

God and Allah on war and peace

In Qur'an and Bible there are many passages on war and peace. Surprisingly the Qur'an is more peace-loving than Muslim terrorists would have us believe. Even the word Jihad, from which the so-called Jihadists take their name, has a totally different meaning in the Qur'an, which condemns the murder of innocent persons, of prisoners of war, and those of different faiths.

Now is the moment to read more:

Jihad - the Good Fight

In this context, a misunderstanding must be cleared up about the word *Jihad*. It is often associated with aggressive war and criminal terrorism. Actually, it means quite the opposite. In most instances, *Jihad* has nothing to do with violence. It is based on the root j-h-d and means '*making a great effort to achieve an objective*'. Muhammad is recorded in the Hadith (tradition) to have told his followers after battle:

"You have arrived with an excellent arrival, you have come from the Lesser Jihad to the Greater Jihad - the striving of a servant (of Allah) against his desires."

Thus the peaceful struggle against evil, or the Satan in oneself, the striving for the good against odds, can be considered as the Greater Jihad, a duty for every Muslim.

Hadith recorded by Imaam Khateeb al-Baghdaadi in *Taareekh Baghdad*, Hafiz al-Daylami (ra) in *al-Firdaws* and al-Bayhaqi in *al-Zuhd*. *Faydhul Qadeer* vol.4 pg.511

The well-known expression '*al-jihad fi sabil*' or '*Strive on the way of Allah.*' is for most Muslims not a call for violence, but for effort directed towards the virtues encouraged by God. In the same sense, the Bible calls for fighting the good fight.

As for the use of violence, it is only allowed in carefully determined circumstances. A particular war can be considered just only if it is waged according to the legal principles stipulated in the Qur'an. This Lesser Jihad, *Jihad bis Saif* (striving with arms), is a defensive, limited war.

Historical wars as a context in Bible and Qur'an

Many of the passages on war in Bible and Qur'an should be read in their historical context. Jewish, Christian and Muslim traditions alike are haunted by the humiliating experience of a people driven from home, of followers of a faith maltreated. For the Jews, slavery in Egypt and the deportation to Babylon was the basic experience; for the early Christians it was persecution by the Roman authorities; for Muslims, this primal humiliating experience is the migration from Mecca. For all three religious traditions these remained as deeply rooted memories evoking fear and bitterness.

In all three traditions, redress was sought by taking up arms against what was perceived as the incarnation of Evil. Hope was drawn from military success. If the Battle of Jericho for the Promised Land was for Jews a consoling memory, for early Christians it was the promised recapture or resurrection of a (New) Jerusalem; for Muslims it was the conquest of Mecca.

Historical wars in the Hebrew Bible

The Hebrew Bible relates the stories of wars involving the Children of Israel. The heroic tales of Moses and his successor Joshua, who vanquished Jericho, are spun in gruesome and sometimes genocidal detail. The idea that 'all is fair in war' was not a Jewish invention, but a widely practiced way of expelling law from the sphere of warfare. Most contemporary Jews and Christians are unable to relate to such unrestrained violence, especially if the weak - women, children, and animals - are victimized. The idea that God sanctions such mass murder runs counter to their image of God the Creator, the God of Love and Righteousness. Christians and Jews now perceive this image of a destructive God as highly antiquated.

The same sentiment holds true for the idea expressed in the Book of Deuteronomy that religious differences legitimize total destruction. The notion that God could order the massacre of the elderly, women and children for religious reasons is considered totally outdated.

Other militant passages in the Hebrew Bible lament the downfall of Jerusalem and rejoice at the subsequent downfall of the powers oppressing the Jews, such as Babylon. The emphasis is on confrontation, on 'us versus them', with the enemy defined as the ultimate evil. The identification of Babel, the historical enemy of Israel, with evil as such is echoed in the Qur'an.

During the course of the writing of the Hebrew Bible over many centuries, the image of God developed in a milder direction. War may no longer be as totally destructive as it was at Jericho. After a victory, the defeated population is no longer exterminated, but is forced to labor or deported. God favors the weaker party. He protects David from the superior strength of the giant Goliath. However when David, as anointed king, waged war too readily and too roughly, God punished him. He was forced to cede to his wise son Solomon the honor of building God's temple.

Humanitarian aid for the enemy... the Hebrew Bible and New Testament

This development in the direction of mildness is reflected in the humane passages on aiding the enemy.

"If your enemies are hungry, give them something to eat. And if they are thirsty, give them something to drink." Proverbs 25:21 Romans, 12:20

The Revelation of a heavenly war in the name of Christ

However in the last book of the New Testament total warfare reappears on a scale more vast than found in the Hebrew Bible. The war, encompassing the whole universe, was predicted in the Revelation to a Christian named John. It is the only extensive description of war in the New Testament. It is a war to be waged by the heavenly hosts commanded by the war angel Michael against the icons of evil: the Beast, the False Prophet, the Devil and the Whore of Babylon.

This book was written when the early Christians had much to fear from persecution by the Romans. It is full of understandable bitterness and hatred, but it does contradict the teaching of Jesus. It has inspired Christians over the ages to go to war against whoever was at the time considered as 'the Antichrist', under the banner of the very man who preached love towards the enemy. The heavenly wars of the Last Day are now often understood in metaphorical terms.

The pacifism and tolerance of Christ

In the Gospels, the development towards a milder image of God which started in the Hebrew Bible is continued, but, at the same time, a major leap is made. Jesus seeks to break with confrontational thinking, with the notion of us-versus-them, by turning the other cheek, and loving even the enemy. Jesus himself did not resist being arrested and put to death. He warned that he who lived by the sword would die by it.

Muhammad versus the polytheists of Mecca

The Qur'an contains many verses about Muhammad's historic struggle against the so-called pagans, or unbelievers. The term 'unbeliever' refers to the Quraish, and their allies the Bakr, the most important tribes in Mecca, the town of Muhammad's birth. They were champions of polytheism. They made life extremely difficult for the prophet of monotheism. In the end, Muhammad and the followers of the new faith migrated to Medina. From there, they engaged in armed struggle against the polytheists of Mecca. The first decisive victory of the Muslims at the Battle of Badr in March 624, or Ramadan 2AH, is mentioned in the Qur'an. The sometimes violent conflict between Muhammad and the polytheists of Mecca offers a historical explanation of the term 'unbeliever'. It cannot simply be applied to the 21st century, but must be understood in its historic context. The last also holds for the violent conflict with Jews living in Medina, which was of a political rather than a religious nature.

In the war between Muhammad and the inhabitants of Mecca, peaceful principles also play an important role. In the historical context, this is understandable. After all,

Muhammad was fighting his own countrymen, with whom he hoped to settle down peacefully after the war. As a result, refraining from all-out destruction was advisable. Muhammad and his followers returned on two occasions to their hometown of Mecca, carrying only light arms, as was the custom for pilgrims. At first, they held what would today be called a peaceful sit-in. Muhammad simply demanded to be allowed to pay his reverences to the Ka'aba, an unalienable right for all pilgrims. A compromise was reached, allowing Muhammad to return to visit the sanctuary a year later. Treaties were signed, and only after they had been violated did renewed fighting break out. Muhammad was exhorted to intensify violence step by step. He was urged to grant the opponent a cooling-off period, to try persuasion first, then deterrence and to resort to armed conflict only if these principles had no effect. Once hostilities were resumed, Muhammad was obliged to limit the means of warfare: taking the enemy prisoner rather than totally destroying him, and keeping open options for a peaceful settlement. In the end, Mecca was captured with relatively little bloodshed; those who did not resist were spared. They were not forced to convert to Islam. As it is stated in the Qur'an:

"Let there be no compulsion in religion." ² The Heifer, 256

Likewise the 'People of the Book', Christians and Jews living in areas conquered by Islam, were not subject to forced conversion or expulsion, but were protected by Muslim rulers in exchange for a special protection tax.

Thus, out of the historic situation, and what was known about the Bible, Divine inspiration led to a Qur'anic approach to war was developed, which remains relevant today. On the issue of war, one could say that the Qur'an represents a middle ground, between the extremely destructive passages in the Hebrew Bible and Revelation on the one hand, and the pacifism of Christ on the other. This becomes visible as aggressive verses in the Qur'an are typically enveloped in milder statements about repentance and forgiveness.

International law and war/ Jihad

Bible

Fight the good fight

Try your best to please God and to be like him. Be faithful, loving, dependable, and gentle. Fight a good fight for the faith and claim eternal life.¹ Timothy 6:11-12

I have fought well. I have finished the race, and I have been faithful.
2 Timothy

4:7

We live in this world, but we don't...fight our battles with the weapons of this world. Instead, we use God's power that can destroy fortresses. We destroy arguments and ...capture people's thoughts...

2 Corinthians

10:3-5

Historic wars in the Bible

Moses and Joshua

Moses sent them off to war. The Israelites fought against the Midianites, just as the LORD had commanded Moses. They killed all the men...They also burned down the Midianite towns and villages. Moses became angry with the army commanders and said,

"I can't believe you let the women live! You must put to

Qur'an

Greater Jihad – strive for the good

To each is a goal to which Allah turns him; then strive together (as in a race) toward all that is good.

2 The Heifer,148

And strive in His cause as you ought to strive, (with sincerity and under discipline).²² The Pilgrimage,78

Then fight in the cause of Allah...

2 The Heifer, 244

And those who strive in Our (Cause)- We will certainly guide them to Our Paths: For verily Allah is with those who do right.

29 The Spider, 69

Historic wars in the Qur'an

War against Muhammad

The punishment of those who wage war against Allah and His Messenger, and strive with might and main for mischief through the land is:

execution, or crucifixion, or the cutting off of hands and feet from opposite sides, or exile from the land: that is their disgrace in

death every boy and all the women who have ever had sex. But do not kill the young women who have never had sex. You may keep them for yourselves." Numbers 31: 6-7, 14-15, 17-18

Meanwhile, the people of Jericho had been locking the gates in their town wall because they were afraid of the Israelites. No one could go out or come in. With my help, you and your army will defeat the king of Jericho and his army, and you will capture the town. Here is how to do it: march slowly around Jericho once a day for six days. But on the seventh day, march slowly around the town seven times while the priests blow their trumpets. Then the priests will blast on their trumpets, and everyone else will shout. The wall will fall down, and your soldiers can go straight in from every side.

The walls of Jericho fell flat. Then the soldiers rushed up the hill, went straight into the town, and captured it. They killed everyone, men and women, young and old...They even killed every cow, sheep, and donkey.

Joshua 6: 1-5,

20-25

King David

David defeated Goliath with a sling and a rock. He killed him without even using a sword. 1

this world, and a heavy punishment is theirs in the Hereafter; Except for those who repent before they fall into your Power: in that case, know that Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

⁵ The Table Spread, 33-34

Allah had helped you at Badr, when you were a contemptible little force; ³ Al-Imran,123 But if they (polytheists of Mecca ed.) violate their oaths after their covenant, (with Muhammad ed.) and taunt you for your Faith, - you fight the chiefs of unfaith: for their oaths are nothing to them: that thus they may be restrained. Will you not fight people who violated their oaths, plotted to expel the Messenger, (Muhammad ed.), and took the aggressive by being the first (to assault) you? ⁹ Repentance,12-13

And slay (fight ed.) them wherever you catch them, and turn them out from where they have turned you out. ² The Heifer,191

David and Goliath

...the faithful ones... said: "This day we cannot cope with Goliath and his forces." But those who

Samuel 17:50

David...captured the city. David made the people...tear down the city walls [with iron picks and axes, and then he put them to work making bricks.² Samuel 12: 29, 31

...David stood up and said: "I wanted to build...a temple, but the LORD has refused to let me build it, because he said I have killed too many people in battle. The LORD said to me, 'Your son Solomon will build my temple, and it will honour me. Solomon will be like a son to me, and I will be like a father to him.'" ¹ Chronicles 28: 2, 3, 6

Carried into captivity

Babylonia

King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylonia sent troops to attack Jerusalem soon after Jehoiachin became king. Jehoiachin immediately surrendered...He also led away as prisoners the Jerusalem officials, the military leaders, and the skilled workers - ten thousand in all. Only the very poorest people were left in Judah. ² Kings 24:10,12, 14

Beside the rivers of Babylon we thought about Jerusalem, and we

were convinced that they must meet Allah said: "How oft, by Allah's will, has a small force vanquished a big one? Allah is with those that steadfastly persevere." By Allah's will they routed them; and David slew Goliath. ² The Heifer, 249,251

We bestowed Grace...on David...And We made the iron soft for him, (Commanding) "You make coats of mail, balancing rings of chain armor, and you work righteousness; for be sure I see...all that you do." ³⁴ The City of Saba,10-11

It was We Who taught him the making of coats of mail for your benefit, to guard you from each other's violence: will you then be grateful? ²¹ The Prophets, 80

Driven from home

The evil Babylon

...the evil ones, teaching men magic, and such things as came down at Babylon...² The Heifer 102

Martyrs

Those who have left their homes, or been driven out therefrom, or suffered harm in My Cause, or fought or been slain,- verily, I will blot out from them their iniquities, and admit them into Gardens with rivers flowing beneath- a reward from the Presence of Allah, and from His

sat down and cried.

Babylon, you are doomed! May the Lord bless everyone who beats your children against the rocks! ^{Psalm 137:1}

Religious wars

Whenever you capture towns in the land the LORD your God is giving you, be sure to kill all the people and animals. He has commanded you to completely wipe out the Hittites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. If you allow them to live, they will persuade you to worship their disgusting gods, and you will be unfaithful to the LORD.

^{Deuteronomy 20:17-}

18

Children, this is the last hour. You heard that the enemy of Christ would appear at this time, and many of Christ's enemies have already appeared. And a liar is anyone who says that Jesus isn't truly Christ. Anyone who says this is an enemy of Christ and rejects both the Father and the Son. ^{1 John} 2:18,22

Presence is the best of rewards. ³

^{Al-Tmran 195}

Legitimate goals of war against unbelievers

Fight in the cause of Allah those who fight you, but do not transgress limits; for Allah does not love transgressors. And slay them wherever you catch them, and turn them out from where they have turned you out...Such is the reward for those who suppress faith.

But if they cease, Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful...but if they cease, let there be no hostility except to those who practise oppression. ^{2 The Heifer, 190 -}

¹⁹³

And why should you not fight in the cause of Allah and of those who, being weak, are ill-treated (and oppressed)? - men, women, and children, whose cry is: "Our Lord! rescue us from this town, whose people are oppressors; and raise for us from You one who will protect; and raise for us from You one who will help!" ^{4 The Women,75}

Did not Allah check one set of people by means of another, there would surely have been pulled down monasteries,

churches, synagogues, and mosques, in which the name of Allah is commemorated in abundant measure. Allah will certainly aid those who aid His (cause).

22 The Pilgrimage,

40

Revelation of heavenly war

A war broke out in heaven. Michael and his angels were fighting against the dragon...But the dragon lost the battle. Yes, that old snake...is known as the devil and Satan.

Revelation,

^{12:7-9}One of the seven angels...said to me, "I will show you how God will punish that shameless prostitute... The woman was dressed in purple and scarlet robes, and she wore jewelry made of gold, precious stones, and pearls. In her hand she held a gold cup filled with the filthy and nasty things she had done.

On her forehead a mysterious name was written: I AM THE GREAT CITY OF BABYLON, THE MOTHER OF EVERY IMMORAL AND FILTHY THING ON EARTH.

Revelation 17: 1, 4-5

Means of war limited

Fighting is prescribed for you, and you dislike it. ...do not transgress limits.

2 The Heifer, 216, 190

(But the treaties are) not dissolved with those Pagans with whom you have entered into alliance and who have not subsequently failed you in anything, nor aided any one against you. So fulfill your engagements with them to the end of their term: for Allah loves the righteous. ⁹ Repentance, 4

If you fear treachery from any group, throw back (their Covenant) to them, (so as to be) on equal terms.

Against them make ready your strength to the utmost of your power, including steeds of war, to strike terror into (the hearts of) the enemies...⁸The Spoils of War, 58, 60

If one amongst the Pagans ask

I also saw the beast and all kings of the earth come together. They fought against the rider on the white horse and against his army. But the beast was captured and so was the false prophet. The beast and the false prophet were thrown alive into a lake of burning sulphur. But the rest of their army was killed by the sword that came from the mouth of the rider on the horse. Then birds stuffed themselves on the dead bodies. Revelation 19:19-21

Jesus: love your enemies

You know that you have been taught, "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." But I (Jesus ed.) tell you not to try to get even with a person who has done something to you. When someone slaps your right cheek, turn and let that person slap your other cheek.

You have heard people say, "Love your neighbors and hate your enemies." But I (Jesus ed.) tell you to love your enemies and pray for anyone who ill-treats you. Then you will be acting like your Father in heaven." Matthew 5:38-39, 43-45

Jesus replied, "My friend, why are you here?" The men grabbed Jesus and arrested him. One of Jesus' followers pulled out a sword. He struck the servant of

you for asylum, grant it to him...and then escort him to where he can be secure. ⁹

Repentance, 6

Therefore, when you meet the Unbelievers (in fight), smite at their necks; at length, when you have thoroughly subdued them, bind a bond firmly (on them)...until the war lays down its burdens...thereafter (is the time for) either generosity or ransom'

47 The Prophet,

4

War termination

Fight those who do not believe in Allah nor the Last Day, nor hold that forbidden which has been forbidden by Allah and His Messenger, nor acknowledge the Religion of Truth, (even if they are) of the People of the Book, until they pay the Jizya tax ed.) with willing submission, and feel themselves subdued. ⁹ Repentance, 29

But if the enemy incline towards peace, you (also) incline towards peace, and trust in Allah...

8 The Spoils of War,

61

It may be that Allah will grant love (and friendship) between you and those whom you (now) hold as enemies. For Allah has power (over all things); And Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

the high priest and cut off his ear.
But Jesus told him, "Put your
sword away. Anyone who lives by
fighting will die by fighting." ^{Matthew}
26:50-52

If your enemies are hungry, give
them something to eat. And if
they are thirsty, give them
something to drink. ^{Proverbs, 25:21}

The Scriptures also say, "If your
enemies are hungry, give them
something to eat. And if they are
thirsty, give them something to
drink." ^{Romans 12:20}

God ends war and brings peace

God brings wars to an end all
over the world. He breaks the
arrows, shatters the spears, and
burns the shields. ^{Psalms 46:9}

The Lord said, "I will go with you
and give you peace." ^{Exodus 33:14}

A child has been born for us. His
names will be Wonderful
Advisor...Mighty God...Prince of
Peace... peace will last forever.
^{Isaiah 9:6-7}

God blesses those people who
make peace. They will be called
his children! ^{Matthew 5:9}

60 The Woman to be

Examined, 7

And fight them until there is no
more tumult or oppression, and
there prevail justice and faith in
Allah;
but if they cease, let there be no
hostility except to those who
practise oppression. ^{2 The Heifer, 193}

Allah guides to peace

...and that He will change (their
state), after the fear in which they
(lived), to one of security and
peace: ^{24 The Light, 55}

Allah is He...the Source of
Peace...the Preserver of Safety...
^{59 The Gathering, 23}

...Allah calls to the Home of
Peace. ^{10:Yunus,25}

...Allah guides all who seek His
good pleasure to ways of peace
and safety... ^{5 The Table Spread, 16}

For them will be a Home of Peace
in the presence of their Lord.

^{6 The Cattle, 127}