

Chapter Seven

Jihad (striving & struggling in the cause of God)

The concept of Jihad is misunderstood by most people: non-Muslims and Muslims alike. To non-Muslims Jihad implies fighting and is associated with Muslim extremists or calls made by extremists to fight infidels. To Muslims who do not understand the concept of Jihad it means liberating Muslim land from foreigners.

We will discuss the following concepts:

- 1- The true meaning of Jihad and its various forms
- 2- What form of Jihad is acceptable to God?
- 3- When is Jihad an obligation?
- 4- Misconceptions about Jihad
- 5- The rewards of true Jihad

The true meaning of Jihad

Jihad in the Arabic language means striving and struggling and implies experiencing difficulty and sacrifice. There are various forms of Jihad:

- 1- Jihad or struggling with our souls to control our vain desires

- 2- Jihad or struggling against the temptation of Satan to obey God's orders and to live our lives as He commanded us to do, placing our priorities correctly and properly
- 3- Jihad to correct misconceptions about Islam and to illustrate and explain the true nature of this religion as a peaceful tolerant religion that respects and safeguards the rights and liberties of every human being, Muslims and non-Muslims alike
- 4- Jihad to defend one's home or country when attacked or subjected to oppression, and this type of Jihad may involve fighting or armed struggle.

Therefore, Jihad in most cases is not fighting as the Western media suggest and falsely proclaim. Fighting is the last resort and to be used only for self-defense and has rules and regulations that must be followed. Otherwise, it is an aggression, and the Qur'an forbids aggression, whether this aggression is committed by one individual or by a country.

Jihad to control our vain desires

Unless we struggle to control our vain desires, we become slaves to those desires and we spend our money and energy trying to satisfy these desires. They become our main concern and obsession, nothing else matters or becomes secondary. The Qur'an explains this concept and warns against becoming slaves worshipping our desires:

﴿ أَرَأَيْتَ مَنْ اتَّخَذَ إِلَهَهُ هَوَاهُ أَفَأَنْتَ تَكُونُ عَلَيْهِ وَكِيلًا ﴿٢٥﴾ ﴾

Seest thou such a one as taketh for his god his own passion (or impulse)? Couldst thou be a disposer of affairs for him?

Al-Furqan 25 : 43

﴿ أَمْ حَسِبُ أَنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ يَسْمَعُونَ أَوْ يَعْقِلُونَ ۚ إِنْ هُمْ إِلَّا كَالْأَنْعَامِ ۗ بَلْ هُمْ

أَضَلُّ سَبِيلًا ﴿٢٦﴾ ﴾

Or thickest thou that most of them listen or understand? They are only like cattle; nay, they are worse astray in Path.

Al-Furqan 25 : 44

It is not easy to control our vain desires. It requires hard work, discipline, patience and sacrifice. It is much easier to have immediate gratification and pleasure than to be patient, suffer or deny ourselves. Only those with strong personality, commitment and resolve are able to discipline themselves and control their desires. The Qur'an gives examples of these pleasures and points out that money, children and the good things in life are appealing:

﴿ زُيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ حُبُّ الشَّهَوَاتِ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ وَالْبَنِينَ وَالْقَنَاطِيرِ الْمُقَنْطَرَةِ مِنَ الذَّهَبِ وَالْفِضَّةِ وَالْخَيْلِ الْمُسَوَّمَةِ وَالْأَنْعَامِ وَالْحَرْثِ ۗ ذَٰلِكَ مَتَاعُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا ۗ وَاللَّهُ عِنْدَهُ حُسْنُ الْمَبَآئِطِ ﴾

Fair in the eyes of men is the love of things they covet: women and sons; heaped-up hoards of gold and silver; horses branded (for blood and excellence); and (wealth of) cattle and well-tilled land. Such are the possessions of this world's life; but in nearness to Allah is the best of the goals (to return to).

Al-Imran 3 : 14

The Qur'an warns us not to be lured by the material glitter in this life, for such pleasures are transient and do not count in our accountability :

﴿ أَعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا لَعِبٌ وَلَهُمْ وِزِينَةٌ وَتَفَاخُرٌ بَيْنَكُمْ وَتَكَاثُرٌ فِي الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَوْلَادِ ۗ كَمَثَلِ غَيْثٍ أَعْجَبَ الْكُفَّارَ نَبَاتُهُ ثُمَّ يَهِيجُ فَتَرَهُ مُضْفَرًا ثُمَّ يَكُونُ حُطَبًا ۗ وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ وَمَغْفِرَةٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرِضْوَانٌ ۗ وَمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا مَتَاعٌ الْغُرُورِ ﴾

Know ye (all), that the life of this world is but play and amusement, pomp and mutual boasting and multiplying, (in rivalry) among yourselves, riches and children. Here is a similitude; how rain and the growth which it brings forth, delight (the hearts of) the tillers; soon it withers; thou wilt see it grow yellow; then it becomes dry and crumbles away. But in the Hereafter is a Penalty severe (for the devotees of wrong). And Forgiveness from Allah and (His) Good Pleasure (for the devotees of Allah). And what is the life of this world, but goods and chattels of deception?

Al-Hadeed 57 : 20

This does not mean that we do not enjoy ourselves or deprive our families of the good pleasures in life. On the contrary, Islam allows and encourages us to enjoy the good and wholesome things that God has provided for His servants:

﴿ قُلْ مَنْ حَرَّمَ زِينَةَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي أَخْرَجَ لِعِبَادِهِ ۖ وَالطَّيِّبَاتِ مِنَ الرِّزْقِ قُلْ هِيَ لِلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا خَالِصَةً يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ ۗ كَذَٰلِكَ نُفَصِّلُ الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٥٧﴾ ﴾

Say: Who hath forbidden the beautiful (gifts) of Allah, which He hath produced for His servants, and the things, clean and pure, (which He hath provided) for sustenance? Say: They are, in the life of this world, for those who believe, (and) purely for them on the Day of Judgment. Thus do We explain the Signs in detail for those who understand.

Al-Araf 7 : 32

We enjoy God's blessing with moderation and avoid excesses :

﴿ وَلَا تَجْعَلْ يَدَكَ مَغْلُولَةً إِلَىٰ عُنُقِكَ وَلَا تَبْسُطْهَا كُلَّ الْبَسْطِ فَتَقْعُدَ مَلُومًا مَّحْسُورًا ﴿١٧﴾ ﴾

Make not thy hand tied (like a niggard's) to thy neck, nor stretch it forth to its utmost reach, so that thou become blameworthy and destitute.

Al-Isra'a 17 : 29

﴿ وَالَّذِينَ إِذَا أَنفَقُوا لَمْ يُسْرِفُوا وَلَمْ يَقْتُرُوا وَكَانَ بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ قَوَامًا ﴿١٧﴾ ﴾

Those who, when they spend, are not extravagant and not niggardly, but hold a just (balance) between those (extremes);

Al-Furqan 25 : 67

We work hard to earn a living as long as it is from a lawful source and we did not cheat or wrong others in the process. We are accountable for our money: how did we earn it and how did we spend it, as Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) explained:

(When man dies he will be asked to account for four things: His whole life, what did he do with it?; and his youth: did he use it well or abuse it?; and his money: how did he earn it, and how did he spend it; and his knowledge: how did he use it?)

Termedhi

Jihad against the temptation of Satan to obey God's orders and to place our priorities correctly

Satan is an avowed enemy to man. He vowed to tempt him and misguide him away from the path of God. The Qur'an explains:

﴿ قَالَ فَبِعِزَّتِكَ لَأُغْوِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ ﴿٨٢﴾ ﴾

(Ib) said: "Then by Thy Power, I will put them all in the wrong,

Sa D 38 : 82

﴿ إِلَّا عِبَادَكَ مِنْهُمُ الْمُخْلِصِينَ ﴿٨٣﴾ ﴾

"Except Thy Servants amongst them, sincere and purified (by Thy grace)."

Sa D 38 : 83

Satan vowed to use every trick to lure man and tempt him and deceive him:

﴿ قَالَ فَبِمَا أَغْوَيْتَنِي لَأَقْعُدَنَّ لَهُمْ صِرَاطَكَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ ﴿١٦﴾ ﴾

He said: "Because Thou hast thrown me out of the Way, lo! I will lie in wait for them on Thy Straight Way:

Al-Araf 7 : 16

﴿ ثُمَّ لَا تَمُنُّهُمْ مِنْ بَيْنِ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ وَعَنْ أَيْمَانِهِمْ وَعَنْ شَمَائِلِهِمْ وَلَا تَجِدُ أَكْثَرَهُمْ شَاكِرِينَ ﴾ ﴿٧﴾

"Then will I assault them from before them and behind them, from their right and their left: nor wilt Thou find, in most of them, gratitude (for Thy mercies)."

Al-Araf 7 : 17

And :

﴿ قَالَ أَرَأَيْتَكَ هَذَا الَّذِي كَرَّمْت عَلَىٰ لَيْنٍ أَخْرَجْتِنِ إِلَىٰ يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ لِأُحْتَنِكَنَّ ذُرِّيَّتَهُ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا ﴾ ﴿١٧﴾

He said: "Seest Thou? This is the one whom Thou hast honored above me! If Thou wilt but respite me to the Day of Judgment, I will surely bring his descendants under my sway, all but a few!"

Al-Isra'a 17 : 62

﴿ قَالَ أَذْهَبَ فَمَنْ تَبِعَكَ مِنْهُمْ فَإِنَّ جَهَنَّمَ جَزَاؤُكُمْ جَزَاءً مَوْفُورًا ﴾ ﴿١٨﴾

(Allah) said: "Go thy way; if any of them follow thee, verily Hell will be the recompense of you (all) - an ample recompense.

Al-Isra'a 17 : 63

﴿ وَأَسْتَفْزِرُ مَنْ أَسْتَطَعْتَ مِنْهُمْ بِصَوْتِكَ وَأَجْلِبَ عَلَيْهِمْ بِخَيْلِكَ وَرَجِلِكَ وَشَارِكِهِمْ فِي الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَوْلَادِ وَعَدَّهُمْ مَا يُعَدُّهُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ إِلَّا غُرُورًا ﴾ ﴿١٩﴾

"Lead to destruction those whom thou canst among them, with thy (seductive) voice, make assaults on them with thy cavalry and thy infantry; mutually share with them wealth and children; and make promises to them. "But Satan promises them nothing but deceit.

Al-Isra'a 17 : 64

God warned us about Satan and his plan, and we were told that he is a ruthless enemy:

﴿ إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ لَكُمُ عَدُوٌّ فَاتَّخِذُوهُ عَدُوًّا إِنَّمَا يَدْعُوا حِزْبَهُ لِيَكُونُوا مِنْ أَصْحَابِ

السَّعِيرِ ﴾

Verily Satan is an enemy to you: so treat him as an enemy. He only invites his adherents that they may become companions of the Blazing Fire.

Fatir 35 : 6

God did not leave us alone or helpless against such a strong cunning enemy. He told us to seek help in our faith and to turn to God, for Satan has no authority over God's righteous servants:

﴿ إِنَّ عِبَادِي لَيْسَ لَكَ عَلَيْهِمْ سُلْطَانٌ وَكَفَىٰ بِرَبِّكَ وَكِيلًا ﴾

"As for My servants, no authority shall thou have over them: "Enough is thy Lord for a Disposer of affairs.

Al-Isra'a 17 : 65

﴿ فَإِذَا قَرَأْتَ الْقُرْآنَ فَاسْتَعِذْ بِاللَّهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ ﴾

When thou does read the Qur-an, seek Allah's protection from Satan the Rejected One.

An-Nahl 16 : 98

﴿ إِنَّهُ لَيْسَ لَهُ سُلْطَانٌ عَلَى الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُونَ ﴾

No authority has he over those who believe and put their trust in their Lord.

An-nahl 16 : 99

﴿ إِنَّمَا سُلْطَانُهُ عَلَى الَّذِينَ يَتَوَلَّوْنَهُ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ بِهِ مُشْرِكُونَ ﴾

His authority is over those only, who take him as patron and who join partners with Allah.

An-Nahl 16 : 100

When we turn to God and live our life as He commanded, we are close to God and under His protection and receive His guidance and mercy. We can, therefore, see our way clearly and not be fooled or misguided by Satan and his allies:

﴿وَأَمَّا يَنْزَغَنَّكَ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ نَزْغٌ فَاسْتَعِذْ بِاللَّهِ إِنَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٠٠﴾﴾

If a suggestion from Satan assail thy (mind), seek refuge with Allah; for He heareth and knoweth (all things).

Al-Araf 7 : 200

﴿إِنَّ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا إِذَا مَسَّهُمْ طَائِفٌ مِّنَ الشَّيْطَانِ تَذَكَّرُوا فَإِذَا هُمْ مُبْصِرُونَ ﴿٢٠١﴾﴾

Those who fear Allah, when a thought of evil from Satan assaults them, bring Allah to remembrance, when lo! they see (aright)!

Al-Araf 7 : 201

This battle, between every human being and Satan is closely linked to our ability of controlling our vain desires. Satan tempts man by appealing to his vain desires. Few people want to go through hardship or sacrifice if they can get immediate gratification. To cite an example: our willingness to give in charity and our natural inclination as human beings to spend our money on things that gives us pleasure and happiness. Satan warns man: If you spend your money in charity, your wealth will decrease, therefore save it for your needs. On the other hand, God promises us as human beings that the money we spend in charity will be replaced, and in addition we will earn God's forgiveness and His good pleasure. In other words, we can get immediate pleasure by satisfying our vain desires, but we have to account for our actions to God; or we can give in charity, and help those who need our help, thereby earning God's pleasure through our good deed and sacrifice. The Qur'an explains:

﴿الشَّيْطَانُ يَعِدُكُمُ الْفَقْرَ وَيَأْمُرُكُم بِالْفَحْشَاءِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يَعِدُكُم مَّغْفِرَةً مِّنْهُ وَفَضْلًا ۗ

﴿وَاللَّهُ وَسِعُ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٦٨﴾﴾

The Evil One threatens you with poverty and bids you to conduct unseemly. Allah promised you His forgiveness and bounties. And Allah careth for all and He knoweth all things.

Al-Baqara 2 : 268

To understand that it is better for us to help the poor and needy and to support important charities than spending our money on temporary

pleasures requires maturity and good judgment, which is referred to in the Qur'an as "Hikma" or wisdom:

﴿ يُؤْتِي الْحِكْمَةَ مَنْ يَشَاءُ ۚ وَمَنْ يُؤْتَ الْحِكْمَةَ فَقَدْ أُوتِيَ خَيْرًا كَثِيرًا ۗ وَمَا يَذَّكَّرُ إِلَّا أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ ﴿٢٦٩﴾ ۝ ﴾

He granteth wisdom to whom He pleaseth; and he to whom wisdom is granted receiveth indeed a benefit overflowing; but none will grasp the Message but men of understanding.

Al-Baqara 2 : 269

What we are actually doing is better for our souls, for the good that we do now in our life will be waiting for us to help us in our accountability on the Day of Judgment:

﴿ وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَمَا تُقَدِّمُوا لِأَنفُسِكُمْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ تَجِدُوهُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ ﴿١١٠﴾ ۝ ﴾

And be steadfast in prayer and regular in charity; and whatever good ye send forth for your souls before you, ye shall find it with Allah: for Allah sees well all that ye do.

Al-Baqara 2 : 110

And :

﴿ وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَأَقْرِضُوا اللَّهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا ۚ وَمَا تُقَدِّمُوا لِأَنفُسِكُمْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ تَجِدُوهُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ ۗ هُوَ خَيْرٌ وَأَعْظَمُ أَجْرًا ۚ وَاسْتَغْفِرُوا لِلَّذِينَ سَلَقْتُمْ فِي الْبَنَىٰ ذُلًّا ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿٧٣﴾ ۝ ﴾

and establish regular Prayer and give regular Charity; and loan to Allah a Beautiful Loan. And whatever good ye send forth for your souls, ye shall find it in Allah's Presence, yea, better and greater, in Reward, and seek ye the Grace of Allah: for Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

Al-Muz-Zammill 73 : 20

Allah does not leave His righteous servants unprotected against their greatest enemy: Satan. God has promised to protect His true servants from the evil influence of Satan:

﴿ إِنَّ عِبَادِي لَيْسَ لَكَ عَلَيْهِمْ سُلْطَانٌ وَكَفَىٰ بِرَبِّكَ وَكِيلًا ﴾

"As for My servants, no authority shalt thou have over them: "Enough is thy Lord for a Disposer of affairs.

Al-Isra'a 17 : 65

We are told to turn to Allah and seek His help and protection:

﴿ وَإِمَّا يَنْزَغَنَّكَ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ نَزْغٌ فَاسْتَعِذْ بِاللَّهِ إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ ﴾

And if (at any time) an incitement to discord is made to thee by the Evil One, seek refuge in Allah. He is the One Who hears and knows all things.

Fusselat 41 : 36

﴿ وَإِمَّا يَنْزَغَنَّكَ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ نَزْغٌ فَاسْتَعِذْ بِاللَّهِ إِنَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴾

If a suggestion from Satan assail thy (mind), seek refuge with Allah; for He heareth and knoweth (all things).

Al-Araf 7 : 200

﴿ إِنِ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا إِذَا مَسَّهُمْ طَائِفٌ مِّنَ الشَّيْطَانِ تَذَكَّرُوا فَإِذَا هُمْ مُبْصِرُونَ ﴾

Those who fear Allah, when a thought of evil from Satan assaults them, bring Allah to remembrance, when lo! they see (aright)!

Al-Araf 7 : 201

Jihad to correct misconceptions about Islam, and to show that Islam is a tolerant peaceful religion that respects and safeguards the rights and liberties of every human being regardless of his faith

To a Muslim living in the West the bias against Islam and the misrepresentation of Islamic concepts is common and seen every day. The Qur'an warns Muslims that this bias and stereotyping is to be expected, and further it charts the way for correcting such bias and distortion:

﴿ لَتَبْلُوَنَّ فِي أَمْوَالِكُمْ وَأَنْفُسِكُمْ وَلَتَسْمَعُنَّ مِنَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ وَمِنَ الَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوا أَذًى كَثِيرًا وَإِنْ تَصْبِرُوا وَتَتَّقُوا فَإِنَّ ذَلِكَ مِنْ عَزْمِ الْأُمُورِ ﴾

Ye shall certainly be tried and tested in your possessions and in your personal selves; and ye shall certainly hear much that will grieve you, from those who received the Book before you and from those who worship many gods. But if ye persevere patiently, and guard against evil, then that will be a determining factor in all affairs.

Al-Imran 3 : 186

This verse explains that to fight this prejudice and bias we must have three essential elements:

- 1- Patient perseverance
- 2- To do good and be aware of our accountability to God
- 3- To understand our objective and remain focused and have the strength of character and resolve to carry out this important, yet difficult work

Patient perseverance and resolve means not to give up or accept that Muslims will be stereotyped or that Islam and its teachings will be distorted. We can actively work to change this image, realizing that it is a difficult long process and that we will fail at times

To be good and conscious of our accountability to God means that we cannot return wrong with another wrong-doing, and that our efforts should be clean and motivated not by revenge but by the desire to show the truth and to serve God. In other words we cannot lie or cheat or hide the truth, but we must explain to the best of our ability the true teachings of Islam

And not be apologetic.

To remain committed and persevere in the face of failure and adversity is no easy task, and requires firm resolution and a strong will. This can only come from strong belief in God and a realization that it is our duty to stand up against injustice and to explain the truth. It is nice to succeed and see the fruits of our labor, but even when we fail, we should understand that what is important is the work that we do, not our personal glory. If we fail, others

will come after us and complete what we started. This concept is illustrated by the Qur'anic verse:

﴿ وَقُلْ أَعْمَلُوا فَسَيَرَى اللَّهُ عَمَلَكُمْ وَرَسُولُهُ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَسَتُرَدُّونَ إِلَىٰ عَالِمِ الْغَيْبِ
وَالشَّهَادَةِ فَيُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴾

And say: "Work (righteousness): soon will Allah observe your work, and His Messenger, and the Believers: soon will ye be brought back to the Knower of what is hidden and what is open: then will He show you the truth of all that ye did."

At-Tawba 9 : 105

This verse gives us comfort since our work is duly witnessed by those whose witness will count: God, His messenger and those who believe. It will count in our favor by the One who knows what is in our hearts and what motivates our actions.

Therefore, it is the duty of Muslims to fight this bias and prejudice and to explain the true nature of Islam correcting misconceptions and stereotypes. The way Muslims can do this effectively is by word and action. Their behavior as good citizens helping others in their community and supporting institutions that serve the community is the best way of showing that the religion of Islam is indeed peaceful, tolerant and proactive. To be engaged in the community illustrates that we as Muslims are aware of and are shouldering our responsibilities.

It serves no purpose to lament the fact that the news media distort the teachings of Islam and only portray the views of extremists who do not represent main stream Islam, or the moderate tolerant nature of this noble religion. We must be actively engaged, which means that Muslims must be involved in the news media and must be alert and able to correct any distortion or bias in the news media. This can only occur if there are Muslim journalists, TV anchors and radio hosts. Attacks on Islam, or misinformation, must be answered immediately and correctly, which implies that Muslims in each community must be active and able to respond quickly and proactively.

Fighting to defend home and country

Fighting is resorted to in Islam as a last resort and is subject to specific rules and regulations:

- 1- The fighting must be done for self-defense and not as a form of aggression
- 2- The fighting is done for the sake of God, and not for personal reasons
- 3- No aggression or wrong-doing is allowed
- 4- When peace is offered it should be accepted
- 5- Fighting is not waged against civilians, women and children, and it is not allowed to destroy crops or buildings
- 6- The prophet's expeditions were defensive in nature

Fighting is allowed only for self-defense and not as a form of aggression

The Qur'an gave permission for the Muslims to fight only in the second year after immigration to Madinah, and only to defend their Muslim community and state against the aggression of Quraish and its allies:

﴿ أُذِنَ لِلَّذِينَ يُقَاتِلُونَ بِأَنَّهُمْ ظَلَمُوا وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ نَصْرِهِمْ لَقَدِيرٌ ﴾

To those against whom war is made, permission is given (to fight), because they are wronged; and verily, Allah is Most Powerful for their aid;

Al-Hajj 22 : 39

﴿ الَّذِينَ أُخْرِجُوا مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ إِلَّا أَنْ يَقُولُوا رَبُّنَا اللَّهُ وَلَوْلَا دَفْعُ اللَّهِ
النَّاسَ بَعْضُهُمْ بَعْضًا هُدِمَتْ سَوَامِعُ وَبِيَعٌ وَصَلَوَاتٌ وَمَسْجِدٌ يُذَكَّرُ فِيهَا اسْمُ اللَّهِ
كَثِيرًا وَلَيَنْصُرَنَّ اللَّهُ مَنْ يَنْصُرُهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَقَوِيٌّ عَزِيزٌ ﴾

(They are) those who have been expelled from their homes in defiance of right, (for no cause) except that they say, "Our Lord is Allah." Did not Allah check one set of people by means of another there would surely have been pulled down monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques, in which the name of Allah is commemorated in abundant measure. Allah will certainly

aid those who aid His (cause); for verily Allah is Full of Strength, Exalted in Might, (able to enforce His Will).

Al-Hajj 22 : 40

We learn from these verses:

- The permission to fight was given to Muslims only because they were wronged and were expelled from their homes for no just reason. They were persecuted because of their faith.
- God helps those who are wronged, but they must stand up against the injustice and start the process of struggle and Jihad
- It is the will and plan of God that some people who have faith resist and stand up defying the wrong and injustice inflicted upon many who are helpless. If we do not shoulder our responsibility then places of worship will not be safe and the right of people to have their faith and convictions respected will be violated. There will be no freedom and no liberties or civil rights. Therefore, it is the duty of Muslims to defend and safeguard the rights and liberties of all, Muslims and non-Muslims alike. Otherwise they would not have fulfilled God's promise and not honored his trust. The next verse explains fully the duties of those whom God allows to establish their authority in the land:

﴿ الَّذِينَ إِنْ مَكَّنَّهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ أَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَوُا الزَّكَاةَ وَأَمَرُوا بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَنَهَوْا

عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ ۗ وَرَبُّهُمُ الْعَلِيِّمُ ﴿٤١﴾

(They are) those who, if We establish them in the land, establish regular prayer and give regular charity, enjoin the right and forbid wrong: with Allah rests the end (and decision) of (all) affairs.

Al-Hajj 22 : 41

These duties as this verse explains involve:

- Duties towards God referred to here as regular prayer
- Social justice, referred to here as giving obligatory charity to help the poor and needy and support social institutions
- Establishing morality
- Fighting immorality
- Understanding our accountability to God

Fighting is done for the sake of God, and not for personal reasons

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) explained this concept clearly, when a man asked him: O messenger of God! A man fights for glory, and a man fights for gain, and a man fights to show courage: which one is fighting for the sake of God? The prophet (PBUH) said: (He who is fighting to make the word of God supreme, is fighting for the sake of God) Bokhari

In other words, if we fight to advance a personal agenda, or to get ahead in this world, or to gain from the fighting in a material way or to expand the land under our authority, then all these motives are not acceptable to God and our fighting is not legitimate according to Islam. The only fighting that is acceptable is to fight aggression and injustice and to defend our homes and country against aggression. The Qur'an states:

﴿ وَقَاتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ الَّذِينَ يُقَاتِلُونَكُمْ وَلَا تَعْتَدُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُعْتَدِينَ ﴾

Fight in the cause of Allah those who fight you, but do not transgress limits; for Allah loveth not transgressors.

Al-Baqara 2 : 190

We learn three lessons from this verse:

- Fighting is waged against those who fight us. In other words, we fight to defend ourselves. We do not start a pre-emptive war because we are fearful others may violate our interests.
- We fight only for the sake of God, not for personal reasons
- Aggression in all its forms is forbidden in Islam.

We have seen recent examples that illustrate this concept. When Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait he was doing so for personal reasons. When he attacked Iran, he was doing so for personal reasons. When the United States invaded Iraq this war was not justified for there was no threat from Iraq against the USA. Most wars are not legitimate and cannot be thought of as valid or justifiable, for in most cases it is done to advance the interests of a dictator or powerful country.

The call for Jihad or “Holy war“ that is uttered by Muslim extremists is also not valid, nor legitimate according to Islamic principles, because it only serves the interests of few and satisfies only their personal goals. These

extremists lack the authority to rally Muslims in Jihad. Only a Muslim leader can issue such a call if a Muslim country is under attack and fighting to protect its citizens and safeguard its freedom.

No aggression is allowed in Islam

Aggression may take several forms:

- War waged for no valid or justifiable reason is not Jihad. On the contrary, it is an act of aggression
- The killing of women and children and those not involved in the fighting is an act of aggression
- Destroying personal property and burning crops is an act of aggression
- Mutilating the dead or torturing prisoners is an act of aggression

All these acts of aggression are forbidden in Islam. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and those who ruled after him always gave the following advice to the soldiers going in Jihad:

(Go in the name of God, but do not commit aggression. Do not kill a woman, a child, an elderly person, or those in retreat or those cultivating the land. Do not burn crops, nor destroy buildings)

During the battle of Badr, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) ordered his followers to treat their prisoners well. He accepted the work of those who taught Muslims how to read and write and set them free. He also set free those who were poor and had no resources. He only accepted ransom from the rich and powerful from Quraish. He ordered the dead among the enemy to be buried properly and be shown respect.

When Muslim armies entered a city victorious, they did not seek revenge or kill unarmed men or rape the women or destroy buildings. They made people feel safe regarding their lives and possessions, and allowed them to practice their religion with no fear of reprisals. Such was not the case when the crusaders entered Jerusalem as they killed 70,000 Muslims and blood spilled in the city streets. When prophet Muhammad (PBUH) entered Macca victorious, he did not enter as a worrier showing his strength subduing his enemies into submission, rather he entered with humility, riding on a camel lowering his head. He told the people of Macca awaiting his verdict in fear (Go, you are free, no blame attaches to you this day). He did not seek

revenge for himself, or for his companions for the abuse and torture the Quraish inflicted on Muslims. He wanted to heal the wounds and to reconcile the hearts. Such is the attitude of a prophet and we should follow his example.

When peace is offered it should be accepted

Fighting is not the primary goal, therefore, it should end when the opportunity for peace exists. Fighting is resorted to only for defensive reasons and is a transient phase. Peaceful relationship and coexistence is the norm. The Qur'a states:

﴿ وَإِنْ جَنَحُوا لِلسَّلَامِ فَاجْتَنِحْ لَهُا وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ ﴾

But if the enemy incline towards peace, do thou (also) incline towards peace, and trust in Allah: for He is the One that Heareth and Knoweth (all things).

Al-Anfal 8 : 61

Genuine peace obviously depends on justice and respecting and safeguarding the rights of the parties involved. Unless grievances are addressed and corrected, the same reasons that led to war will cause violence again.

Peace is accepted not because of weakness, but to safeguard human life and to allow negotiations to find a peaceful solution to current problems. War does not solve problems or address relevant issues, it creates more harm and destruction. Islam calls for strength and for Muslims to be prepared, but orders us to fight only as a last resort:

﴿ وَأَعِدُّوا لَهُمْ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُمْ مِنْ قُوَّةٍ وَمِنْ رِبَاطِ الْخَيْلِ تُرْهِبُونَ بِهِ عَدُوَّ اللَّهِ وَعَدُوَّكُمْ وَءَاخِرِينَ مِنْ دُونِهِمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَهُمُ اللَّهُ يَعْلَمُهُمْ ۗ وَمَا تُنْفِقُوا مِنْ شَيْءٍ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ يُوَفَّ إِلَيْكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تُظْلَمُونَ ﴾

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, of Allah and your enemies, and others besides, whom ye may not know, but whom Allah doth know. Whatever ye shall spend in the Cause of Allah, shall be repaid unto you, and ye shall not be treated unjustly.

Al-Anfal 8 : 60

The reward of those who die fighting defending their country

Those who die in legitimate Jihad are martyrs and their place is in Heaven enjoying the good pleasure of God:

﴿ وَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ قُتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَمْوَاتًا بَلْ أَحْيَاءٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ يُرْزَقُونَ ﴿١٦٦﴾ ﴾

Think not of those who are slain in Allah's Way as dead. Nay, they live, finding their sustenance in the Presence of their Lord;

Al-Imran 3 : 169

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) explained that martyrs have a great reward, that their sins are forgiven, and they are in the highest place in paradise. He also emphasized that fighting in the cause of God and sacrificing one's life is the ultimate expression of faith. The Qur'an stresses that God has promised His paradise in exchange for striving in His cause with our souls and possessions:

﴿ إِنَّ اللَّهَ اشْتَرَى مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَنْفُسَهُمْ وَأَمْوَالَهُمْ بِأَنْ لَهُمُ الْجَنَّةَ يُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَيَقْتُلُونَ وَيُقْتَلُونَ وَعَدًّا عَلَيْهِ حَقًّا فِي التَّوْرَةِ وَالْإِنْجِيلِ وَالْفُرْقَانِ وَمَنْ أَوْفَى بِعَهْدِهِ مِنَ اللَّهِ فَاسْتَبْشِرُوا بِيَعْيِكُمُ الَّذِي بَايَعْتُمْ بِهِ ۚ وَذَٰلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ ﴿١٦٧﴾ ﴾

Allah hath purchased of the Believers their persons and their goods; for theirs (in return) is the Garden (of Paradise): they fight in His Cause, and slay and are slain: a promise binding on Him in Truth, through the Law, the Gospel, and the Qur-an: and who is more faithful to his Covenant than Allah? Then rejoice in the bargain which ye have concluded: that is the achievement supreme.

At-Tawba 9 : 111

Some refer to the Hadeeth of the prophet (PBUH) in which he explained the great reward of the martyr, and among these rewards is "70 virgins". I look at this reference as a symbol of how much great reward awaits those who sacrifice their life for the sake of God, and not literally. My evidence is the prophet's saying that (everything is forgiven for the martyr except his debt). God could have forgiven everything that a martyr did in his life, but we are reminded of our obligations to be fair in our financial dealings with others, and that we are responsible for what we owe others. Having done a marvelous thing as Jihad and even dying in the cause of God does not relieve our obligations towards others. Islam is a practical religion, and its guidelines are clear and not ambiguous. I believe that the reference to the virgins is symbolic and stresses the great gifts of God awaiting those who do good.

The call for Jihad issued by extremists and radicals has no validity from an Islamic point of view

Only Muslim leaders can rally support and order Muslims to come out for legitimate Jihad. This call occurs if a Muslim country is being attacked and to fight aggression. Only those with authority can issue such a declaration for Jihad. They include leaders of a Muslim

country or religious scholars who are qualified, and it must be for a clear act of aggression.

Therefore, when we see a call for Jihad from a terrorist leader or from a radical group, such a call has no weight and carries no significance. They are only inviting those who are ignorant and playing on the emotions of Muslims. They do not possess the necessary criteria to call for Jihad. On the contrary, they have shown through their criminal behavior that they cannot be trusted and that their brand of Islam is dangerous and misguided. Their agenda should be exposed and their wrong ideology contrasted against the true teachings of Islam which calls for safeguarding human liberties and for peaceful coexistence and cooperation.

Prophet Muhammad's expeditions were defensive in nature and did not involve aggression

A prophet of mercy will not attack people with no warning or commit aggression or fight in order to gain land or extend his authority. If we examine all the battles that the prophet (PBUH) was engaged in, we find a reason and explanation behind each of his battles. Either he and the Muslims were defending themselves and their state against aggression, or it was to discipline tribes that killed Muslims or limited the freedom of Muslims. The Qur'an stresses that Muslims should give warning before they engage in war, and not resort to treachery:

﴿ وَإِمَّا تَخَافُ مِنْ قَوْمٍ خِيَانَةً فَانذِرْ إِلَيْهِمْ عَلَىٰ سَوَاءٍ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْخَائِبِينَ ﴿٨٥﴾ ﴾

If thou fearest treachery from any group, throw back (their Covenant) to them, (so as to be) on equal terms: for Allah loveth not the treacherous.

Al-Anfal 8 : 58

We learn from the prophet's attitude to be straightforward and not resort to deceit or treachery. When Muslim armies met their enemies they offered three choices:

- To become Muslims if they wished by their free will and not being forced to do so
- Or to follow the tenants of their faith whether that faith was a Jewish or Christian faith but to pay Jizia as a tax or a form of protection
- Or to fight the Muslims.

Therefore, fighting was not inevitable. Non-Muslims could spare themselves the fighting and continue to practice their faith with no coercion from the Muslims and continue to conduct their business and control their affairs. Muslims were not interested in forcing others to become Muslims against their will.

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