



Akademik Eğitim ve Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi (AJESS Journal)

The Term Fasād in the Holy Qur'a

Dr. Bachir Bouyadjera ali cherif, University of Naama – Salhi Ahmed, Algeria.
boudjera@cuniv-naama.dz

Article History

Received: 31/07/2026; Accepted : 06/10/2026; Published : 19/10/2026

Abstract

The term fasād (corruption) and its derivatives occur approximately fifty times in the Holy Qur'an. Their meanings vary according to the issues addressed by the verses in which they appear. The term fasād is closely associated with the word "earth." The two occur together, either explicitly or by implication, in most of the approximately fifty instances. This association reflects the broad scope of corruption, which has spread throughout human society.

Corruption is not part of the original human disposition. Rather, it represents a departure from the sound innate nature (fiṭrah) upon which human beings were created. The Qur'an states: "So direct your face toward the religion, inclining to the truth—the natural disposition of Allah upon which He created humankind" (Qur'an 30:30).

A study of the verses containing fasād and its derivatives reveals several causes of corruption. The most important are following personal desires, allowing blessings to make a person forget their Bestower, transgression, and allegiance to unbelievers.

The study identifies five principal foundations of corruption: public and concealed indecency, sin, unjust aggression, associating partners with Allah, and speaking about Allah without knowledge.

Humanity remained in a state of righteousness for a long period. Corruption then arose among people. Allah sent messengers and revealed scriptures and laws to address it. This process culminated in the law brought by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), who completed the reformative mission of the earlier prophets.

Keywords: fasād; corruption; earth; causes of corruption; foundations of corruption; reform.

Introduction

Allah created the earth as a suitable dwelling place for human life. He created human beings to develop it in righteousness and to follow the true faith. He also warned them against actions that undermine this order. Yet human beings, drawn by their desires, departed from divine guidance and their sound innate disposition. They consequently spread corruption on earth. The Qur'an records the angels' question: "Will You place on it someone who will spread corruption and shed blood, while we glorify You with praise and sanctify You?" (Qur'an 2:30).

This study examines the term fasād and its derivatives in the Holy Qur'an. These forms occur frequently and carry different meanings according to their contexts. The study also considers the causes, foundations, and historical emergence of corruption on earth. It then examines how revealed laws were intended to address it.

The central research question is as follows: If Allah created the world in an original state of righteousness, when and how did corruption emerge on earth? How did the revealed laws of Islam address this development?

The study addresses these questions through the following structure:

Introduction.

Two main sections:

Section One: The term fasād in the Holy Qur'an and its association with the earth.

Subsection One: The term fasād in the Holy Qur'an.

Subsection Two: The association of fasād with the earth.

Subsection Three: The historical emergence of corruption on earth.

Section Two: The causes and foundations of corruption and the emergence of revealed laws to address it.

Subsection One: The causes of corruption on earth.

Part One: Following personal desires.

Part Two: Forgetting the Bestower of blessings as a cause of corruption.

Part Three: Transgression as a cause of corruption.

Part Four: Allegiance to unbelievers as a cause of corruption.

Subsection Two: The foundations of corruption on earth.

Part One: Public and concealed indecency.

Part Two: Sin.

Part Three: Unjust aggression.

Part Four: Associating partners with Allah.

Part Five: Speaking about Allah without knowledge.

Subsection Three: The purpose of prohibiting corruption and the emergence of revealed laws to remedy it.

Part One: The purpose of prohibiting corruption.

Part Two: The emergence of revealed laws to address corruption.

Conclusion: The main findings of the study.

The study adopts an inductive and analytical research method.

Section One: The Term Fasād in the Holy Qur'an and Its Association with the Earth

Subsection One: The Term Fasād in the Holy Qur'an

The word fasād and its derivatives occur approximately fifty times in the Holy Qur'an. Their meanings differ according to the subjects addressed by the relevant verses.

In the Qur'an, fasād is consistently presented in a negative light. Allah has forbidden corruption and made clear that He does not love it. He says:

“When he turns away, he strives throughout the land to spread corruption in it and destroy crops and offspring.

Allah does not love corruption” (Qur'an 2:205).

Corruption is condemned because it conflicts with the welfare of human beings, which is part of the divine wisdom underlying creation. Divine wisdom does not approve of conduct that defeats its purposes.

Corruption also undermines the conditions needed for stability and well-being. For this reason, Allah established the principle by which people restrain one another and thereby prevent corruption. The Qur'an states:

“So they defeated them by Allah's permission, and David killed Goliath. Allah gave him kingship and wisdom and taught him what He willed. Were it not for Allah's restraining some people through others, the earth would have been corrupted. But Allah is full of bounty toward all worlds” (Qur'an 2:251).

Although corruption may signal approaching divine punishment, it is itself a form of suffering because of the harm it causes. Allah says: “Corruption has appeared on land and at sea because of what people's hands have earned, so that He may let them taste some of what they have done, that they might return” (Qur'an 30:41). The verse indicates that excessive sin reduces agricultural production, fruit yields, and livelihoods. People consequently experience hardship and deprivation¹

The Qur'an also uses fasād in the sense of wrongdoing and aggression. Allah says: “Do not spread corruption on the earth after it has been set right. Call upon Him in fear and hope. Indeed, Allah's mercy is near to those who do good” (Qur'an 7:56). This verse follows the statement: “Indeed, He does not love those who transgress” (Qur'an 7:55).

Corruption is the opposite of beneficence (ihsān). Allah says: “Do good as Allah has done good to you, and do not seek corruption on the earth. Indeed, Allah does not love those who spread corruption” (Qur'an 28:77). The prohibition against seeking corruption follows the command to do good. It warns against combining acts of goodness with corrupt conduct. A command to do good therefore also implies a prohibition against corruption.

Corruption is also the opposite of righteousness (ṣalāh), or it represents the loss of what is right. Allah says: “Do not spread corruption on the earth after it has been set right. Call upon Him in fear and hope. Indeed, Allah's mercy is near to those who do good” (Qur'an 7:56).

The Qur'an uses the term in a broader sense as well. Its general meaning may be described as a state of disorder or deterioration. This can occur in human actions, conduct, and beliefs. It can also affect conditions on earth, on land and at sea, and in the heavens.

The first two forms appear in Allah's words: “And to Midian We sent their brother Shu'ayb. He said, ‘My people, worship Allah; you have no deity other than Him. Clear evidence has come to you from your Lord. Give full measure and weight, do not deprive people of what is rightfully theirs, and do not spread corruption on the earth after it has been set right. That is better for you, if you are believers’” (Qur'an 7:85).

Shu'ayb began by calling his people to the oneness of Allah, the foundation of righteousness. Its opposite, polytheism, is a foundation of corruption. Al-Suddī explained corruption as “associating partners with Allah, the gravest form of corruption”;² Shu'ayb then prohibited a particular injustice common among his people: giving short measure and weight. This practice combines theft with betrayal. He subsequently prohibited corruption in its wider sense. His approach moved from a specific and widespread form of misconduct to the broader category of wrongdoing on earth. This gradual method reflects wisdom in preparing people to accept guidance and moral improvement³

The third form appears in the verse, “Corruption has appeared on land and at sea” (Qur'an 30:41). Some commentators interpreted corruption here as drought, reduced vegetation, and the loss of blessing. Ibn 'Abbās explained it as the decline of blessings caused by people's actions, so that they might repent.

¹ See Abū al-Fidā' Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm*, vol. 6, p. 203 (Dar al-Rashād al-Ḥadīthah, Casablanca, Morocco, 1989).

² Muḥammad al-Shawkānī, *Faḥ al-Qadīr*, vol. 4, p. 263 (Dar Ibn Kathīr and Dar al-Kalim al-Ṭayyib, Damascus and Beirut, 1st ed., 1414 AH).

³ Al-Ṭāhir Ibn 'Ashūr, *Al-Taḥrīr wa-al-Tanwīr*, vol. 12, p. 138 (Al-Dār al-Tūnisīyyah li-l-Nashr, 1984).

Al-Nahhās described this as “the best explanation of the verse.” He also reported that “corruption at sea means the interruption of fishing because of the sins of human beings”¹

The principle of mutual restraint was instituted to prevent corruption and promote righteousness through sound laws. The central claim is that sound religious practice entails well-being on earth, whereas corruption in religion entails corruption on earth.

Subsection Two: The Association of Fasād with the Earth

The word fasād is closely linked to “earth” in most of its approximately fifty occurrences. The reference may be explicit or implied. In only eleven instances is the earth not mentioned. Some of these passages describe the conduct or fate of corrupt people, such as “See how the end of the corrupters was.” Others are supplications, such as “My Lord, support me against the corrupting people.” Still others emphasize divine knowledge, as in “Your Lord knows best those who spread corruption.” Such expressions occur more than once. Most other usages associate corruption with the earth. In one verse, the term appears with land and sea; in another, it is connected to the heavens and the earth.

The predominant Qur’anic use of the term fasād thus conveys the meaning of a bad or disordered condition. This can be seen in the following Qur’anic expressions: “Do not go about the earth spreading corruption”; “those who spread corruption on earth”; “do not seek corruption on earth”; “you will surely cause corruption on earth twice”; “do not spread corruption on earth after it has been set right”; “we did not come to cause corruption on earth”; “corruption on earth”; and “you will surely cause corruption on earth.”

The repeated association of corruption with the earth indicates the scale of the phenomenon. Corruption is neither purely personal nor confined to individuals. It affects groups, nations, and societies. It is not limited to one place or historical period. In this account, it has accompanied human society since Adam was appointed as a successor on earth. Allah says: “When your Lord said to the angels, ‘I will place a successor on the earth,’ they said, ‘Will You place in it one who will spread corruption and shed blood, while we glorify You with praise and sanctify You?’ He said, ‘I know what you do not know’” (Qur’an 2:30).

Subsection Three: The Historical Emergence of Corruption on Earth

Monotheism, guidance, and righteousness constitute the innate disposition upon which human beings were created. Corruption arose later as a departure from that disposition and from the purpose of creation. Allah says: “Humankind was once one community. Then Allah sent the prophets as bearers of good news and warners, and sent down with them the Scripture in truth to judge between people concerning their differences. None disputed it except those who had received it, after clear proofs had come to them, out of mutual envy and wrongdoing. Allah then guided the believers regarding that over which they had differed” (Qur’an 2:213). Ibn ‘Abbās and Qatādah explained that this refers to the ten generations between Adam and Noah. They followed the truth until disagreements arose. Allah then sent Noah, followed by other prophets²

The verse thus indicates that there was a period when upright conduct and righteousness prevailed. According to this interpretation, people did not need the mission of prophets until corruption appeared among them. This occurred, it is said, between the times of Adam and Noah (peace be upon them)³

This account also suggests that Allah created human beings with an innate disposition free from error and misguidance. The Qur’an says: “We have certainly created humankind in the best form” (Qur’an 95:4). Another statement attributed to Ibn ‘Abbās reads: “They were one community in unbelief,” referring to the people living when Noah was sent⁴

This indicates that corruption arose among the people of the earth and spread to all of them. Allah then sent Noah (peace be upon him). He destroyed the unbelievers among them through the Flood and saved Noah and a small group with him. All the surviving people were then righteous. Later, they differed again, and Allah sent the prophets.

The angels expressed surprise when Allah told them, “I will place a successor on earth.” They asked: “Will You place there one who will spread corruption and shed blood?” (Qur’an 2:30). They understood that the earth was created to be developed and maintained in righteousness, without corruption. Those inclined to cause corruption and shed blood are not fit to develop it.

The Qur’an states that Allah created the world free from polytheism. Allah says: “So direct your face toward the religion, inclining to the truth—the natural disposition of Allah upon which He created humankind. There is no changing Allah’s creation. That is the upright religion, but most people do not know” (Qur’an 30:30).

In the two Ṣaḥīḥ collections, the Prophet (peace be upon him) is reported to have said: “Every child is born upon the natural disposition. It is the parents who make the child a Jew, a Christian, or a Magian, just as an animal gives birth to an intact offspring. Do you find any mutilation in it?” Abū Hurayrah then recited: “The natural disposition of Allah upon which He created humankind. There is no changing Allah’s creation. That is the upright religion” (Qur’an 30:30)⁵

¹ Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Qurṭubī, *Al-Jāmi’ li-Aḥkām al-Qur’ān*, vol. 7, p. 38, edited by Sidqī Muḥammad Jamīl and ‘Irfān al-‘Ashshā (Dar al-Fikr, Beirut, Lebanon, 1414 AH/1993 CE).

² *Al-Jāmi’ li-Aḥkām al-Qur’ān*, vol. 2, p. 30.

³ *Al-Taḥrīr wa-al-Tanwīr*, vol. 9, p. 175.

⁴ *Al-Jāmi’ li-Aḥkām al-Qur’ān*, vol. 2, p. 30.

⁵ Reported by al-Bukhārī, *Book of Funerals* (23), chapter “What Has Been Said about the Children of Polytheists” (92), hadith 1385, vol. 1, p. 38; and by Muslim, *Book of Divine Decree* (46), chapter “The Meaning of Every Child Being Born upon the Natural Disposition” (6), hadith 6849, p. 1275. See Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, prepared by Muḥammad ibn Nizār Tamīm and Haytham ibn Nizār Tamīm (Dar al-Arqam, Beirut, Lebanon, edition and date not stated).

Ibn Taymiyyah stated that the natural disposition entails knowing and loving Allah¹. It also entails giving Him the highest place in one's love. This is the meaning of monotheism and the declaration that there is no deity but Allah. He referred to the explanatory narration: "Every child is born upon this religion"²

Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim also reports, on the authority of 'Iyād ibn Ḥimār, that the Prophet (peace be upon him) conveyed the following divine saying: "I created all My servants with a natural inclination toward pure monotheism. Then the devils came to them and turned them away from their religion. They forbade what I had made lawful for them and commanded them to associate with Me what I had not authorized";³ the passage affirms the original uprightness of human nature. The prophets were therefore sent to remind people of what their innate disposition already recognized. They strengthened it and removed influences that distorted it. Their mission was to affirm and complete that disposition, not to replace it. Full moral development comes when sound nature is supported by revealed law⁴

Section Two: The Causes and Foundations of Corruption and the Emergence of Revealed Laws to Address It

Subsection One: The Causes of Corruption

A study of the Qur'anic verses containing *fasād* and its derivatives reveals several important causes of corruption.

Part One: Following Personal Desires. This may be the underlying cause of many other forms of corruption. The Qur'an describes its consequences in strong terms: "Had the truth followed their desires, the heavens and the earth and all who are in them would have been corrupted" (Qur'an 23:71). In his commentary *al-Taḥrīr wa-al-Tanwīr*, Ibn 'Āshūr⁵ explains that if aggression were treated as good and justice as evil, people would attack and destroy one another. Agriculture and livestock would be ruined. He cites the verse: "When he turns away, he strives throughout the land to spread corruption in it and destroy crops and offspring. Allah does not love corruption" (Qur'an 2:205). Personal desires also differ and change. If truth followed each changing desire, no stable order or law could remain⁶

Part Two: Blessings Causing a Person to Forget Their Bestower. The blessings Allah grants to His servants call for gratitude. Gratitude involves remembering the Giver and refraining from using His gifts in acts of disobedience. As the saying goes, "Blessings are like untamed creatures; gratitude binds them." A servant may continue to commit sins until these sins take away blessings, one after another. Such a person departs from the rulings of divine law and falls into corruption. Obedience and gratitude preserve and increase blessings, while sins lead to their decline and loss.

Ja'far ibn Muḥammad said: "When Allah grants a servant a blessing, and the servant recognizes it inwardly and gives thanks for it verbally, an increase soon follows"⁷

Ibn al-Qayyim also wrote: "Sins continue to take away blessings, one after another, until they are all withdrawn." He cited Allah's words: "Allah does not change the condition of a people until they change what is within themselves" (Qur'an 13:11). He added that faith is the greatest blessing. Adultery, theft, drinking intoxicants, and plunder may deprive a person of its benefits. In his words, "Sins are the fire that consumes blessings, just as fire consumes wood. We seek Allah's protection from the loss of His blessings and well-being"⁸

He further stated: "Disobedience causes blessings to disappear. Among its consequences is the loss of blessings already enjoyed and the prevention of blessings yet to come. What is present is lost, and what is expected is withheld. Nothing preserves Allah's existing blessings like obedience to Him, and nothing brings back what is missing like obedience. What is with Him can be attained only through obedience. Allah has appointed both a means and an impediment for everything. The means of receiving His blessings is obedience, while the impediment is disobedience. When Allah wills to preserve a blessing for a servant, He inspires the servant to protect it through obedience. When He wills its removal, the servant is left to disobey Him through that very blessing"⁹

Ibn Rajab al-Ḥanbalī wrote: "Whoever uses Allah's blessings to disobey Him has denied His favour and exchanged it for ingratitude. Such a person deserves to lose those blessings." He then cited these lines: "When you have a blessing, take care of it, for sins remove blessings. Continue to give thanks to Allah, for gratitude to Him removes afflictions"¹⁰

¹ Muslim, Book of Divine Decree (35), chapter "The Meaning of Every Child Being Born upon the Natural Disposition" (6), hadith 6853, p. 1276.

² *Al-Tafsīr al-Kāmil li-Ibn Taymiyyah*, compiled, studied, edited, and sourced by 'Umar ibn Gharāmah al-'Amrawī, vol. 5, p. 215 (Dar al-Fikr, Beirut, Lebanon, 1st ed., 1423 AH/2002 CE).

³ Reported by Muslim, Book of Paradise (39), chapter "The Qualities by Which the People of Paradise May Be Recognized in This World" (17), hadith 7309, p. 1367.

⁴ See the preceding source, vol. 5, p. 215.

⁵ *Al-Ṭāhir Ibn 'Āshūr*.

⁶ *Al-Taḥrīr wa-al-Tanwīr*, vol. 19, p. 93.

⁷ Ibn Mufliḥ al-Ḥanbalī, *Al-Ādāb al-Shar'īyyah wa-al-Minah al-Mar'īyyah*, vol. 3, p. 233 (Ālam al-Kutub).

⁸ Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Ṭarīq al-Hijratayn wa-Bāb al-Sa'adatayn*, vol. 2, pp. 588–589, edited by Muḥammad Ajmal al-Iṣlāḥī, with hadith references by Zā'id ibn Aḥmad al-Nashīrī, and reviewed by Sa'ūd ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz al-'Arīfī and 'Alī ibn Muḥammad al-'Imrān (Dar 'Aṭā'at al-'Ilm, Riyadh, and Dar Ibn Ḥazm, Beirut, 4th ed., 1440 AH/2019 CE).

⁹ Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Al-Dā' wa-al-Dawā'*, p. 106 (Dar al-Ma'rifah, Morocco, 1st ed., 1418 AH/1997 CE).

¹⁰ Ibn Rajab al-Ḥanbalī, *Al-Jāmi' li-Tafsīr al-Imām Ibn Rajab al-Ḥanbalī*, vol. 1, p. 163, compiled and arranged by Abū Mu'adh Ṭāriq ibn 'Awaḍ Allāh ibn Muḥammad (Dar al-'Āshimah, Saudi Arabia, 1st ed., 1422 AH/2001 CE).

Part Three: Transgression as a Cause of Corruption. Transgression means exceeding proper limits;¹ the Qur'an attributes this conduct to the peoples of 'Ād and Thamūd and to Pharaoh: "Have you not considered how your Lord dealt with 'Ād, with Iram of the lofty pillars, the like of which had not been created in the lands; and with Thamūd, who carved the rocks in the valley; and with Pharaoh, the lord of stakes? They transgressed in the lands and multiplied corruption in them, so your Lord poured upon them a scourge of punishment" (Qur'an 89:6–13). Their transgression took the form of disobedience and oppression. It included rejecting prophets, expelling them, and killing them, among other acts.

Al-Ṭabarī explained: "They multiplied acts of disobedience in the lands and committed what Allah had forbidden. As for 'Your Lord poured upon them a scourge of punishment,' it means that He sent down His punishment and inflicted His retribution because of the corruption and rebellion they had committed"²

Part Four: Allegiance to Unbelievers as a Cause of Corruption. Believers are commanded to maintain bonds of loyalty with one another and to oppose unbelievers. Allah says: "If you do not do so, there will be discord on earth and great corruption" (Qur'an 8:73). If believers fail to support one another and oppose unbelievers, numerous harms may follow. Truth may become mixed with falsehood, and believers with unbelievers. Major religious duties, including striving in Allah's cause and migration, as well as other purposes of the law, may be neglected³

The intended purpose is to preserve the unity of the Muslim community by avoiding what divides its members. This requires mutual loyalty and opposition to their enemies. Otherwise, disputes and weakness may arise, and their enemies may gain power over them. This is presented as a serious form of corruption.

Subsection Two: The Foundations of Corruption

The principal sources from which corruption on earth arises are identified in the following Qur'anic verse. The prophets opposed these acts and sought to remove them: "Say, 'My Lord has forbidden indecencies, whether open or hidden, sin, unjust aggression, associating with Allah that for which He has sent down no authority, and saying about Allah what you do not know'" (Qur'an 7:33);⁴ this verse identifies five major categories of prohibited conduct.

Part One: Public and Concealed Indecency. This category includes beliefs, statements, and actions that are gravely objectionable. Examples include disbelief, polytheism, false testimony, lying, adultery, and sodomy.

Al-Qurtubī described indecencies as acts of extreme moral ugliness, whether public or concealed. He identified adultery as one of the manifest forms⁵

Part Two: Sin. The Arabic term *ithm* refers to wrongdoing and disobedience. Al-Suddī stated: "Sin means disobedience";⁶ Ibn Kathīr explained that it refers, in this context, to wrongdoing that concerns the person who commits it;⁷ this interpretation is supported by the Prophetic statement: "Sin is what troubles your heart and what you dislike other people discovering"⁸

Sin is conduct regarded as morally reprehensible and harmful, and therefore prohibited by Allah. According to this reasoning, divine prohibition is related to the harm an act causes. Conduct involving harm or corruption falls within this category.

Part Three: Unjust Aggression. The term *baghy* denotes wrongful oppression or retaliation beyond what is lawful;⁹ it includes violations of people's bodily integrity, dignity, and property without a legitimate justification.

Commentators distinguish sin from unjust aggression. The former concerns the wrongdoer's own conduct, while the latter involves harm inflicted on others. Both are prohibited¹⁰

¹ Ibn 'Aṭīyyah al-Andalusī, *Al-Muḥarrar al-Wajīz fī Tafsīr al-Kitāb al-'Azīz*, vol. 5, p. 478, edited by 'Abd al-Salām 'Abd al-Shāfi Muḥammad (Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, Beirut, 1st ed., 1422 AH).

² Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl Āy al-Qur'ān*, vol. 24, p. 410 (Dar al-Tarbiyah wa-al-Turāth, Mecca, Saudi Arabia, P.O. Box 7780, publication date not stated).

³ 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Nāṣir al-Sa'dī, *Taysīr al-Karīm al-Raḥmān*, vol. 2, p. 215 (Maktabat Nizār Muṣṭafā al-Bāz, Mecca, Saudi Arabia, 1415 AH/1995 CE).

⁴ Al-Shūshāwī cited al-Masfāsī as interpreting this verse in light of the five essential objectives of Islamic law. The words "indecencies, whether open or hidden" point to the protection of lineage. The public form includes open prostitution, while the concealed form includes illicit relationships. "Sin" has been interpreted as referring to wine, as in the verse of poetry: "I drank wine until I lost my reason; thus does sin take away the mind." "Unjust aggression" points to the protection of life, property, and honour. "Associating with Allah that for which He has sent down no authority" points to the protection of religion. "Saying about Allah what you do not know" refers to pre-Islamic prohibitions concerning certain categories of animals, including al-baḥīrah, al-sā'ibah, al-waṣīlah, and al-ḥām. See Abū 'Abd Allāh al-Ḥusayn al-Rajrājī al-Shūshāwī, *Raf' al-Niqāb 'an Tanqīḥ al-Shihāb*, vol. 5, p. 312; vols. 1–3 edited by Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Sarrāḥ, and vols. 4–6 edited by 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Jibrīn. Originally two master's theses in Islamic legal theory at the College of Sharia, Riyadh (Maktabat al-Rushd, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, 1st ed., 1425 AH/2004 CE).

⁵ Al-Jāmi' li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān, vol. 7, p. 180.

⁶ Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr, vol. 3, p. 338.

⁷ Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr, vol. 3, p. 339.

⁸ Muslim, *Book of Righteousness, Kinship, and Manners* (14), chapter "The Explanation of Righteousness and Sin" (5), hadith 6608, p. 1235.

⁹ Abū Bakr Jābir al-Jazā'irī, *Aysar al-Tafāsīr li-Kalām al-'Alī al-Kabīr*, p. 446 (Maktabat al-'Ulūm wa-al-Hikam, Medina, Saudi Arabia, 1st ed., 1423 AH/2002 CE).

¹⁰ See Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr, vol. 3, p. 338.

Part Four: Associating Partners with Allah. Polytheism (shirk) means directing acts of worship to someone or something other than Allah. Al-Suddī considered it the foremost form of corruption. It includes directing supplication, sacrifice, vows, hope, and fear to others. It also includes accepting claims of religious authority that prohibit what Allah has permitted or permit what He has prohibited.

Speaking about Allah without knowledge is presented as a foundation of both polytheism and disbelief. A polytheist may claim that another object of worship can provide access to Allah, intercede before Him, or secure a person's needs, as intermediaries are believed to do before earthly rulers. Thus, every act of polytheism involves a claim about Allah without knowledge. However, not every such claim necessarily constitutes polytheism. Claims made without knowledge may also involve denying divine attributes or introducing unauthorized innovations into religion. This category is therefore broader than polytheism¹

Part Five: Speaking about Allah without Knowledge. Divine law seeks human well-being in this life and the next. The authority to establish what is lawful and unlawful belongs to Allah alone, since He created human beings and knows what benefits or harms them. No one else has an independent right to declare lawful things unlawful or unlawful things lawful. The Qur'an therefore criticizes practices of the pre-Islamic period in which people prohibited beneficial things without knowledge. It directs the Prophet to explain what Allah has truly forbidden because of its harmful consequences: "My Lord has forbidden only indecencies ..." (Qur'an 7:33). Such rulings must not be replaced with prohibitions based on unsupported desires.

Subsection Three: The Purpose of Prohibiting Corruption and the Emergence of Revealed Laws to Address It

Part One: The Purpose of Prohibiting Corruption

Allah created the earth in a sound and ordered state suited to human life. He says: "He placed firm mountains upon it, blessed it, and determined its provisions" (Qur'an 41:10). He also says: "We have certainly created humankind in the best form" (Qur'an 95:4).

Allah sent messengers and revealed laws that taught people what would benefit them and encouraged them to pursue it. These laws also warned against corruption and other forms of harm so that people might avoid them.

Corruption disrupts the order that divine law seeks to preserve. The purpose of this order is to enable people to benefit from the good placed on earth. The Qur'an indicates that corruption is prohibited because it results in hardship and distress. Allah says: "Allah knows the corrupter from the reformer. Had Allah willed, He could have placed you in hardship. Indeed, Allah is Almighty and Wise" (Qur'an 2:220). The term 'anat means hardship. Its use in this context suggests that the law seeks to prevent harmful corruption and secure beneficial forms of righteousness.

Corruption may damage the original righteousness of the earth and deprive people of some provisions and sustenance. Allah says: "Corruption has appeared on land and at sea because of what people's hands have earned, so that He may let them taste some of what they have done, that they might return" (Qur'an 30:41). Ibn Kathīr explained that disobedience causes a decline in crops and fruits;² Abū al-ʿĀliyah likewise stated: "Whoever disobeys Allah on earth has corrupted the earth," since the well-being of earth and heaven depends on obedience. The text also cites a report attributed to Abū Dāwūd: "The implementation of one prescribed penalty on earth is dearer to its people than rain for forty mornings";³ the explanation is that enforcing prescribed penalties deters many people from committing forbidden acts. Avoiding sins brings blessings from heaven and earth. The passage also refers to the descent of Jesus (peace be upon him) near the end of time and his rule according to this purified law. After Allah destroys the Antichrist, his followers, and Gog and Magog, the earth will be told to bring forth its blessings. Thus, the establishment of justice increases blessings and goodness. A report in the two Ṣaḥīḥ collections states: "When a wicked person dies, the land, people, trees, and animals find relief from him"^{4,5}

A further reason for prohibiting corruption is the destruction it may cause in this life, before the punishment of the Hereafter. Such harm may also follow when people fail to prevent wrongdoing. Allah says: "Why were there not, among the generations before you, people of virtue who forbade corruption on earth, except for a few whom We saved? Those who did wrong pursued the luxury they had been given, and they were criminals" (Qur'an 11:116). The verse is understood here as linking the destruction of earlier communities to corruption and the failure to oppose it.

Allah also says: "Corruption has appeared on land and at sea because of what people's hands have earned, so that He may let them taste some of what they have done, that they might return" (Qur'an 30:41). The expression "so that He may let them taste" has been interpreted in two ways. The first understands it as describing the outcome of human wrongdoing: people suffer some of its consequences and are thereby called to return to the right path. The second interprets it as indicating purpose. Drought, scarcity, and other disasters are consequences of wrongdoing through which people

¹ See Tafsīr al-Manār, vol. 8, p. 357.

² Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-ʿAẓīm, vol. 6, p. 203.

³ Reported by Ibn Mājah, Book of Prescribed Penalties (20), chapter "The Enforcement of Prescribed Penalties" (3), hadith 2538, (331), p. 432. See Sunan Ibn Mājah, assessed and annotated by Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī, prepared by Mashhūr ibn Ḥasan ʿĀl Salmān (Maktabat al-Maʿārif, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, 1417 AH).

⁴ Reported by al-Bukhārī, Book of Heart-Softening Narrations (81), chapter "The Agonies of Death" (42), hadith 6512, vol. 4, p. 291.

⁵ Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr, vol. 6, p. 203.

experience part of the penalty for their acts in this world, before the full reckoning of the Hereafter. This is linked to the verse: “Whatever affliction befalls you is because of what your hands have earned, yet He pardons much” (Qur’an 42:30)¹

Part Two: The Emergence of Revealed Laws to Address Corruption

Allah originally created the earth in a sound state and formed human beings in the best manner. He made what is on earth available to them and provided the means for material well-being. Allah says: “He has subjected to you all that is in the heavens and all that is on the earth, all from Him” (Qur’an 45:13). Monotheism, guidance, and righteousness formed the innate disposition of human beings from the beginning. This is also reflected in the divine question, “Am I not your Lord?” (Qur’an 7:172).

Allah created human beings and knows what benefits their souls. When Adam descended to earth, Allah promised guidance to his descendants. That guidance would lead them to well-being in this life and the next. The Qur’an states: “He said, ‘Descend from here, all of you, as enemies to one another. When guidance comes to you from Me, whoever follows My guidance will neither go astray nor suffer. But whoever turns away from My remembrance will have a constricted life. We shall raise him blind on the Day of Resurrection.’ He will say, ‘My Lord, why have You raised me blind when I once had sight?’ Allah will say, ‘Thus did Our signs come to you, and you forgot them; so today you will be forgotten’” (Qur’an 20:123–126).

Adam accepted Allah’s covenant for himself and his descendants. Humanity then multiplied and developed the earth. People remained in a state of righteousness for a long period. Allah says: “Humankind was one community, and Allah sent prophets as bearers of good news and as warners” (Qur’an 2:213). They were united in monotheism, faith, guidance, uprightness, and reform. They did not need the sending of messengers until their circumstances changed and corruption emerged. Allah then sent messengers and revealed scriptures and laws with them;² Ibn ‘Abbās said: “Between Adam and Noah were ten generations, all following Islam”³

When corruption spread among the people of the earth, Allah sent Noah to correct their deviation and restore them to the right path. The Qur’an states: “We sent Noah to his people, saying, ‘Warn your people before a painful punishment comes to them.’ He said, ‘My people, I am a clear warner to you. Worship Allah, be mindful of Him, and obey me. He will forgive you some of your sins and grant you respite until an appointed time. When Allah’s appointed time arrives, it cannot be delayed, if only you knew’” (Qur’an 71:1–4).

Noah used various methods to call his people to faith. Yet they responded with denial, arrogance, refusal, stubbornness, and persistence in corruption. Their end was a devastating flood that swept away the wrongdoers and their corruption. Allah saved Noah and the believers with him. In this account, all people thereafter were righteous. Allah says:

“They denied him, but We saved him and those with him in the Ark, and made them successors” (Qur’an 10:73).

Humanity continued to grow. The believers multiplied, and their righteous descendants followed the straight path for a period. They later turned away from that path and departed from divine law, as Noah’s people had done. Allah sent chosen messengers and revealed His guidance to them. He commanded the messengers to call their peoples back to the truth. They encountered denial, followed by destruction. Allah says: “Then after him We sent messengers to their peoples. They came to them with clear proofs, but they would not believe in what they had already denied. Thus do We seal the hearts of those who transgress” (Qur’an 10:74).

Allah sent prophets to reform the innate human disposition in ways suited to the particular needs of their peoples. Their methods differed according to circumstances, times, and communities. Before the mission of the Prophet Muhammad, humanity lived in a period of widespread ignorance during the sixth and seventh centuries CE. Polytheism, superstitions, factional loyalties, tribalism, class divisions, and social and political corruption were widespread. Many sound reformist teachings had been distorted. These included the teachings of prophets and of wise people whose innate dispositions had remained oriented toward the truth. The Prophet (peace be upon him) described this condition in the following report: “Allah looked upon the inhabitants of the earth and detested them, Arabs and non-Arabs alike”;^{4,5} Muhammad (peace be upon him) was then sent with guidance to complete the reformative work of the prophets before him. He sought to reunite people in goodness and guidance, restore the upright monotheistic religion of Abraham, and clarify their differences. Allah says: “It is He who sent His Messenger with guidance and the religion of truth, so that He might make it prevail over all religion” (Qur’an 61:9).

The Prophet (peace be upon him) died after Allah had preserved the Book He revealed. Allah then prepared the Prophet’s Companions to record and spread the Qur’an throughout different lands. They united the Muslim community around it,

¹ See Jamāl al-Dīn al-Qāsimī, *Maḥāsīn al-Ta’wīl*, vol. 13, p. 184, edited by Muḥammad Fu’ād ‘Abd al-Bāqī (Dar al-Fikr, Beirut, Lebanon, 2nd ed., 1398 AH/1978 CE).

² See *Al-Jāmi’ li-Aḥkām al-Qur’ān*, vol. 3, p. 30; and *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr*, vol. 1, p. 374.

³ Reported by al-Ṭabarī (vol. 2, p. 334) and al-Ḥākim (vol. 2, p. 546). The narrators are described as reliable. Al-Ḥākim judged the report authentic according to al-Bukhārī’s criteria, and al-Dhahabī agreed. See *Hidāyat al-Mustanīr bi-Takhrīj Aḥādīth Ibn Kathīr*, p. 89.

⁴ Muslim, *Book of Paradise and Its Delights and Inhabitants* (51), chapter “The Qualities by Which the People of Paradise and Hell May Be Recognized in This World” (16), *hadith* 7309, p. 1367.

⁵ Rīzq Allāh Aḥmad, *Al-Sīrah al-Nabawīyyah fī Zill al-Maṣādir al-Aṣliyyah*, p. 57 (King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, 1st ed., 1412 AH/1992 CE).

preserved the Prophetic Sunnah, and transmitted it to later generations. They also conveyed the divine message to the world¹

The law brought by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) aimed to transform corrupt conditions. The Qur'an describes guidance that "brings them out of darkness into light by His permission and guides them to a straight path" (Qur'an 5:16). Yet the purpose of the law was not simply to replace everything that existed before it. It also retained sound practices from earlier communities. Human societies had preserved valuable customs derived from previous revelations, wise counsel, and sound reasoning. Arabs retained elements of Abrahamic monotheism. Jews preserved elements of an earlier revealed law, and Christians retained some of its teachings and those of Jesus (peace be upon him). Other societies retained elements of earlier legal traditions, including those of ancient Egypt, Greece, and Rome. They also followed principles recognized by sound human nature, such as the view that the unlawful taking of a human life is a crime.

As Ibn 'Āshūr observed: "Among the mercies of Islamic law is that it allowed nations to retain their established customs and particular conditions, provided these were not corrupt." He cited a narration in al-Muwatta' attributed to the Prophet (peace be upon him): "Any house or land divided during the pre-Islamic period remains subject to that division. Any house or land that remained undivided when Islam came is to be divided according to Islam"^{2,3}

Conclusion

This study examined corruption on earth through the occurrences of fasād in the Holy Qur'an. It considered the term's causes and foundations and the legal and moral purposes of prohibiting and resisting corruption. The analysis used an inductive and analytical approach.

The principal findings and recommendations are presented below.

First: Main Findings

In the Qur'anic context discussed here, corruption includes the effects of words and actions that conflict with the sound innate disposition of human beings. It also contradicts the righteousness intended in creation.

The frequent association of corruption with the earth suggests that its effects extend throughout human society. The phenomenon is presented as having a long history, reaching back to the beginning of human life on earth.

The causes of corruption originate in the human self. They include following personal desires, denying blessings, transgression, and allegiance to unbelievers. The latter weakens and fragments the unity of the Muslim community.

Corruption has several major foundations from which other harmful practices develop. These include associating partners with Allah, speaking about Him without knowledge, unjust aggression, and sin. They are manifested in both public and concealed indecency.

The prohibition of corruption aims to prevent the hardship and suffering to which it leads. Divine law therefore seeks to avert harmful conduct and promote what is good and beneficial.

Revealed laws were sent to address corruption that arose after humanity's initial creation. Their purpose, in this account, was to restore the conditions of stability and righteousness needed for human well-being.

Second: Recommendations

On the basis of these findings, the study recommends renewing efforts to invite people to follow divine guidance. Such efforts should encourage adherence to religious obligations and avoidance of prohibited acts, with the aim of well-being in this life and the next. Islam is presented as a comprehensive way of life that resists corruption and the harm, hardship, and distress it brings. This approach seeks to foster righteousness on earth and a good life in the Hereafter. Allah says: "Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while being a believer, We will surely grant them a good life. We will reward them according to the best of what they used to do" (Qur'an 16:97).

References

1. Aḥmad, Rizq Allāh. Al-Sīrah al-Nabawīyyah fī Zill al-Maṣādir al-Aṣliyyah [The Prophetic biography in light of the original sources]. King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, 1st ed., 1412 AH/1992 CE, p. 57.
2. Al-Ashqar, 'Umar Sulaymān. Muḥāḍarāt Islāmiyyah Hādifah [Purposeful Islamic lectures]. Dar al-Nafā'is, Jordan, 1st ed., 1418 AH/1997 CE, p. 26.
3. Al-Bukhārī, Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl. Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī. Publication supervised by 'Alī Ḥasan al-Ḥalabī. Al-Zahrā' li-l-'Ilām al-'Arabī, Cairo, Egypt, n.d.; edition not stated.
4. Al-Jazā'irī, Abū Bakr Jābir. Aysar al-Tafāsīr li-Kalām al-'Alī al-Kabīr [An accessible commentary on the Word of the Most High]. Maktabat al-'Ulūm wa-al-Ḥikam, Medina, Saudi Arabia, 1st ed., 1423 AH/2002 CE, p. 446.
5. Al-Qāsimī, Jamāl al-Dīn. Maḥāsīn al-Ta'wīl [The virtues of interpretation]. Edited by Muḥammad Fu'ād 'Abd al-Bāqī. Dar al-Fikr, Beirut, Lebanon, 2nd ed., 1398 AH/1978 CE, vol. 13, p. 184.
6. Al-Qurtubī, Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad. Al-Jāmi' li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān [Compendium of Qur'anic rulings]. Edited by Ṣidqī Muḥammad Jamīl and 'Irfān al-'Ashshā. Dar al-Fikr, Beirut, Lebanon, 1414 AH/1993 CE, vol. 7, p. 38.

¹ 'Umar Sulaymān al-Ashqar, Muḥāḍarāt Islāmiyyah Hādifah, p. 26 (Dar al-Nafā'is, Jordan, 1st ed., 1418 AH/1997 CE).

² Al-Muwatta', Book of Judgments (26), chapter "Judgment on the Division of Property" (27), hadith 35. Edited by Muḥammad Fu'ād 'Abd al-Bāqī (Dar al-Ḥadīth, Cairo, Egypt).

³ Al-Ṭāhir Ibn 'Āshūr, Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah al-Islāmiyyah, p. 304, edited by Muḥammad al-Ḥabīb Ibn al-Khūjah (Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs, Qatar, 1425 AH/2004 CE).

7. Al-Rajrājī al-Shūshāwī, Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Ḥusayn. Raf‘ al-Niqāb ‘an Tanqīḥ al-Shihāb [Unveiling the revision of al-Shihāb]. Vols. 1–3 edited by Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Sarrāḥ; vols. 4–6 edited by ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Jibrīn. Based on two master’s theses in Islamic legal theory, College of Sharia, Riyadh. Maktabat al-Rushd, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, 1st ed., 1425 AH/2004 CE, vol. 5, p. 312.
8. Al-Sa‘dī, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Nāṣir. Taysīr al-Karīm al-Raḥmān [Facilitating the interpretation of the Words of the Most Merciful]. Maktabat Nizār Muṣṭafā al-Bāz, Mecca, Saudi Arabia, 1415 AH/1995 CE, vol. 2, p. 215.
9. Al-Shawkānī, Muḥammad. Faṭḥ al-Qadīr [The opening of the All-Powerful]. Dar Ibn Kathīr and Dar al-Kalim al-Ṭayyib, Damascus and Beirut, 1st ed., 1414 AH, vol. 4, p. 263.
10. Al-Ṭabarī, Muḥammad ibn Jarīr. Jāmi‘ al-Bayān ‘an Ta’wīl Āy al-Qur’ān [Comprehensive explanation of Qur’anic verses]. Dar al-Tarbiyah wa-al-Turāth, Mecca, Saudi Arabia, P.O. Box 7780, n.d., vol. 24, p. 410.
1. Ibn ‘Ashūr, al-Ṭāhir. Al-Taḥrīr wa-al-Tanwīr [Liberation and enlightenment]. Al-Dār al-Tūnisiyyah li-l-Nashr, 1984, vol. 12, p. 138.
11. Ibn ‘Ashūr, al-Ṭāhir. Maqāṣid al-Sharī‘ah al-Islāmiyyah [Objectives of Islamic law]. Edited by Muḥammad al-Ḥabīb Ibn al-Khūjah. Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs, Qatar, 1425 AH/2004 CE, p. 304.
12. Ibn ‘Aṭīyyah al-Andalusī. Al-Muḥarrar al-Wajīz fī Tafsīr al-Kitāb al-‘Azīz [The concise commentary on the Noble Book]. Edited by ‘Abd al-Salām ‘Abd al-Shāfi Muḥammad. Dar al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, Beirut, 1st ed., 1422 AH, vol. 5, p. 478.
13. Ibn Kathīr, Abū al-Fidā’. Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-‘Azīm [Commentary on the Great Qur’an]. Dar al-Rashād al-Ḥadīthah, Casablanca, Morocco, 1989, vol. 6, p. 203.
14. Ibn Mājah. Sunan Ibn Mājah. Hadith assessment and commentary by Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī; prepared by Mashhūr ibn Ḥasan Āl Salmān. Maktabat al-Ma‘ārif, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, 1417 AH.
15. Ibn Mufliḥ al-Ḥanbalī. Al-Ādāb al-Shar‘iyyah wa-al-Minaḥ al-Mar‘iyyah [Islamic etiquette and prescribed virtues]. Ālam al-Kutub, vol. 3, p. 233.
16. Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah. Al-Dā’ wa-al-Dawā’ [The disease and its remedy]. Dar al-Ma‘rifah, Morocco, 1st ed., 1418 AH/1997 CE, p. 106.
17. Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah. Tarīq al-Hijratayn wa-Bāb al-Sa‘ādatayn [The path of the two migrations and the gate to the two forms of happiness]. Edited by Muḥammad Ajmal al-Iṣlāḥī; hadith references by Zā‘id ibn Aḥmad al-Nashīrī; reviewed by Sa‘ūd ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-‘Arīfi and ‘Alī ibn Muḥammad al-‘Imrān. Dar ‘Aṭā‘at al-‘Ilm, Riyadh, and Dar Ibn Ḥazm, Beirut, 4th ed., 1440 AH/2019 CE, vol. 2, pp. 588–589.
18. Ibn Rajab al-Ḥanbalī. Al-Jāmi‘ li-Tafsīr al-Imām Ibn Rajab al-Ḥanbalī [Collected exegesis of Imam Ibn Rajab al-Hanbali]. Compiled and arranged by Abū Mu‘ādh Ṭāriq ibn ‘Awaḍ Allāh ibn Muḥammad. Dar al-‘Āṣimah, Saudi Arabia, 1st ed., 1422 AH/2001 CE, vol. 1, p. 163.
19. Ibn Taymiyyah, Abū al-‘Abbās. Al-Tafsīr al-Kāmil li-Ibn Taymiyyah [The complete exegesis of Ibn Taymiyyah]. Compiled, studied, edited, and sourced by ‘Umar ibn Gharāmah al-‘Amrawī. Dar al-Fikr, Beirut, Lebanon, 1st ed., 1423 AH/2002 CE, vol. 5, p. 215.
20. Ibn Yūsuf, ‘Ādil. Hidāyat al-Mustanīr bi-Takhrij Aḥādīth Ibn Kathīr [Guidance through the verification of hadiths cited by Ibn Kathir], p. 89. Publication details not stated in the original.
21. Mālik ibn Anas. Al-Muwatta’, Book of Judgments (26), chapter on the division of property (27), hadith 35. Edited by Muḥammad Fu‘ād ‘Abd al-Bāqī. Dar al-Ḥadīth, Cairo, Egypt.
22. Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj al-Naysābūrī. Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim. Prepared by Muḥammad ibn Nizār Tamīm and Haytham ibn Nizār Tamīm. Dar al-Arqam, Beirut, Lebanon, n.d.; edition not stated.
23. Riḍā, Muḥammad Rashīd. Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-Ḥakīm (Tafsīr al-Manār) [Commentary on the Wise Qur’an]. Egyptian General Book Organization, 1990.