, 2014). Many problems would probably disappear if people applied Quranic principles at the workplace. Thus, this author hopes to identify some of the management lessons in the Qur'ān by taking each *sūrah* as a unit of analysis. This study analyses some of the management lessons in *Sūrah Al-Baqarah*, the second *sūrah* of the Qur'ān.

2. METHODOLOGY

The research is based on the *tawhidic* paradigm. This research paradigm assumes that every discipline should be aligned with the aims and the principles of the Qur'ān and the Sunnah. Many management concepts are not wrong but they have to be understood in the bigger context, namely that human beings have been created to worship Allah (51:56). A detailed analysis is not possible s due to the length of *Sūrah Al-Baqarah* and its richness. This is a limitation to this study. The explanations of Amr Khaled and Nouman Ali Khan will be analyzed by referring to Khaled (n.d.) and Khan (2012, 216) respectively. Both authors are activists and preachers. Khaled is influential in the Arab world and Khan is influential in the United States and around the world.

3. THE PERSPECTIVE OF AMR KHALED

Without providing an explanation of each *ayah*, Khaled (n.d.) presents an overview of the whole Qur'ān by stressing the main themes of each *sūrah.* Khaled (n.d.) says that *Sūrah Al-Baqarah* was revealed in Madinah. Khaled (n.d.) says,

> "Every sūrah has one core idea and one objective. This *sūrah's* main objective is the succession of man on this earth. To put it simply, it calls "You Muslims are responsible for the earth". Allah entrusted many nations throughout history with ruling the earth. Some succeeded and some failed. It is time for this nation to take the responsibility and achieve this divine goal." (Khaled, n.d., p. 19).

In this *sūrah*, Allah introduces three kinds of people: believers, disbelievers and hypocrites. Khaled (n.d., p. 20) writes,

"*Only one of these types will bear the responsibility for the earth*". The most important attributes of successful people is their faith in the unseen. The most obvious characteristics of unsuccessful people is their absolute materialism.

Allah introduces the story of Adam (peace be upon him) and informs the angels that He has created him to establish him and his progeny on the earth. Khaled (n.d., p. 21) writes, "*Human beings are responsible for this earth as was Adam. It is not the responsibility of those who disobey Allah and renounce His laws*". He notes that this implies that Muslims should not restrict the teachings of Islam to mere acts of worship. They have to learn science and technology as well. Satan disobeyed Allah due to his jealousy and sought to lead Adam (peace be upon him) and his wife astray. Allah informs them that they need to live on earth and when guidance comes, they must follow it to be successful (2:38).

Allah explains how this mission of establishing a just society fell upon the Children of Israel. They were reminded of Allah's favor upon them (Qur'ān, 2:40). Khaled (n.d., p. 22) says that the first duty of the nation in charge of the earth is to remember Allah's blessings. The Children of Israel were ungrateful and they developed a materialistic attitude. For example, they said, "*O Mūsā, we will never believe you until we see Allah openly*" (2:55). Khaled (n.d., p. 23) comments that this materialism is a fatal sin that can cause a nation to be replaced with another nation. For this reason, a key trait of a pious person is belief in the unseen. Another example of their materialism was cheating in the matter of the Sabbath. This episode concerns a group of Jews who fished during the Sabbath but resorted to trickery to obey the letter of the law without respecting the spirit of the law. Khaled (n.d., p. 25) observes that several *āyah* discourage imitating previous nations. This often starts with imitating smaller matters but eventually ends with disbelief.

Allah then shows a successful example, prophet Ibrahim (peace be upon him). He was given a variety of trials but he obeyed Allah diligently. He was successful because he obeyed Allah, not because of his kinship (similarly, Prophet Adam's story started as a test of obedience). Allah clarifies that his covenant with Ibrahim does not extend to wrongdoers (2:124). Khaled (n. d., p. 25) writes, "*It shows that succession is associated with obedience, not kinship*."

Khaled (n.d., p. 27) argues that Allah then passes the responsibility to establish a just society to the Muslims. Muslims are therefore obliged to learn from the mistakes of past nations in order to not repeat them. Khaled (n.d., p. 27) says this requires three things:

obeying Allah, becoming a unique nation, and fearing Allah. A key aspect of this section is the story concerning the construction of the *Ka'bah* and the change of the *qiblah* from Jerusalem to Makkah. The change of the *qiblah* key to becoming a unique nation. The next section deals with legislation that reforms all aspects of Islamic society (e.g. 2:177). Khaled (n.d., p. 31) notes:

> "The Qur'ān deals with the penal code and then moves on to religious legislation. This indicates that acts of worship are inseparable from the other rules legislated in Islam. This fact emphasizes the thoroughness of Allah's methodology and its inclusion of all aspects of life."

Sūrah Al-Baqarah is the only *sūrah* in which all the pillars of Islam are mentioned explicitly. All of these rules are supported by regular prayers (2: 238). The prayer reminds the believers of the unseen which is essential for them to be successful (2:03). This belief in the unseen is supported by a clear understanding of Allah's perfect names and attributes (2:255). Later on Allah explains that the Islamic economic system must be free of *ribā* (2:276 and 2:278-279). The conclusion is that Muslims must "hear and obey" (2:285). Based on the above summary, Table 1 was derived.

TABLE 1
Some Management Lessons in *Sūrah Al-Baqarah*
Based on Khaled (n.d.)

	Description
1	Muslims need to manage this earth based on Islamic principles
2	Muslims need to differentiate themselves from previous nations by not repeating their mistakes. In particular, they developed a materialistic attitude that ruined their faith.
3	Muslims must be ethical in their business dealings
4	Muslims will be tested and their only chance of being successful is adhering firmly to Islamic principles
5	This adherence to Islamic principles depends on their belief in the unseen and their level of spirituality. The daily prayers, the Ḥajj and fasting are essential components of this spirituality.

Unfortunately, Khaled (n.d.) never defines what he means by materialism. Furthermore, he ends up stereotyping the Jews. His overall argument (i.e., that the *sūrah* makes Muslims responsible for

the earth) is not agreed upon by all scholars of the Qur'ān. For example, Islahi (2007, p. 91) writes,

> "The central theme of this sūrah is a call to faith. There is a passing reference to faith in Sūrah Al-Fātiḥah, but in a broad context springing from a sense of gratitude. Here faith is treated in detail. In explicit terms, the sūrah invites us to believe in the Qur'ān and in the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Sūrah Al-Fātiḥah refers to the belief in Allah whereas Sūrah Al-Baqarah underscores the need for the belief in prophethood."

The perspective of Nouman Ali Khan follows.

4. THE PERSPECTIVE OF NOUMAN ALI KHAN

Khan (2012) explains this *sūrah* in his "Cover to Cover" on www.bayyinah.tv. An updated explanation is also available on www.bayyinah.org (Khan, 2016). Khan (2016) says this *sūrah* is organized as follows:

- Part 1: Allah describes the characteristics of believers, disbelievers and hypocrites. The key is the belief in the unseen and the quest for guidance.
- Part 2: The story of Adam. This story is about human greed. Allah is a merciful God and He accepts repentance.
- Part 3: The story of the Children of Israel. They were supposed to be a role model for humanity. However, they changed part of their book. They expected that the last prophet would be Jew so they refused to accept Muhammad (peace be upon him) as he was Arab.
- Part 4: The story of Prophet Ibrahim (peace be upon him). He was tried several times and obeyed God perfectly. In building the *Ka'bah*, he asks Allah to protect Makkah from fear and hunger. This section highlights the shared lineage between the Jews and the Arabs.
- Part 5: This section discusses the handing over to the Muslims the responsibility of being the role model for humanity.
- Part 6: The Muslim nation will be tested with fear and hunger. Will the Muslims make the same mistakes that the Children of Israel made?
- Part 7: This section highlights the laws given to the Muslims to reform society.

- Part 8: Protect yourself from greed by spending on charity. The opposite of charity is getting involved in *ribā*. Doing business is permissible.
- Part 9: The last two *āyah* is a prayer to strengthen the believers so that they hear and they obey the call of the Prophet (peace be upon him).

Khan (2012) says that, first and foremost, *Sūrah Al-Baqarah* is about faith in the unseen and seeking guidance from Muhammad (peace be upon him). This faith leads to establishing the prayers and giving charity. This leads to *taqwā*. *Taqwā* is seeking protection from God's displeasure. This is the only way to become successful (2:05).

Khan (2012) points out that the Qur'ān does not call all non-Muslims disbelievers (*kuffār*). Many non-Muslims have the potential to believe. The term *kuffār* is never used lightly in the Qur'ān. The term *al-nās* (mankind) is more common. Next comes the description of the hypocrites (2:8-9). Faith should naturally lead to pure hearts. Prior to the migration to Madinah, the society in Yathrib was made up of believers and disbelievers. However, when the Prophet (peace be upon him) settled in Madinah, he was given political and social power. The citizens of Madinah now had worldly reasons to become Muslims. Thus, hypocrites appeared in Madinah. This *sūrah* highlights the danger of hypocrisy. Often, hypocrites arose in the religious, business and political elite and they used their power to manipulate the ignorant masses. However, hypocrisy at the time of the Prophet (peace be upon him) cannot be compared with hypocrisy today. Allah has kept hypocrisy somewhat of a mystery in the Qur'ān so that Muslims refrain from speculating about it. Ultimately, hypocrites cause corruption on the earth and they engage in a trade in which they sold guidance to buy misguidance (2:16). This analogy of trade appears a lot in the Qur'ān. Doing business with Allah means that you trust Him but you see the benefits of the trade after you die (Khan, 2012). Allah then says,

> "O mankind! Worship your Master who created you and those before you so that you may acquire taqwā." (2:21)

The invitation to humanity is to worship Allah. This *āyah* alone proves that Islam is an inclusive religion. The Qur'ān invites the whole of mankind to the truth. By using the word *Master*, Allah implies that we are necessarily His slaves (Khan, 2012).

Allah then introduces the story of Adam. This is fitting as this is the beginning of history. Khan (2012, 2016) explains how the Qur'ānic narrative differs from the Judeo-Christian account. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, God is portrayed as a vengeful god who sends Adam (peace be upon him) on earth as a punishment. In the Qur'ān, Allah is full of mercy and wisdom. Sending Adam to earth is not a punishment but it is the fulfilment of Adam's purpose of creation. Allah teaches Adam and his wife words of repentance and He promises to send His guidance to his descendants. Khan (2012, 2016) emphasizes that,

1.   Allah taught Adam both worldly knowledge (2:31) and revelation (2:37) so both types of knowledge are sacred.
2.   The story of Adam is about accepting responsibility. Adam was created to inhabit the earth. His disobedience was out of greed and negligence. By contrast, Iblis's disobedience was out of arrogance.

In 2:30, Allah declares that He created mankind to be a *khalīfah*. Khan (2012, 2016) does not explain clearly the issue of *khalīfah*. Islahi (2007, p. 164) writes that Allah wants to test whether people will submit to Allah's will. Islahi (2007, p. 164) writes, "*This is, in a way, one form of appointing a deputy by the real owner and sovereign, not because He is or was absent, but rather to test the fidelity and obedience of the deputy*."

The story of Adam was that of an individual. The scene shifts to the Children of Israel to illustrate collective disobedience. Khan (2012, 2016) stresses that the Qur'ān is not anti-Jewish. In other parts of the Qur'ān, the glorious parts of Jewish history are highlighted. This story is a lesson to Muslims throughout history so that Muslims can avoid repeating the same mistakes.

Allah starts by reminding the Jews of his favors (2:40). This is immediately followed by the instruction not to sell out (2:41-42). Khan (2012, 2016) argues that the Jewish leaders were aware of the truth whereas the ordinary Jews were mostly ignorant. Over the centuries, the religious elite had distorted their religious texts to obtain economic and political benefits. They often used their religious influence to mislead others. Allah then says,

> "And seek help with patience and prayer and truly, it is extremely hard except those who have khushū'." (2:45)

Khan (2016) highlights that the religious elite had the knowledge but their problem was a lack of spirituality. Allah provides

a spiritual remedy, the prayer. The reference to *khushū'* indicates that the one praying feels truly connected to Allah. The one praying believes in the unseen and prays to Allah as if he or she is talking to Him directly. It is much more than mere ritualistic prayer. Allah then says:

> "And fear a day when a person shall not avail another, nor will intercession be accepted from him, nor compensation be taken from him, nor will they be helped." (2:48)

Although this message is addressed to the Children of Israel, it is a message to all mankind. Khan (2012, 2016) argues that most people have a misunderstanding concerning salvation. The only thing that will help them is their faith and their deeds.

The scene shifts to when Allah helped the Jews against the Pharaoh. Khan (2012, 2016) explains that, in the Qur'ān, nations receive messengers. There comes a time when, to help the messenger, Allah sends a miracle. If a nation denies a miracle, it is destroyed. In the case of the Children of Israel, they received miracle after miracle but they were not destroyed. Allah reminds the Jews of His many favors so that they can be grateful (2:52, 2:56) and develop *taqwā* (2:63). Allah reminds them that He is merciful and He accepts repentance (2:54). Allah does not punish nations in order to harm them but in order to discipline them (Khan, 2016).

An important story is the breaking of the Sabbath (2:65-66). This story concerned some Jews who relied on fishing for their livelihood. These Jews were divided into three categories: one group fished on the Sabbath, one group obeyed Allah and did not advise the sinners, and a third group obeyed Allah and gave advice to the sinners. The first two groups were destroyed and only the last group was saved. Khan (2016) explains that "advising sinners" means that everyone is supposed to advise close relatives and close friends within their circle of influence. This story is a reminder that Muslims must speak out against sin. They cannot be passive Muslims.

The scene then shifts to the story of the cow. This was a miracle but they refused to accept it because their hearts were now hard (2:74). Khan (2012) argues that this *āyah* suggests that the heart is the key and the intellect assists the heart. Unless one constantly reminds oneself of the unseen, one's heart hardens.

The Children of Israel had developed false beliefs. In particular, they developed an understanding that even if they went to

Hell, it would only be for a short time (2:80). Allah refutes that belief. In 2:83, Allah explains the foundation of a just society.

> And when We took the covenant from the Children of Israel, [enjoining upon them], "Do not worship except Allah; and to parents do good (ihsan) and to relatives, orphans, and the needy. And speak to people good [words] and establish prayer and give zakāh." Then you turned away, except a few of you, and you were refusing. (2:83)

Khan (2016) observes that social responsibility (e.g., having *iḥsān* towards parents, helping relatives and the needy) comes first. Religious acts (prayer and zakāt) come later in this list. He argues that true religiosity is demonstrated by a good social conduct. Rather than doing this, the Jews started fighting one another. They believed in some parts of their book and ignored others (2:85). Khan (2012) describes them as being "*religious with a worldly mind-set*" and argues that this attitude is common in the Muslim world today. Similarly, emphasizing religious acts while forgetting social responsibilities is also common (Khan, 2016). A consequence of this mind-set is that one does wrong knowingly and one seeks solutions outside of Divine revelation (2:103-105).

The focus now turns to the Muslims. In particular, they are reminded that the Quraish still control the *Ka'bah* (2:114) and that the mission of the Prophet (peace be upon him) is to liberate the *Ka'bah* (Khan, 2012). Allah then tells the story of Ibrahim (peace be upon him). This is to remind the Children of Israel that the Arabs share a common bond (Khan, 2012). Particular emphasis is put on the *du'ā'* of Ibrahim to make the House a place of worship and Makkah safe and prosperous (2:125-126). Khan (2016) discusses the legacy of Ibrahim in much detail. Some people misunderstand the mission of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and assume that he was interested in building an empire. However, the liberation of Makkah was primarily a spiritual objective. Indeed, spiritual purification (*tazkīyah*) is the ultimate objective of religion and the real purpose for raising prophets (Islahi, 2007, p. 366). Prayer is not simply a ritual to be performed daily, it is the spiritual exercise that gives believers strength. Allah says:

> "O you who believe! Seek help with patience and prayer. Truly, Allah is with those who are patient" (2:153)

Like the Jews, the Muslims have to demonstrate their faith. Allah says,

"And certainly, we shall test you with something of fear, hunger, loss of wealth, lives and fruits but give glad tidings to those who are patient." (2:155)

Allah then says that people who worship other than Allah do so because they love the idols more than they do love Allah. But the believers love Allah more than anything else (2:165). This is then followed by a section on individual protection and then on social protection. Generally speaking, Islamic legislation makes things easier for the people (2:185) as difficulty often arises when people follow cultural norms. The foundation of *taqwā* is based on feeling near to Allah (2:186).

This is followed by some rulings of Islamic law. This includes the prohibition of bribery (2:188), fighting for the sake of Allah (2:193), completing the Ḥajj and the *'umrah* (2: 196). People are commanded to enter Islam completely without procrastinating (2:208-210). This is followed by a section preparing the Muslims to fight to liberate Makkah. Allah prepares the Muslims to spend in the Cause of Allah (2:254; 2:261-265, 2:273-274) to strengthen the Muslim army. By contrast, Satan threatens people with poverty (2: 268). Allah then explains the sin of *ribā* (2:275-276, 2:278-279) and advises lenders to be lenient to debtors (2:280). When it comes to business transactions, people should remember that they will be returned to Allah and they should seek protection for themselves (2:281). Giving up *ribā* is only possible for those who have *taqwā* (2:278). Allah concludes this *sūrah* by stating the mind-set of the believers – "*we hear and we obey*"- and reminding mankind that Allah does not burden a person beyond his capacity (2:285-286).

In the light of this summary, several points stand out. First, Khan's explanations are more spiritual than those of Khaled (n.d.). The definition of success in Islam is not increased material wealth, not the creation of an Islamic state, but spiritual purification and entering Paradise. Second, Khan (2012, 2016) presents a more complex picture of the Children of Israel. The Qur'ān is critical of the religious elite that manipulated the religious texts for their own benefit and misled their followers. The story of the Jews who broke the Sabbath indicates that some of the Jews were good, some of them were bad and many were simply passive. By extension, Allah is warning the Muslim elite not to abuse their power to achieve worldly benefits. Allah is also

warning the ordinary Muslim not to simply follow influential Muslims. Ordinary Muslims must educate themselves about their religion and follow its principles. Table 2 summarizes some management lessons found in Khan (2012, 2016).

TABLE 2
Some Management Lessons in *Sūrah Al-Baqarah*
Based on Khan (2012, 2016)

Description
1 The role of leaders is critical. If religious leaders, political leaders and business leaders prioritize their personal gains, they can manipulate their followers to their advantage.
2 Muslim subordinates cannot afford to blindly follow their leaders. They need to assess their integrity. If necessary, they need to speak out against their leaders. This is the summary of the Jews who spoke out against the Jews who broke the Sabbath.
3 All Muslims need to believe in the unseen, seek guidance, be patient, establish the prayer, spend on charity, fast during Ramaḍān and perform the Ḥajj. This builds *taqwā*. This will ensure leaders and followers stay on the straight path.
4 All Muslims need to understand that Allah is loving and merciful. He forgives sins and loves those who call on Him. At the same time, Allah disciplines people when they transgress the limits. One gets closer by one's sincerity and righteous acts.
5 All Muslims need to be ethical in every aspect of their lives. They cannot be selectively ethical.

From a management perspective, this *sūrah* highlights the danger of bad leadership. Even spiritual leaders can be "*spiritual with a worldly mind-set*." As Khan (2012, 2016) points out repeatedly, the *sūrah* stresses the history of the Children of Israel so that Muslims avoid making the same mistakes. Khan (2016) argues that the problem of corrupt leadership currently plagues the Muslim world. Although Muslims often think of political leaders, Khan (2016) points out the danger of corrupt business leaders. This theme will be explored further by referring to the management literature.

5. THE POWER OF BUSINESS LEADERS

Business leaders have multiple roles. One of the main roles is to define and shape the culture of the organization. They have the power to recruit, reward and punish individuals based on their willingness to

conform to the organization's culture. Organizational culture can be divided into three categories:

1. *Positive organizational culture:* This kind of culture helps employees to strengthen their Islamic identity.
2. *Neutral organizational culture:* This kind of culture does not help or hinder employees from developing their Islamic identity.
3. *Negative organizational culture:* This kind of culture prevents employees from developing their Islamic identity.

One of the management lessons of *Sūrah Al-Baqarah* is to highlight that the primary ethical responsibility of Muslim leaders is to develop an organization with a positive organizational culture. This view is consistent with the opinion of other Muslim scholars of management (Fozia, Rehman and Farooq, 2016). The primary ethical responsibility of Muslim employees is to seek employment only in organizations with positive or neutral organizational culture. Apart from these *āyāt* found in *Sūrah Al-Baqarah*, a number of *ḥadīth* seem relevant.

It is reported that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, "*Had only ten Jews (amongst their chiefs) believe me, all the Jews would definitely have believed me.*" (Al-Bukhari). This clearly indicate the extent to which the leaders were able to influence the ordinary Jew and that the Prophet (peace be upon him) was cognizant of that fact. Many *ḥadīth* give severe warnings to Muslim leaders. For example, there is an authentic narration in which the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, *"No ruler is appointed but he has two groups of advisers: A group which urges him to do good and tells him not to do evil, and a group which does its best to corrupt him. Whoever is protected from their evil is indeed protected. And he (the ruler) belongs to the group that has the greater influence over him"* (Al-Nasā'ī). It is reported that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, "*If God appointed anyone ruler over a people and he died while he was still treacherous to his people, God would forbid his entry into Paradise.*" (Muslim). With regards to followers, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "*A man follows the religion of his friend; so each one should consider whom he makes his friend.*" (Abu Dawud). If one must be careful about his friends, then it is assumed that one must be careful about one's organization.

The message of the *sūrah* is that once Muslims understand the power of business leaders and Muslim business leaders use their power to create a positive corporate culture, then completing the other injunctions in the *sūrah* is easier. To enable further understanding of this topic, I will briefly explore the difference between good

leadership and bad leadership. More emphasis will be put on bad leadership because that is the theme of the *sūrah*. The positive side of leadership can be explored in later studies.

6. THE POWER TO MANIPULATE

A pioneer in understanding organizational culture is Edgar Schein. Coutu (2002) notes that Schein started his career as a psychologist in the United States Army. During the Korean War, thousands of prisoners were brainwashed by the Chinese. Schein was asked to study this new phenomenon. After leaving the army, he became a professor and realized that there were many similarities between how these prisoners were treated and how American organizations indoctrinate their managers. In the 1960s, the process of brainwashing managers was obvious. Today, it is more subtle but still very much present.

The idea that organizations brainwash their employees seems offensive. Psychologists define a brainwashing program as "*a behavioral change technology applied to cause the learning and adoption of an ideology or set of behavior*" (Langone, 1993, p. 8). In such a program, a leader manipulates his or her followers by controlling their social and physical environment (Langone, 1993, p. 3). Once followers modify their behavior, they unconsciously change their thoughts to eliminate cognitive dissonance. Although the term brainwashing is popular, a more accurate description would be "behavior-washing". It is assumed that people get brainwashed because they are "stupid". This explanation is unsatisfactory. For example, an experienced researcher studying cults went undercover and attended a weekend event organized by a cult. After attending this event, the researcher needed to be deprogrammed (Galanti, 1993, p. 101). Galanti (1993, p. 102) writes,

> the confusion surrounding brainwashing stems from the fact that most people are looking for something overt and foreign. I went to Camp K looking for something big and evil; what I found was very subtle and friendly thus I didn't recognize its power. What I found was that the process works first on an emotional and a behavioral one. The need for love and approval--upon which cult members play-- leads to psychological and behavioral identification with the group. Over time, beliefs change as well, but more through the repression of the intellect.

She observes that deprogramming focuses on stimulating analytical faculties. In *Sūrah Al-Baqarah*, the religious elite used their influence to brainwash their followers by repressing their intellect. Once followers stop questioning the leadership, manipulation is very easy. It is thus not surprising that the Qur'ān encourages people to think and reflect.

Some organizations have very strong organizational cultures. For example, Lashinsky (2012) published an account of the inside working of Apple Inc. He explored the good and the bad sides of Apple. Many aspect of Apple's culture are disturbing to outsiders. To understand Apple, one must understand the personality of Steve Jobs. Jobs grew up in the Silicon Valley. He founded Apple in 1976. In 1985, Jobs was fired. Apple went through a difficult phase and almost went bankrupt. Jobs returned to rescue Apple. His leadership style alternated between charming and bullying (Lashinsky, 2012). His personality made many employees cry or leave. Everybody acknowledges that he was a tyrant. But at the same time, "*he was the most imaginative, decisive and persuasive person that you could meet. He inspired outstanding effort and creativity. Even those who despise him admire him*." (Lashinsky, 2012). His brutality in dealing with subordinates created a harsh, bullying, and intimidating culture (Lashinsky, 2012). Arguments at Apple are personal and confrontational. Secrecy is normal. Like a secret society (Lashinsky, 2012, p. 42), new members are not trusted until they prove themselves. People fight one another to achieve perfection. Personal time is often sacrificed if the company needs it. One engineer explains, "*At Apple, people are so committed that they go home at night and don't leave Apple behind. What they do at Apple is their true religion*" (Lashinsky, 2012, p. 45). Clearly, not every organization is like Apple. The point is that many organizations do seem to use brainwashing techniques to get the most out of their employees. A common misunderstanding is to assume that leaders are either born good or born evil. Few people properly understand the problems associated with cognitive dissonance and excessive power.

7. COGNITIVE DISSONANCE AND EXCESSIVE POWER

Research has shown that good leaders turn bad for two reasons: one is through the process of cognitive dissonance. The second is through having excess power.

Tavris and Aronson (2007) argue that individuals end up doing things that go against their values through the process of

cognitive dissonance. They give the example of the Milgram experiments. After the Second World War, Americans were shocked by German concentration camps. Americans assumed that the explanation was that "German Are Different" and that they are more likely to obey authority than Americans. Social psychologist Stanley Milgram devised an experiment in 1963 to prove this. The original idea was to collect data in the United States and then collect data in Germany. The assumption was that American volunteers would more readily disobey people in authority compared to Germans. The experiment was set up in the following manner:

- Volunteers were told that they were helping out in an experiment on memory and learning.
- A technician in uniform encouraged volunteers to continue with the experiment.
- A subject (an actor) who would pretend to get electrocuted.

The volunteers were told that subjects would be given material to learn. Every time they get it wrong, they would be given a small 15 volts electrical shock. For volunteers to understand what this felt like, they were given a small shock. They could barely feel it so they agreed. Volunteers were then told that if the subjects still did not change, the voltage would be increased to 30 volts and then to 45 volts and so on. In reality, subjects were never electrocuted. Psychologists wanted to see at what stage volunteers would stop obeying orders. Two-thirds of volunteers gave life-threatening shocks of 450 volts

Tavris and Aronson (2007) argue that this gradual increase in voltage is how cognitive dissonance works. Small deviations from ethical standards are rationalized and accepted. Tavris and Aronson (2007) stress that cognitive dissonance is an unconscious and gradual process that can happen to anybody.

The Stanford Prison Experiments is a good example of the dangers of excessive power. Some people assume that the individual's personality influences a person's behavior. Social psychologists have found that behavior is mostly determined by the system that surrounds a person. If you put good people in a bad system, they will behave badly. Zimbardo (2007) wanted to demonstrate this by hiring volunteers and putting them in an extraordinary situation. The psychological profile of volunteers was established. Zimbardo then created a prison in Stanford University and randomly assigned the volunteers as prisoners and guards. Zimbardo and his team then watched and recorded events with minimal interference. Within a few hours, the guards realized that they had enormous power over the prisoners. At the same time, the prisoners were getting themselves

organized as a cohesive social unit. This started a power struggle between the guards and the prisoners. Within a couple of days, the guards started to use physical and psychological punishments in a gradually more and more sadistic manner. Within a week, the experiment had to be stopped. Nobody behaved in a manner that could have been predicted based on their psychological profile (Zimbardo, 2007). Zimbardo (2007) noted that in normal situations, where social power is distributed, dispositional factors explain normal behavior. However, in unusual situations where one party has significantly more power than another, situational factors better explains behavior.

The literature on positive leadership will be reviewed.

8. POSITIVE LEADERSHIP

Whereas psychology has traditionally focused on people's flaws, positive psychology focuses on people's strengths (Lewis, 2013). Many managers focus on employees' weaknesses even though greater performance improvement comes from developing existing talent and strength (Lewis, 2013). Typically, the organizational performance management systems assumes that "*work is fixed and people need to change.*" This prevents leaders from building on their employees' strengths (Lewis, 2013). Some companies changed the system so that the assumption is that "*people are fixed and work needs to change*." Subordinates are allowed to trade work with co-workers so that everybody focuses on their strengths. A management tool that seems to be at the heart of positive leadership is called "Appreciative Inquiry" (AI). AI was pioneered by David Cooperrider. AI has gained worldwide recognition and many multinationals are successfully using AI. Cooperrider and his colleagues have published their results in leading academic journals.

Another rule is that a performance management system must be based on rewarding both performance and living the values (see Table 3).

TABLE 3
Managing Based on Values

High Performers Not living the values	High performers Living the values
Low Performer Not living the values	Low Performer Living the values

Source: Wilkinson (2011)

Wilkinson (2011) defines a value as a principle that the organization is willing to protect at any cost. Wilkinson (2011) argues that for most organizations, employees who perform but do not adhere to the values create "*95% of the problems*". According to Wilkinson (2011) an organization should get rid of these high performers. If not, they will corrupt the organization's corporate culture. Maybe this is what happened historically to the Children of Israel. Wilkinson (2011) concludes that keeping a healthy corporate culture requires a lot of work. This research suggests that Muslim managers can apply these management tools in order to live up to the high expectations placed in *Sūrah Al-Baqarah*.

9. CONCLUSION

This study has tried to highlight some management lessons in *Sūrah Al-Baqarah*. Five lessons in Khaled (n.d.) and six lessons in Khan (2012, 2016) were identified. However, a large portion of the *Sūrah* is dedicated to exploring the problem of corrupt leadership. The story of the Jews who broke the Sabbath highlights the spiritual risks associated with being a passive follower.

Muslim business leaders can build one of three types of organizational cultures: positive organizational culture; neutral organizational culture; and negative organizational culture.

It should be noted that organizations have written rules and unwritten rules. One assumes that no Muslim business leaders would openly say that "loyalty to the organization is more important than loyalty to Allah". However, by promoting individuals who demonstrate loyalty to the organization at any cost, the rest of the employees will understand the unwritten rule.

The burden does not only lie on business leaders. Muslim employees have an ethical responsibility to choose an organization whose business, values and organizational culture does not contradict Islamic principles.

Although it is tempting to simply conclude that "bad leaders are simply bad people", social psychology and management theory shows that it is not necessarily true. Good people may over time become bad if they make small changes to their ethical standards and if they are given excess power. The message of *Sūrah Al-Baqarah* is that if this could happen to the Children of Israel, this could happen to the Muslims. This author argues that Muslims can benefit much from learning about positive psychology. Certain tools – such as appreciative inquiry and Wilkinson's (2011) performance evaluation

grid among others – have practical values that should be further explored.

It should be noted that positive psychology is rooted in secularism. From an Islamic perspective, a key ingredient is the quality of prayers. Allah says, "*O you who believe! Seek help with patience and prayer. Truly, Allah is with those who are patient*" (2: 153). This is an essential element of good leadership in Islam that scholars can study in the future.

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