

# JIHAD

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>I. JIHAD DEFINED</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>A. STRUGGLE, STRIVING</b>	<b>1</b>
1. Internal	2
2. External, for the cause of Allah	3
<b>B. PROMOTING ISLAM, DAWAH</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>II. REQUIREMENT OF JIHAD</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>A. SIXTH PILLAR OF ISLAM</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>B. FOR MEN: REQUIRED</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>C. FOR WOMEN: OPTIONAL</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>III. PURPOSE OF JIHAD</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>A. RID THE WORLD OF POLYTHEISTS/DISBELIEVERS</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>B. SPREAD ISLAM</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>C. TEST THE TRUE FOLLOWERS OF ALLAH</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>D. OBTAIN BOOTY</b>	<b>14</b>
1. 1/5 to Muhammad, Allah	16
2. To the fighters individually and collectively	16
3. No portion to women	17
4. The Ongoing Quest for booty	17
<b>E. ASSURE A PLACE IN PARADISE</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>F. USHER IN “THE HOUR” OF JUDGMENT</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>IV. METHOD OF JIHAD</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>A. TAKING DISBELIEVERS CAPTIVE</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>B. KILLING DISBELIEVERS</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>C. PSYCHOLOGICAL JIHAD</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>V. JIHAD IN HISTORY</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>A. LIFETIME OF MUHAMMAD</b>	<b>23</b>
1. From Ibn Ishaq’s Sira Rasul Allah	23
2. From Qur’an	28

<b>B. POST MUHAMMAD CRUSADES</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>VI. CRITICISM OF JIHAD</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>A. JIHAD VS. CRUSADES</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>B. GREATER VS. LESSER JIHAD</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>C. ABROGATION OF QURAN</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>VII. CONCLUSION</b>	<b>35</b>

*These things I have spoken to you, that you should not be made to stumble. They will put you out of the synagogues; yes, the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service. And these things they will do to you because they have not known the Father nor Me.*

- John 16:1-3

# JIHAD

Since the events of 9/11/01, the word “jihad” has become almost a common household term. This word has been used prolifically in the media, in politics, and in religious discussions, particularly when discussing Islam. But what exactly is jihad? What does the term mean today and how has it been defined historically? Is jihad taught in the Qur’an and the Hadith (traditions attributed to Muhammad) and if so, what do these sources say about jihad? More importantly, what did the founder of Islam portray this “jihad” to be and what example did he set for his future adherents of Islam to follow?

I will be addressing these questions and more. I will begin by defining jihad, both in the historical context of Islam and as the term is defined by some modern day thinkers, both Muslim and non-Muslim. I will then discuss the requirement for participation in jihad as revealed in the Qur’an and Hadith. Next, I will investigate the purpose of jihad as it has been used since the time of Muhammad, and I will examine particular examples of jihad by Muhammad and his successors. Finally, I will conclude by discussing some of the common criticisms of jihad, such as the oft-cited attempt to compare Islamic jihad with the Christian crusades.

## I. Jihad defined

The word ‘jihad’ has a somewhat broad lexical meaning.

### A. STRUGGLE, STRIVING

At the most basic level the word ‘jihad’ means to strive or struggle, particularly as it applies to the desire of Muslims to please Allah. Jihad is defined most often as striving in the way of Allah, struggling to do that which pleases Allah, or exerting oneself with regard to one’s religion. The Encyclopedia of Islam says of jihad, “In law, according to general doctrine and in historical tradition, the jihad consists of military action with the object of the expansion of Islam and, if need be, its defense.”<sup>1</sup> One scholar who has studied Islam extensively defines jihad as warfare with spiritual significance,<sup>2</sup> although the common understanding is that this warfare can be either external or internal. By most accounts, though, jihad is defined as “warfare authorized by a legitimate representative of the Muslim community for the sake of an issue that is universally, or nearly universally, acknowledged to be of critical importance for the entire community against an admitted enemy of Islam.”<sup>3</sup>

Since jihad has both an internal application as well as an external one, we must examine both to arrive at a comprehensive understanding of what jihad actually entails.

---

<sup>1</sup> Encyclopedia of Islam, quoted in David Cook, *Understanding Jihad* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005), 2.

<sup>2</sup> David Cook, *Understanding Jihad* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005), 2.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

## 1. Internal

One common definition of jihad is that of an internal struggle, or a struggle against the inner self or inner desires. This definition is one preferred by moderate Muslims as well as those in the media and academia who would have us believe that Islam has no historical connection at all to violence and is purely a religion of peace. For example, one official of the European Union who is involved in an effort to remove from the lexicon of EU documents the term “Islamic Terrorism” notes, “jihad is a perfectly positive concept of trying to fight the evil within yourself.”<sup>4</sup>

There does appear to be some vague support in the Qur’an and Hadith for the idea of a spiritual jihad or struggle. Cook notes, “some verses in the Qur’an appear to describe a purely spiritual striving.”<sup>5</sup> For example, Sura 2:218 says “Lo! those who believe, and those who emigrate (to escape the persecution) and strive in the way of Allah, these have hope of Allah’s mercy” (Pickthal). According to some modern Islamic scholars, “Jihad is entirely peaceable and represents the exertion of spiritual warfare waged by the faithful against the lower, or evil, soul.”<sup>6</sup> Bat Ye’or also notes that some well-respected Islamic scholars today maintain that jihad is only a moral struggle.<sup>7</sup> However, it seems that the beginnings of a non-violent or demilitarized concept of jihad in ancient Islamic literature is a late development that can be traced to the eighth and ninth centuries, long after the death of Muhammad.<sup>8</sup>

Outside of a few vague references, jihad as a spiritual struggle lacks any support in the Islamic canonical literature. For example, in Bukhari, of the 72 times the word “jihad” is used, it always speaks of fighting a war in the cause of Allah. This lack of support smacks of dishonesty among those who attempt to spiritualize jihad. Notes Cook, “(John) Esposito [a proponent of spiritual jihad]...spiritualizes what is an unambiguously concrete and militant doctrine, without a shred of evidence from the Qur’an or any of the classical sources, in which the jihad and fighting is against real human enemies, and not the devil.”<sup>9</sup>

Furthermore, when addressing the issue of jihad, Bukhari also includes the possibility of martyrdom as a possible consequence of jihad. However, becoming a martyr is an odd concept incompatible with jihad if jihad is limited to an internal struggle alone.

In summary then, despite what modern day scholars may claim, jihad as a concept has almost been inextricably linked with some sort of military action, is seldom spoken of apart from physical exertion or struggle on Allah’s behalf, and as an internal struggle has a late development.

---

<sup>4</sup> Mark Trevelyan, “EU Lexicon to shun term ‘Islamic Terrorism’,” [on-line], available at: [http://today.reuters.co.uk/news/newsarticle.aspx?type=topNews&storyid=2006-04-11T091529Z\\_01\\_L22771047\\_RTRUKOC\\_0\\_UK-SECURITY-EU-LANGUAGE.xml](http://today.reuters.co.uk/news/newsarticle.aspx?type=topNews&storyid=2006-04-11T091529Z_01_L22771047_RTRUKOC_0_UK-SECURITY-EU-LANGUAGE.xml), accessed 4/14/2006.

<sup>5</sup> Cook, 32.

<sup>6</sup> Quoted in Cook, 2.

<sup>7</sup> Bat Ye’or, *Eurabia: The Euro-Arab Axis* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2005), 30.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>9</sup> Cook, 42.

## 2. External, for the cause of Allah

Both in literature and in the example of Muhammad, jihad is an external, physical exertion or striving, most often associated with physical violence of some sort, to advance the cause of Allah. Jihad may be direct, confrontational warfare, or may be indirect warfare, which we call terrorism. Whether warfare or terrorism, jihad is also strongly associated with martyrdom.

### a) Warfare

The first aspect of external jihad involves the concept of direct warfare. One well-respected manual on Islamic law defines jihad as the “means to war against non-Muslims, and is etymologically derived from *mujahada*, signifying warfare to establish the religion.”<sup>10</sup> The footnotes to Sahih Bukhari, book 56 (The Book of Jihad), provide an even more in-depth definition: “*Al-Jihad* (Holy Fighting) in Allah’s cause (with full force of numbers and weaponry), is given the utmost importance in Islam, and is one of the pillars (on which it stands). By *Jihad* Islam is established, Allah’s Word is made superior, and His religion (Islam) is propagated.”<sup>11</sup> And again according to Islamic law, the “details concerning *jihad* are found in the accounts of the **military expeditions** of the Prophet.”<sup>12</sup> There is no sense of an internal struggle found from any of these reliable and trusted sources. The struggle is an external one.

Jihad as warfare has enormous support in the canonical literature of Islam. We find over 160 verses (ayat) in the Qur’an which speak of jihad as warfare or fighting. For a sample, consider the following (translation by Muhammad Taqi-ud-Din Al-Hilali and Muhammad Mushin Khan):

Sura 2:216 – Jihad (**holy fighting** in Allah’s cause) is ordained for you (Muslims)...

Sura 4:74 -- ...whoso  **fights in the cause of Allah**, and is **killed** or gets victory, We shall bestow on him a great reward.

Sura 4:95 – Not equal are those of the believers who sit (at home), except those who are disabled (by injury or are blind or lame), and those who **strive hard and fight** in the Cause of Allah **with their** wealth and their **lives**.

Sura 8:39 – **Fight them** until there is no more *Fitnah* (disbelief and polytheism, i.e. worshipping others besides Allah) and the religion (worship) will be for Allah alone.

---

<sup>10</sup> Ahmed ibn Naqib al-Misri, *Reliance of the Traveller (‘Umdat al-Salik): A Classic Manual of Islamic Sacred Law*, Revised Ed., trans. Nuh Ha Mim Keller (Beltsville, MD: Amana, 1994), section o9.0.

<sup>11</sup> *The Translations of the Meanings of Sahih Al-Bukhari*, 9 vols., Muhammad Mushin Khan, translator (Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: Darussalam, 1997), 4:44.

<sup>12</sup> *Reliance of the Traveller*, section o9.0

Sura 8:57 – So if you gain mastery over them in war, **punish them severely**...so that they may learn a lesson.

Sura 8:60 – And **make ready** against them all you can of power including **steeds of war** (tanks, planes, missiles, artillery) to threaten the enemy of Allah and your enemy...

Sura 8:65 – O Prophet (Muhammad)! Urge the believers to **fight**.

Sura 9:29 – **Fight** against those who (1) believe not in Allah, (2) nor in the Last Day, (3) nor forbid that which has been forbidden by Allah and His Messenger, (4) and those who acknowledge not the religion of truth (i.e. Islam) among the people of the Scripture (Jews and Christians)...

Sura 9:123 – O you who believe! **Fight those of the disbelievers** who are close to you, and let them find harshness in you.

Sura 47:4 – So, **when you meet (in fight—Jihad in Allah’s cause)** those who disbelieve, **smite (their) necks** till when you have **killed and wounded** many of them...

Sura 47:20 – But when a decisive *Surah* (explaining and ordering things) and **fighting (*Jihad*—holy fighting in Allah’s cause) is mentioned (ordained) therein**, you will see those whose hearts is a disease (of hypocrisy) looking at you with a look of one fainting to death.

Sura 61:4, 10-12 - Verily, **Allah loves those who fight** in His Cause in rows as if they were a solid structure... O you who believe! Shall I guide you to a trade that will save you from a painful torment? That you believe in Allah and His messenger Muhammad, and that **you strive hard and fight with your wealth and your lives**... if you do so, He will forgive you your sins and admit you into Gardens under which rivers flow, and pleasant dwellings in Paradise...”

Note that none of the verses above speak of jihad as anything other than warfare. All revelations of jihad in the Qur’an coincide with military activity.<sup>13</sup> There is not even the smallest hint of jihad as a spiritual struggle. Furthermore, based on some of these verses, it seems that the religious obligation of Muslims to fight the Christians and Jews required a permanent state of war.<sup>14</sup>

Bukhari also wrote extensively of jihad, and in nearly every instance it involved an armed or physical conflict. Some examples (cited by Hadith number):

---

<sup>13</sup> Cook, 7.

<sup>14</sup> Bat Ye’or, *The Decline of Eastern Christianity under Islam: From Jihad to Dhimmitude* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1996), 48.



2783 and 2825 – “When you are called (by the Muslim ruler) for *Jihad* (holy fighting in Allah’s cause) go forth immediately.”

2790 – “Paradise has one hundred grades which Allah has reserved for the *Mujahidun* [jihad warriors] who fight in His Cause...’

2924 – “The Prophet then said, ‘The first army amongst my followers who will invade Caesar’s city will be forgiven their sins.’”

2925 – You (Muslims) will fight against the Jews till some of them will hide behind stones.

2926 – “The hour will not be established until you fight against the Jews...”

Despite this evidence from both the Qur’an and Hadith, as well as other Muslim and non-Muslim chroniclers, many Muslims do not view their jihad campaigns in the context of warfare. To do so would be tantamount to criticism of the canonical literature, and because mandatory jihad and dhimmitude rules are justified by Islam’s sacred texts, criticism is prohibited.<sup>15</sup>

Jihad as warfare was an evolutionary development, as we will explore later. Note, however, that warfare was limited during the early years of Muhammad’s prophethood to only when the Muslims were attacked directly and preemptively. This was defensive jihad. During subsequent years jihad became an offensive strategy and eventually was made obligatory. The command of Muslims to engage in jihad becomes obvious when one notes that the verb in the Qur’an appears in the emphatic and imperative moods.<sup>16</sup>

Jihad also has been described as “systematized warfare”<sup>17</sup> because hostilities were approached using somewhat of a systematic method. For example, one scholar of Islam notes that, according to Islamic doctrine, any war against unbelievers, whatever its immediate grounds, is morally justified.<sup>18</sup> But when Muslims encountered unbelievers, hostilities against them were not always immediate. According to the tenets of Islam, “It is preferable not to begin hostilities with the enemy before having invited the latter to embrace the religion of Allah except where the enemy attacks first. They have the alternative of either converting to Islam or paying the poll tax, short of which war will be declared against them.”<sup>19</sup>

## b) Terrorism

The second aspect of external jihad is the concept of terrorism. Terrorism, or causing one to become fearful of something, has deep roots in the establishment of jihad. Terrorism is

---

<sup>15</sup> Bat Ye’or, *Eurabia*, 34.

<sup>16</sup> Ali Dashti, *23 Years: A Study of the Prophetic Career of Mohammad* (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 1994), 95.

<sup>17</sup> Cook, 20.

<sup>18</sup> Bat Ye’or, *Eurabia*, 34.

<sup>19</sup> Ibn Abi Zayd al-Qayrawani, quoted in Bat Ye’or, *Decline of Eastern Christianity*, 295.

defined as the use of violence and intimidation in the pursuit of political aims. Terror is a weapon that had its origins in the first struggling years of Islam.<sup>20</sup> It is distinct from outright-armed conflict, in that terrorism often involves no physical contact at all. Yet physical violence is not necessarily precluded by definition. Indeed, many of the terrorist acts we are witnessing today are often violent physically. But in the Qur'an, terrorism generally involved intimidation and psychological fear. For example, consider the following verses from the Qur'an:

Sura 3:151 - We shall cast terror into the hearts of those who disbelieve because they ascribe unto Allah partners, for which no warrant hath been revealed. (Pickthal)

Sura 7:4 - How many a township have We destroyed! As a raid by night, or while they slept at noon, Our terror came unto them. (Pickthal)

Sura 8:12 - Remember thy Lord inspired the angels (with the message): "I am with you: give firmness to the Believers: I will instill terror into the hearts of the Unbelievers: smite ye above their necks and smite all their finger-tips off them." (Ali)

Sura 8:60 - 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...

Sura 9:5 - So when the sacred months have passed away, then slay the idolaters wherever you find them, and take them captives and besiege them and lie in wait for them in every ambush...

### c) Martyrdom

The third aspect of external jihad is that of martyrdom. Although the Qur'an says little about martyrs, limited to only a few verses, much is made of martyrs in the Hadith.

Martyrdom is often associated with spiritual prestige.<sup>21</sup> It was so in the time of Muhammad and remains so today. For example, in a recent interview a woman who had several young sons displayed pride to the reporter interviewing her after her boys became martyrs in the Palestinian jihad against Israel. She spoke quite boastfully of the sacrifice they made in Allah's cause.<sup>22</sup>

Becoming a martyr in Islam, particularly a martyr in the jihad, has enormous benefits. A martyr gains immediate entry into Paradise, is allowed to partake of things forbidden to a

---

<sup>20</sup> Paul Fregosi, *Jihad in the West: Muslim Conquests from the 7<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> Centuries* (Amherst: Prometheus, 1998), 44.

<sup>21</sup> Cook, 27.

<sup>22</sup> "Palestinian Candidate Mother of Martyrs," [on-line], available at [http://www.wnd.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE\\_ID=48178](http://www.wnd.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE_ID=48178), accessed 4/20/2006.

Muslim during earthy life, has 72 virgins awaiting him, brings fame and honor to the family, and has the ability to intercede on behalf of other Muslims in heaven.<sup>23</sup>

Sura 57:19 - And those who believe in Allah and His messengers, they are the loyal, and the martyrs are with their Lord; they have their reward and their light; while as for those who disbelieve and deny Our revelations, they are owners of hell-fire. (Pickthal)

Sura 9:20-22 – Those who believed (in the Oneness of Allah—Islamic Monotheism) and emigrated and strove hard and fought in Allah’s cause with their wealth and their lives are far higher in degree with Allah. They are the successful. Their Lord gives them glad tidings of Mercy from Him, and His being pleased (with them), and of Gardens (Paradise) for them wherein are everlasting delights. They will dwell therein forever. Verily, with Allah is a great reward. (Al-Hilali and Khan)

Sura 9:111 - Lo! Allah hath bought from the believers their lives and their wealth because the Garden will be theirs: they shall fight in the way of Allah and shall slay and be slain. It is a promise which is binding on Him in the Torah and the Gospel and the Qur'an. Who fulfilleth His covenant better than Allah? (Pickthal)

Bukhari 2790 – The people said, “O Allah’s Messenger! Shall we acquaint the people with this good news?” He said, “Paradise has one hundred grades which Allah has reserved for the Mujahidun who fight in His Cause...

A martyr’s Paradise is apparently so superior and overwhelming, martyrs would be willing to return to earth just to be able to be ushered into Paradise and experience the majesty of once again entering therein. Bukhari cites Anas bin Malik as stating, “Nobody who dies and finds good from Allah would wish to come back to this world, even if he were given the whole world and whatever is in it, **except the martyr** who, on seeing the superiority of martyrdom, **would like to come back to the world and get killed again** (in Allah’s Cause).” (Bukhari 2795). Muhammad is also noted as saying that he would prefer to be martyred, then come back to life, then be martyred again, over and over (Bukhari 2797).

Honor plays a significant role in the psyche of the Oriental culture. Bukhari speaks of the honor bestowed upon a martyr as something to be desired. Bukhari also cites Anas bin Malik, who quotes Muhammad: “Nobody who enters Paradise likes to return to this world even if he got everything on the earth, except a martyr who wishes to return to the world so that he may be martyred ten times because of the honor and dignity he receives (from Allah)” (Bukhari 2817). In other words, because receiving honor is portrayed as positive, and since martyrdom brings honor, martyrdom is also portrayed as positive and something to be desired.

Before moving on, I want to recap the definition of jihad thus far. I have noted that jihad is defined as striving or struggling, and can be defined in a limited sense as an internal struggle

---

<sup>23</sup> Cook, 28-29.

or striving against one's inner desires or against unseen forces. However, the bulk of Islamic literature seems to define jihad as a purely physical struggle and usually associated with violence, death, and martyrdom. In addition to striving either internally or externally, jihad can also be defined to include activities associated with Dawah.

## **B. PROMOTING ISLAM, DAWAH**

Dawah is a term meaning "invite" or "to give an invitation" and encompasses the idea of inviting non-believers to Islam. Sura 16:125 exhorts Muslims to "Invite (all) to the Way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious." And as if addressing dawah toward Christians specifically, Sura 28:87 directs believers to "let nothing keep thee back from the Signs of Allah after they have been revealed to thee: and invite (men) to thy Lord, and be not of the company of those who join gods with Allah." These two ayat seem to define dawah as an intellectual, apologetic approach used to convince and persuade others of the truth of Islam in the absence of fear and intimidation.

However, during the period of Muhammad's leadership, dawah, or inviting others to Islam, was conducted through intimidation and often was inseparable from physical jihad. For example, Ibn Ishaq recounts an encounter between Hamza, one of Muhammad's uncles, and Abu Jahl and his followers. In poetry describing the encounter, Hamza writes, "All we did was to enjoin chastity and justice and call them to Islam, but they received it not, and they treated it as a joke, they ceased not so until I volunteered to attack them."<sup>24</sup> On another occasion, Muhammad sent one of his men to a group of polytheists and "ordered him to invite them to Islam three days before he attacked them. If they accepted then he was to accept it from them, and if they declined he was to fight them...so the men accepted Islam as they were invited."<sup>25</sup> Abu Dawud instructs Muslims that, "When you meet the polytheists, summon them to Islam, and if they accept, refrain from further hostilities toward them."<sup>26</sup> The implication, then, is that if they do not accept Islam, hostilities against them are completely justified. This pattern of inviting others to Islam and then attacking them if they refused is repeated numerous times in the campaigns of Muhammad as he spread Islam throughout Arabia.

Paul Fregosi, who has studied the history of jihad extensively, provides a comprehensive definition of the relationship between jihad and dawah. Fregosi notes, "The purpose of the jihad is to expand and extend Islam until the whole world is under Muslim rule. The jihad is essentially a permanent state of hostility that Islam maintains against the rest of the world, with or without fighting, for more sovereignty over more territory."<sup>27</sup> This is not the mere opinion of one modern scholar, whom many Muslims today would label an "orientalist" in an attempt to discredit his research. Ibn Kathir, 14<sup>th</sup> century Imam well-respected among

---

<sup>24</sup> Muhammad ibn Ishaq, *The Life of Muhammad*, A. Guillaume, translator (Karachi, Pakistan: Oxford University Press, 1967), 284.

<sup>25</sup> Ibn Ishaq, 645.

<sup>26</sup> *Sunan Abu Dawud*, 3 vols., Ahmad Hasan, translator (New Delhi: Kitab Bhavan, 1990) 2:722 (2606).

<sup>27</sup> Fregosi, 20.

Muslims, wrote an extensive commentary (Tafsir) on the Qur'an in which he notes the purpose of jihad is, "...so that the religion of Allah becomes dominant above all others."<sup>28</sup>

## II. Requirement of Jihad

### A. SIXTH PILLAR OF ISLAM

We generally speak of the five pillars established in Islamic law: the shahada (confession that Allah is one and Muhammad is his prophet), salat (daily ritual prayers), zakat (obligatory giving), sawm (required fasting during Ramadan), and hajj (pilgrimage to Mecca). However, there seems to be a general consensus that jihad constitutes a sixth pillar in Islam. Indeed, both the Qur'an and Hadith, as well as Islamic law, establish the requirement of those able to participate in jihad. Exceptions are made for those unable physically to participate, such as those blind or otherwise physically hindered, the mentally unfit, and the very elderly.

The Qur'an contains over 40 verses that explicitly define the absolute requirement for participation in Jihad, with severe penalties for failure to participate. Here is just a short sample.

- Sura 2:216 states, "Jihad (holy fighting in Allah's cause) is ordained for you (Muslims) though you dislike it..."
- Sura 4:77 - "Have you not seen those to whom it was said: Withhold your hands from fighting, perform the prayer and pay the zakat. But when orders for fighting were issued, a party of them feared men as they ought to have feared Allah. They say: 'Our Lord, why have You ordained fighting for us, why have You made war compulsory?'"
- Sura 9:38 - "Believers, what is the matter with you, that when you are asked to march forth in the Cause of Allah (i.e., Jihad) you cling to the earth? Do you prefer the life of this world to the Hereafter? Unless you march, He will afflict and punish you with a painful torture, and put others in your place. But you cannot harm Him in the least."
- Sura 9:41 is even more direct, commanding Muslims to, "March forth, whether you are light (being healthy, young and wealthy) or heavy (being ill, old, and poor) and strive hard with your wealth and your lives in the Cause of Allah."
- Sura 9:81-84 - "Those who stayed behind rejoiced in their inaction behind the back of the Messenger. They hated to strive and fight with their goods and lives in the Cause of Allah. They said, 'Go not forth in the heat.' Say, 'The fire of Hell is fiercer in heat.' If only they could understand! So let them laugh a little, for they will weep much as a reward for what they did. ... Do not pray for any of them that die, nor stand at his grave. They rejected Allah and disbelieved His Messenger. They died in a state of perverse rebellion."
- Sura 9:93-94 - "The (complaint) is against those who claim exemption [from fighting] while they are rich. They prefer to stay with the (women) who remain

---

<sup>28</sup> *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, 10 vols., English Translation (Riyadh, Saudia Arabia: Darussalam, 2000), 1:531.

behind (at home). Allah has sealed their hearts. They are content to be useless. Say: 'Present no excuses: we shall not believe you.' It is your actions that Allah and His Messenger will observe. They will swear to you by Allah, when you return hoping that you might leave them alone. So turn away from them, for they are unclean, an abomination, and Hell is their dwelling-place, a fitting recompense for them."

- Sura 48:11 - "What is the matter with you that you are divided about the Hypocrites? Allah has cast them back (causing their disbelief). Would you guide those whom Allah has thrown out of the Way? For those whom Allah has thrown aside and led astray, never shall they find the Way."
- Sura 48:17 - "There is no blame for the blind, nor is it a sin for the lame, nor on one ill if he joins not in the fighting. But he who retreats, (Allah) will punish him with a painful doom."

### **B. FOR MEN: REQUIRED**

It is worth noting that in the hadith and fiqh, the requirement of Muslim men to participate in jihad is always framed in the context of warfare or physical force rather than spiritual jihad. Previously I noted where Bukhari defines jihad as one of the pillars on which Islam stands. Ibn Kathir adds additional insight when he states "Jihad is required in all conditions," and he adds, "Allah ordained that the believers all march forth with the Messenger whether they felt active, lazy, at ease or had difficult circumstances."<sup>29</sup> This marching forth is a real, physical event, as noted by Shafi'i, one of the four primary jurists who established Islamic law. Shafi'i notes, "these communications mean that the jihad, **and rising up in arms in particular**, is obligatory for all able-bodied believers...and no one is able to perform the duty for another."<sup>30</sup> Abu Dawud in his Hadith notes, "He who dies without having fought or having felt fighting (against the infidels) to be his duty will die guilty of a kind of hypocrisy."<sup>31</sup>

### **C. FOR WOMEN: OPTIONAL**

Women are not required to participate directly in jihad, though they may do so if they desire. Most often in the traditions, women were seen as assisting the fighters by providing a continuous supply of water, attending to injuries, and other tasks not associated with direct warfare. Bukhari narrates Ar-Rubai' bint Mu'awwidh as saying, "We used to take part in holy battles with the Prophet by providing the people with water and serving them and bringing the killed and wounded back to Al-Madina."<sup>32</sup> Imam Muslim notes that at times Muhammad would take women into battle with him and fight along side them. They would treat the wounded, and for this they were given a portion of the booty.<sup>33</sup>

---

<sup>29</sup> Ibn Kathir, 4:433.

<sup>30</sup> *Al-Shafi'i's al-Risala: Treatise on the Foundations of Islamic Jurisprudence*, Majid Khadduri, translator (Cambridge, UK: Muslim Texts Society, 1987), 84. (emphasis mine)

<sup>31</sup> Sunan Abu Dawud, 2496.

<sup>32</sup> Bukhari 2883.

<sup>33</sup> *Sahih Muslim*, Revised Ed., 4 vols., Abdul Hamid Siddiqi, translator (New Delhi: Kitab Bhavan, 2004), 3:1207 (4456).

It is to be understood, then, that jihad is incumbent upon all able-bodied men, and optional for women. It should be noted also that “religious obligation [is] Islam’s normal path to expansion...[it is] not a spiritual war but a real military war of conquest...an institution, an organic piece of Muslim society.”<sup>34</sup> Indeed, as 14<sup>th</sup> Century Islamic historian Ibn Khaldun observed, “In the Muslim community, the holy war is a religious duty, because of the universalism of the Muslim mission and the obligation to convert everybody to Islam either by persuasion or by force.”<sup>35</sup>

### III. Purpose of Jihad

Upon reading the primary sources which are fundamental to the development of Islamic theology, one can find a number of motives to justify the institution of jihad: to rid the world of polytheists and unbelievers, to spread Islam and its superiority as a religion, to test the followers of Allah for their allegiance, to obtain booty or spoils of warfare, to be assured a place in Paradise, and to usher in the “last hour” and prepare for Allah’s reign on earth. None of these stands in isolation from another, and every campaign of Muhammad and his successors was energized by two or more of these motivating factors.

#### **A. RID THE WORLD OF POLYTHEISTS/DISBELIEVERS**

Most certainly a primary purpose for conducting jihad involves the attempt to rid the world of polytheists. Islam is a monotheistic religion—there is one and only one God who alone deserves to be worshipped. The Qur’an, Hadith, and Islamic law speak extensively of the need to eliminate those who worship multiple gods or no god at all. Allowing these to continue living is an affront to Allah.

Ibn Kathir in his commentary on Sura 9:29 notes, “fighting Jews and Christians is legislated because they are idolaters and disbelievers...who utter lies against Allah.”<sup>36</sup> He accuses the Jews of calling Ezra (‘Uzayr) the son of God, and Christians are likewise guilty of calling Jesus (Isa) the same. The context of Sura 9 is fighting and killing others for various infractions against Allah, and lying about who is and is not God is one such infraction. For this reason alone—equating another with God or a son of God—Jews and Christians are worthy of death.

Former believers who have since rejected Islam are also accorded a status worthy of death. Consider Sura 4:89, which address those who have once believed but no longer do so: “They wish that you reject Faith, as they have rejected (Faith), and thus that you all become equal (like one another). So take not *Auliya*’ (protectors and friends) from them, till they emigrate in the Way of Allah (to Muhammad). But if they turn back (from Islam), take (hold of) them and kill them wherever you find them, and take neither *Auliya*’ (protectors or friends) from them” (Al-Hilali and Khan). Sura 8:38-39 also address this issue of former believers, noting that those who return to Islam will be forgiven but those who continue in disbelief face consequences similar to those who have been punished previously for the same offense. Aya

<sup>34</sup> Jacques Ellel, forward in Bay Ye’or, *The Decline of Eastern Christianity Under Islam: From Jihad to Dhimmitude* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1996), 19.

<sup>35</sup> Ibn Khaldun, quoted in Bat Ye’or, *The Decline of Eastern Christianity*, 296.

<sup>36</sup> Ibn Kathir, 4:408.

39 further exhorts Muslims to fight polytheists and disbelievers until these have been eliminated and all worship is for Allah alone.

Finally, Muslims who war against polytheists and unbelievers are accorded a special reward from Allah. According to Shafi'i, "Those who perform it in the war against the polytheists will fulfill the duty and receive the supererogatory merit."<sup>37</sup> Though he is not specific what this extra measure of merit is comprised of, the Qur'an offers a bit more information. In speaking of those who participate in jihad instead of those who sit at home, Sura 4:95 says, "Allah has preferred those who strive hard and fight, above those who sit (at home) by a huge reward." Rewards are realized upon entering Paradise, and Bukhari notes that "Paradise has one hundred grades which Allah has reserved for the *Mujahidun* who fight in His Cause."<sup>38</sup> Thus, participation in ridding the world of polytheists and unbelievers is rewarded handsomely by Allah.

## **B. SPREAD ISLAM**

Of the many common beliefs between Islam and Christianity, one is the desire of each system's adherents to see their faith spread throughout the world. Yet, while Christians evangelize using peaceful methods, the preferred method of spreading Islam has been and remains holy war or jihad. When reading through the history of the Muslim conquests, one might form the opinion that jihad was fueled by the desire for Muslims to acquire ever more land and nations. Yet Bat Ye'or notes that the purpose of jihad "is not so much to conquer lands as to Islamize the populations."<sup>39</sup> Of course, conquering new lands certainly has its share of benefits. But Muslims truly believe Islam to be superior to all other religions, which is why "the caliph fights all other peoples until they become Muslim."<sup>40</sup> One scholar calls jihad an invention of Muhammad himself, devised as the primary vehicle for the spread of Islam and the expansion of Muhammad's political ambitions, until it eventually became the rallying call for world domination.<sup>41</sup>

Rather than just an invention of Muhammad, faithful Muslims believe Allah also commands the spread of Islam through jihad. The believer who desires to win favor with Allah must be obedient to this command. Bukhari relates a conversation between Ali and Muhammad where, in his zeal to convert unbelievers to Islam, Ali makes the statement "We will fight them (the infidels) till they become like us (Muslims)." Muhammad gently corrects Ali and instructs him to "be patient, till you face them and invite them to Islam, and **inform them what Allah has enjoined upon them.**"<sup>42</sup> Imam Muslim comments that the Umma (Islamic nation or community) will extend from the east to the west and will include all ethnic groups. Races belonging to different colors will all embrace Islam.<sup>43</sup> Ibn Kathir further asserts that "Islam is the religion that will dominate over all other religions"<sup>44</sup>. This is Allah's will and the responsibility of fulfilling Allah's will lies with Muslims.

---

<sup>37</sup> Shafi'i, 84.

<sup>38</sup> Bukhari, 4:49 (2790).

<sup>39</sup> Bat Ye'or, *Decline of Eastern Christianity*, 18.

<sup>40</sup> *Reliance of the Traveller*, section o9.9

<sup>41</sup> Efraim Karsh, *Islamic Imperialism: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 4.

<sup>42</sup> Bukhari, 4:125 (2942) [emphasis mine].

<sup>43</sup> Sahih Muslim, 4:1804 (6904).

<sup>44</sup> Ibn Kathir, 4:412.



Where Islam has become the dominant religion in a given society, the options available to those who refuse to accept Islam are severely limited: resist until death, submit to Islamic rule, or for Christians and Jews, pay *jizya* (protection tax) and become a *dhimmi*. Under *dhimmitude*, “In return for payment of tribute, (conquered peoples) obtained the security of life, property, and civil and religious institutions.<sup>45</sup> In obedience to Allah, “the caliph [or Muslim ruler] makes war upon Jews, Christians, and Zoroastrians...until they become Muslim or else pay the non-Muslim poll tax.”<sup>46</sup> Thus, the goal of *jihad* [and *dhimmitude*] is the incorporation of non-Muslims into Muslim society, either by conversion or submission.<sup>47</sup> Spencer relates, “The laws that consider non-Muslims *dhimmis*, protected people, and enforce their submission to Muslims are inextricably bound up with the concept of *jihad*.<sup>48</sup>

Thus, it is clear in Islamic primary sources that the goal of *jihad* is the establishment of Islam worldwide. Bat Ye’or summarizes this point succinctly when she states, “*Jihad* is effort, by military means or peaceful methods...for the establishment of Islamic law or its spread, mission, or sovereignty over (infidel) lands...until, through *jihad*, (they) come under Islamic rule. (*Jihad*) must continue as long as unbelief exists.”<sup>49</sup> Hundreds of years earlier, Abu Dawud recounted an occasion where, “The Apostle of Allah said ‘I am commanded to fight with men till they testify that there is no god but Allah; when they do that they will keep their life and their property safe from me.’”<sup>50</sup> This is *jihad*.

### **C. TEST THE TRUE FOLLOWERS OF ALLAH**

Allah uses the opportunity of *jihad* to test his followers and “separate the wheat from the chaff,” as it were. In Sura 3:142 we find the following exhortation: “Did ye think that ye would enter Heaven without Allah testing those of you who fought hard (In His Cause) and remained steadfast?” Sura 9:16 further states, “Do you think that you shall be left alone while Allah has not yet tested those among you who have striven hard and fought...” Ibn Kathir comments that the purpose of Allah revealing this *aya* was to distinguish “between those who obey him and those who disobey him [Allah].”<sup>51</sup> Sura 47:4 provides even more explicit insight into this concept. To provide the context, I quote the entire *aya*, though it is rather lengthy.

So, when you meet (in fight—*Jihad* in Allah’s Cause) those who disbelieve, smite (their) necks till when you have killed and wounded many of them, then bind a bond firmly (on them, i.e. take them as captives). Thereafter (is the time) either for generosity (i.e. free them without ransom), or ransom (according to what benefits Islam), until the war lays down its burden. Thus [you are ordered by Allah to continue in carrying out *jihad* against the disbelievers till they embrace Islam and are saved from the punishment in the

<sup>45</sup> Bat Ye’or, *Decline of Eastern Christianity*, 56-57.

<sup>46</sup> *Reliance of the Traveller*, section o9.8

<sup>47</sup> Robert Spencer, *Onward Muslim Soldiers: How Jihad Still Threatens America and the West* (Washington, DC: Regenery, 2003), 7.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> Bat Ye’or, *Eurabia*, 32.

<sup>50</sup> Sunan Abu Dawud, 2634.

<sup>51</sup> Ibn Kathir, 4:388.

Hell-fire or at least come under your protection], **but if it had been Allah's Will, He Himself could certainly have punished them (without you). But (He lets you fight) in order to test some of you with others.** But those who are killed in the way of Allah, He will never let their deeds be lost. (Al-Hilali and Khan) (emphasis mine, parentheses and brackets in the original)

Only those with legitimate excuses are exempt from jihad.<sup>52</sup> Legitimate excuses include blindness, limping and other similar physical limitations, or poverty that would prevent a Muslim from preparing for jihad. All others are expected to contribute to the cause, and refusing to do so comes at the risk of incurring Allah's wrath. Ibn Kathir comments that "Allah chastises and admonishes those who stayed away from Jihad...even though they had the ability to join it."<sup>53</sup>

#### **D. OBTAIN BOOTY**

No discussion about the purpose of jihad would be complete without mentioning booty. Indeed, for a number of the campaigns undertaken by Muhammad and his followers, the primary goal was the attraction to, and the potential of acquiring, the goods and treasures of the target tribe or people. Islamic expert Francisco Gabrieli notes that the love of loot rather than the love of God was among the main motivating factors of early Muslims.<sup>54</sup> Some of the earliest conquests involved short, pillaging incursions into adjacent villages to collect booty, steal livestock, and enslave the villagers.<sup>55</sup> For example, one of Muhammad's very first expeditions after migrating from Mecca was undertaken not for the purpose of spreading Islam, but for capturing and stealing loot. Karsh observes, "During the first eighteen months after the Hijra, [Muhammad] carried out seven raids on merchant caravans as they were making their way to Mecca. This was an attempt to build up the wealth and prestige of his followers, who had lost their livelihood as a result of their move to Medina, and to weaken Mecca's economic life."<sup>56</sup>

According to Ibn Ishaq, shortly after arriving at Medina, Muhammad became aware of a trading caravan of the Jewish Quraysh tribe that was to be passing through. He summoned his warriors with the admonition to "go out and attack it, Perhaps God will give it as prey."<sup>57</sup> There was no suggestion at all that Muhammad's followers were to first call the Quraysh to Islam. Muhammad's followers justified their actions because the Muslims, driven from Mecca against their will due to the persecution they endured, faced financial hardship and thus sought recompense for those losses by raiding the trading caravans of the Quraysh as they passed close to Medina.<sup>58</sup> But as Fregosi notes rather bluntly, the caravan raid was nothing more than Muhammad financing his major entry into public life by hijacking a caravan in the desert.<sup>59</sup>

---

<sup>52</sup> Ibn Kathir, 4:495.

<sup>53</sup> Ibn Kathir, 4:492.

<sup>54</sup> Fregosi, 60.

<sup>55</sup> Bat Ye'or, *Decline of Eastern Christianity*, 48.

<sup>56</sup> Karsh, 12.

<sup>57</sup> Ibn Ishaq, 289.

<sup>58</sup> Cook, 7.

<sup>59</sup> Fregosi, 48.

On another occasion, one of Muhammad's antagonists by the name of Abu Sufyan was part of a caravan containing a large amount of silver. The caravan stopped at an oasis to rest. While there, Muhammad sent Zayd, a warrior, to capture the silver. He succeeded in capturing the caravan and its contents, but the men of the caravan escaped. Zayd then brought the spoil to Muhammad, who was pleased with the success.<sup>60</sup>

The Qur'an justifies the taking of booty and at times even encourages it. Sura 48:16-21 is the most instructive in this regard.

You shall be called to fight against a people given to great warfare, then you shall fight them, or they shall surrender. Then if you obey, Allah will give you a fair reward...He rewarded them with a victory and abundant spoils that they will capture. **Allah has promised you abundant spoils** that you will capture, and **He has hastened for you this**, and He has restrained the hands of men from you: that it may be a sign for the believers, and that He may guide you to the Straight Path. **And other (victories and much booty He promises you)** which are not yet within your power; indeed Allah compasses them. And Allah is ever able to do all things.

We also find evidence in the Qur'an of Muhammad's warriors coveting booty. Sura 3:152 reads, "Allah did indeed fulfill his promise to you when ye with his permission were about to annihilate your enemy, until ye flinched and fell to disputing about the order, and disobeyed it after He brought you in sight (of the booty) which ye covet" (Ali). The desire to obtain booty was indeed a significant motivating factor.

Noteworthy also is the interesting observation that at one point in Islamic tradition and law, the division of booty was considered to be one of the five pillars of Islam. It has since been supplanted by performance of the Hajj. However, Bukhari notes that in the history of Islam, Muhammad once required obedience to these five activities:

- To testify that none has the right to be worshipped but Allah and Muhammad is Allah's apostle
- To offer prayers perfectly
- To pay the Zakat (obligatory charity)
- To observe fast during the month of Ramadan
- **And to pay Al-Khumus (one fifth of the booty to be given in Allah's cause)**<sup>61</sup>

The Qur'an and Hadith specify that the booty was to be divided between Muhammad and the warriors participating in the raid, and optionally to women.

Legitimate booty was not limited just to material goods either. Some of the most revered booty consisted of the captives themselves. Women and children captives were shared out

---

<sup>60</sup> Ibn Ishaq, 364.

<sup>61</sup> Bukhari, 1:84 (53).

among the soldiers after setting aside a fifth for Muhammad or the current Caliph.<sup>62</sup> The children became slaves, while the captive women were given to the male warriors as wives or objects of sexual satisfaction, again with Muhammad keeping some for himself. The Qur'an allows a Muslim to have sex not only with one of his wives, but also with any captured slave woman.

Sura 23:1-6 - "The believers must (eventually) win through, those who humble themselves in their prayers; who avoid vain talk; who are active in deeds of charity; who abstain from sex, except with those joined to them in the marriage bond, or (the captives) whom their right hands possess, for (in their case) they are free from blame..."

Sura 4:24 - "And all married women (are forbidden unto you) save those (captives) whom your right hands possess. It is a decree of Allah for you"

While slavery has been abolished in most Muslim cultures, it is still practiced and still viewed as a right of being a Muslim. For example, a Saudi named Homaidan Al-Turki was sentenced in September 2006 to 27 years to life in prison for keeping a woman as a slave in his home in Colorado. For his part, Al-Turki claimed that he was a victim of anti-Muslim bias. He told the judge: "Your honor, I am not here to apologize, for I cannot apologize for things I did not do and for crimes I did not commit. The state has criminalized these basic Muslim behaviors. Attacking traditional Muslim behaviors was the focal point of the prosecution." The following month, an Egyptian couple living in Southern California received a fine and prison terms, to be followed by deportation, after pleading guilty to holding a ten-year-old girl as a slave. And in January 2007, an attaché of the Kuwaiti embassy in Washington, Waleed Al Saleh, and his wife were charged with keeping three Christian domestic workers from India in slave-like conditions in al-Saleh's Virginia home.<sup>63</sup>

### **1. 1/5 to Muhammad, Allah**

Muhammad did not keep the spoils of warfare for himself, but required one-fifth to be used for the caring of orphans, the wayfaring traveler, and the poor and needy (Sura 8:41, 59:7-9). The remaining four fifths was divided among the warriors who participated in the raid.<sup>64</sup>

### **2. To the fighters individually and collectively**

Many of the initial followers of Muhammad were attracted to Islam not because they were convinced Muhammad was Allah's prophet, but because of the prospect of obtaining large amounts of booty. Cook observes that economic reasons, more than anything else, drew early Muslims to conquest through the capture of fantastic amounts of booty including slaves, gold, jewels, and virgins.<sup>65</sup>

<sup>62</sup> Bat Ye'or, *Decline of Eastern Christianity*, 47. See also Muslim 3:1165 (4370).

<sup>63</sup> Robert Spencer, "The Persistence of Islamic Slavery," *Front Page Magazine*, July 20, 2007 [on-line], available at <http://www.frontpagemag.com/Articles/Printable.asp?ID=29227>, accessed July 21, 2007.

<sup>64</sup> Muslim 4328, 4337; see also Bukhari 2:278 (1398); Ibn Ishaq, 287.

<sup>65</sup> Cook, 25

In general practice, the booty was divided up among all the warriors on a somewhat equal basis. Occasionally Muhammad would favor one warrior or group of warriors over another in the distribution.<sup>66</sup> However, the Hadith also records occasions where mujahid received booty apart from the general distribution. For example, Bukhari relates an occasion when an infidel spy tried to strike up a conversation with Muhammad's companions and then left. Muhammad ordered one of his men to follow the infidel and kill him, which he did. "The Prophet then gave me the belongings of the killed spy (in addition to my share of the war booty)."<sup>67</sup>

Imam Muslim records such an incident when Muhammad sat down to distribute the booty of one battle. Muhammad allowed a warrior to keep as his sole property the booty of one he had slain if he could prove, either with empirical evidence or by the account of witnesses, that he had indeed been the one to kill the enemy.<sup>68</sup> Interestingly, the commentary on this Hadith notes, "That the Holy Prophet gave the belongings of the killed to that Muslim who had killed him, is a sort of encouragement of the Muslims to participate in Jihad." In other words, Muhammad used booty as a bribe to get his warriors to fight his holy war.

### 3. No portion to women

While women were allowed to participate in jihad, they were allotted no specific share in the distribution of booty. Since participation in jihad for women was only voluntary, rather than required as it was for men, women, whether they participated voluntarily or not, were not prescribed any portion of booty. Imam Muslim records at times Muhammad would give women a reward from the booty for their service in treating the wounded, but this was the exception rather than the rule.<sup>69</sup>

### 4. The Ongoing Quest for booty

The quest for booty was not limited to the campaigns of Muhammad. While the prospect of obtaining an enemy's wealth was a significant draw for Muhammad's initial companions, it has continued to draw converts to Islam since. Indeed, jealousy and envy toward the United States and its prosperity no doubt is one factor in the current jihad proclaimed against the U.S. by Osama bin Laden. This drive for the wealth of others produces violence as a natural outcome. As one scholar notes, "Division of booty between tribes and the Arab state provoked permanent bloody conflicts throughout the Arab Empire."<sup>70</sup> And it continues today.

This ongoing quest for wealth also has produced a change in the nature of jihad itself. The Holy War is every bit a pursuit for material gain as it is for winning converts to Islam. Ali Dashti observes that as jihad developed over time, "Islam was transformed from a spiritual mission into a militant and punitive organization whose progress depended on booty from raids."<sup>71</sup> Absent the possibility of booty, Islam likely would not have spread as rapidly as it did.

---

<sup>66</sup> Bukhari 4:238 (3150).

<sup>67</sup> Bukhari, 4:178 (3051).

<sup>68</sup> Muslim 3:1146 (4340).

<sup>69</sup> Muslim 3:1207 (4456).

<sup>70</sup> Bat Ye'or, *Decline of Eastern Christianity*, 60.

<sup>71</sup> Dashti, 97.

Thus, Muhammad won the hearts of his loyal followers not by his words but rather by his rewards. As Bat Ye'or notes succinctly, “Jihad procured considerable booty and cemented Islamic solidarity.”<sup>72</sup> The use of booty by Muhammad as a reward for his followers resulted in an Islam that grew from a factious group of fringe radicals in Mecca into a religion whose prophet provided “revelations” of “victories which would make them master of places where he saw wealth and luxury” which would become theirs for following him.<sup>73</sup> In short, Islam was successful because it offered the Arabs material rewards in the here and now—military conquests with all the attendant material advantages: loot, women, and land.<sup>74</sup>

### **E. ASSURE A PLACE IN PARADISE**

Entrance into heaven or paradise is not assured for Muslims. On the Day of Judgment, Allah will weigh one's good deeds against one's bad deeds, using a set of scales (Sura 23:102-103, 101:6-11). One's destiny depends on which side of the scale is heavier, with the final decision left to Allah and his will alone. However, Muslim warriors, or mujahidin, are exempt from the Day of Judgment and gain immediate entrance into paradise if they are killed during jihad (Sura 3:195; 9:111). Sura 3:169-171 provides the foundation for many of the traditions concerning the fate of martyrs.

(169) Think not of those who are killed in the Way of Allah as dead. Nay, they are alive, with their Lord, and they have provision.

(170) They rejoice in what Allah has bestowed upon them of His Bounty and rejoice for the sake of those who have not yet joined them, but are left behind (not yet martyred) that on them no fear shall come, nor shall they grieve.

(171) They rejoice in a Grace and a Bounty from Allah, and that Allah will not waste the reward of the believers.

Numerous ahadith firmly establish the immediate ushering into Paradise of one martyred while fighting for Allah's cause.

- Allah guarantees that He will admit the *Mujahid* in His Cause into Paradise if he is killed (Bukhari, 2787).
- Jibril (Gabriel) informed the Prophet that they (i.e. the martyrs) met their Lord, and He was pleased with them and made them pleased (Bukhari, 2801).
- [Muhammad speaking to the mother of Haritha, a martyr] “O mother of Haritha! There are Gardens in Paradise and your son got the *Firdaus Al-A'la* (i.e., the best place in Paradise)(Bukhari 2809).

---

<sup>72</sup> Bat Ye'or, *Decline of Eastern Christianity*, 58.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>74</sup> Ibn Warraq, *The Quest for the Historical Muhammad* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus, 2000), 17.

- Know that Paradise is under the shades of swords (Jihad in Allah's cause)(Bukhari, 2818).
- An infidel and the one who killed him will never be brought together in Hell, meaning that a person who kills an infidel while fighting in Allah's cause has his sins forgiven and goes to Paradise. (Sunan Abu Dawud, 2489)

The guarantee of immediate entrance to Paradise, described as a veritable garden of pleasure, motivated Muhammad's early warriors to fight with all they had. After all, what was there to lose? One could fight, be successful in battle and capture considerable booty as a reward, or fight, become martyred, and be ushered into a garden of ultimate pleasure. It was a win-win proposition. Even today, the rewards of a martyr provide reason enough for the *mujahid* to make the ultimate sacrifice for Allah's cause.

### **F. USHER IN "THE HOUR" OF JUDGMENT**

"The Hour" of Judgment is a common motif found throughout the Qur'an. At the time of "The Hour," Muslims will stand before Allah and be judged for their deeds in Allah's service. Nobody except Allah knows when "the Hour" will occur (Sura 7:187; 20:15; 31:34). Yet we find in the Hadith the idea that jihad can hasten this moment and bring it to pass sooner, as if Allah's pre-determined time for "The Hour" is subject to manipulation by the obedience of his followers to engage in jihad. Nevertheless, this idea has support in the Hadith as follows.

- Allah's messenger said "The Hour will not be established until you fight against the Jews... (Bukhari, 2926).
- The Prophet said, "One of the portents of the Hour is that you will fight against people wearing shoes made of hair; and one of the portents of the Hour is that you will fight against broad-faced people whose faces will look like shields coated with leather. (Bukhari, 2927)
- Allah's messenger said, "The Hour will not be established until you fight against the Turks; people with small eyes, red faces, and flat noses. Their faces will look like shields coated with leather. (Bukhari, 2928)

## **IV. Method of Jihad**

The act of jihad involves both physical and psychological aspects. Waging jihad connotes the mental defeat of the enemy as much as the literal, physical conquering. Physical jihad includes taking captive the enemy as prisoners or slaves as well as annihilation of the enemy.

### **A. TAKING DISBELIEVERS CAPTIVE**

As mentioned previously, it was common practice (and is still the case today) that Muslim warriors were to slay the men of their enemy (Jews, Christians, polytheists, idolaters, anyone who does not believe in Allah) and take as captives the women and children as wives and slaves respectively. However, men were not unilaterally slain and a Muslim had the option of taking a man captive if he thought it would benefit Islam or if it was likely that the captive would convert to Islam. Sura 47:4 is instructive in this regard.

So, when you meet (in fight—Jihad in Allah's Cause) those who disbelieve, smite (their) necks till when you have killed and wounded many of them, then

bind a bond firmly (on them, i.e. **take them as captives**)...Thus you are ordered by Allah to **continue in carrying out Jihad against the disbelievers till they embrace Islam** and are saved from the punishment in the Hell-fire or at least come under your protection...

The well known “sword verse” of Sura 9:5 which exhorts the Muslim slay the idolater wherever he finds him, also allows for the capture of one who may repent and ultimately embrace Islam. In his commentary on this verse, Ibn Kathir addresses the disposition of the idolaters and notes the allowance for “executing some and keeping some as prisoners.”<sup>75</sup>

## **B. KILLING DISBELIEVERS**

When the word “jihad” is discussed among non-Muslims, it conjures up the image of a bearded Middle-Eastern man with a turban wrapped around his head charging forth toward a cluster of unbelievers while swinging a sword about wildly. Moderate Muslims of today would have us believe such an image is mere fable—a construct of those who would stop at nothing to discredit Islam. Unfortunately, such a moderate Muslim would have a difficult time refuting the fact that his very scripture and traditions support such an image.

The exhortation for the Muslim to kill or slay Allah’s enemies either openly or while waiting in ambush is found extensively in both the Qur’an and Hadith, as well as in the manuals of Islamic law accepted by the majority of Muslims today from the earliest Islamic jurists. For instance, Imam Malik, who formed the Maliki School of Islamic Jurisprudence, respected and observed by many Muslims, requires Muslims to “make your raids in the name of Allah in the way of Allah. Fight whoever denies Allah.”<sup>76</sup>

Of the scores of verses in the Qur’an that condone the death of infidels, polytheists, and unbelievers in general, we need only look at a handful to gain a sense of what the Qur’an teaches in this regard.

Sura 8:57: “So if you gain the mastery over them in war, **punish them severely** in order to disperse those who are behind them, so that they may learn a lesson” (Khan).

The phrase “punish them severely” seems a bit ambiguous, so for clarification we can consult the well-respected commentator Ibn Kathir. He clears up any ambiguity by stating that this verse “commands punishing them harshly and **inflicting casualties on them.**”<sup>77</sup> Inflicting casualties on the enemy suggests more than simply beating them—it implies by definition the savage murder of the enemy.

Sura 8:65: “O Prophet (Muhammad)! Urge the believers to fight. If there are twenty steadfast persons amongst you, they will overcome two hundreds, and if there be a hundred steadfast persons they will overcome a thousand of

---

<sup>75</sup> Ibn Kathir, 4:376.

<sup>76</sup> Imam Malik ibn Anas, *Al-Muwatta of Imam Malik Ibn Anas: The First Formulation of Islamic Law*, Aisha Bewley, translator (Inverness, Scotland: Madinah Press, 2004), 174 (21.3 (11)).

<sup>77</sup> Ibn Kathir, 4:341.



those who disbelieve, because they (the disbelievers) are people who do not understand” (Khan).

Clearly, this verse encourages Muslims to fight with the intent of conquering and killing the enemies of Allah.

Sura 9:5: “Then, when the sacred months have passed, **slay the idolaters wherever ye find them**, and take them captive, and besiege them, and prepare for them each ambush” (Pickthall).

Again, Ibn Kathir provides us a more refined understanding of this verse, noting the verse means to **fight the idolaters “on the earth in general, executing some** and keeping some as prisoners. Do not wait until you find them. Rather, seek and besiege them in their areas and forts...they will have **no choice but to die or embrace Islam.**<sup>78</sup>

Some Muslim apologists claim that Sura 9:5 does not apply to Jews or Christians, or even to unbelievers in a general sense, but only to idolaters—those who once believed in Islam and then turned away. This seems to be a tenuous position at best, and is refuted by other Islamic scholars. The word used for idolaters is *Mushrikun*, and Al-Hilali and Khan provide a comprehensive definition of this word in their translation of Sura 9:36.

Verily the number of months with Allah is twelve months (in a year), so was it ordained by Allah on the Day when He created the heavens and the earth; of them four are Sacred (i.e. the 1<sup>st</sup>, the 7<sup>th</sup>, the 11<sup>th</sup>, and the 12<sup>th</sup> months of the Islamic calendar). That is the right religion, so wrong not yourselves therein, and fight against **the Mushrikun (polytheists, pagans, idolaters, disbelievers in the Oneness of Allah)** collectively as they fight against you collectively.

If there was any confusion about who these Mushrikun are, these two scholars clear away any ambiguity as to the definition of the term.

Sura 9:73: “O Prophet! Strive hard against the disbelievers and the hypocrites, and **be harsh against them**, their abode is Hell,--and worst indeed is that destination.”

Again, Ibn Kathir provides more explanatory commentary for this verse: “Allah commanded His Messenger to strive hard against the disbelievers and the hypocrites and to be harsh against them. [Quoting Tabari], “Ibn Abbas said, ‘Allah commanded the prophet to fight the disbelievers with the sword, to strive against the hypocrites with the tongue and annulled lenient treatment of them.’” [Again quoting Tabari], “Ad-Dahhak commented, ‘**Perform Jihad against the disbelievers with the sword** and be harsh with the hypocrites with words, and this is the jihad performed against them.’”

These few quotations from the Qur’an and Hadith barely scratch the surface on this topic. Much more evidence is available from these primary sources to substantiate that jihad

---

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 4:376

involves the murder of those opposed to Allah. Jihad is not simply an internal struggle against evil desires, nor is it simply an external struggle to convince others to accept Islam through peaceful means. While jihad may encompass either or both of these ideas, it is first and foremost warfare against anybody who does not accept the Oneness of Allah alone.

### **C. PSYCHOLOGICAL JIHAD**

Another method of jihad used by the Muslims was (and is) psychological warfare. This method goes hand in hand with physical warfare. The idea here is to scare the enemy or terrorize them into believing that they have lost the battle, even before the battle has begun. It is a strategy that has been used by military leaders through the ages because it works.

Sura 8:60 has already been mentioned in other contexts, but this verse also shows the importance Muhammad placed on preparing the enemy to be defeated. He exhorts his followers to, “Make ready for them whatever force and strings of horses you can, to **terrify thereby the enemy of God and your enemy...**” (Arberry). Muhammad wanted his warriors to gather together as strong a show of force as they could muster, in order to defeat the enemy of God through fear. The enemy was to be defeated before the first arrow was shot.

Sura 3:151 reads, “We shall cast terror into the hearts of those who disbelieve, because they ascribe unto Allah partners, for which no warrant hath been revealed...” (Pickthall). Cook observes, “Incitement and psychological fear are both important components of jihad...the psychological preparation for victory or defeat is also a theme of the Hadith literature.”<sup>79</sup> The eleventh century jurist Al-Tartushi “speaks of the role of psychological terror in paving the way for victory.”<sup>80</sup>

## **V. Jihad in history**

Now that we have explored the source documents of Islam and have come to understand the term *jihad* as warfare-like aggression toward anyone who does not worship Allah, we need to see if this definition of *jihad* corresponds to an actual practice of *jihad* by Muhammad and his subsequent followers. In other words, we need to ask the following question: Although the Qur’an and Hadith seem to command *jihad*, and although Muhammad taught his followers to “slay the infidels,” is there any evidence from history that Muslims actually engaged in such practices?

Much research into providing an answer to this question has already taken place by others. The history of Islam is replete with examples of warfare to such an extent that warfare, rather than peace, seems to have been the norm. Bat Ye’or notes, “According to the juridical concept of jihad, war was the normal state of relations between Muslims and Christians. All trade and other treaties between Muslims and Christians were called ‘truce treaties’ or, in effect, declarations of peace.”<sup>81</sup> Not only was this the case in the history of early Islam, it remains the case today. One need only look at the calls for a ‘peace treaty’

---

<sup>79</sup> Cook, 17.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 67.

<sup>81</sup> Bat Ye’or, *Eurabia*, 33.

between Israel and the Palestinians, which has been ongoing for decades, to realize that not much has changed in over 1,300 years.

Fregosi further observes, “Islam has always preached war. Its founder and its heroes were warriors. ‘The sword is the key to heaven and hell’ Muhammad told his followers.”<sup>82</sup> We will look at but a few examples of this warfare of *jihad* practiced by Muhammad and his subsequent followers.

## **A. LIFETIME OF MUHAMMAD**

At the outset of Islam, while Muhammad was still in Mecca, jihad was permitted for defensive purposes only. Muhammad had few followers in Mecca, and an offensive campaign would surely have been met with disastrous results. However, after the hijra, Muhammad gained political and military strength as the number of his followers increased dramatically. In an almost lock-step harmony with this increase in military strength, we note in the Qur’an a change from *jihad* as merely a defensive mechanism to *jihad* permitted and required offensively. Dashti makes the observation that the Suras revealed in Medina demonstrate an increasing sense that jihad was made obligatory, as the verbs in those later Suras appear in the imperative and emphatic moods.<sup>83</sup>

After he settled in Medina with his followers, Muhammad personally participated in 27 campaigns, and assisted or oversaw some 59 others, for an average of no fewer than nine campaigns annually over his last ten years.<sup>84</sup> Fittingly, Cook notes that a number of Muhammad’s early biographers refer to his last ten years of life as *al-maghazi* (the raids).<sup>85</sup>

### **1. From Ibn Ishaq’s Sira Rasul Allah**

I will note a few examples of jihad from one of the earliest biographies of Muhammad, recorded by Ibn Ishaq, considered as the most reliable and authoritative biography of the Prophet of Islam.

#### **a) Expedition of ‘Ubayda bin al-Harith**

Shortly after arriving in Medina and after gaining political and military clout, Muhammad began sending out expeditionary forces to “spy out the land” as it were. One such expeditionary force, led by ‘Ubayda bin al-Harith, encountered a large contingent of Jews near an oasis. Seeing they were outnumbered, the Muslims retreated, but not before shooting an arrow to declare their intentions.<sup>86</sup> Ishaq leaves no doubt what those intentions were, as he quotes the poetry of Abu Bakr, written regarding the Jews that were encountered during the expedition and which includes the following:

I swear, and I am no perjurer,  
If they do not quickly repent of their error,  
A valiant band will descend upon them

---

<sup>82</sup> Fregosi, 22.

<sup>83</sup> Dashti, 95.

<sup>84</sup> Cook, 6.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Ibn Isahq, 281.

Which will leave their women husbandless.  
 It will leave dead men, with vultures wheeling round,  
 It will not spare the infidels as Ibn Harith did.<sup>87</sup>

Earlier I noted Sura 9:29, which exhorts Muslims to fight those who believe not in Allah. Ibn Ishaq provides an example of angst, bordering on warfare, against a group of people whose crime is simply that they do not accept Islam and believe in Allah. Ibn Ishaq describes a scene where one of Muhammad's warriors makes the comment, "All we did was to enjoin chastity and justice and call them to Islam but they received it not, and they treated it as a joke. The ceased not so until I volunteered to attack them where they dwelt."<sup>88</sup>

### b) Battle of Badr

The Battle of Badr is the single most significant of Muhammad's expeditions. Badr began as another of the many caravan raids by Muhammad. This caravan was one of the richest in terms of its cargo that year, and was en route from Syria to Mecca when Muhammad overtook it. To ensure his success at capturing the caravan, Muhammad had assembled a force of 300 of his men—a fighting force larger than any previous campaign. However, the Quraysh of the caravan had been forewarned of Muhammad's plans and had called for reinforcements from Mecca. Thus, when Muhammad and his 300 followers came upon the caravan with the intent of capturing its cargo, they were met by a force of 900-1000 Meccans.

The battle is significant for Islam because Muhammad's forces, outnumbered by a 3-to-1 margin, defeated the Meccans overwhelmingly, with the supposed help from an angelic force that only Muhammad himself was able to see.

Badr was fought on the 17<sup>th</sup> of Ramadan, 624 (2 AH).

Ibn Ishaq records the Battle of Badr as the first time Muhammad promised paradise for those martyred in battle. In fact, the promise of immediate entrance to Paradise likely was responsible for the overwhelming victory of the Muslims, since they fought as if they had nothing to lose—there was no fear of dying in battle, because what lay ahead for the martyr was a garden filled with every sensual pleasure. Ibn Ishaq records for us the words used by Muhammad to instill a sense of fearlessness in his warriors:

Then the apostle went forth to the people and **incited** them, saying, 'By God in whose hand is the soul of Muhammad, no man will be slain this day fighting them with steadfast courage advancing not retreating but God will cause him to enter Paradise. Umayr b. al-Humam was eating some dates which he had in his hand. "Fine, fine!" said he, "is there nothing between me and my entering Paradise save to be killed by these men?" He flung the dates from his hand, seized his sword, and fought against them till he was slain...<sup>89</sup>

In gory detail Ibn Ishaq records many of the scenes of Badr:

---

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 282.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 284.

<sup>89</sup> Ibn Ishaq, 300.

- They hewed them to pieces with their swords until they were dead.<sup>90</sup>
- When I got within striking distance I fell upon him and fetched him a blow which sent his foot and half his shank flying.<sup>91</sup>
- Ikrima struck on the shoulder and severed my arm and it hung by the skin from my side, and the battle compelled me to leave him. I fought the whole of the day dragging my arm behind me and when it became too painful for me I put my foot on it and standing on it I tore it off.<sup>92</sup>
- I cut off his head and brought it to the Apostle saying, “This is the head of the enemy of God, Abu Jahl. I threw his head before the apostle and he gave thanks to God.”<sup>93</sup>

Tradition records that Muhammad’s forces killed 70 Quraysh and took captive another 70. This, the first successful *jihad* at Badr, began what was to become a continual history of aggression—many successful, some not successful—against non-Muslims. Thus was born *jihad* as we know it today.

### c) Battle of the Trench

The Battle of the Trench can easily be called one of the bloodiest conflicts of early Islam. This battle took place in 627 A.D., five years after Muhammad migrated to Medina.

A coalition of Arab and Jewish tribes in Mecca and the surrounding area conspired together to mount an attack on Muhammad, to rid him once and for all. This, they hoped, would eliminate the constant raids on their caravans, which no doubt was placing a burden on the economy of these tribes and Mecca. But as discussed earlier, Muhammad and the Muslims considered it a right to attack the caravans as retribution for the loss suffered at having to flee Mecca due to persecution from the pagan Arabs and the Jews.

As the battle plans were developed, the Meccan alliance enlisted the help of the Jewish Qurayza tribe, who lived on the south side of Medina. The battle plans called for the Meccan contingent to attack Muhammad from the north, while the Qurayza would attack from the south, thus ensuring a victory for alliance and eliminating Muhammad once and for all.

However, the Muslims, led by Muhammad, had prepared for the battle by digging a large trench north of Medina to provide a barrier to entry. Medina was naturally fortified on all other fronts. As the Meccan tribes approached Medina from the north, they were caught off guard by the trench. While a few Jewish warriors were able to cross the trench, and were ultimately killed, the majority of the Jewish force was prevented from further advancement. Eventually, the tribes from Mecca retreated.

---

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 302.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 304.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

This left the Qurayza tribe in Medina alone to face Muhammad. Realizing the hopelessness of their situation, they surrendered. The Qurayza were offered the chance to convert to Islam or die, and chose to face death rather than abandon the Torah. Judgment was pronounced against them: the men were to die and the women and children taken as hostages. Ibn Ishaq recounts that Muhammad himself called for the captives to be brought in batches to the trench, and in one day he personally beheaded 600-700 men (Ishaq says some sources indicate the number may be as high as 800-900) and threw their headless bodies into the trench.<sup>94</sup>

Thus, this particular *jihad* resulted in the death of up to 900 Jewish men in a single day. While on the face of it, this battle might seem to be justified as a defensive one for the Muslims, the root cause, again, was Muhammad's consistent *jihad* attacks against the Jewish tribes of Mecca and the surrounding area. Clearly, the Muslims considered this event another struggle in the ongoing attempt to spread Islam, for Bukhari records the following: "On the day of the battle of *Ghazwat-ul-Khandaq* (battle of the ditch) the Ansar used to say, 'We are those who have given the *Bai'a* (pledge) to Muhammad for *Jihad* (holy fighting) as long as we live.'<sup>95</sup>

#### d) Invasion of Mecca

When Muhammad was forced to flee Mecca to Medina at the outset of Islam, the polytheistic tribes of Mecca and the surrounding territory were seen as enemies of Muhammad. The dominant tribe in Mecca was the Banu Quraysh, the same tribe that led the coalition against Muhammad in the Battle of the Trench. The Quraysh were led by Abu Sufyan, who is recognized in Islamic history as one of Muhammad's greatest opponents.

In the years following the hijra, Muhammad had systematically eliminated or forced the relocation of most polytheistic tribes to lands far away. Ridding Mecca of all traces of polytheists was one of Muhammad's final steps in creating an empire occupied solely of Muslims. He needed only to convert the remaining polytheists in Mecca.

The invasion of Mecca took place on the 20<sup>th</sup> of Ramadan, 630 AD (A.H. 8). Muhammad assembled a force of some 10,000 Muslims and descended upon Mecca. Their first goal was Abu Sufyan himself. It seems likely the Muslims reasoned that if the tribal leader was either killed or converted, the battle and capture of Mecca would become an easy task.

Muhammad and Abu Sufyan met outside Mecca, prior to Muhammad's forces descending on the city. Ibn Ishaq relates the exchange that occurred between the two:

Ibn Abbas (Muhammad's cousin): I told him [Abu Sufyan] that the apostle was here and with his army and expressed concern for him and for Quraysh: **'If he takes you he will behead you**, so ride on the back of this mule so that I can take you to him and ask for you his protection.' I took him to the Apostle and when he saw him he said 'Isn't it time that you should recognize that there is no God but Allah? Woe to you, Abu Sufyan, isn't it time you recognized that I am God's Apostle?'

<sup>94</sup> Ibn Ishaq, 464.

<sup>95</sup> Bukhari, 5:86 (3796).

Abu Sufyan: As to that, I still have some doubt.

Ibn Abbas: I said to him, '**Submit and testify** that there is no God but Allah and that Muhammad is the apostle of **God before you loose your head,**' so he did so.<sup>96</sup>

Thus, the leader of the Quraish tribe "converted" to Islam under the threat of losing his head if he refused. 'Conversion by the sword' is a phrase used today to describe the spread of Islam, but moderate Muslims characterize the phrase as an exaggeration. In fact, one pro-Muslim website proclaims

Many non-Muslims, when they think about Islam, picture religious fanatics on camels with a sword in one hand and a Qur'an in the other. This myth, which was made popular in Europe during the Crusades, is totally baseless. First of all, the Holy Qur'an clearly says "Let there be no compulsion in religion".

In addition to this, Islam teaches that a person's faith must be pure and sincere, so it is certainly not something that can be forced on someone. In debunking the myth that Islam was "spread by the sword"...

<sup>97</sup>

Claims such as this display either a complete disregard or willing ignorance of the history of Islam, or an attempt at historical revisionism. As we have seen above, and is evident time and again throughout the history of Islam, forced conversions were a part of jihad. Abu Sufyan is only one victim among hundreds of thousands, or perhaps millions.

The invasion of Mecca was a relatively bloodless one when compared to Muhammad's other conquests. Except for a few minor skirmishes, the Muslim forces gained control of Mecca without resistance, after the forced conversion of Abu Sufyan to Islam.

### e) Other "convert or die" encounters

The forced conversion of Abu Sufyan was not an isolated incident. The history of Islam is replete with numerous similar incidents.

- When 'Umayr came to Mecca he stayed there summoning people to Islam and treating those who opposed him violently so that through him many became Muslims.<sup>98</sup>
- The apostle sent Khalid b. al-Walid in the month of Rabi'u l-Akhir in the year 10 to the B. al-Harith, and ordered him to invite them to Islam three days before he attacked them. If they accepted then he was to accept it from them; and if they declined he was to fight them... 'If you accept Islam you will be safe' so they accepted Islam as they were invited.<sup>99</sup>

---

<sup>96</sup> Ibn Ishaq, 547.

<sup>97</sup> <http://www.islamicweb.com/begin/myth8.htm>, accessed May 6, 2006.

<sup>98</sup> Ibn Ishaq, 319.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 645.

- God sent Muhammad with this religion and he strove for it until men accepted it voluntarily or by force.<sup>100</sup>

## 2. From Qur'an

Richard Bailey has analyzed the Qur'an and the development of jihad in the Qur'anic text.<sup>101</sup> The following is a synopsis of Bailey's research.

The Qur'an can be divided into two periods: from 610-622, when Muhammad began preaching in Mecca and had a small band of followers, and 622-632 when Muhammad fled to Medina and Islam began to flourish. Of the 114 Suras that comprise the Qur'an, 90 of these originated during the Meccan period. The remaining 24 Suras originated during Muhammad's time in Medina. The early Meccan Suras contain no material on fighting or jihad, even though the Muslims faced considerable persecution during this period. It is during the time of the later 24 Suras, while in Medina, that the teaching of *jihad* or fighting in the way of Allah developed. This teaching of *jihad* developed on four stages.

### STAGE ONE, MECCA—NO RETALIATION

During this initial period the Qur'an is silent regarding fighting or any sort of violence. The following verses are a small sample and typify the teaching of this period.

- Sura 73:10-11 – Be patient and bear with those who deny the truth
- Sura 52:45-48 – Leave them alone and wait for the Lord to punish them
- Sura 20:129-130 – be patient with evil things said by evil people
- Sura 23:96 – It is best not to retaliate evil for evil
- Sura 16:125-26 – Invite to the way of God only with gracious preaching and arguments

### STAGE TWO, LATER MECCA, DEFENSIVE FIGHTING PERMITTED

After several months in Medina, Muhammad began looting the Meccan caravans. This practice eventually resulted in the Meccans launching attacks against the Muslims [hoping to stop the looting]. Muslims are given permission to fight defensively.

- Sura 22:39-41 – Permission is given to go to war to defend themselves.
- Sura 22:58 – Rewards given for those who die in jihad.

### STAGE THREE, MEDINA, DEFENSIVE FIGHTING COMMANDED

After the battle of Uhud, which the Muslims lost and during which many Muslims were killed, hypocrites—Arabs who pretended to believe but did not—began to show themselves as enemies. Jews also later came to be seen as enemies.

- Sura 2:190-194 – Fight [imperative] defensively against an attack from fellow Arab Meccan opponents until persecution is stopped and Islam is established

---

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 669.

<sup>101</sup> Rev. Richard P. Bailey, "Jihad: The Teaching of Islam from its Primary Sources-The Quran and Hadith" [online article], available at <http://answering-islam.org.uk/Bailey/jihad.html> (accessed Feb. 19, 2006).



- Sura 8:1 – The spoils of war in fighting against Arab Meccans belongs to God
- Sura 8:12-18 – Cut the necks and fingers of those who oppose God and Muhammad and never turn your backs
- Sura 8:57-61 – If you defeat them, treat the treacherous with treachery and terrorize. God will repay what you spend. If they ask for peace, give them peace.
- Sura 8:67-69 – Keep killing and do not take prisoners until the land is subdued. You should not fight to get material goods, but Allah forgives your mistake *this time*. [but what about all the *other* times??]
- Sura 47:4-6, 15 – Cut their necks, subdue them, then be generous. Martyrs will receive paradise where there are rivers of water, milk, wine, and honey, plus abundant fruit.
- Sura 4:95-96 – God gives a higher grade and reward to those who strive and fight in God’s cause
- Sura 48:15-17 – Those who lag behind will face God’s punishment. The lame, sick, blind are excused. Those who fight will be rewarded with Paradise

#### STAGE FOUR, AFTER CONQUERING MECCA, OFFENSIVE WAR: COMMANDED TO KILL PAGANS AND HUMBLE CHRISTIANS AND JEWS

Mecca was conquered, the Meccans surrendered, and most of them converted to Islam. The Jews still rejected Muhammad as a prophet, so the list of enemies of Islam grew to include all unbelievers—Jews, Christians, and all pagans. Jihad is no longer just defensive, but offensive against all unbelievers. Since this is the final teaching in the Qur’an, this teaching is still in force today.

- Sura 9:19-22 – Jihad is greater than any other service, and of the highest rank in the sight of God
- Sura 9:29-31 – Fight against Christians and Jews until they are subdued, because God’s curse is on them
- Sura 9:38, 39, 41 – Don’t avoid fighting, but fight with whatever you have. Otherwise God will punish you with serious punishment.
- Sura 9:81-96 – Those who are able to fight but do not want to fight are rejected of God. Those unable are forgiven.
- Sura 9:123 – Fight the unbelievers around you
- Sura 5:36-38 – Death or torture to those who oppose the Apostle.
- Sura 5:54 – Don’t befriend Jews or Christians because they are unjust and unreliable.

Bailey further mentions that the *Brill Encyclopedia of Islam* and comments in Bukhari’s Hadith by translator Muhammad Mushin Khan both support this idea of a successive development, in stages, of the teaching and expansion of the practice of jihad.

### **B. POST MUHAMMAD CRUSADES**

The spread of Islam by way of jihad did not end with the death of Muhammad in 632; in fact, it had only begun. Jihad has been a continuing reality since Muhammad, up to and including today. Several scholars have invested considerable effort into documenting these ongoing struggles to spread Islam through holy fighting. The summary of this research, below, is just

a small sample. For a more thorough analysis, you are encouraged to investigate the bibliographical references.

- 634 AD: Abu Bakr's invasion of the Gaza region up to Caesarea, 4,000 Jews, Christians and peasants massacred.<sup>102</sup>
- 635-642: Conquest of Mesopotamia, Christian monasteries pillaged and burned, monks massacred, entire towns put to the sword.<sup>103</sup>
- 639: entered Egypt with 4,000 men exterminating the populations of cities and villages. Towns of Palestine, Syria, Persia, Armenia put to the sword.<sup>104</sup>
- 643: North Africa—Tripoli ransacked, Carthage entirely razed and most inhabitants killed, Maghreb burned and inhabitants put to the sword.<sup>105</sup>
- 712 onward: Invasion of Spain, continuing into Europe, killing scores of thousands as Islam marched across Europe.<sup>106</sup>
- 838: Turkey invaded, Amorium-4,000 slaughtered, 6,000 Greek captives exterminated.<sup>107</sup>
- 827-902: Sicily. Long jihad to establish Islam on the island. 8,000 murdered in Enna in 859, thousands more during the siege. Altar erected to sacrifice the virginity of one Christian nun per day by one jihad warrior.<sup>108</sup>
- 981: Zamora, Spain; 4,000 Christian captives slaughtered by Ibn Ami Amir, a.k.a. Almanzor.<sup>109</sup>
- 1086: Almoravid Muslims attack Andalusians. Muslims stop counting Christian casualties after reaching 24,000.<sup>110</sup>
- 1340-1480: Mongol invasion of Russia, 24,000 Russian corpses found in one day along the streets of Moscow.<sup>111</sup>
- 1389: Kosovo, Field of Blackbirds. Defensive Christian force of up to 30,000 defeated, beheaded, their heads heaped in pyramids.<sup>112</sup>

On May 8, 2006, Iranian President Ahmadinejad sent a letter to U.S. President Bush, calling the U.S. to return to monotheism. Many in the media saw this move as an “opening of the diplomatic door” that has been closed for a number of years; a good will gesture on Ahmadinejad's part. Yet, those familiar with Islamic history spotted an immediate parallel between this letter and Muhammad's requirement to call a people to embrace Islam first before attacking them, as recorded in the Hadith. Could this letter be a prelude to an Iranian jihad against the U.S.? Time will tell.

---

<sup>102</sup> Bat Ye'or, *Decline of Eastern Christianity*, 44.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>106</sup> Bat Ye'or, *Decline of Eastern Christianity*, 49.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 48-49.

<sup>108</sup> Fregosi, 133.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 149.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 160.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 214.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 230.

Islamic critics of America and the West often criticize Europeans and Americans of being imperialists and colonialists, of invading Muslim lands with the intention of imposing Western culture and values on the conquered people. Interestingly, history shows that, on the one hand, Western colonization of Muslim lands lasted 130 years, from the 1830s to the 1960s. Muslim colonization of nearby European lands, on the other hand, lasted 1,300 years, from the 600s to the mid-1960s. Yet, strangely, it is the Muslims—the Arabs and the Moors to be precise—who are the most bitter about colonialism and the humiliation to which they have been subjected; and it is the Europeans who harbor the shame and guilt. It should be the other way around.<sup>113</sup> Imperialistic invasions of foreign lands by followers of Muhammad have been an ongoing challenge for the world population for over 1,300 years, and continue to this day.

## VI. Criticism of Jihad

Through the course of history, Christianity has undergone considerable scrutiny and been the subject of numerous critical analyses—of the reliability and accuracy of the Bible, the historicity of Jesus, the cohesiveness and coherence of the Biblical text, and so on. Islam, on the other hand, has only recently become the subject of similar critical analyses.

When subjected to critical analysis, the subject of jihad seems to be incoherent. Undoubtedly, certain Muslim attempts to compare Islamic jihad to similar events in the history of Christianity or the West fall short of making sense. We will examine only a few of the common criticisms of jihad.

### A. JIHAD VS. CRUSADES

When Muslims are asked to justify the existence of jihad, especially as part of a religion that claims to be a “religion of peace,” they often point to the Crusades, as if to say, “You Christians are no different. Look at how many Muslims were killed by Christian warriors during the Crusades.” Yet jihad and the Crusades are as different as oil and vinegar, and any attempt at equating the two is illegitimate. Fregosi comments, “History has largely bypassed the Muslim attacks on and invasions of Europe that lasted from the seventh to the twentieth centuries, but has remained transfixed on the Christian Crusades to the Holy Land that lasted only from the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries. We could say that the historical perspective here is gravely out of focus.”<sup>114</sup> Indeed, the two hundred years of the Crusades is hardly on par with over 1,300 years of ongoing Islamic jihad; such a comparison is invalid at the most basic level.

Moreover, Muslims accuse Westerners of being imperialists, intent on invading foreign lands to “Westernize” the world. All this began, to the Muslim mind, at the Crusades. Yet when we look at the history of jihad, it is the followers of Islam who were the original imperialists, and they have been invading new territories for a much longer time. Their criticism seems, on the face of it, disingenuous. Fregosi notes, “When accusing the West of imperialism, Muslims are obsessed with the Christian Crusades but have forgotten their own, much grander jihad. In fact, they often denounce the Crusades as the cause and starting point of the antagonism

---

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>114</sup> Fregosi, 24.

between Christianity and Islam. They are putting the cart before the horse.”<sup>115</sup> In recognizing that warriors of Islamic jihad constituted the first imperialists, Bat Ye’or makes the observation that; “Analysts deliberately mislead the public by using the Crusades in order to create a sense of moral equivalency between Christianity and Islam and to calm European concerns about jihad. They ignore, of course, that jihad, as an ideology and a praxis, was unremittingly active in Asia, Africa, and Europe four centuries before the Crusades.”<sup>116</sup> Thus, while it is true that “The jihad wars were sheer imperialism, just as ours were,”<sup>117</sup> Islam was at the forefront of imperialism, long before Christianity was, and the imperialism of Islam has been ongoing for a much longer time when compared to the relatively short time of the Crusades. It seems that the critics of the Christian crusades are simply being intellectually dishonest in forcing a comparison.

Additionally, the scope of the Crusades pales in comparison to the scope of jihad. The Crusades can be characterized as a legitimate response to previously unchecked Islamic imperialism, with the goal of recapturing from the Muslims land that was previously occupied by Christians. Fregosi provides incisive insight into illegitimate attempts to equate the two when he states, “The Jihad has affected and engulfed far more countries than the Palestine-bound Crusades. The Crusades, eight in number, were concentrated in the Holy Land and all took place between the years 1096 and 1270, not quite two hundred years in all. The Crusaders wanted to establish themselves in the Holy Land, formerly Christian. Islam’s motives, through Jihad, were far grander.”<sup>118</sup>

Finally, any attempt to equate jihad with the Crusades must include a legitimate and honest look at the example set by the founders of Islam and Christianity—Muhammad and Jesus Christ, respectively. A fair and honest look at the words and deeds of these two men should provide insight as to whether the Crusades and jihad are part and parcel of each ideology’s tenets or instead an anomaly.

When one examines honestly the teaching of Jesus Christ and the conduct toward others that he displayed, we find that Jesus taught a message of love, tolerance for sinners, patience with the impatient, sympathy for those who would scorn him and ridicule him. Jesus was never violent, never advocated the murder of anyone, especially those who opposed him. In light of Jesus’ teaching and his example, the Crusades are an anomaly—they do not fit within the framework of the Biblical teaching of how one is to treat one’s enemies.

On the other hand, though, we find the teaching and example of Muhammad to be perfectly in line with jihad. Muhammad taught hate and contempt for one’s enemies. Example after example can be found in his biographies where he ordered the murder of those who dared insult him through poetry, or sing songs which derided him. Anger, vengeance, and hatred for one’s enemies were part and parcel of Muhammad’s words and his example. Therefore, it should come as no surprise, as Fregosi notes, “Muslims who kill are following the commands of Muhammad, but Christians who kill—and there are many—are ignoring the words of

---

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 24-25.

<sup>116</sup> Bat Ye’or, *Eurabia*, 31.

<sup>117</sup> Fregosi, 21.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 23.

Christ. Therein perhaps lies one of the basic philosophical differences between Islam and Christianity.”<sup>119</sup>

Indeed, through jihad, numerous “conquests took place within the framework of the common ideology of jihad and the administrative and juridical apparatus of the shari’a.”<sup>120</sup> In other words, jihad is woven into and made a component part of Islamic law; the Crusades of Christianity were outside the norms of Christian teaching.

### **B. GREATER VS. LESSER JIHAD**

Another common argument put forth by Islam is that of two types of jihad; the greater jihad, characterized as a spiritual struggle, and the lesser jihad which is the physical defense of Islam, including warfare at times if necessary. The argument goes that physical struggle or warfare (lesser jihad) is an aberration, and that the original intent of jihad was limited to solely a spiritual, inner struggle. Unfortunately, this common assertion is again misleading and disingenuous.

There exists a compelling amount of material, both in the Qur’an and Hadith, which identifies the concept of jihad as an external, outward, physical struggle, usually accompanied by some sort of violence. Cook notes, “most verses in the Qur’an are unambiguous as to the nature of what jihad prescribed—the vast majority of them referring to ‘those who believe, emigrate, and fight in the path of Allah,’ as in 2:218, 8:72, 9:20, 49:15”<sup>121</sup> Moreover, there is little evidence that jihad ever meant anything other than “fighting for Allah,” and there is little evidence that jihad was ever presented as a spiritual struggle. Cook provides the following analysis of the historical literature as it relates to a spiritual jihad:

...traditions indicating that jihad meant spiritual warfare, however, are entirely absent from any of the official, canonical collections...one might reasonably infer from this that the Hadith collectors construed as illegitimate the entire line of thought leading to the conclusion that spiritual warfare is part of or equivalent to aggressive jihad.<sup>122</sup>

The Muslim who wishes to practice aggressive jihad has an abundance of literary material upon which to base his actions and derive his precedents. But with the exception of Ayatullah al-Khumayni’s contemporary book on the “greater jihad,” there do not seem to have ever been any works devoted exclusively to the subject of the spiritual jihad.<sup>123</sup>

Some scholars contend that jihad as a spiritual struggle is a recent development, or perhaps a resurgence of an understanding of jihad long since forgotten but recently revived. Either way, the fact still stands that jihad as preached and practiced by Muslims for over 1,300 years has, nearly without exception, been a physical, forceful struggle. Cook again observes, “(recent) Muslim apologists...rediscovered the internal jihad in the nineteenth century and

---

<sup>119</sup> Fregosi, 22.

<sup>120</sup> Bat Ye’or, *Decline of Eastern Christianity*, 55.

<sup>121</sup> Cook, 32.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

have been emphasizing it ever since that time as the normative expression of jihad—in defiance of all the religious and historical evidence to the contrary.”<sup>124</sup>

Moreover, scholars who study and analyze Middle East culture note that spiritual jihad is merely a façade, created in an attempt to disguise the truth of jihad hiding behind the façade to those of us in the West. Jihad as a spiritual struggle is presented only to Western audiences. “Few Muslim scholars or even apologists writing in non-European languages have ever made the exaggerated claims (re: spiritual struggle)...those who write in Arabic or other Muslim languages realize that it is pointless to present jihad as anything other than militant warfare.”<sup>125</sup>

The bottom line is that greater jihad “is nothing more than false advertisement designed to pull the wool over the eyes of the audience...(it) should not be used today by scholars of Islam as ‘proof’ that nonviolent jihad has historical depth or universal acceptance in classical or even contemporary Islam.”<sup>126</sup>

### **C. ABROGATION OF QURAN**

In the year prior to Muhammad’s death, Abu Bakr led a pilgrimage to Mecca (hajj). This pilgrimage is significant because it was during this time Sura 9 was revealed to Muhammad. Most scholars agree that Sura 9 was either the last or second to last Sura to be revealed to Muhammad. The significance of this concerns the law of abrogation in Islam (Sura 2:106), which holds that earlier revelations can be abrogated or overruled by later ones. Sura 9, as a late revelation, is said to abrogate earlier revelations, specifically with regard to how polytheists and pagans are to be dealt with.

Years earlier, Muhammad had entered into covenant agreements with the polytheistic Jewish tribes around Mecca, wherein these Jews were to be given protection to continue practicing their religion so long as they defended the Muslims when needed and fulfilled other obligations. But at the beginning of the hajj led by Abu Bakr in A.H. 9, Muhammad received a new revelation permitting the breaking of the agreement with the polytheists<sup>127</sup>, thus outlawing polytheism and abrogating the earlier revelation that nobody should face compulsion in religion.

The revelation of Sura 9 during this hajj set new requirements for the way Muslims were to treat polytheists and idolaters, which by definition includes everyone who believes in a God other than Allah, or believes in no God at all. According to Sura 9:29, Muslims are commanded to engage in warfare with anyone who does not believe in Allah:

Fight those who believe not in Allah nor the Last Day.  
Nor hold that forbidden which hath been forbidden by Allah and His  
Messenger. Nor acknowledge the Religion of truth, from among the People of  
the Book...

---

<sup>124</sup> Ibid, 40.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>127</sup> Ibn Ishaq, 617.

It is quite common to hear a moderate Muslim explain the actions of those who indiscriminately take innocent lives in the name of jihad as a radical faction of Islam, not a Muslim who follows the teaching of the Qur'an. After all, the reason goes, Islam is a religion of peace, as demonstrated by Sura 2:256, "Let there be no compulsion in religion: Truth stands out clear from error." This verse, the argument goes, teaches that nobody should be compelled to believe in or adopt any religion; therefore, Islam teaches peace and tolerance for all beliefs.

However, this simply is not the case. The Muslim scholar and commentator Ibn Kathir, writing a commentary on Sura 9:5, notes "'the sword ayah,' abrogated every agreement of peace between the prophet and any idolater, every treaty, and every term."<sup>128</sup> Cook expands on Ibn Kathir's commentary when he notes Sura 9:5 "is said to abrogate *all* other verses in the Qur'an on the subject of *war and peace*."<sup>129</sup>

Thus, while it is true Muhammad taught there should be "no compulsion in religion," this earlier teaching is no longer valid—and compelling someone to adopt a religious belief, i.e. Islam, is legitimate; indeed, it is commanded.

## VII. Conclusion

In this brief survey of Islamic jihad, we examined the definitions of jihad given today by Muslims. We saw that jihad simply means "struggle" and can have both an internal meaning and an external one. We discussed writings found in both the Qur'an and the traditions that require any able-bodied man to participate in jihad; participation by women is optional. We noted several purposes or reasons for engaging in jihad: 1) To rid the world of unbelievers; 2) to spread Islam; 3) To test the true followers of Allah; 4) To obtain booty; 5) To assure the warrior instant and eternal entrance into Paradise; and 6) To usher in 'The Hour' of judgment. We discussed the methods of jihad, including taking prisoners captive, engaging in psychological jihad and terror with Allah's enemy, and killing those who refuse to submit to Islam as the Qur'an commands. We reviewed some examples of jihad as demonstrated by Muhammad during his lifetime and by his followers. We took a critical look at some of the objections raised by Muslims when the bloody history of jihad is pointed out to them.

Needless to say, there is hardly a shred of evidence to support the idea that jihad was ever understood as anything other than a 'holy war' of aggression by Muslims and against anyone and everyone else. If he was anything at all, Muhammad was a warrior who knew how to inspire his followers to fight with reckless abandon, because there was absolutely nothing to lose and everything to gain. To put it in a nutshell, I defer again to Fregosi.

Muhammad, unlike Christ, was a man of violence; he bore arms, was wounded in battle and preached holy war—Jihad—against those who defied the will of God as revealed to him. This description of the Prophet may be psychologically unacceptable to many devout Muslims but it is in line with historical reality. Killing became part of the routine of the life of Muhammad

---

<sup>128</sup> Ibn Kathir, 4:377.

<sup>129</sup> Cook, 10 (italics mine).

the warrior after he moved from Mecca to Medina in 622 and became a fighter in the cause of Allah.<sup>130</sup>

And Muslims have been fighting in the cause of Allah ever since.

---

<sup>130</sup> Fregosi, 58.



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Ibn Anas, Malik, *Al-Muwatta of Imam Malik Ibn Anas: The First Formulation of Islamic Law*, Aisha Bewley, translator, Inverness, Scotland: Madinah Press, 2004.

Bailey, Richard P., "Jihad: The Teaching of Islam from its Primary Sources-The Quran and Hadith" [online article], available at <http://answering-islam.org.uk/Bailey/jihad.html>

Bat Ye'or, *Eurabia: The Euro-Arab Axis*, Madison, NJ: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 2005.

\_\_\_\_\_, *The Decline of Eastern Christianity under Islam: From Jihad to Dhimmitude*, Madison, NJ: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 1996.

Al-Bukhari, Muhammad b. Isma'il, *The Translations of the Meanings of Sahih Al-Bukhari*, 9 vols., Muhammad Mushin Khan, translator, Riyadh: Darussalam, 1997.

Cook, David, *Understanding Jihad*, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005.

Dashti, Ali, *23 Years: A Study of the Prophetic Career of Mohammad*, Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 1994.

Abu Dawud, Sulaiman, *Sunan Abu Dawud*, 3 vols., Ahmad Hasan, translator, New Delhi: Kitab Bhavan, 1990.

Fregosi, Paul, *Jihad in the West: Muslim Conquests from the 7<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> Centuries*, Amherst: Prometheus, 1998.

Ibn Ishaq, Muhammad, *The Life of Muhammad*, A. Guillaume, translator, Karachi, Pakistan: Oxford University Press, 1967.

Ibn Warraq, *The Quest for the Historical Muhammad*, Amherst, NY: Prometheus, 2000.

Karsh, Efraim, *Islamic Imperialism: A History*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006.

Ibn Kathir, Al-Hafiz Abu Al-Fida, *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, 10 vols., English Translation by Sheik Safiur-Rahman Al-Mubarakpuri et al., Riyadh: Darussalam, 2000.

Ibn Naqib al-Misri, Ahmed, *Reliance of the Traveller ('Umdat al-Salik): A Classic Manual of Islamic Sacred Law*, Revised Ed., trans. Nuh Ha Mim Keller, Beltsville, MD: Amana, 1994.

Al-Qushayri al-Naisaburi, Muslim b. Hajjaj, *Sahih Muslim*, Revised Ed., 4 vols., Abdul Hamid Siddiqi, translator, New Delhi: Kitab Bhavan, 2004.

Al-Shafi'i, Muhammad ibn Idris ibn al-Abbas, *Al-Shafi'i's al-Risala: Treatise on the Foundations of Islamic Jurisprudence*, Majid Khadduri, translator, Cambridge, UK: Muslim Texts Society, 1987.

Spencer, Robert, *Onward Muslim Soldiers: How Jihad Still Threatens America and the West*, Washington, DC: Regenery, 2003.

# J I H A D

## I. What is Jihad?

Striving, struggling, as in the desire of Muslims to please Allah

- a. **Internal** – spiritual struggle over internal desires, thoughts, etc.  
Little support in Qur'an and Hadith, later development
- b. **External** – physical exertion in the way of Allah
  - i. **Warfare** – fighting, killing.  
Sura 2:216 – Jihad is ordained for you  
Sura 4:74 – whoso fights in the cause of Allah...  
Sura 4:95 – ...those who fight in the cause of Allah with their...lives  
Sura 8:39 – Fight them until there is no more *fitnah*  
Sura 8:65 – O Prophet! Urge the believers to fight  
Sura 9:29 – Fight against those who believe not in Allah...
  - ii. **Terrorism** – instill fear into one's enemy  
Sura 3:151 – We shall cast terror into the hearts of those who disbelieve...  
Sura 8:12 – I will instill terror into the hearts of the unbelievers...  
Sura 8:60 – Make ready...the utmost of your power...to strike terror into the enemy
  - iii. **Martyrdom** – sacrificing one's life for the cause of Allah  
Sura 57:19 – the martyrs are with their Lord, they have their reward...  
Sura 9:20-22 – Those who believed...and fought in Allah's cause...with their lives...they are the successful...their Lord gives them Gardens wherein are everlasting delights  
Sura 9:111 – Allah hath bought from the believers their lives...

Promoting Islam, Dawah

- to invite, to give an invitation [to accept Islam]
- an intellectual, apologetic approach used to persuade others of the truth of Islam  
Sura 16:125 – invite all to the Way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching...  
Sura 28:87 – ...invite men to thy Lord
- implies a non-violent, reasoned, rational invitation to accept Islam; **however...**  
**historical accounts of Dawah are often accompanied by violence:**  
"We call[ed] them to Islam...they received it not...I volunteered to attack them."  
"Muhammad...invite[d] them to Islam three days before he was to attack them...if they declined he was to fight them...so they accepted Islam."  
"When you meet the polytheists, summon them to Islam; if they accept, refrain from further **hostilities**."

## II. Is Jihad required of Muslims?

- a. **Sixth Pillar of Islam**  
Sura 2:216 – Jihad is ordained for you Muslims though you dislike it...  
Sura 9:41 – March forth [a command]...and strive hard with your wealth and with your lives...
- b. **Men – Jihad required**  
"Jihad is required in all conditions...Allah ordained that the believes march forth...whether they felt active, lazy, at ease or had difficult circumstances."  
"Jihad, and rising up in arms in particular, is obligatory for all able-bodied believers..."  
"He who dies without having fought or having felt fighting to be his duty is guilty of hypocrisy."
- c. **Women – Jihad optional**  
Hadith accounts show women providing water, caring for the wounded, etc. According to tradition, Muhammad used to take women into battle at times; they received a portion of booty for their service.

## III. What is the purpose of Jihad?

- a. **Rid the world of polytheists, disbelievers**  
Ibn Kathir – "Fighting Jews and Christians is legislated because **they are idolaters** and disbelievers... who utter lies against Allah.  
Sura 4:89 – "if they turn back from Islam, take them and kill them wherever you find them..."  
Sura 8:39 – "Fight them until there is no more *fitnah* (worshipping others besides Allah)."  
Shafi'i – "Those who perform it [jihad] in the **war against polytheists** will... receive the supererogatory merit."
- b. **Spread Islam**  
Muhammad – "Be patient till you face them and invite them to Islam, and inform them what Allah has enjoined on them."  
Muslim – The Umma (Islamic community) will extend from east to west. **All colors, races, and ethnic groups will embrace Islam.**  
Ibn Kathir – "Islam is the religion that will **dominate** over all other religions."  
Muhammad – "I am commanded to fight with men **till they testify** that there is **no God but Allah**."
- c. **Test true followers of Allah**

Sura 9:16 – Do you think that you shall be left alone while Allah has not yet tested those among you who have striven hard and fought...?  
Sura 47:4 – If it had been Allah's will, he himself could certainly have punished them without you. But he lets you fight in order to test some of you with others...  
Ibn Kathir – “Allah chastises and admonishes those who stayed away from jihad even though they had the ability to join it.”

#### d. Obtain booty

Muhammad – “Go and attack it [Meccan caravan], perhaps God will give it as prey.”  
Sura 48:16-21 – Allah has promised you abundant spoils...he has hastened you for this.

#### - 1/5 to Muhammad, Allah

Sura 8:41 – Whatever of war booty you may gain, one-fifth is assigned to Allah, the Messenger, the orphans, the poor, the wayfarer. See also Sura 59:7-9.

#### - To fighters individually and collectively

Several examples found Hadith; see Bukhari 3051, Muslim 4340 for examples.

#### - No portion required for women

#### e. Assure a place in paradise

Sura 3:195 – Those who...fought and were killed in My cause...I will admit them to Gardens (in Paradise)  
Sura 3:169-171 – Think not of those who are killed in the Way of Allah as dead, they are alive with their Lord. They rejoice in a grace and bounty from Allah.  
“Allah guarantees that He will admit the mujahid in His Cause into Paradise if he is killed.”  
“Jibril (Gabriel) informed the Prophet that they (the martyrs) met their Lord”  
“O mother of Haritah [a martyr], there are gardens in Paradise and your son got the best place.”  
“Know that Paradise is under the shades of swords.”

#### f. Usher in “the hour” of judgment

“The Hour will not be established until you fight against the Jews.”  
“One of the portents of The Hour is that you will fight against people wearing shoes made of hair.”  
“The Hour will not be established until you fight against the Turks.”

### IV. How is Jihad carried out? What methods are used?

#### a. By taking captives

Sura 47:4 – When you meet those who disbelieve, smite their necks...take them as captives...  
Sura 9:5 – kill the idolaters wherever you find them, capture and besiege them, lie in wait for them

#### b. Through slaughter, killing disbelievers

Sura 8:57 – If you gain mastery over them in war, punish them severely [inflicting casualties on them]  
Sura 9:5 – slay the idolaters wherever you find them...

- Ibn Kathir – “This verse means fight the idolaters, executing some and keeping others...they will have no choice but to die or embrace Islam.”

Sura 9:73 – Strive hard against the disbelievers and hypocrites, be harsh against them...

- Ibn Kathir – This verse means fight the disbelievers with the sword. Perform jihad against disbelievers with the sword.

#### c. With psychological jihad

Sura 8:60 – Make ready whatever force of war you can, to terrify the enemy of God and your enemy  
Sura 3:151 – We shall cast terror into the hearts of those who disbelieve...

### V. What examples of Jihad are available from history?

#### a. Muhammad's biography

- Expedition to the bin al-Harith: Show of strength by Muslims, but whom eventually retreated. Abu Bakr wrote poetry regarding the expedition, promising to leave their women husbandless and enough dead men to cause a large flock of vultures to swarm.
- Battle of Badr: fought on 17<sup>th</sup> of Ramadan, 624. Muhammad incited his warriors with promises of Paradise if killed or large amounts of booty if they lived. Battle was particularly gory, with hands, feet, heads severed. 70 Jewish tribesmen killed, another 70 taken captive.
- Battle of the Trench: Coalition of Jewish tribes from Mecca and Medina conspire to kill Muhammad to end his raids on their trade caravans and their livelihood. Jews from Mecca caught off guard by trench dug around Medina, preventing entry. Jews in Medina were found guilty of conspiring against Muhammad, and 800-900 men were beheaded in one night; women and children taken captive as slaves.
- Invasion of Mecca: Relatively little bloodshed, because Meccans were well aware of Muhammad's bloodthirsty method of warfare. Abu Sufyan, leader of Meccan tribe, was warned to accept Islam or lose his head. He accepted Islam.
- “When ‘Umayr [one of Muhammad's followers] came to Mecca he stayed there summoning people to Islam and treating those who opposed him so violently that through him many became Muslims.”
- “God sent Muhammad with this religion and he strove for it until men accepted it voluntarily or by force.”

b. The Qur'an – Stages of Jihad (from Richard Bailey)

**Stage One – Mecca, No retaliation**

Sura 73:10-Be patient with those who deny the truth  
 Sura 52:45-48 – Leave them alone and wait for the Lord to punish them  
 Sura 20:129 – be patient with evil things said by evil people  
 Sura 23:96 – It is best not to retaliate evil for evil  
 Sura 16:125 – Invite to the way of God only with gracious preaching and arguments

**Stage Two – Late Mecca, Defensive Fighting Permitted**

Sura 22:39-41 – Permission is given to Muslims to go to war to defend themselves.  
 Sura 22:58 – Rewards given for those who die in jihad.

**Stage Three – Medina, Defensive Fighting Commanded**

Sura 2:190-194 – Fight [imperative] defensively against an attack from fellow Arab opponents until persecution is stopped and Islam is established.  
 Sura 8:1 – The spoils of war in fighting against Arab Meccans belongs to God.  
 Sura 8:12-18 – Cut the necks and fingers of those who oppose God and Muhammad and never turn your backs  
 Sura 8:57 – If you defeat them, treat the treacherous with treachery and terrorize.  
 Sura 8:67 – Keep killing and do not take prisoners until the land is subdued.

**Stage Four – Mecca Conquered, Offensive Command to Kill Pagans, Humble Christians and Jews**

Sura 9:19-22 – Jihad is greater than any other service, and of the highest rank in the sight of God  
 Sura 9:29-31 – Fight against Christians and Jews until they are subdued, because God's curse is on them  
 Sura 9:38-41 – Don't avoid fighting, but fight with whatever you have. Otherwise, God will punish you with serious punishment.  
 Sura 9:81-96 – Those who are able to fight but do not want to fight are rejected by God. Those unable to fight are forgiven.  
 Sura 9:123 – Fight the unbelievers around you  
 Sura 5:36-38 – Death or torture to those who oppose the Apostle  
 Sura 5:54 – Don't befriend Jews or Christians because they are unjust and unreliable.

c. Post-Muhammad Jihad

634: Invasion of Gaza, 4,000 Jews, Christians, peasants massacred  
 635-642: Conquest of Mesopotamia; monasteries pillaged, burned; monks massacred  
 639: Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Persia, Armenia invaded, over 4,000 put to the sword  
 712: Invasion of Spain, continuing across much of Europe, scores of thousands killed  
 838: Turkey invaded; 4,000 residents and 6,000 Greek captives exterminated  
 827-902: Sicily jihad; 8,000 murdered in Enna alone, thousands more elsewhere  
 981: Zamora, Spain: 4,000 Christians slaughtered by Almanzor.  
 1086: Muslims invade Andalusians; body count halted after more than 24,000 counted  
 1340-1480: Mongol invasion of Russia, 24,000 found dead in Moscow in just one day  
 1389: Kosovo; defensive Christian force of up to 30,000 beheaded, heads stacked in pyramids  
 And so it continues even to today...

VI. What are some common criticisms regarding Jihad?

a. Jihad and Crusades: Aren't they the same thing?

Crusades lasted ~200 years	Jihad ongoing for more than 1,300 years
Crusades criticized as beginning of Imperialism	Imperialism began with Muhammad's jihad expeditions more than 500 years prior to the Crusades
Crusades began as effort to recapture from Muslims land once occupied by Christians	Jihad began with intent to take land never occupied by Muslims, to establish the 'umma" (Islamic community).
Jesus did not teach violence against those who refused his message, nor did he live it	Muhammad not only preached violence against non-believers, he set the example!

b. Greater Jihad and Lesser Jihad

Definition: **Greater Jihad** = spiritual struggle, **Lesser Jihad** = physical, including violence. However... save for a little known Hadith, there is virtually no evidence in Muslim historical literature to support a "greater jihad" concept of spiritual battles in Islam.

Abundance of historical support: jihad = physical struggle, including fighting, warfare.

Furthermore—Muslim scholars writing to non-Western audiences: Jihad=Fighting, not spiritual struggles.

**Conclusion:** Entire line of thought where spiritual struggle is equivalent to aggressive jihad is illegitimate.

c. Abrogation of the Qur'an

Abrogation: Earlier revelations can be abrogated, changed, or substituted by later revelations (Sura 2:106)

Moderate Muslims: Islam is a religion of peace. Sura 2:256 – No compulsion in religion. However...

Sura 9, a later revelation, abrogates all earlier revelations, as does Sura 5.

- Sura 9:5 – Slay the idolaters wherever you see them, lie in wait for them
- Sura 9:29 – Fight those who believe not in Allah
- Sura 9:123 – Fight the disbelievers around you, let them find harshness in you.

**Conclusion:** Islam may have been a "religion of peace" at one time; not today. Fighting is legitimate, and commanded.