

An Anatomy of Murder

The dignity and honor of man are undisputed. That is because Almighty Allah, the Creator, explicitly affirms that He has honored the children of Adam, and has conferred on them special favors, over a great part of creation (al-Isra', 70).

Everything especially on earth has been created in order to serve man as Allah's vicegerent, and to facilitate the execution of his noble terrestrial mission and purpose. Similarly, everything that man himself creates, as part of his continuous cultural and civilizational functioning, is to resonate the same meaning and aid the same objective.

In other words, man stands at the center of creation with all other dimensions and aspects of life existing primarily to validate, constantly uplift and sustain the nobility and excellence of man. The foremost criteria for evaluating a civilization revolve around what type of human beings it produces, and to what extent it is disposed to the preservation of human life, dignity and the inherent distinction of man.

It is on account of this that the Qur'an warns that whoever killed an innocent soul or a human being, it would be in the sight of Allah as if he killed all mankind. But whoever saved one, it would be as if he saved all mankind (al-Ma'idah, 32).

Moreover, about killing intentionally an innocent believer, the Qur'an categorically states that "his recompense is Hell, wherein he will abide eternally, and Allah has become angry with him and has cursed him and has prepared for him a great punishment" (al-Nisa', 93).

Indeed, there is nothing that can sanction and justify taking an innocent human life. No clause in a legal framework can accommodate such an inhuman act, nor can a sound mind have any capacity to dwell on such a matter, let alone agree to it.

Murder is heartless, merciless, barbaric and most disgraceful. It is an anomalous act, incompatible with any rationality, morality, and the intended cultural as well as civilizational wellbeing of people.

That is why when a murder occurs, the best form of justice is that a murderer publically pay with his own life as a form of general deterrence, so as to prevent others who may have identical intentions from committing identical crimes in the future.

And that means protecting and cherishing the true meaning of life: "And there is for you in legal retribution or *qisas* (saving of) life, O you (people) of understanding, that you may become righteous (restrain yourselves)" (al-Baqarah, 179).

Indeed, being firm and unyielding towards murder and murderers means respecting life and those who want to live it responsibly and nobly. All human initiatives and rules must reflect that and be totally in support of the truth, justice, righteousness and peace.

According to Maududi: "It is essential for the preservation of human life that everyone should regard the life of the other as sacred and help to protect it. The one who takes the life of another without right, does not commit injustice to that one alone, but also proves that he has no feeling for the sanctity of human life and of mercy for others. Hence he is most surely the enemy of the whole human race, for if every individual suffered from the same kind of hard-heartedness, the whole human race would come to an end. On the contrary, if one helps to preserve a single human life, he is indeed a helper of all mankind for he possesses those qualities upon which depends the survival of the whole human race."

Qabil (Cain) *versus* Habil (Abel)

All these principles have been clearly displayed in the course of the incident of the first murder on earth, when Qabil (Cain) killed Habil (Abel) (al-Ma'idah, 27-31). Both were the sons of Prophet Adam.

Prior to the incident, the two men had presented their sacrifices to Allah. However, the sacrifice of Habil was accepted, while the one of Qabil wasn't.

That alone in no way could be a reason for Qabil to take the life of his younger and blameless brother. But then, he was older and filled with pride, egotism and envy, which eventually blinded him and his cognitive abilities. He was no longer in a position to make sound judgements.

With his rationality impaired, and recognizing no outside source of moral authority, Qabil was left to the mercy of his raging *nafs* (selfish soul that only urges evil, desire and passion). Being thus in control of his entire being, the monstrous spiritual, along with emotional, state of Qabil's personality prompted and facilitated to him the slaying of his brother.

"And his (selfish) soul permitted to him the murder of his brother, so he killed him and became among the losers" (al-Ma'idah, 30).

Facing his vicious and hard-hearted brother, Habil tried to bring him to his senses by evoking the supreme authority of the heavenly regulatory moral program - which had been revealed by Allah to their father, Prophet Adam. Habil told Qabil: "Indeed, Allah only accepts (sacrifices and other meritorious deeds) from the righteous (who fear Him)" (al-Ma'idah, 27).

But Qabil did not listen, as he did not recognize such an authority.

Habil then tried to appeal to common sense and his brother's intelligence, making clear how dire the consequences of the intended evil action would be, saying: "If you should raise your hand against me to kill me - I shall not raise my hand against you to kill you. Indeed, I fear Allah, Lord of the worlds. Indeed I want you to obtain (thereby) my sin and your sin so you will be among the companions of the Fire. And that is the recompense of wrongdoers" (al-Ma'idah, 28-29).

But again, Qabil did not listen, nor did he heed the warnings. The voices of his selfish and wicked soul were deafening. He could not hear, nor discern, anything else, as a result of which he capitulated to the pressure of his desires and passionate determination.

Thus, Qabil's killing of his brother Habil was not due to his sacrifice having been rejected, but rather due to the intensity and insatiability of his malevolent spiritual and emotional state.

Qabil thus became the father and progenitor of murder as a concept and life's reality. Whoever unjustly kills, follows in his footsteps. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) accordingly once said that "no human being is killed unjustly but a part of responsibility for the crime is laid on the first son of Adam who invented the tradition of killing (murdering) on the earth" (Sahih al-Bukhari).

Habil's "crime", on the other hand, was that he stirred and agitated his brother's madness by his righteousness and purity, resisting it afterwards with his sanity, sound judgment and determination. His "crime" furthermore was simply his status which Qabil did not like, that is, being of those who are righteous and pious and so, better than him, as well as his being an obstacle for Qabil's immoral inner self to freely express itself and thrive.

That means, Habil's "crime" was his sheer existence, which could significantly get in the way of Qabil's. Therefore, he had to go.

For Qabil to be, Habil needed to be no more.

Muslims and the legacy of Habil

This can explain the nature of all murders, be they individual, mass, state-sponsored or state murders. They are all the results of what could be called premeditated insanity or - to quote Prof. Michael Huemer - rational irrationality.

According to Yusuf Ali, among the the Christians, Cain (Qabil) was the type of the Jew as against Abel (Habil) the Christian. The Jew tried to kill Jesus and exterminate the Christian.

In the same way, as against Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), the younger brother of the Semitic family, Cain (Qabil) was the type of the Old Testament and New Testament people, who tried to resist and kill Muhammad (pbuh) and put down his people (Yusuf Ali).

And the narrative goes on. Muslims continue to epitomize the example and legacy of Habil, while their older Jewish and Christian brethren in the family of Abrahamic religions - in particular their extremist segments - continue to epitomize the example and legacy of Qabil.

The bloody pages of history continue to be inscribed at the expense of Muslims and their cultures in Palestine, Bosnia, Kosovo, Chechnya and several other post-Soviet states, just as they were inscribed during the Crusades, the fall of Andalus (Islamic Spain) and Western colonization.

The same trend, unfortunately, continues unabated today in the era of globalization. It is becoming yet more serious and more disastrous. It generated the notions and phenomena of islamophobia, Islamic

fundamentalism and terrorism, making them some of the most widespread and most feared, as well as distorted and abused, concepts. Consequently, Muslims suffer today more than ever before, both in their own lands and beyond.

Many followers of other leading non-Abrahamic religions, such as Hinduism and Buddhism, became also emboldened and took a leaf out of the Jews' (specifically Zionists') and Christians' book. Some of the greatest recent genocide drives against Muslims have been committed and orchestrated by the followers of those two religions and their offshoots. The governments of India, Myanmar and China are most culpable.

In all cases, Muslims' "crime" is that they are Muslims and practice Islam, that they belong to "them" or "others" and not "us", and that they are turning somewhat into a hindrance for governments to achieve and implement extreme nationalism, certain nativist ideologies and authoritarian tendencies.

To be exact, Muslims' "crime" is that they are there and live freely. They should be either completely neutralized or dispensed with altogether. Often, Muslims are seen as a necessary evil.

Following the pattern set by Qabil, rational thinking and just legal frameworks are the last to be consulted in the process. That makes those recent genocide drives against Muslims very difficult to control and handle internationally. No negotiations or international interventions could yield any significant and sustainable improvements on the ground.

One doubts they ever will, for the rule of sound reason, incontrovertible logic and just laws have long disappeared from the international scene saturated with mistrust, deceit and double standards. The world is ruled by the wrong people. There is so much power in the wrong hands, that is, in the hands of Qabil's associates.