

Understanding Islam

Dispelling myths about Jihad, Oppression
and Violence in Islam

Farhan Iqbal

&

Dr. Tauseef Ahmad Khan

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To:

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as} of Qādiān
Founder of the Aḥmadiyya Muslim Jamā'at

وَأِنْ جَنَحُوا لِلسَّلَامِ فَاجْنَحْ لَهَا وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ

And if they incline towards peace, incline thou also towards it, and put thy trust in Allah. Surely, it is He Who is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.

—Sūrah Al-Anfāl, 8:62

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Farhan Iqbal and Dr. Tauseef Ahmad Khan
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PUBLISHER'S NOTES

In this text, references to verses of the Holy Quran have been placed in the endnotes and are given in the modern numerical system. In these references, we have counted *Bismillāhir-Raḥmānir-Raḥīm* as the first verse, except for *Sūrah At-Taubah* (that is Chapter 9 of the Holy Quran). In these notes, the first number refers to the *Sūrah* (chapter) and the second number refers to the *Āyah* (verse).

The following abbreviations have been used in this book; Readers are requested to recite the full salutations when reading the book:

SA: An abbreviation for *Ṣallallāhu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, meaning, “*May peace and blessings of Allah be upon him,*” is written after the name of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{sa}.

AS: An abbreviation for *‘Alaihissalām / ‘Alaihassalām / ‘Alaihimussalām*, meaning, “*May peace*

be upon him / her / them," is written after the name of Prophets other than the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{sa}, and pious women prior to the era of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{sa}.

RA: An abbreviation for *Raḍiallāhu ‘anhu / ‘anhā / ‘anhum*, meaning, “*May Allah be pleased with him/her/ them,*” is written after the names of Companions of the Holy Prophet^{sa} and Companions of the Promised Messiah^{as}.

RH: An abbreviation for *Raḥimahullāh*, meaning, “*May Allah have mercy upon him,*” is written after the names of deceased pious Muslims who are not Companions.

In transliterating Arabic terms we have followed the following system:

ا	<i>at the beginning of a word, pronounced as a, i, u, preceded by a very slight aspiration, like h in the English word 'honour.'</i>
ث	<i>th, pronounced like th in the English word 'thing.'</i>
ح	<i>h, a guttural aspirate, stronger than h.</i>
خ	<i>kh, pronounced like the Scotch ch in 'loch.'</i>
ذ	<i>dh, pronounced like the English th in 'that.'</i>
ص	<i>s, strongly articulated s.</i>
ض	<i>d, similar to the English th in 'this.'</i>
ط	<i>t, strongly articulated palatal t.</i>
ظ	<i>z, strongly articulated z.</i>
ع	<i>'a strong guttural, the pronunciation of which must be learnt by the ear.</i>
غ	<i>gh, a sound approached very nearly in the r 'grasseye' in French, and in the German r. It requires the muscles of the throat to be in the gargling position whilst pronouncing it.</i>
ق	<i>q, a deep guttural k sound.</i>
ء	<i>,' a sort of catch in the voice.</i>

Short vowels are represented by:

a for $\text{—}^{\text{˘}}$ (like u in 'bud');

i for $\text{—}^{\text{˘}}$ (like i in 'bid');

u for $\text{—}^{\text{˘}}$ (like oo in 'wood');

Long vowels by:

\bar{a} for اَ or آ (like *a* in 'father');

\bar{i} for عِ or اِي (like *ee* in 'deep');

\bar{u} for وِ or اُو (like *oo* in 'root');

Other:

ai for اِي (like *i* in 'site')¹;

au for اُو (resembling *ou* in 'sound').

Please note that in transliterated words the letter 'e' is to be pronounced as in 'prey' which rhymes with 'day'; however the pronunciation is flat without the element of English diphthong. If in Urdu and Persian words 'e' is lengthened a bit more it is transliterated as 'ei' to be pronounced as 'ei' in 'feign' without the element of diphthong thus عِ is transliterated as 'kei'. For the nasal sound of 'n' we have used the symbol 'ń'. Thus, the Urdu word مین would be transliterated as 'meiń'. The consonants not included above have the same phonetic value as in the principal languages of Europe.

CONTENTS

<i>Foreword</i>	1
<i>Introduction</i>	5
Is Islam a Violent Religion?	9
Does Islam say, Convert or Die?	13
Do Terrorists Represent Islam?	17
The Historical Context	24
Jihad for Peace	29
A Prophet of Peace	34
Extremists are Not Devout	41
Who are the True Muslims?	45
The Promised Messiah ^{as}	49
Khilāfat	56
What is Jihad?	63
Types of Jihad	64
Jihad in Context	68
Jihad Today	70
Was Islam Spread by the Sword?	74
Do Muslims not know their Teachings?	85
Did the Early Muslims lead Offensive Raids?	91
Case #1: The Nakhla Expedition	91
Case #2: Jews at Khaibar	104
Does Violence escalate in Early Islam?	111
How to Study and Understand the Holy Quran?	120
The Battle of Tabuk	125
Are Women violently oppressed in Islam?	129
Does Islam Promote Domestic Violence?	135
Guidance for Women who face Marital Abuse	153
Comparison with the Bible	156

Slavery and Prisoners of War	163
Prisoners or Slaves?	169
Distribution of Prisoners of War	172
Female Prisoners of War	174
Comparison with the Bible	178
What is Shariah?	181
Does Shariah Law impose Harsh Punishments?	187
Does Islam allow Freedom of Speech?	193
Is Allah an Impersonal God?	201
Is the Holy Quran more violent than the Bible?	205
<i>Epilogue</i>	219
<i>Appendix I: Verses of Peace</i>	221
<i>Appendix II: Traditions of Peace</i>	227
<i>Notes</i>	243

FOREWORD

The opponents and critics of Islam have always levelled allegations against Islam and raised questions on various aspects of Islam. In the recent past, attacks have intensified through the use of various mediums and avenues, including books published against Islam. The enemies of Islam perceive themselves to be attacking Islam in new and innovative ways. For instance, a misconstrued concept of Jihad - a subject of great controversy in recent years – has been used as a means to criticize Islam. One such attempt was made some time back by the late Dr. Nabeel Qureshi. Reading his criticisms and the criticisms of others, we discover that they present nothing new. The questions are the same – Is Islam a religion of war or peace? Does Islam advocate violence, bloodshed, and disorder? Does it condone persecution in any form?

In this day and age, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qādiān, the Promised Messiah and Imām Mahdī^{as} was divinely appointed to revive the pristine and peaceful teachings of Islam. As part of this effort, he penned a great number of books that defended Islam through arguments that were most apt and cogent, and comprehensively answered such allegations against Islam and removed the misunderstandings associated with Islam.

Today, with all the propaganda and continuous one-sided media coverage against Islam, many in the non-Muslim world believe that Islam is a religion of extremism and terror. Indeed, some people declare that Islam is at the root cause of destroying peace in the world through its “violent” teachings. In doing so, they forget that no religion at its source has ever promoted violence and bloodshed. It is a most tragic irony that of all the books, the Holy Quran is singled out today and presented as a proponent of extremism, violence and coercion.

An even greater tragedy that exists today is that many a Muslim clergy, themselves, support these false notions and blatantly attribute them to the

Holy Quran. The book *Understanding Islam* provides detailed answers to these false notions, using arguments that are simple to follow, effective and made in a contemporary style. The book helps a person enhance their understanding of true Islam as opposed to the one often portrayed in the media. This book comes at a time when a genuine need was felt to address the topics of aggressive Jihad or holy war, violence and oppression, that are incorrectly assumed to be a part of Islam.

In light of the writings of Promised Messiah^{as}, the true teachings of Islam about these subjects are presented for the benefit of both Muslims and non-Muslims, alike. May Allah reward Maulānā Farhan Iqbal, Dr. Tauseef Ahmad Khan, and the team members of The Review of Religions Research Canada, who made a collective effort in producing this book! Āmīn! May Allah make this book a means for opening the hearts of all people towards understanding the true Islam and accepting its perfect, beneficial teachings! Āmīn!

Sheikh Abdul Wadood

National Secretary Ishā'at, Canada

Ramadhan 2018

INTRODUCTION

IN THE FACE of such terrorism, extremism and radicalization of a select few Muslim youth, the Ahmadi Muslims took the opposite approach — the one proposed by the Holy Quran — of defending the religion of Islam through rebuttal by the pen. They undertook the responsibility of showing the world that these extremists do not represent Islam at all. Far from acting in the name of Islam, they are acting directly against the teachings of Islam as enshrined in its three primary sources: the Holy Quran, the Sunnah or practice of Prophet Muhammad^{sa}, and his Aḥādīth or sayings.

Meanwhile, the critics of Islam see this despicable violence as an opportunity to embellish their narrative with “evidence” that Islam is a violent and oppressive religion. One such critic was Dr. Nabeel Qureshi who wrote a book, *Answering Jihad: A Better Way Forward*, which consists of the same arguments

about the alleged “violence in Islam” that critics of Islam often present. The present book is a direct response to Dr. Qureshi and other critics like him. The questions answered are not new, but are meant to help those readers who do not know the true Islamic position on such matters. Effort has been made in this book to point out specific instances where critics misquote, or misrepresent the data, as well as cases where verses of the Holy Quran are cherry-picked by its critics to try to fit their own narrative. Instead of exploring the sources of Islam carefully, they approach it with a preconceived notion that Islam is violent.

Whether it is the perceived violence and oppression in the Holy Quran, or in the life of the Prophet Muhammad^{sa}, or domestic violence, or oppression of women and prisoners of war, the critics of Islam paint a picture of a violent and brutal religion that teaches everything but peace and harmony among human beings. An analytical exploration of the context, intent, and objective of these teachings reveals that Islam makes every effort to do the exact opposite. Advancement towards peace in society is one of the main goals of Islam and is not just a slogan that Muslims have

concocted or adopted as a defensive reaction to terrorism. Islam has always been a religion of peace, mercy, love, and compassion for mankind.

In the following pages, we demonstrate this by basing our arguments and analysis directly upon the original sources. Dr. Qureshi's book has been used as a guide and as a window into the common allegations made by critics of Islam at large. Each chapter begins with a question that Dr. Qureshi has raised and that non-Muslims commonly hear about Islam and then proceeds to respond. The answers provided are distilled from the writings of His Holiness Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as} – the Promised Messiah and Imām Mahdī and founder of the Aḥmadiyya Muslim Jamā'at – as well as the speeches and discourses of His Holiness Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad^{aa} – the Khalīfa of Islam and current head of the worldwide Aḥmadiyya Muslim Jamā'at.

IS ISLAM A VIOLENT RELIGION?

PERHAPS ONE OF the bluntest allegations against Islam is simply that it is not a religion of peace, along with the assertion that this expression was invented as late as the 1930's and took off by the 1970's in the writings of Muslims intended for western audiences.¹ It is also claimed that "it is beyond dispute that the Holy Quran never actually claims that, 'Islam is the religion of peace,' - nor do the traditions of Muhammad[^{sa}]." This allegation is baseless, as the very root of the word Islam connotes peace.

The root letters that form the word "Islam" are *sīn-lām-mīm* or S-L-M. Lane,² a leading Arabic-English lexicon, elucidates its meaning as "submission", "making secure", "peace; being at peace with oneself and others" or "paying a price in

full". The Islamic salutation *Assālamu 'Alaikum* exchanged between two Muslims whenever they meet literally means: 'May peace be upon you'. In fact, this greeting is so important that Prophet Muhammad^{sa} told the Muslims to extend this greeting of peace regardless of whether they know the other person or not.³

The Holy Quran frequently employs the word *salām* with the connotation of peace. For example, it declares:

*Allah guides those who seek His pleasure on the paths of salām [peace]*⁴

*For them is the abode of salām [peace] with their Lord.*⁵

It can also connote security, as the Holy Quran states: *Salām [Peace] be upon Noah.*⁶

Even one of the names of Allah mentioned in the Holy Quran is *As-Salām*, meaning, 'The Source of Peace'.⁷ Hence, the unfounded claim that the definition of Islam as peace is a "later innovation" is false.

The founder of the Aḥmadiyya Muslim Jamā'at, His Holiness Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (referred to in this book as the Promised Messiah^{as}) clarified the meaning of Islam in the following words:

In the idiom of Arabic, Islam means money paid as earnest to conclude a bargain, or to commit some affair to someone, or to seek peace, or to surrender a claim or point. The technical meaning of Islam is set out in the verse:

بَلَىٰ مَنْ أَسْلَمَ وَجْهَهُ لِلَّهِ وَهُوَ مُحْسِنٌ فَلَهُ أَجْرُهُ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِ وَلَا خَوْفٌ
عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ

*Nay, whoever submits himself completely to Allah, and is the doer of good, shall have his reward with his Lord. No fear shall come upon such, neither shall they grieve.*⁸

This means that a Muslim is one who commits himself wholly to the cause of God Almighty; that is to say, one who devotes himself to God Almighty, to following His designs and to winning His pleasure, and then becomes

steadfast in doing good for the sake of God Almighty and devotes all his faculties to that cause. In other words, he belongs entirely to God Almighty both doctrinally and in practice.”⁹

The fifth Caliph (Successor) of the Promised Messiah^{as}, His Holiness, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad^{aa} says:

Islam is peace. If a person does not follow a particular teaching properly whilst claiming to subscribe to it, then it is he who is in error, not the teaching. The meaning of the word ‘Islam’ itself means peace, love and security. That “there should be no compulsion in matters of faith,”¹⁰ is a clear injunction of the Holy Quran. From cover-to-cover, the Holy Quran teaches love, affection, peace, reconciliation and the spirit of sacrifice. The Holy Quran states repeatedly that one who does not adopt righteousness is far removed from Allah, and therefore, is far removed from the teachings of Islam. Hence, if anybody portrays Islam as an extreme and violent religion filled with teachings of bloodshed, then such a portrayal has no link with the real Islam.¹¹

DOES ISLAM SAY, CONVERT OR DIE?

Some Christian evangelists contend that while Islam does mean peace, it only promotes a state of violence and war. They argue that Prophet Muhammad^{sa} himself used the words, “*Aslim Taslam*”, when giving warning to neighbouring tribes, which they wrongly translate as, “If you surrender, you will have peace”. Their argument is that the word *Aslim* here means to surrender by conversion.¹²

This argument is born out of ignorance or perhaps prejudice. Prophet Muhammad^{sa} would indeed send the message of *Aslim Taslam* to tribes, individuals, and even Kings. *Aslim Taslam* simply means: “Accept Islam and you will have salvation.” Both the words *Aslim* and *Taslam* are variations of the word “Islam”. Considering the earlier discussion of the root letters of Islam – S-L-M – another meaning of the phrase *Aslim Taslam* is “maintain peace, and you will be granted peace”. In other words, as long as the non-Muslims remain peaceful, they should expect the same from Muslims.

Muslims, on the other hand, will not unilaterally or aggressively attack the non-Muslims for any reason, as long as the non-Muslims remain peaceful. While another lexical meaning of the word *Aslim* is submit, it is wrongly thought that this expression means political submission. The entire mission of Prophet Muhammad^{sa} was spiritual. His entire life bears testimony to the fact that whenever he used the word “submission,” it was to the will of Allah in spiritual terms. He never once imposed the idea of forced submission upon anyone. This is clear from the various letters he sent inviting the kings of major empires around Arabia to Islam, wherein he used this term. The majority did not accept Islam in the beginning, yet he did not set out to coerce them into believing, nor did he demonstrate any hostility toward them.

Islam teaches that every Prophet was sent by the same God, and each one of them felt pain at the immoral plight of his people. Each one desperately sought to save the people, to whom they were sent, from the inevitable fallout of their misguided ways. Prophet Muhammad^{sa} sent these letters of invitation to Islam, inviting the unenlightened

people to get to know their Creator. He sought, like other Prophets before him, to promulgate a teaching that would grant them peace – both in this world, as well as the next.

Not a single instance can be proven in the life of Prophet Muhammad^{sa} that he ever used coercion to convert anyone, either through warfare or through exploitation. Prophet Muhammad^{sa} did not compel any prisoners of war to accept Islam, nor did he ask relatives of a prisoner to accept Islam in exchange for a prisoner's release. Under normal circumstances, where no battle was being waged, it was perfectly reasonable to invite people to Islam. During battles, this message of peace was always a primary objective. Each and every battle of Prophet Muhammad's^{sa} life bears testimony to the fact that wherever reconciliation was possible, it was always the priority, and it was always the Muslims who desired it. In fact, Prophet Muhammad^{sa} clearly forbade the desire to fight when he said:

*Do not wish for battle with the enemy. Pray to Allah to grant you safety; (but) when you are obliged to face them in battle, show patience.*¹³

In no clearer terms could Prophet Muhammad^{sa} have forbidden any desire or ulterior motives in the hearts of Muslims to fight the enemy. He always desired and wished for peace. These words of Prophet Muhammad^{sa} resonate with the words of Captain John Parker, when he instructed his company of Minutemen assembled to rebuff the approach of the British Redcoats during a battle:

*Stand your ground. Do not fire unless fired upon, but if they mean to have a war, let it begin here.*¹⁴

Prophet Muhammad's^{sa} desire for peace was so great that he pushed for and established treaties for peace, even when the conditions of the treaty were heavily in favor of the other party. In contrast, he never enacted a single treaty that forced anyone to convert to Islam. This is reflected by the following verse of the Holy Quran which makes it binding upon Muslims to always make peace their top priority:

*And if they incline towards peace, incline thou also towards it.*¹⁵

Not a single example can be found in the life of Prophet Muhammad^{sa} from the first battle of Badr to the last battle in his life led by Hazrat Usāma^{ra}, where people were coerced to become Muslims after winning, or after the signing of a treaty.

DO TERRORISTS REPRESENT ISLAM?

A recent allegation by some detractors of Islam is that terrorist organizations like ISIS or Daesh, Boko Haram, and Al-Qaeda, represent the real Islam as they follow and practice the original teachings of Islam explained by the Holy Quran and demonstrated in the life and practices of Prophet Muhammad^{sa}.

This allegation is utterly baseless, the reality is that all the incidents of terror and devastation perpetrated by these terrorist groups are all against the clear-cut teachings of the Holy Quran. Furthermore, absolutely no support for such acts of brutality can be found from the life of Prophet Muhammad^{sa} of Islam. These acts which are perpetrated by these barbaric groups, falsely

invoking the name of Islam, genuinely grieve all true and peace loving Muslims. They are based on such brutal and inhumane ideologies which have nothing whatsoever to do with Islam.

When we look in depth at the Holy Quran and the life and character of Prophet Muhammad^{sa} of Islam, it becomes clear that the early Muslims never initiated any battle or armed violence and they never forced Islam upon others. Extremist organizations are, in fact, the antithesis of Islam, the teachings of the Holy Quran and the life and example of Prophet Muhammad^{sa}. Let us make a few comparisons to illustrate this point.

In several verses of the Holy Quran, Allah the Almighty has laid down various principles of defensive warfare (which are only the means of protecting the freedom of conscience and worship for all religions and not just Islam). For example, Allah established the principle of fighting in self-defence in the following verse:

*And fight in the cause of Allah against those who fight against you, but do not transgress. Surely, Allah loves not the transgressors.*¹⁶

Extremist organizations violate this verse by attacking indiscriminately and transgressing the rights of others with extreme cruelty. They want to fight those who do not wish to fight them. How deeply and clearly their actions contrast the commandment in the above verse! Yet it is amazing that critics of Islam assert that extremist organizations are following the Holy Quran in letter and spirit. In fact, this verse quoted above is itself enough to prove that all terrorist organizations (present or past) are acting against the clear-cut teachings of the Holy Quran.

Again, Allah the Almighty commands Muslims to never exceed the limits or to transgress during any defensive armed engagement:

*And if you desire to punish the oppressors, then punish them to the extent to which you have been wronged; but if you show patience, then, surely, that is best for those who are patient.*¹⁷

Do the terrorist organizations follow the above commandment? Of course not! Instead, they go out of their way to kill innocent civilians – some of

whom are even pursuing humanitarian causes at the time of capture by these terrorists. To suggest that the terrorists are acting on Islamic teachings is an abomination and an atrociously unfounded claim that can only be made by Islamophobes who are intent on defaming Islam out of their own ignorance.

Allah the Almighty also says that during a battle, a party should only fight until there is no more persecution, and religion can once again be professed freely for the sake of God alone.

Furthermore, the Holy Quran stipulates that the Muslims must fulfil any covenants or pacts they form with idolaters if they have not acted with aggression towards Muslims and have kept the terms of their mutual agreements from their side:

*Excepting those of the idolaters with whom you have entered into a treaty and who have not subsequently failed you in anything nor aided anyone against you. So fulfil to these the treaty you have made with them till their term. Surely, Allah loves those who are righteous.*¹⁸

Allah says that upholding treaties is a necessary requirement of righteousness and that He loves those who are righteous.

Allah also instructs Muslims to always act fairly and with justice, even during battle and that the enmity of others should not drive a Muslim to act unjustly:

*O ye who believe! be steadfast in the cause of Allah, bearing witness in equity; and let not a people's enmity incite you to act otherwise than with justice. Be always just, that is nearer to righteousness. And fear Allah. Surely, Allah is aware of what you do.*¹⁹

Explaining this further, Prophet Muhammad^{sa} is reported to have said:

*Go in Allah's name, trusting in Allah, and adhering to the religion of Allah's Messenger^{sa}. Do not kill the elderly, or a young infant, or a child, or a woman; do not be dishonest about booty, but collect your spoils. Create peace in the land, and treat the people with benevolence, for surely, Allah loves the benevolent...*²⁰

As regards prisoners of war, Allah says that it is not permissible to take captives except in a state of a pitched battle, because to do so would suggest that, rather than seeking the love of God as evidenced by following His commandments, one cares only for amassing wealth and power:

*It does not behove a Prophet that he should have captives until he engages in regular fighting in the land. You desire the goods of the world, while Allah desires for you the Hereafter. And Allah is Mighty, Wise.*²¹

Thus, it proves very clearly that it is forbidden, outside of war-time, to keep anyone captive; yet in recent times, we have seen these so-called “Islamists” forcibly imprisoning numerous innocent people, while taking defenceless women as concubines. This is yet another proof that such people have nothing to do with the true and explicit teachings of Islam.

Regarding prisoners of war, Allah the Almighty has stated in the Holy Quran that they should be freed following the conclusion of fighting and not

enslaved for a longer period of time as was the custom then.²² Allah says that they should either be freed in return for ransom or, preferably, released freely out of kindness and as a favour. This alternative of releasing them freely as an act of kindness underscores the fact that the other option, i.e. ransom, could not have meant blackmailing and extortion of exorbitant amounts of money, or any excessive demands placed on them – as is seen in the case of extremist organizations these days – in exchange for granting them freedom. This applies both to males and females.

In the early days, women used to go to the battlefields to support and motivate the men who fought and, in this way, those women were also liable to be captured. The Holy Quran, however, made it categorically clear that no woman is to be treated cruelly or violated in any way. This shall be illuminated further in the chapter entitled, *Slavery and Prisoners of War*.

THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

In response to such verses as we have quoted above, anti-Islam writers like Dr. Qureshi often go on to cite other verses that, taken in isolation, seem to be encouraging Muslims to attack non-Muslims. Is it true then that whether one is a peaceful Muslim or an extremist is just dependent on which verses you prefer and how you interpret them?

The answer is a resounding: No! This is because the Holy Quran itself tells you how it should be interpreted. It states that some verses form the basis of its teachings (i.e. *moḥkamāt*), while others are context-specific (*mutashābihāt*). It goes on to condemn those who apply the context-dependent verses outside of their appropriate context, as defined by those verses that form the basis of the book. Furthermore, it states that those who correctly interpret the Holy Quran are those who look at the book as a whole and interpret it without creating contradiction:

He it is Who has sent down to thee the Book; in it there are verses that are decisive in meaning — they

*are the basis of the Book — and there are others that are susceptible of different interpretations. But those in whose hearts is perversity pursue such thereof as are susceptible of different interpretations, seeking contradiction and seeking wrong interpretation of it. And none knows its right interpretation except Allah and those who are firmly grounded in knowledge; they say, 'We believe in it; the whole is from our Lord.' — And none heed except those gifted with understanding.*²³

Those who are well-grounded in knowledge accept that the whole is from God. In other words, they try to understand any given topic in its entirety by looking at all the verses of the Holy Quran.

When one turns to the issue of Jihad as mentioned in the Holy Quran, one has to understand why Muslims were permitted to fight, and with whom? The Holy Quran itself explains both, in the first ever injunction that granted permission to take up arms in self-defence:

Permission to fight is given to those against whom war is made, because they have been wronged —

*and Allah indeed has power to help them — Those who have been driven out from their homes unjustly only because they said, 'Our Lord is Allah' — And if Allah did not repel some men by means of others, there would surely have been pulled down cloisters and churches and synagogues and mosques, wherein the name of Allah is oft commemorated. And Allah will surely help one who helps Him. Allah is indeed Powerful, Mighty.*²⁴

Permission to fight was given because Muslims were thrown out of their homes for no other reason than their religious beliefs. Even after they migrated, they were still harassed in their new homes in another town. In fact, Muslims undertook three migrations: two to Abyssinia, to live under the rule of the Christian king, Negus, who ruled with justice, and one to Madīnah. In all three cases, their pagan persecutors pursued them still to their resettlements and harassed them there. In the first case, 'Amr ibn Al-Ās was sent all the way from Makkah to Abyssinia in order to persuade the Abyssinian king to send the Arab Muslim refugees

back to Makkah.²⁵ In the third case, as soon as the Muslims arrived in Madīnah, the pagan persecutors in Makkah sent messages to the Medinites, warning them that if they did not kill or expel the Muslims, the pagans would invade Madīnah to kill them all:

The disbelievers of Quraish wrote to ‘Abdullāh ibn Ubayy ibn Salūl and also to those members of the Aus and Khazraj tribes who were idolaters. This occurred while the Messenger of God resided in Madīnah but before the incident at Badr. The Quraish said, “You have given shelter to our tribes men, and you remain the more numerous of Madīnah’s inhabitants. We swear by God that you had better either kill him or expel him, or else we will rally the Arabs to help us and march against you in our full numbers, slaying your warriors and ravishing your women!”²⁶

This is the context of why the Muslims were permitted to take up arms in self-defence. This is also why the Holy Quran speaks of “fighting disbelievers” because the two sides of the fight were Muslims (referred as, the believers) and non-Muslims (referred as, the disbelievers). Quite

clearly, it does not mean that it is an abiding teaching that Muslims should fight all non-Muslims, indiscriminately, for all of time. Nowhere does the Holy Quran even remotely suggest this by any stretch of the imagination.

Indeed, the Holy Quran clearly commands the Muslims that they must not fight against, or persecute, those non-Muslims who do not persecute them for their faith. Instead, they should be treated with kindness and equity:

*Allah forbids you not, respecting those who have not fought against you on account of your religion, and who have not driven you forth from your homes, that you be kind to them and act equitably towards them; surely Allah loves those who are equitable.*²⁷

This is why it is so important to read all the verses of the Holy Quran together, rather than misrepresenting the teachings of the Holy Quran by isolating various verses, tearing them out of context, and do cherry-picking to falsely present the isolated verses as representing the whole picture.

All the verses of the Holy Quran quoted thus far, demonstrate beyond a shadow of doubt that the terrorist organizations are not at all following the commandments of the Holy Quran and do not represent its teachings in the least.

JIHAD FOR PEACE

The word Jihad and its connotations will be separately discussed in the chapter entitled, *What is Jihad?* but it must be clear at this point that this word literally means “to struggle”. When we look at the life of Prophet Muhammad^{sa}, we learn that he struggled for peace throughout his life. This was his Jihad for peace. It is impossible for us to reproduce his illustrious life in this short book but a few examples offer the reader a glimpse!

During his time in Makkah, for instance, he and his companions were severely persecuted, humiliated, and harassed with extreme hostility. Some of his companions were even tortured to death in the most brutal manner. Yet, on one occasion, when Hazrat ‘Abdur Raḥman bin ‘Auf^{ra}

and some other companions came to him and said, “O Messenger of Allah! We were respected when we were idolaters and when we believed, we were humiliated”. This was a suggestion to allow them to fight their persecutors, but Prophet Muhammad^{sa} responded by saying, “I have been commanded to pardon, so do not fight”.²⁸ This demonstrates how much he detested warfare and how much importance he gave to the promotion of peace.

One excellent example that clearly illustrates this is the personal conduct and precept of Prophet Muhammad^{sa} when he migrated to Madīnah along with his followers, and the manner in which the migrant Muslims absorbed themselves into the local society. It was a perfect model of how to immigrate and integrate into a new society. Before the migrant Muslims arrived, there were two main ethnic groups in Madīnah, namely, the Jews and the Arabs.

Upon the arrival of the Muslims, there emerged three groups – the Muslims, the Jews and the non-Muslim Arabs. Prophet Muhammad^{sa} immediately proclaimed that it was essential that they all lived together in peace and harmony; and, therefore, he proposed a covenant of peace between them.

According to the terms of this treaty each group and each tribe was given its mutually agreed upon due rights. The safety and security of the lives and wealth of all parties was guaranteed in this treaty and any pre-existing inter-tribal customs were also respected. It was also agreed that if any person came from Makkah with the intention of causing harm or mischief he would not be provided sanctuary by anyone in Madīnah nor would they enter into any pact with them.

Further, if a common enemy attacked Madīnah all three groups would join together and defend the city as one entity; although it was also stipulated that non-Muslims would not be forced to fight alongside Muslims if the Muslims were ever attacked or fought outside Madīnah. In addition, any agreements the Jews had already entered into with other groups would be honoured by the Muslims. The Jews would live by their religion and the Muslims would live by their religion.

When all three groups unanimously accepted the terms of this agreement it was also agreed through mutual consent that Prophet Muhammad^{sa} would serve as the Head of the State. Thus, as the de-facto

head of the state, Prophet Muhammad^{sa} enacted a covenant of peace between all parties within the city. According to the treaty, the Jews were not bound by the Islamic Shariah (law) but were bound only by the Jewish laws and customs. This was the perfect example of tolerance and mutual respect Prophet Muhammad^{sa} had for other faiths.

By contrast, extremist organizations claim that Shariah law must be enforced on every person, no matter what their religion or background may be, whereas the example of Prophet Muhammad^{sa} is entirely different and diametrically opposed to that. Indeed, this treaty clearly stipulated that no woman was to be forcibly removed from her home, thus nullifying the extremists' claim that non-Muslim women are their possessions or chattel.

According to the treaty, no person would ever be compelled to accept Islam; rather it expressly stated that the Jews and the non-Muslims of Madīnah, would be treated with love and compassion and as brothers by the Muslims.

History bears witness to the fact that the Muslims followed this agreement to the letter and if the covenant was ever breached it was done so by the

other parties. As the accepted leader of Madīnah, sometimes Prophet Muhammad^{sa} would have to deal with individuals or groups who had breached the covenant, or who were involved in wrongdoing. Such cases of infractions were adjudicated in fairness, following the provisions of the treaty of Madinah.

If a so-called Muslim terrorist organization or any Muslim government, acts against these principles of true justice and equality, it must be clearly understood that they are doing so only to fulfil their own personal or political interests. Even if they claim to act in the name of Islam, the explicit truth is that their dastardly actions have no basis whatsoever in Islam or the teachings of Prophet Muhammad^{sa}.

If one studies the early Islamic history in a fair, and unbiased manner, one will see that during the early era of the life of Prophet Muhammad^{sa} and during the period of his four Rightly Guided Khulafā', the behaviour of the Muslims was impeccable. They were never the aggressor in any battle; nor did they ever seek to conquer land under a policy of materialistic expansionism.

Wherever they sought to disseminate Islam's teachings they did so only through preaching in an entirely peaceful manner. For example, Islam spread to China and South India and yet nowhere in history does it state that any Muslim armies ever attacked those nations; rather, Islam spread to these countries and among other nations through peaceful means. In later periods, some Muslim monarchs initiated wars for various reasons for which Islam alone cannot be blamed; and even in those wars the inhabitants of the captured countries were never forced to convert to Islam. Certainly, the Quran rejects such ventures and teaches only peaceful propagation of the teachings of faith.²⁹

A PROPHET OF PEACE

It has been established in the previous section that Prophet Muhammad^{sa} was a man of peace and forgiveness, and the real Jihad that he waged in his life was the Jihad for peace. Still, some critics unfairly allege that the mere presence of violence in his life is enough to call him a "violent Prophet". Dr.

Qureshi goes one step further by suggesting that “the battles of the early Muslim community seem to have escalated in a crescendo toward the end of Muhammad’s^[sa] life, not halting with his death but rather catapulting into global proportions”.³⁰

The reality is that the mere presence of violence in the life of Prophet Muhammad^{sa} cannot mean that he was a “violent Prophet”. As has been shown in this chapter through the various verses of the Holy Quran, there is a context behind all the defensive armed engagement that took place during Prophet Muhammad’s^{sa} life. He never sought enemies and never had any ill-will towards anyone. When he had only a handful of followers in the early days, a significant number of people in Makkah started opposing them violently. Even at that time, some of his followers wished to fight back but he forbade them: not due to weakness but as a matter of adherence to principle.

Those first thirteen years of the blessed life of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{sa} were characterized by great and unmitigated pain and suffering for him and his nascent community of faith. The followers of Prophet Muhammad^{sa} were dragged in the

streets, beaten to near death, and were subjected to such torture which puts to shame the correctional cruelties of today. One must stop and question the reason for unleashing such atrocities against early Muslims. The truth of the matter is, that - much like the disciples of Jesus Christ^{as}- the only crime for which these humble souls were ever charged, was their unwavering desire to worship the One True God.

The Makkans even sought to bribe Prophet Muhammad^{sa} into abandoning his faith, offering him fabulous amounts of wealth and the most beautiful women in all of Arabia in lieu of renacting his faith. He was so absolutely steadfast and unflinching in his love for the religion of Islam, that he unequivocally declared, "By God! If these people put the Sun on my one hand and the Moon upon the other, even then I shall not refrain from the fulfillment of my responsibility".³¹

Hence, Prophet Muhammad's^{sa} reasons for fighting were to adhere to the principle of self-defence in the face of unprovoked attacks, and in defense of his faith, when the Makkans threatened to destroy the religion of Islam with the use of force,

once and for all. He never had any intention to fight for the sake of power or wealth, because he was offered both of these things by the Makkans and he refused to take these. To insinuate that Prophet Muhammad^{sa} did not fight at that time because he did not possess the strength and the resources to fight, could not be further from the truth. The fact is that he had the company of such followers who were known for their significant wealth, such as Hazrat ‘Abdur Raḥman bin ‘Auf^{ra} and Hazrat Uthmān^{ra}. He also enjoyed the full support of his dear wife Hazrat Khadijah^{ra}, who was known in the land as an affluent business woman and trader. Moreover, he had the support of his whole tribe which was the strongest in Makkah. If Prophet Muhammad^{sa} wanted to fight, he could have easily financed an armed conflict and fought the pagans, but he refused to engage in fighting just to win territories; instead, his divinely inspired goal was to win hearts, peacefully and with love and fairness.

It should also be noted that armed combat, in the life of Prophet Muhammad^{sa}, only started after all the aforementioned crimes of the Makkans against Muslims had reached a climax. The severity of

persecution had become unbearable for many Muslims, and forced them to migrate from their hometown of Makkah. The night when Prophet Muhammad^{sa} left Makkah was the night when the tribes had unaminously conspired to assassinate him in his home. Even after reaching Madīnah, the Makkans did not leave the Muslims alone, and kept on pursuing them and instigating tribes against them until the Muslims were left with no choice but to defend themselves by taking up arms in self-defence, despite having no desire to fight for any material gains or for the sake of power. In fact, the Muslims were abhorrent to the idea of spilling blood, and considered peace as the best environment for Islam's teachings to appeal to the natural instincts of human beings in the society.

The reality is that Muslims abhorred combat, not because of any cowardly fear of death but due to their desire to maintain and promote peace. The Holy Quran says:

*Fighting is ordained for you, though you find it repugnant.*³²

The Muslims went to the greatest lengths to not disturb the existing social peace, allowing themselves to be subjects of torture, and even dying in the cause. It is a fact that Islam says that fighting can be permissible at certain times, and in certain situations. This is why Islam claims that it is a universal message that is attuned with the human nature and was, therefore, sent to all mankind. Its teachings are consistent with, and applicable to, the whole of humanity, whether they are from the developed world, or hail from the small tribes of Africa. It is a message with a complete code of life, and this means that there are exceptional scenarios where defensive warfare is allowed.

Comparatively, Christians are faced with a dilemma on self defence. On the one hand they say that they practice the teaching of Christ and “turn the other cheek”, but on the other hand there are numerous occasions when they have to justify self defence, even in day to day life.

Critics may allege that Islam left behind a legacy of war. What is curious, however, is that up until the treaty of Hudaibiya (6 A.H. or 628 CE), when the Muslims were constantly defending themselves in a

state of war, they did not exceed 1400 in number. It was in the three lunar years of relative peace that followed the treaty of Hudaibiya that the Muslim numbers grew to well over 10,000³³ by the time of the victory of Makkah (8 A.H. or 630 AD).³⁴ In other words, it was not war that caused them to spread. It was the period of peace when they actually spread. Furthermore, it was this increase in their numbers that caused their enemies to become ever more jealous of the spread of their faith within and even beyond Arabia. If the frequency of battles in the later part of the life of Prophet Muhammad^{sa} increased, one reason was the rapidly growing Muslim community that caused anxiety and distress to the violently disposed enemies of Muslims who considered the expansion of Islam an anathema to their pagan traditions, and wished to annihilate the Muslims once and for all.

Painting the image of a bloody religion with violent ambitions is an unprincipled allegation and the most horrid distortion of facts. It may suffice to quote the words of the famous British Orientalist De Lacy O' Lear:

*History makes it clear, however, that the legend of fanatical Muslims sweeping through the world and forcing Islam at the point of the sword upon conquered races, is one of the most fantastically absurd myths that historians have ever repeated.*³⁵

In conclusion, Islam's only "sword" is wisdom and goodly exhortation quoted in the Holy Quran:

*Call unto the way of thy Lord with wisdom and goodly exhortation, and argue with them in a way that is best. Surely, thy Lord knows best who has strayed from His way; and He knows those who are rightly guided.*³⁶

EXTREMISTS ARE NOT DEVOUT

To allege that those who went and joined Daesh or any other extremist organization were devout Muslims and went back to the core texts of the Holy Quran is not supported by established facts. In a classified report, MI5 concluded that "far from being religious zealots, a large number of those

involved in terrorism do not practice their faith regularly. Many lack religious literacy and could... be regarded as religious novices.”³⁷ This observation was proven right just a few years later when two would-be British extremists were arrested on their way to Syria carrying the books, *Islam for Dummies* and *The Koran for Dummies*.³⁸

Similarly, in 2015, Didier François, a released prisoner of ISIS, told CNN that his captors were obsessed with politics and did not even keep a copy of the Holy Quran.³⁹ Former senior FBI agent Ali Soufan revealed that when he interrogated members of Al-Qaeda he quickly learned that they were wholly politically motivated and knew very little about Islam and the Holy Quran. Salah Abdeslam who helped plot the attacks in Paris in November 2015 reportedly visited homosexual bars, drank alcohol, was involved in petty crimes and took drugs⁴⁰ – all of which is strictly forbidden in Islam. To assert that these people are true representatives of Islam is wildly fantastical.

A more recent piece of evidence was given by the German author, politician and former judge, Jurgen

Todenhof. He spent 10 days living with ISIS in Syria and Iraq. He said in his BBC interview:

I wanted to ask them [ISIS, editor], are you really Islamic? Because in Islam [Quran, editor] 113 of the 114 Surahs start with 'In the Name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful'. Where is your mercy? There is no mercy...They gave an answer: [we] caught 3500 Shias and we killed only 50 percent of them, so we had mercy. They did not have an answer. They are, as far as Quran is concerned, illiterate. They don't know really the spirit of Quran. I will say that it is an anti-Islamic movement. They have an Islamic mask because Quran does not allow to kill innocents; Quran does not allow to destroy churches, synagogues and so on. And Quran does not allow to force somebody to believe something.⁴¹

In short, the argument that being a devout Muslim can possibly turn you into a violent Jihadist is based on pitiable ignorance, or unprincipled malice and mischief. Reports and first hand accounts of Daesh soldiers reveal that they joined this group for monetary and political reasons. They were not devout Muslims who just suddenly saw a

'light' while pondering over the Holy Quran. They were no more Islamic in their actions than the Klu Klux Klan is Christian or witch-burning in the Middle Ages was Christian. Their publications have misquoted the Holy Quran in order to try and bring a cover of legitimacy for their barbaric pursuits, but this is no different from misquoting the Bible or other holy scriptures for pursuing similar goals, in both earlier and recent history.

Regardless, for the benefit of the general reader who seeks the truth, the question remains: Who are the true Muslims? What do they believe in? What are they doing to counter such extremist ideologies? We address this question in the next chapter.

WHO ARE THE TRUE MUSLIMS?

EVERY TIME A terrorist attack is mentioned in the news, we Muslims undergo twice as much shock and grieving as compared to others. Firstly, we sympathize and grieve with the innocent people who are brutally attacked by the terrorists; and secondly, we grieve over the hijacking of Islam by a small but dangerous group of people. This second source of grief makes it all the more important for Muslims and non-Muslims alike to understand the true teachings of Islam.

We would argue that in this age, true Islam can only be found in the Aḥmadiyya Muslim Community. This Community is the most dynamic organization within the vast body of Islam today. Its teachings are firmly grounded in the two main sources of guidance in Islam, that is, the Holy

Quran and the traditions (or Aḥādīth) of Prophet Muhammad^{sa}. It was founded in March 1889 by His Holiness Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as} (1835-1908) of Qādiān, India. Aḥmadī Muslims believe him to be the long awaited Promised Messiah and Imām Mahdī, whose advent was foretold by Prophet Muhammad^{sa}. There are many narrations which speak about the coming of the Messiah. At one occasion, for instance, Prophet Muhammad^{sa} said:

The Hour will not begin until 'Īsā bin Mariam^{as} [i.e. the Promised Messiah] comes down as a just judge and a just ruler...¹

At other occasions, he used the title *Ḥakam* (Arbiter) and *'Adal* (Judge) for the Promised Imām Mahdī,² and told people that his status is so great that even if they have to crawl over ice to reach him, they should do so and pledge allegiance to him, because he is the Khalīfa of Allah.³ Other prophecies speak about the time of the coming of the Messiah, the area in which he will appear, and the state of the world at his time. Yet other prophecies speak of

signs for the appearance of the Messiah. A great example is that of the sign of the eclipses, as Prophet Muhammad^{sa} declared:

There are two signs for the truthfulness of our Mahdī, which have not manifested for anyone since the creation of the heavens and the earth, that is, during Ramadhan the moon will be eclipsed on the first night (among the possible nights for lunar eclipse) and the sun will be eclipsed on the middle day (among the possible days for the eclipse of the sun).⁴

His Holiness Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as} claimed to be the Messiah in 1890 and only four years had passed that the sign prophesied above manifested. During the month of Ramadhan in 1894, the moon eclipsed on the first of its three possible nights, that is, the 13th of Ramadhan, and the sun eclipsed on the second of its three possible days, that is, the 28th of Ramadhan.

Fast forward to today, the Aḥmadiyya Muslim community has completed 129 years since inception, during which time it has spread to more than 200 countries around the globe with tens of millions of followers. It is now acknowledged as the

most vibrant living force within contemporary Islam. The number of its adherents and its significance in the world of religion are on the increase daily, almost hourly. No genuine student of religion can afford to neglect or ignore it.

This Movement is established at the very centre of Islam and represents the essence of Islam, shorn of all the veils that have, through the centuries, gradually been patched upon the body of Islam and have thus defaced and disfigured it. The Movement does not depart, even in the very least, from the original text of the Holy Quran, nor does it add one iota to the original doctrines and teachings of Islam. It is rather a revival of the real teachings of Islam, and more particularly of the wisdom and the philosophy that underlies its doctrines and teachings, based upon and derived entirely from the Holy Quran and the pronouncements and practice of Prophet Muhammad^{sa}. It is not a new religion nor is it an innovation in religion. It sets forth only that which has been inherent in Islam from the beginning.

THE PROMISED MESSIAH [AS]

His Holiness Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as} was born in 1835 CE in Qādiān, India. From his early life, he dedicated himself to prayer, and the study of the Holy Quran and other scriptures. He was deeply pained to observe the plight of Islam, which was being attacked from all directions. In order to defend Islam and present its teachings in their pristine purity, he wrote more than ninety books, thousands of letters, and participated in many religious debates.

He argued that Islam was a living faith and it was the only faith by following which man could establish contact with his Creator and could experience real, tangible revelation through communion with Him. The teachings contained in the Holy Quran and the Law promulgated by Islam were designed to raise man to moral, intellectual and spiritual perfection. His Holiness Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as} started experiencing divine dreams, visions, and revelations at a young age and later, under Divine command, he established the Community (or *Jamā'at*) in 1889.

He instructed his Community to go to the core teachings of Islam. For instance, he said:

I hold very firmly that for your guidance God has provided three things. The foremost among these is the Holy Quran, which sets forth the unity of God, His grandeur and greatness, and decides all points in dispute between Jews and Christians. Further, the Quran forbids that you worship anything other than God - neither man, nor beast, the sun nor the moon, nor any other heavenly body, nor material means, nor your own selves. Therefore beware! Do not take a single step in contravention of anything contained in the Holy Book. Verity, I tell you truly that whosoever evades even the least of the seven hundred commandments embodied in the Holy Quran, he slams the door of salvation upon himself. The real and perfect paths of salvation have been opened only by the Holy Quran; all others were only its shadows. Therefore you should study this holy Scripture with the utmost attention and deepest thought; and you should love it as you have never loved anything else.

... The second instrument for guidance vouchsafed to the Muslims is the Sunnah, i.e., the measures adopted by the Holy Prophet^{sa} with a view to the exposition of the Holy



His Holiness Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as}

*The Promised Messiah and Imām Mahdī
Founder of the Aḥmadiyya Muslim Jamā'at*

Quran and its being put into actual tangible practice. ... The third means of guidance is the ḥadīth,⁵ because many points in regard to history, ethics, jurisprudence are to be found explained fully in it; and the great utility of the ḥadīth lies in the fact that it is a servant of the Quran and the Sunnah. [In summary]... the Holy Book is the Word of God, while the Sunnah is the act of the Holy Prophet^{sa}, the ḥadīth being a supporting witness for the Sunnah.⁶

He further says:

You should adhere to the ḥadīth to such an extent that no action of yours, no pause, no performance, and no failure to perform any work, should be without basis in ḥadīth. But if there is a ḥadīth which stands in contradiction of what has been stated in the Quran, you should exercise your mind to reconcile the interpretation: but where no such reconciliation is possible, the ḥadīth should be rejected and thrown aside, since it cannot be taken to have come from the Holy Prophet^{sa}. But if there is a weak ḥadīth, which stands, nevertheless, in accord with the Holy Quran, it is to be accepted, for the Quran has confirmed it.⁷

The above quotes summarize the teachings of the founder of the Aḥmadiyya Muslim Community, and it is clear that its members are instructed to go to the core teachings of Islam and follow them to the letter and spirit. This flies in the face of those who allege that those who go back to the core texts of Islam will just find violence in Islam and will have to choose to be only nominally Muslim, leave Islam or become radical Jihadists bent on killing others.⁸

Why? Because not a single example can be given of a member of the Aḥmadiyya Muslim Community ever taking part in violent Jihad or terrorism to kill innocent people. By staying true to the core teachings, this community has shown a great commitment and passion in their defence of Islam but also for their sympathy for mankind. Instead of striking down others, the members of this community devote their lives to serve God's Creation and show love towards them. This requires true selflessness and love for others. This love is exemplified by the fourth condition of the pledge of initiation that all community members take:

That under the impulse of any passions, he/she shall cause no harm whatsoever to the creatures of God in general and Muslims in particular, neither by his/her tongue, hands, nor any other means.⁹

The founder of the Aḥmadiyya Muslim Community, the Promised Messiah^{as} explaining the above says:

The members of my Jamā'at, wherever they might be, should listen with attention. The purpose of their joining this Movement and establishing the mutual relationship of spiritual preceptor and disciple with me is that they should achieve a high degree of good conduct, good behaviour and righteousness. No wrongdoing, mischief, or misconduct should even approach them. They should perform the five daily Prayers regularly, should not utter a falsehood and should not hurt anyone with their speech. They should be guilty of no vice and should not let even a thought of any mischief, or wrong, or disorderliness, or turmoil pass through their minds. They should shun every type of sin, offence, undesirable action, passion, and unmannerly behaviour. They should become pure-hearted and meek servants of God Almighty, and no poisonous germ should flourish in their beings....

Sympathy with mankind should be their principle and, they should fear God Almighty. They should safeguard their tongues and their hands and their thoughts against every kind of impurity, disorderliness and dishonesty. They should join the five daily Prayer services without fail. They should refrain from every kind of wrong, transgression, dishonesty, bribery, trespass, and partiality. They should not participate in any evil company. If it should be proved that one who frequents their company does not obey God's commandments... or is not mindful of the rights of people, or is cruel or mischievous, or is ill-behaved, or is seeking to deceive the servants of God Almighty by speaking ill or abusively of them, or is guilty of imposture towards the persons with whom they have entered into a covenant of bai'at, it should be their duty to repel him and to keep away from such a dangerous one. They should not design harm against the followers of any religion or the members of any tribe or group. Be true well-wishers of everyone, and take care that no mischievous, vicious, disorderly, or ill-behaved person, should be ever of your company, or should dwell among you; for such a person could at any time be the cause of your stumbling....

These are matters and conditions that I have been urging from the beginning, and it is the duty of every member of my Jamā'at to act upon them. You should indulge in no impurity, mockery or derision. Walk upon the earth with good hearts, pure tempers, and pure thoughts. Not every evil is worth fighting, so cultivate the habit of forgiveness and overlooking defaults, and behave with steadfastness and meekness. Do not attack anyone improperly, and keep your passions under complete control. If you take part in a discussion, or in an exchange of views on a religious subject, express yourself gently and be courteous. If anyone misbehaves towards you, withdraw from such company with a greeting of peace. If you are persecuted or reviled, be mindful that you should not meet stupidity with stupidity, for otherwise you will be counted in the same category as your opponents. God Almighty desires that you should become a Jamā'at that should set an example of goodness and truthfulness for the whole world. Hasten to exclude everyone from your company who sets an example of evil, mischief, provocation and ill-behaviour. He who cannot dwell among us in meekness, goodness and piety, using gentle words and comporting himself in ways of good conduct, should depart from us quickly, for God does not desire

*that such a one should dwell among us. He will die miserably, for he did not adopt the way of goodness. Therefore, be alert, and be truly good-hearted, gentle and righteous. You will be recognized by your regular attendance at Prayer services and your high moral qualities. He who has the seed of evil embedded in him will not be able to conform to this admonition.*¹⁰

Thus, this community does not take part in violent Jihad, but it is engaged in enjoining goodness and seeks the welfare of the fellow man through self-sacrifice and sympathy for mankind. The members of the community use the pen to undertake their Jihad, rebutting attacks on Islam through discourse rather than through violence, since Islam is attacked today on its precepts, rather than physically.

KHILĀFAT

After the demise of the Promised Messiah^{as} in 1908, the institution of Khilāfat (Successorship, also translated “Caliphate”) was established to succeed him, in fulfillment of the prophecies contained in

the Holy Quran and Aḥādīth. In the Holy Quran, Allah speaks of this promise and what it entails, as follows:

*Allah has promised to those among you who believe and do good works that He will surely make them Successors in the earth, as He made Successors from among those who were before them; and that He will surely establish for them their religion which He has chosen for them; and that He will surely give them in exchange security and peace after their fear: They will worship Me, and they will not associate anything with Me. Then whoso is ungrateful after that, they will be the rebellious.*¹¹

The Muslims here are promised a “successorship” or Khilāfat similar to the one granted to those before them. Prophet Muhammad^{sa} elaborated how this Khilāfat was to be granted when he said:

Prophethood shall remain among you as long as Allah shall will. He will bring about its end and follow it with Khilāfat on the precepts of prophethood for as long as He shall will and then bring about its end. A tyrannical

monarchy will then follow and will remain as long as Allah shall will and then come to an end. There will follow thereafter monarchical despotism to last as long as Allah shall will and come to an end upon His decree. There will then emerge Khilāfat on the precepts of Prophethood. (Prophet Muhammad^{sa} said no more).¹²

In fulfillment of these prophecies, four successors have passed since the death of the Promised Messiah^{as}. His Holiness Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad^{aa} is the current, fifth Khalīfa or Successor to the Promised Messiah^{as} and the head of the Aḥmadiyya Muslim Community.

His Holiness is the world's leading Muslim figure promoting peace and inter-religious harmony. Through his sermons, lectures, books, and personal meetings with world leaders in a variety of walks of life, His Holiness has continually advocated the worship of God Almighty and serving of humanity. Some of his speeches and letters to world leaders addressing these issues have been compiled into a book published recently, *World Crisis and Pathway to Peace*¹³.



His Holiness Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad^{aa}

*The Khalīfa of Islam and current head of
the worldwide Aḥmadiyya Muslim Jamā'at*

Since being elected Khalīfa, His Holiness has led a worldwide campaign to convey the peaceful message of Islam, through all forms of print and digital media. Under his leadership, national branches of the Aḥmadiyya Muslim Community have launched campaigns that reflect the true and peaceful teachings of Islam. Aḥmadi Muslims the world over are engaged in grassroots efforts to distribute millions of “Peace” leaflets to Muslims and non-Muslims alike; they host interfaith and peace symposia, and organize and conduct exhibitions of the Holy Quran, in order to demonstrate its true and noble message. These campaigns have received worldwide media coverage and demonstrate that Islam champions peace, loyalty to one’s country of residence and service to humanity.¹⁴

These campaigns include “Stop the CrISIS” (with the goal to counter radicalization), “Meet a Muslim Family”, “Fast with a Muslim Friend”, and so on. Recently, in the USA, a campaign entitled “True Islam” has been endorsed thousands of times by Muslims and non-Muslims alike. It consists of 11 points that are key tenets of true Islam that

differentiate it from extremism. It states that true Islam is a religion that:

1. Wholly rejects all forms of terrorism.
2. Believes in non-violent Jihad of the self and of the pen.
3. Believes in the equality, education, and empowerment of women.
4. Advocates freedom of conscience, religion and speech.
5. Advocates for the separation of mosque and state.
6. Believes in loyalty to one's country of residence.
7. Encompasses the universal declaration of human rights.
8. Believes in all verses of the Holy Quran and forbids lying.
9. Recognizes that no religion can monopolize salvation.
10. Believes in the need for unified Muslim leadership.
11. Wholly rejects the concept of a bloody Messiah.¹⁵

This is just one of many examples of campaigns that the Aḥmadiyya Muslim Jamā'at undertakes which constitutes Jihad for peace.

WHAT IS JIHAD?

IT CAN BE stated without a doubt that “Jihad” is the most misunderstood concept about Islam in this day and age. Despite our efforts to explain what Jihad truly is, and despite numerous publications and flyers that explain this concept, it is persistently assumed by Islamophobes that Jihad is a bloody “holy war” meant to eradicate everything un-Islamic and purely used for conquest and political dominance. Even the extremists and terrorists exploit this popular misunderstanding of Jihad and vehemently abuse un-Islamic definitions of Jihad to attempt to bring legitimacy to their unjust causes.

The word Jihad comes from the root letters “*jīm-ha-dāl*” (J-H-D) which, according to Lane’s lexicon, means, “he strove, laboured, or toiled; exerted himself or his power or efforts or endeavours or ability”. At the most basic level, all that Jihad means is “to endeavour or to strive” and to suggest that

the only meaning of Jihad is military action is a gross distortion of facts.

This is why when the Holy Quran states “*wa Jāhidū fillāhi haqqa Jihadihī*”, it is clearly translated as, “And **strive** in the cause of Allah as it behoves you to **strive for it**”.¹ In fact, there is no advocacy for violence in the term “Jihad”. It is only in the parlance of religious extremists that this term came to be used perversely in reference to religious wars.

TYPES OF JIHAD

The question then rises: What is the difference between the literal meaning and figurative meaning of Jihad? And how do we know which one is applied and when? The answers to these questions can be understood easily when we learn the different types of Jihad. In the Holy Quran, three different types of Jihad are mentioned:

1. *Jihad-e-Akbar* (Greatest Jihad) - striving against the self that incites to evil
2. *Jihad-e-Kabīr* (Greater Jihad) – striving against satan and satanic teachings

3. *Jihad-e-Asghar* (Lesser Jihad) – striving with financial sacrifices and sacrificing one’s life (through warfare in specific circumstances)

Dr. Qureshi argues here that such distinctions between greater and lesser Jihad have “no place in the foundations of Islam”.² He suggests that both the Holy Quran and Aḥādīth emphasize Jihad in the context of violence and so there is no reason why it should be classified as “lesser Jihad”. We find it strange that Dr. Qureshi even thought of making this argument when the Holy Quran is very clear about this, as it makes the specific classification in the following words:

*...wa jāhid-hum bihī Jihadan kabīrā: And fight against them by means of it (the Holy Quran) a great fight.*³

Here the words *Jihadan Kabīrā* (Greater Jihad) are used by the Holy Quran itself in order to indicate very clearly that a struggle with the Holy Quran – which can only be in the spiritual sense – is what is the intended meaning here.

Additionally, the Jihad one wages against one's own negative, evil, and satanic thoughts and inclinations is the greatest and purest form of Jihad for every Muslim, as mentioned in the following verses:

*And as for those who strive [jāhadū] in Our path — We will surely guide them in Our ways. And verily Allah is with those who do good.*⁴

*O ye who believe! be heedful of your own selves. He who goes astray cannot harm you when you yourselves are rightly guided. To Allah will you all return; then will He disclose to you what you used to do.*⁵

Similarly, in one ḥadīth, Prophet Muhammad^{sa} is quoted to have said, “The *Mujāhid* [one who engages in Jihad] is one who strives against his own soul”⁶.

Furthermore, in one tradition, Prophet Muhammad^{sa} used the same terminology that the Holy Quran uses above in order to differentiate

between the greater and lesser Jihad, when he said, “We return from the lesser Jihad heading towards a greater Jihad”.⁷ At the time, he was returning from a battle and this was a clear indication that physical violence is a lesser Jihad while striving against evil is a greater Jihad. This tradition is not found in the most authentic collections of Aḥādīth but since it uses the same terminology that the Holy Quran uses, and does not deviate from the Quranic teachings in any way, there is no reason to reject it.

There is no doubt that the lesser Jihad of fighting in self-defence – when such fighting is thrust upon the Muslims by a violent enemy – is mentioned in the Holy Quran in several verses. However, all of this fighting was done in a specific context and in a specific period, with very particular goals in mind. In those contexts, the Holy Quran had full rights to glorify a form of fighting that is meant for religious freedom for all, and for the protection of the Muslim community. Even in worldly terms, fighting is justified when a person’s country is under attack and his or her family’s life is at stake.

JIHAD IN CONTEXT

The following verses of the Holy Quran clearly explain the context and limitations for Jihad. Some of these verses have already been presented in the chapter, *Is Islam a violent religion?* Seeing these verses as a whole helps us understand the context behind Jihad and the fact that this is not an unjust war being committed for militaristic gains.

When can Jihad be fought?

*Permission to fight is given to those against whom war is made, because they have been wronged — and Allah indeed has power to help them.*⁸

Who started all the fighting?

*...they were the first to commence hostilities against you...*⁹

What is the extent of Jihad?

*And fight in the cause of Allah against those who fight against you, but do not transgress. Surely, Allah loves not the transgressors.*¹⁰

*And if you desire to punish the oppressors, then punish them to the extent to which you have been wronged; but if you show patience, then, surely, that is best for those who are patient.*¹¹

What was the reason for fighting?

*And kill them wherever you meet them and drive them out from where they have driven you out*¹²

What is the end goal for fighting?

*And fight them until there is no persecution, and religion is freely professed for Allah.*¹³

Explaining the context of such warfare, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as} writes:

*It should also be remembered that Islam permits the taking up of the sword only in opposition to people who themselves take it up first and it permits the slaughter only of those who embark upon slaughter first. It does not lay down that Muslims, while they are the subjects of a non-Muslim sovereign who deals with them with justice and equity, should take up arms against him as rebels.*¹⁴

He writes further:

This commandment (to fight) was specific to the period and time. It was not forever. It applied during the time when those entering the fold of Islam were being slaughtered like sheep and lambs. After the time of the Holy Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and his Successors, people unfortunately made very grave mistakes in understanding the philosophy of Jihad... The unjust slaughter of God's creatures was deemed to be a mark of religious virtue.¹⁵

JIHAD TODAY

Some critics argue that Jihad is a permanent feature in Islam – perhaps even the so-called 6th pillar.¹⁶ Some suggest that Muslims only see the world in one of two ways: Dārul Islam and Dārul Ḥarb. Dārul Islam is the House of Islam (that is, parts of the world where Muslims live), and Dārul Ḥarb is the House of War (that is, parts of the world where non-Muslims live). However, these terminologies come from later scholars. They are not used in the

Holy Quran or Aḥādīth. According to the prophecies of Prophet Muhammad^{sa}, the Muslims were going to deviate further and further away from their faith until they were to reach a point when:

*...nothing will remain of Islam except its name. And nothing will remain of the Quran except its inscription. Their mosques will be full of worshippers but devoid of guidance. Their 'ulemā' (scholars) will be the worst people under heaven. Fitna (discord) will come from them and return to them.*¹⁷

It was prophesied for this time that the Promised Messiah^{as} was to come and bring the people back to the true teachings of Islam. Explaining this mission of his, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as} says:

The Promised Messiah has come in the world to refute the notion of using the sword [or fighting] in the name of religion, and to prove, with arguments and reasoning, that Islam is such a religion which does not need the support of the sword for its propagation. Rather, the inherent excellences of its teachings, its truth,

enlightenment, reasoning, arguments, and the active assistance of God the Exalted, and signs, and His personal attention are such matters that always drive [Islam's] progress and propagation¹⁸.

He also writes:

It should be remembered that today's Islamic scholars (who are called maulavīs) completely misunderstand Jihad and misrepresent it to the general public. The public's violent instincts are inflamed as a result and they are stripped of all noble human virtues. This is in fact what has happened. I know for certain that maulavīs who persist in propagating these blood-spattered doctrines are in fact responsible for murders committed by ignorant, egotistical people who know nothing of why Islam was forced to fight battles in its early history.¹⁹

Hence, to assume that permanent, aggressive Jihad is a feature of Islam is a false notion as the Holy Quran clearly specifies the context for Jihad and says that fighting should stop immediately when the enemy desires peace.

In the Aḥādīth, it is also mentioned that the prophesied era of the Promised Messiah^{as} would be such that religious fighting will come to an end with his appearance.²⁰ He will not use the sword or any earthly weapon for his cause. Instead, he will only pray to God for the success of his message and he will establish peace. In contrast, it is wrongly asserted that Islamic eschatology declares a violent bloodthirsty Mahdī and Messiah who would kill all disbelievers. The Promised Messiah^{as} has come to stop this cycle of violence which the so-called scholars of Islam have wrongly continued for their selfish reasons. He has made a declaration in his writings directly to all of the scholars of Islam and called on them to stop this wrong-headed preaching of violence:

O Muslim scholars and maulavīs! Listen to me. I tell you truly that this is not the time for Jihad. Do not disobey God's Holy Prophet^{sa}. The awaited Messiah has arrived and orders you to abstain from religious wars involving armed combat, killing and bloodshed. Not refraining even now from spilling blood and giving such sermons is therefore not the way of Islam. The person who accepts

*me will not merely stop preaching in this way; he will recognize the evil of this path and come to know that it invites God's anger.*²¹

WAS ISLAM SPREAD BY THE SWORD?

This is a common question raised by people who are either unaware of its teachings or who actively seek to malign Islam. Prophet Muhammad^{sa} is called *Raḥmatal lil 'Ālamīn* (Mercy for all peoples)²² and the Holy Quran is also called "Mercy".²³ How can we assume that this is a religion of terror, brutality, violence and compulsion on others to accept it? The following verses clearly and unequivocally condemn any form of compulsion in faith:

*There should be no compulsion in religion.*²⁴

*And say, 'It is the truth from your Lord; wherefore let him who will, believe, and let him who will, disbelieve.'*²⁵

*Those who believe, then disbelieve, then again believe, then disbelieve and then increase in disbelief, Allah will never forgive them nor will He guide them to the way.*²⁶

*Say, 'O ye disbelievers! I worship not that which you worship; Nor worship you what I worship. And I am not going to worship that which you worship; Nor will you worship what I worship. For you your religion, and for me my religion.'*²⁷

On the contrary, the Holy Quran advocates for inter-faith harmony:

*Say 'O People of the Book! Come to a word equal between us and you – that we worship none but Allah, and that we associate no partner with Him, and that some of us take not others for Lords beside Allah.'*²⁸

Muslims are also instructed to invite others to Islam peacefully and with reasoning:

*Call unto the way of thy Lord with wisdom and goodly exhortation, and argue with them in a way that is best. Surely, thy Lord knows best who has strayed from His way; and He knows those who are rightly guided.*²⁹

As a result, the Holy Quran has left no room whatsoever for forcing others to convert to the faith of Islam. Some critics hint that the greatest expansion of Islam happened during the years of warfare and conquest, but this claim does not hold up to historical scrutiny. Islam was spreading during the early Makkan years so much so that it raised alarm among Makkan leaders, which in itself became one of the biggest reasons why they started persecuting them. Later on, Muslims migrated to Madīnah and that was also because Islam had spread to Madīnah and it was a place where the persecuted Muslims of Makkah could find a safe haven. All of this increase in their numbers happened prior to any warfare. Then, the wars started and although the number of Muslims kept on increasing but it was in a comparatively limited way. It was only when the Treaty of Hudaibiyya

was signed, followed by a three-year period of peace, that Muslim numbers started to grow at a comparatively much faster rate.

This treaty itself demonstrates how earnestly Prophet Muhammad^{sa} wanted peace. Some of the features of this treaty are as follows:

These are the conditions of peace between Muhammad^{sa}, son of 'Abdullah, and Suhail ibn 'Amr, the envoy of Makkah. There will be no fighting for ten years. Anyone who wishes to join Muhammad^{sa} and to enter into any agreement with him, is free to do so. Anyone who wishes to join the Quraish and to enter into an agreement with them is also free to do so. A young man, or one whose father is alive, if he goes to Muhammad^{sa} without permission from his father or guardian, will be returned to his father or guardian. But should anyone go to the Quraish, he will not be returned.³⁰

This gives us a glimpse into the unfair conditions that were laid out in the treaty that put the Muslims at a disadvantage, but Prophet Muhammad^{sa} agreed to them anyway for the sake of peace. Some of his companions, like Hazrat 'Umar^{ra}, even

expressed their reservations and concern over the humiliating conditions, but Prophet Muhammad^{sa} reasoned with them. Even when the treaty had just been signed, a young man named Abū Jandal^{ra}, who had just made good his escape from Makkah, appeared on the scene, bound and exhausted, and pleaded with the Muslims to allow him to remain with them and to not send him back. He had been terribly mistreated by the Makkans just because he had converted to Islam. Prophet Muhammad^{sa} told him that the treaty had now been signed and that he will not go back on his word. He returned him to the Makkans and urged him to remain patient.³¹ Such was the determination of Prophet Muhammad^{sa} to establish and maintain peace, yet some critics suggest that Islam was spread by the sword.

Similarly, it was the magnanimity of Prophet Muhammad^{sa} and his Jihad for peace that caused Islam to spread at the time of the Fall of Makkah, a bloodless victory. This victory happened when Prophet Muhammad^{sa} entered the city of Makkah with a force of 10,000 followers. This was such a powerful force that no one dared to challenge it

enabling Prophet Muhammad^{sa} to take the city of Makkah without any resistance. At that time, he had the opportunity to take revenge from all those who had harmed him, tortured his companions, or killed his friends and relatives. However, he did none of that. Instead, he addressed the Makkans as follows:

*You have seen how true the promises of God have proved. Now tell me what punishment you should have for the cruelties and enormities you committed against those whose only fault was that they invited you to the worship of the One and Only God.*³²

The Makkans requested for mercy, and Prophet Muhammad^{sa} responded:

By God, you will have no punishment today and no reproof.³³

These words of love, compassion, and absolute forgiveness are the reasons why Islam spread so quickly and became the dominant religion in the world within a century of the above statement of general amnesty declared by Prophet Muhammad^{sa}.

Prophet Muhammad^{sa} chose to award punishment for only a handful of Makkans whose crimes against humanity had been of the worst category. Most of these were also forgiven, later on. One of them was 'Ikrimah, son of the arch-enemy of the Muslims, Abū Jahl. 'Ikrimah was on the way to Abyssinia when his wife went after him and said to him, "Are you running away from a man as gentle and soft as Prophet Muhammad^{sa}?" She then assured him that he need not worry and that Prophet Muhammad^{sa} will forgive him too. 'Ikrimah then returned to Makkah and said to Prophet Muhammad^{sa}, "I understand from my wife that you have forgiven even one like me". Prophet Muhammad^{sa} affirmed that he had forgiven him. At that point, 'Ikrimah was so overwhelmed by the magnanimity of Prophet Muhammad^{sa} that he made the declaration of faith and became a Muslim right there and then. This is what caused the religion of Islam to spread very rapidly, not fear or violence or brutality!

Explaining the reasons for the spread of Islam, the Promised Messiah^{as} says:

Islam is such a religion that does not need the support of the sword for its propagation. Rather, the inherent excellences of its teachings, its truth, enlightenment, reasoning, arguments, and the active assistance of God the Exalted, the signs, and His personal attention are such matters that always drive its progress and propagation...The message of Islam does not need any compulsion for its propagation... To consider that the Ghāzis (Islamic veterans of war)...cause rebellion in the name of Jihad is an absurd thought, and it is nothing but foolishness and ignorance to call these rebellious people by the name of Ghazi. If an ignorant Muslim harbors even the least amount of sympathy for these people considering them to be performing Jihad, I say in truth that the one who calls a rebellious person Ghazi, and praises those who bring a bad name to Islam is an enemy of Islam... In England, France and other European countries, Islam is very harshly criticized for having been spread by the use of force... The truth is that this rebellion has been spread by the maulavīs (Islamic clerics), who are the unwise friends of Islam. They did not understand the reality of Islam, and provided an opportunity to others to raise objections because of their concocted beliefs... Had they not deceived others about Jihad or misunderstood the

*meaning of Jihad, no one would have taken advantage of the opportunity to criticize Islam.*³⁴

The Promised Messiah^{as} has also challenged the corrupt Muslim scholarship in the following words:

*Is it not shameful that a complete stranger should be unjustly killed while occupied in his daily affairs, thus widowing his wife, making his children orphans, and turning his house into a funeral parlour? Which Ḥadith or verse of the Holy Quran authorizes such behaviour? Is there any maulavi who can respond? Foolish people hear the word Jihad, and make it an excuse for the fulfilment of their own selfish desires. Or perhaps it is sheer madness that inclines them towards bloodshed.*³⁵

Some people allege that Prophet Muhammad^{sa} once said “I will fight the people until they testify the Shahada” and that this is a clear-cut injunction to force people to convert. It is important to note that the Arabic word translated as “fight” in this ḥadīth is *uqātilu*, which has multiple meanings, one of which is to “kill one’s inner desires”.³⁶ This is

similar to an Arabic idiom which says *qataltul-khamra bil-mā'i*, which does not mean “I have killed the water” but “I have mixed the wine with water such that it has lost its power”.³⁷ The root of *uqaatilu*, which is “*qa-ta-la*”, can also mean “to know something” (Lane). When Prophet Muhammad^{sa} said *uqātilun nāsa*, it only means that he shall struggle against the people until Islam is spread, by way of preaching and talking about the good teachings of Islam.

Even if that was not the case and he was using the connotation of fighting literally, we should understand that he is only referring to a specific people as the Arabic word for people has the definite article “al” attached to it. Hence, this specifies the group of people who had initially started the fighting against the Muslims and wanted to destroy the Muslims. Prophet Muhammad^{sa} only fought them in self-defense and never sought to convert anyone through the sword.

DO MUSLIMS NOT KNOW THEIR TEACHINGS?

IT IS SOMETIMES alleged that Muslims should investigate their own faith and if they do so, they will discover that it is violent. In order to support this argument, Islamophobes point to the extremists who appear to be zealously supporting and acting in the name of their faith. It is then suggested that the vast majority of Muslims who do not turn to extremism and violence are simply unaware of their own teachings. But, is this fair? Is it reasonable to suggest that young people who suddenly become radicalized without proper investigation and study are true representatives of a faith?

Is it also sensible to argue that some people who convert to Islam and soon turn to extremism are legitimately following their faith? If so, is it correct to further suggest that people like the Khalīfa of

Islam, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad^{aa} who have spent a lifetime learning about and teaching their faith are simply unaware of the very core teachings of Islam? Such blanket statements are of course expected from people who wish to spread Islamophobia and misinformation about Islam. The extremists on the other hand tend to misuse such impressions, which are held by Islamophobes, in order to bring legitimacy to their own causes. Regardless, the fact of the matter is that Islam – or any religion for that matter – cannot be understood by following this methodology. It is pure fallacy to say that radicalized youths suddenly discovered the true teachings of their faith, and in fact this is an insult of those professors and scholars who spend decades studying the origins and teachings of Islam and vehemently oppose violence in the name of Islam.

At the end of 2015, a short video was made by Dutch video bloggers showing how Christians could not tell even when quotations from the Bible were read to them.¹ The video involved wrapping a Bible in the cover of a Quran and approaching Christians and others, asking them if they knew such violence and misogyny was in the Holy

Quran. They appeared shocked at what they thought was the Holy Quran, but when it was revealed that such teachings were actually Biblical in origin, Christians and others just laughed away the ignorance of their own Scripture. Now, such Christians are unaware of their own scripture and are peaceful at the same time. Does that mean that Christianity is violent in its roots? Of course not!

Comparatively, a gun-maker in Florida designed an assault rifle with a cross and the Biblical verse, "Blessed be the Lord my Rock, who trains my hands for war, my fingers for battle", etched on each side.² This is an example of a radical Christian who is using scripture to justify his violence. In this case again, it would be wrong for us to conclude that Christianity is a violent religion based on the action of a radical who is quoting from the Bible. It is him, not the vast majority of peaceful Christians, who is unaware of Christian theology.

The same is the case of "Muslim" extremists and fundamentalists who are simply unaware of or unwilling to follow the numerous peaceful teachings of the Holy Quran. In most cases, if they even so much as read the Holy Quran thoughtfully and carefully, they will see nothing but

condemnation of their actions. For instance, the taking of innocent lives is severely condemned in the Holy Quran (5:33). Similarly, taking of one's own life in a so-called "suicide bombing" is also severely condemned in the Holy Quran:

*..kill not yourselves*³

*...and cast not yourselves into ruin with your own hands, and do good; surely, Allah loves those who do good.*⁴

Suicide is also completely forbidden and condemned in various statements of Prophet Muhammad^{sa}:

*Prophet Muhammad^{sa} said, "He who commits suicide by throttling shall keep on throttling himself in the Hell Fire and he who commits suicide by stabbing himself shall keep on stabbing himself in the Hell Fire".*⁵

We witnessed (the battle of) Khaibar. Allah's Messenger^{sa} said about one of those who were with him and who claimed to be a Muslim, "This (man) is from the dwellers

of the Hell Fire.” When the battle started, that fellow fought so valiantly and bravely that he received plenty of wounds. Some of the people were about to doubt (Prophet Muhammad’s^{sa} statement), but the man, feeling the pain of his wounds, put his hand into his quiver and took out of it some arrows with which he killed himself (i.e. committed suicide). Then some men amongst the Muslims came hurriedly and said, “O Allah’s Apostle^{sa}! Allah has made your statement true; so-and-so has committed suicide”. Prophet Muhammad^{sa} said, “O so-and-so! Get up and make an announcement that none but a believer will enter Paradise and that Allah may support the religion with an unchaste (evil) wicked man.”⁶

If the extremists had read these few verses and Aḥādīth, they would have understood that there is no such thing in Islam as suicide during warfare, justified or not.

An article by the Pew Research Centre stated, “Recent surveys show that most people in several countries with significant Muslim populations have an unfavorable view of ISIS, including virtually all respondents in Lebanon and 94% in Jordan”.⁷ These surveys show that even if all Muslims may not be well-versed in their faith, they do know that ISIS or

Daesh has nothing to do with the religion of Islam and that its actions are against the teachings of Islam.

Therefore, it is possible that people belonging to a certain faith may not be completely aware of all its teachings. Our contention is that once a person learns about the Holy Quran and Prophet Muhammad^{sa}, he becomes a servant of humanity in accordance with this instruction contained in the Holy Quran:

*You are the best people raised for the good of mankind; you enjoin what is good and forbid evil and believe in Allah.*⁸

DID THE EARLY MUSLIMS LEAD OFFENSIVE RAIDS?

DUE TO A mountain of evidence that demonstrates how peaceful Prophet Muhammad^{sa} truly was, the critics sometimes attempt to look for aggressiveness in some of the battles that he had to engage in. In this chapter, we take two case studies in order to illustrate that such attempts on the part of critics are futile.

CASE #1: THE NAKHLA EXPEDITION

Dr. Nabeel Qureshi has claimed that the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{sa} ordered a “raid” in which he sent his companions to attack a Makkan Caravan. He claims that the Muslims attacked, killed and captured undefended Makkans during a truce and

he further claims that the Holy Quran justified this attack.¹ This allegation is completely false and we will show its reality through the Holy Quran, Aḥādīth and historical books which tell the true story of what had occurred.

Allah states in the Holy Quran:

*And fight in the cause of Allah against those who fight against you, but do not transgress. Surely, Allah loves not the transgressors.*²

This verse, along with many others quoted in this book, show that in the religion of Islam, the only time fighting is allowed is in the case of self defence.

It would be helpful here for the reader to understand the principles and general rules of Islam and Prophet Muhammad^{sa} when it comes to fighting. Once Prophet Muhammad^{sa} gave Hazrat Khālid bin Walīd^{ra}, a great military leader, an important instruction on warfare, as narrated by Rabah Ibn Rabīʿ:

When we were with the Messenger of Allah^{sa} on an expedition, he saw some people gathered together over something and sent a man (to them) saying to him, "See,

what are these people gathered around?" The man then came (after checking) and said, "They are gathered around a woman who has been killed". He said, "This is not one with whom fighting should have taken place". Khālid ibn al-Walīd^{ra} was in charge of the group. The Prophet^{sa} sent a man (to him) with the instruction, "Tell Khālid not to kill a woman or a hired servant".³

This tells us about the stringent rules of engagement in Islam. A Muslim soldier was not even allowed to kill a woman or a hired servant; in other words, according to Islam, there must be no killing of non-combatants. The essence of the teaching in relation to fighting is: One is only allowed to fight in self-defence, and only fight those who are participating in the battle.

We now move to the event which Dr. Qureshi has attempted to criticize. First of all, seeing a specific event in isolation without any consideration of context is itself wrong and unjustified especially when determining the *aggressiveness* of one party or the other. Critics try to portray the early Muslims as aggressive by focusing on specific events like the Nakhla expedition when in reality the Muslims of

that time always only reacted to aggression by the Quraish.

The Nakhlah expedition was preceded by a series of events demonstrating a very severe attitude of the Makkans towards the Muslims. As discussed earlier in this book, the hostility of the Quraish of Makkah and the other Arabian tribes had overtime reached such an extent that remaining quiet in response and not doing anything would have practically amounted to suicide for the Muslims. The Makkan life of Prophet Muhammad^{sa} and the cruelties inflicted upon the Muslims by the Quraish and the plans they devised in order to destroy the religion of Islam were enough reason for war to break out. Muslims were brutally beaten and battered mercilessly, their wealth was confiscated, they were boycotted to the point of starvation, and some were martyred ruthlessly.

The situation was so bad that some Muslims left Makkah and migrated to Abyssinia. Great pains were even inflicted upon the leader of the Muslims – Prophet Muhammad^{sa} – who was dearer to them than their own selves. While on a visit to Ṭā'if, stones were thrown at him till his body became

drenched in blood. Ultimately, the tribes of the Quraish made a collective decision to assassinate Prophet Muhammad^{sa} for no crime other than preaching his peaceful message. Then, in order to carry out this plan, some youths were selected from various tribes to attack Prophet Muhammad^{sa} in the middle of the night. However, God protected Prophet Muhammad^{sa} and he departed from his home out of their sight and took refuge in a cave.

To every honest researcher and seeker of truth, we ask: Were these cruelties and evil schemes and plans not equivalent to an announcement of war by the Quraish? By such actions, did the Quraish not unilaterally declare war on a small community of peace-loving, innocent Muslims who did nothing other than spread a message of peace? In the backdrop of such incidents, can any sensible individual assert that the Quraish of Makkah were not at war with Islam and the Muslims? Can it possibly be assumed that what the Muslims did in response to 13 years of suffering at the hands of the Quraish was “aggressive” and uncalled for? Would it not have been suicide if the Muslims had done nothing?

It was this series of events which caused Prophet Muhammad^{sa} to migrate to Madīnah and even then the Quraish did not stop in their hostile activities. They began to instigate the Madīnites and tribes surrounding Madīnah against the Muslims. As a result, God gave Muslims the allowance to defend themselves and the first verses regarding Jihad were revealed on 12 Şafar A.H, or 15 August 623 A.D, when a period of approximately one year had elapsed since the arrival of Prophet Muhammad^{sa} in Madīnah.

After this permission for self-defense, Prophet Muhammad^{sa} undertook a series of expeditions for the protection of Muslims, with various objectives such as intelligence gathering, reconnaissance, signing defense pacts with tribes situated around Madīnah, and so on. Any expedition where Prophet Muhammad^{sa} himself led a party of the Muslims is called a *Ghazzwah* and any expedition where he appointed someone else to lead a party for a set purpose is called *Sariyyah*. The series of events that took place, leading up to the Nakhlah expedition, is as follows:

1. *Ghazwah* of Waddān
2. *Sariyyah* of ‘Ubaidah bin Al-Ḥārith^{ra} [2 A.H.]
3. *Sariyyah* of Ḥamzah bin ‘Abdil-Muṭṭalib [2 A.H.]
4. *Ghazwah* of Buwāṭ [2 A.H.]
5. *Ghazwah* of ‘Ushairah [2 A.H.]
6. *Sariyyah* of Sa’d bin Abī Waqqāṣ [2 A.H.]
7. Attack of Kurz bin Jābir and *Ghazwah* of Safwān [2 A.H.]
8. *Sariyyah* of ‘Abdullāh bin Jaḥsh towards Nakhlah

When these expeditions are looked at in closer detail, we discover that none of them led to any serious armed conflict. In every instance, the Muslims only sought to gather intelligence to guard themselves against the aggressiveness of the Quraish. However, despite their vigilance, the mischief of the Quraish managed to break through. A chieftain of Makkah named Kurz bin Jābir Fihri suddenly raided a pasture of Madīnah, which was situated three miles from the city and fled with camels and other possessions of the Muslims. As

soon as Prophet Muhammad^{sa} found out about this, he set out in pursuit along with some of his companions, but Kurz was able to escape.

This incident sheds light on the evil machinations and plans of the Quraish to attack Madīnah and destroy the Muslims completely. It was a significant turning point in relations between the Muslims and the Quraish, as the Quraish had practically initiated battle by inflicting harm upon the Muslims. It was in the context of this event which had naturally caused the Muslims to become apprehensive that the Nakhla expedition took place. Seeing these real threats from the Quraish, Prophet Muhammad^{sa} decided that the movements of the Quraish should be surveyed from a closer distance so that all the necessary intelligence with respect to them is available and Madīnah is safeguarded from such sudden attacks in future. A party of eight companions was assembled for this task with 'Abdullāh bin Jaḥsh^{ra} appointed as their commander.

The companions selected for this expedition belonged to the tribe of Quraish, and this was because they would have better experience in

dealing with the conspiracies of the enemies, as they were also from the Quraish. Their task was covert and initially even the members of this party did not have any idea of what their specific task was, or where they were headed. At their departure, Prophet Muhammad^{sa} handed their commander a sealed letter and said:

*This letter contains necessary instructions for you. When you cover a distance of two days' travel from Madīnah, open the letter and act in accordance with the stipulated instructions.*⁴

The secrecy of the statement was meant to emphasize the confidentiality of the task, and provide assurance that the whereabouts of this group of companions. After two days of travel, the instructions were read and they were as follows:

*Go forth to the Valley of Nakhla between Makkah and Tā'if, and obtain information on the Quraish and return with news therefrom.*⁵

This statement of Prophet Muhammad^{sa} alone should be enough for any truth-seeker in regards to the task which had been assigned to the companions, in contrast to what critics allege.

Two companions named Sa'd bin Abī Waqqās^{ra} and 'Utbah^{ra} had lost their camels on the journey, which then left only six companions for this task of solely investigating the battle preparations of the Quraish. Once the companions had reached Nakhla, they began their task. Some of the companions shaved their heads, so the people would consider them among those who have come for the purpose of Umrah. Soon after the companions had reached Nakhla that a small caravan of the Quraish also happened to arrive and both parties encountered each other. At this point, the Muslims had a dilemma and they consulted one another. Their clear objective was covert intelligence gathering. However, the Quraish had already formally declared war with their attack on a pasture very close to Madīnah. Furthermore, since the people from the caravan had spotted the Muslims, their secret mission would no longer remain secret and this could have detrimental affects later on.

Keeping these factors in view, the Muslims decided to attack and, as a result, one man was killed and two were taken captive. The goods of the caravan were also seized. One person from the caravan however escaped causing the Muslims to swiftly return to Madīnah with the spoils. This is the part which critics like Dr. Qureshi call a “raid” however the very context in which this attack was made disproves such an allegation. How can a small party of 8 Muslims be sent so far away from Madīnah just to plunder a caravan? We must remember that such caravans used to pass in the vicinity of Madīnah as well en route to Syria. To send such a small contingent of Muslims so close to enemy headquarters – i.e. Makkah – just to plunder a small caravan is not just historically inaccurate but also an absurd suggestion. Their objective – as proven from history – was nothing other than intelligence gathering.

Furthermore, when Prophet Muhammad^{sa} found out how they had attacked the caravan, he was extremely displeased. This means that the decision to attack the caravan was unilaterally and mistakenly taken by the head of the expedition. It is

narrated that when the Prophet Muhammad^{sa} heard of this, he said:

*I have not given you permission to fight in the Sacred Month.*⁶

This is in reference to a confusion the Muslims had at the time of the attack. Some thought that it was a sacred month according to ancient Arabian custom that makes fighting unlawful, while others believed that it was not a sacred month and fighting is permitted. This statement of Prophet Muhammad^{sa} makes it clear that from the very beginning, he had no desire nor intention for any attack on a caravan.

It is also recorded that Prophet Muhammad^{sa} was so displeased that he refused to accept the spoils.⁷ This fact further refutes all the faulty conclusions of the critics. If Prophet Muhammad^{sa} was a man who “raided” caravans (God forbid!) just to get their spoils, he should have gladly accepted the spoils from this group and encouraged them to continue such actions. His refusal to accept the spoils and the consequent remorse and embarrassment felt by the Muslims demonstrates the care with which Muslims

wished to avoid bloodshed. Some companions even reproached the Muslims who did this, and said:

*You did that which you had not been ordered, and you fought in the Sacred Month, although you had not been ordered at all to fight in this campaign.*⁸

This event had caused much controversy, and Muslims and disbelievers were discussing it as well. Finally, the following Quranic verse was revealed as a means of relief for the Muslims:

*They ask thee about fighting in the Sacred Month. Say: 'Fighting therein is a great transgression, but to hinder men from the way of Allah, and to be ungrateful to Him and to hinder men from the Sacred Mosque, and to turn out its people therefrom, is a greater sin with Allah; and persecution is worse than killing.' And they will not cease fighting you until they turn you back from your faith, if they can. And whoso from among you turns back from his faith and dies while he is a disbeliever, it is they whose works shall be vain in this world and the next. These are the inmates of the Fire and therein shall they abide.*⁹

This verse sheds light on a historical fact that the Quraish would spread their bloody propaganda even in the Sacred Months. In fact, while the Muslims sought to avoid any hostilities in the Sacred Months, the Quraish became more active in their evil pursuits, taking advantage of the gatherings and journeys of the Sacred Months.¹⁰ Certainly, the bloodthirsty agenda of the Quraish knew no bounds and whatever violent actions the Muslims resorted to in reaction were only in self-defense.

CASE #2: JEWS AT KHAIBAR

The treatment of the Jews by Prophet Muhammad^{sa} is perhaps one of the most commonly cited examples by critics of Islam. However, the reality is that Prophet Muhammad^{sa} always went out of his way to treat the Jews kindly and with love and compassion. This was particularly demonstrated when he signed treaties of peace and security with the Jewish tribes of Banū Qainuqā', Banū Naḍīr and

Banū Quraizah, and laid the foundation for peaceful and harmonious collaboration. However, as the Muslims grew in strength and numbers, members of these tribes began to show signs of discontent and at occasions, they even made provocative statements akin to incitement for war. For instance, once after the Battle of Badr, the Prophet Muhammad^{sa} addressed a gathering of the Jews and invited them to Islam. They were so angered by his humble preaching that they said in response:

*“O Muhammad^{sa}, it seems that you have perhaps become arrogant after killing a few Quraish. Those people were inexperienced in the art of war. If you were to fight us, you would come to know the real likes of warriors”.*¹¹

While the Prophet Muhammad^{sa} only warned and advised the Jews, they responded with such statements that were confrontational.

What is more is that these were not empty threats. Members among these Jewish tribes began to openly rebel against the Muslims and began to express their dislike and resentment for the Muslims. Prophet Muhammad^{sa} on the other hand

always took care to teach patience and tolerance. On one occasion, an argument broke out between a Jew and a Muslim, when the Jew asserted the superiority of Moses^{as} above all other prophets. The Muslim became so angered by this that he dealt very harshly with the Jew asserting the superiority of Prophet Muhammad^{sa}. When Prophet Muhammad^{sa} was informed of this, he was displeased and said to the Muslim rebukingly:

Do not give me superiority over Moses...

Then, he mentioned a greatness of Moses^{as} and consoled the Jew.¹² Eventually, the provocative actions of the Jews escalated to the point of violence and they were given the option to leave Madīnah along with their valuables, which they chose to do.

Some of the Jews belonging to the tribes of Banū Qainuqā' and Banū Naḍīr settled in the area of Khaibar, which was only 150 kilometres from Madīnah. These people were extremely hostile to Islam and the Muslims, and along with the help of other tribes in Arabia, they had intentions to attack the Muslims. In the past, they had participated in

warfare against the Muslims and had killed them without remorse. An example is the Battle of the Trench, when Muslims were attacked in Madīnah by ten thousand troops. These troops included many Jews of Khaibar. The same people also made the tribe of Banū Quraizah violate the terms of their pact, and encouraged them to attack Muslims. One of the leaders of the people of Khaibar, named Al-Yusayr Ibn Rizam, also gathered his tribe to attack the Muslims. All such incidents recorded in history enable one to see the context of the relationship between the Muslims and the Jews of Khaibar, and how much hatred they had created against the Muslims. They did not want peace, and their goal was to end Islam and kill Muslims.

They made constant efforts to inflame other tribes against the Muslims including the Christian tribes settled on the southern frontier of the Roman Empire. They even wrote to their co-religionists in Iraq and used propaganda to incite the Chosroes of Iran against the Muslims. This caused the Chosroes to send orders to the Governor of Yemen to arrest Prophet Muhammad^{sa}. However, due to Divine protection, before these orders could be carried out,

he was deposed and killed by his own son, who cancelled these orders. Such hostile and dangerous actions of the Jews resulted in the Jews becoming further distanced from Madīnah.

When critics and Islamophobes speak or write about these incidents, they seem to purposely and intentionally hide these relevant contexts. Regardless, these statements should not be seen as a show of contempt for *all* Jews. They are made only in reference to those among the Jews of Madīnah or (later) Khaibar who sought to aggressively attack and kill the Muslims.

The Jews of Khaibar had decided to hire soldiers from the tribe of Banū Ghatafān to attack Madīnah. After the treaty of Hudaibiyya, this tribe raided Madīnah, and robbed innocent people and killed an innocent man as well:

When the day dawned, 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Fazarī made a raid and drove away all the camels of the Messenger of Allah^{sa} and killed the man who looked after them.¹³

This narration provides yet further evidence of one of the many instances of hostile behavior of some

Jews against the Muslims. It was after this and other news about the continued preparations of war by the Jews of Khaibar that Prophet Muhammad^{sa} decided to banish them from Khaibar.

The narration quoted above goes on to mention that when the Muslims reached Khaibar, Marhab (the King) was already ready to engage in a battle. The battle began and, in the end, the Jews decided to surrender. Prophet Muhammad^{sa} of Islam then signed a peace treaty with them which stated that all Jews, their wives and children would leave Khaibar and settle in some place further away from Madīnah.

As is usually the case with Prophet Muhammad^{sa}, we see examples of his compassion even in times of war. In this case for instance, there was a Jewish woman who attempted to poison Prophet Muhammad^{sa} and his companions by inviting them for a meal. One of the companions named Bishra^{ra} even died after eating the poisoned meat. Prophet Muhammad^{sa} was however saved through a Divine revelation as a result of which he did not take a full bite of the poisoned food. He asked the woman why she did this, and she replied:

*My people were at war with you, and my relations were killed in this battle. I decided to poison you, believing that if you were an impostor you would die and we should be safe, but if you were a Prophet, God would save you.*¹⁴

In reality, she was liable to be given the death penalty or life imprisonment for this attempted murder; but the compassionate, merciful Prophet Muhammad^{sa} did not award any punishment to this woman. Instead, he forgave her, and once again it was this merciful character of Prophet Muhammad^{sa} that attracted many common people to convert to Islam.

Therefore, the fair-minded reader should meticulously study these contextual occurrences to come to know the truly beautiful character of Prophet Muhammad^{sa} and avoid any possibility of succumbing to the unfounded propaganda carried out by the Islamophobes.

DOES VIOLENCE ESCALATE IN EARLY ISLAM?

A FEW CRITICS of Islam suggest that there is a trajectory of violence in the early history of Islam, meaning that Islam began as a peaceful religion but later developed into a violent creed. To support this hypothesis, it is argued that the peaceful passages of the Holy Quran were revealed in the early years and the allegedly violent passages were revealed later, culminating eventually in the revelation of *Sūrah At-Taubah* (Chapter 9) of the Holy Quran. It is then alleged that this is the “most violent” chapter of the Holy Quran and since it is the last of the revealed chapters, it contains the “marching orders” for Muslims that constitute an open-ended command to be violent and to keep on fighting the non-Muslims endlessly. It is further alleged that

Sūrah 9 is also known as *Al-Barā'ah* or “The Disavowal” meaning that all the treaties made with the polytheists prior to its revelation have been annulled and do not matter any more. What is more is that perhaps one of the most commonly quoted “violent verses” of the Holy Quran is also from this Sūrah:

...kill the idolaters wherever you find them and take them prisoners, and beleaguer them, and lie in wait for them at every place of ambush. But if they repent and observe Prayer and pay the Zakat, then leave their way free”¹

The first problem with these arguments is that an attempt is being made here to isolate Sūrah 9 from the rest of the Holy Quran. Muslims see the Holy Quran as the Word of God contained in *one* complete book. The Holy Quran itself never states anywhere that one passage is more important than the other. Furthermore, it does not include any dates for particular passages or Sūrahs, which means that the Holy Quran is to be seen *in full*. As such, there is no argument based on the Holy Quran itself to suggest any given passage is the “marching

orders” or any given passage was revealed later and hence more important.

As time passed, and the study of the Holy Quran developed and became a science, commentators of the Holy Quran sought a more organized and enhanced study. They searched through historical sources and tried to determine the date of revelation of each Sūrah. As a result, in some cases, the date of revelation is widely accepted, but in other cases, the precise date of revelation of a given Sūrah may be disputed. Regardless, as far as the word of God is concerned, it has always been seen as a *whole* in the Holy Quran, not in pieces as some critics imagine.

This is why when the Holy Quran says that there is no compulsion in religion (2:257) and that the religion of the disbelievers is for them and the religion of Islam is for the Muslims (109:7), these passages should be seen as supplementary or additional to other verses of the Holy Quran; not contradictory to them. Specific to Sūrah *At-Taubah*, it should be understood that even this Sūrah must not be seen as an independent and stand-alone chapter or Sūrah of the Holy Quran. One of the unique things about this chapter is that it is actually a part of the previous chapter or a sub-section of the

previous chapter, *Al-Anfāl*. Every chapter of the Holy Quran starts with the words *Bismillāhir Raḥmānir Raḥīm* (In the name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful) and it is mentioned in the traditions of Prophet Muhammad^{sa} that every time a *new* Sūrah was to be revealed these words (*Bismillāh...*) would be revealed indicating the start of the revelation of the new Sūrah. In the case of Sūrah *At-Taubah*, that did not happen which is a clear indication that this Sūrah is to be seen as a part of the previous Sūrah – *Al-Anfāl* – and not separate from it.

Furthermore, Sūrah *Al-Anfāl* was among the first to be revealed after the migration of Prophet Muhammad^{sa} to Madīnah, and Sūrah *At-Taubah* was among the last to be revealed after the migration.² When we see these two chapters as a whole, we notice that *Anfāl* contained a prophecy that God would give Muslims a great victory and this prophecy was made at a time when there were no signs of its fulfillment. Muslims were still a small community who had fled from their persecutors in Makkah. Years later when Makkah fell and the prophecy was fulfilled, the second part of *Anfāl* was revealed and separately named *At-Taubah*. As a result, Sūrah *At-Taubah* (chapter 9) of the Holy

Quran is in a sense Part II of Sūrah *Al-Anfāl* (chapter 8) and contains a declaration of the fulfillment of the great prophecy made in *Al-Anfāl*.

Another point to be noted is that a second name for Sūrah *At-Taubah* is *Al-Barā'ah* which critics translate as "The Disavowal" alleging that all prior treaties that the Muslims made with non-Muslims are now null and void and the Muslims are free to attack anyone. This confusion comes from the meaning of the Arabic word *Barā'ah*. While it is true that one meaning of this word is "immunity or disavowal", another meaning of this term is absolution from a fault or responsibility.³ This second meaning is what applies here in context, especially when Sūrah *At-Taubah* is seen as a continuation of Sūrah *Al-Anfāl*, and a part of the Holy Quran as a *whole*.

The fact is that the Makkans used to mock the Muslims for having fled to Madīnah and used to say that the prophecies of Prophet Muhammad^{sa} regarding victory have failed. This Sūrah alleviates this mockery and "fault" from the Muslims, Prophet Muhammad^{sa} and God, stating that the prophecy has indeed been fulfilled as Makkah has come under the control of the Muslims:

*This is a declaration on the part of Allah and His Messenger addressed to the idolaters whom you had promised that Allah and His Messenger would surely triumph, that the promise has been fulfilled and that Allah and His Messenger are absolved of all obligation (Barā'ah) in that respect.*⁴

In other words, this verse makes a declaration that Islam and Prophet Muhammad^{sa} have been completely vindicated by the Fall of Makkah. Thus the meaning of the Arabic word that applies here, strictly according to the context, is, “absolution from a fault or responsibility”, and certainly not the self-serving mistranslation by the critics, that is, “the disavowal of all previous treaties with non-Muslims”, and an open invitation to engage in a perpetual fighting with non-Muslims.

As far as the so-called “violent verses” in Sūrah *At-Taubah* (Chapter 9) are concerned (9:3, 5, 13), they should be seen in the context of 9:4:

Excepting those of the idolaters with whom you have entered into a treaty and who have not subsequently failed you in anything nor aided anyone against you. So fulfil to these the treaty you

have made with them till their term. Surely, Allah loves those who are righteous.

In other words, Muslims are emphatically commanded that they should not violate the treaties they have made with these people, and that they should not fight with anyone unfairly or unjustly. Muslims should only fight those who are vehemently opposed to them, and are bent on waging an armed conflict.

As we have clearly established in previous chapters, the Holy Quran is very clear about the specific conditions in which Jihad can be declared, the extent to which Jihad can be fought, the goal for Jihad, and so on. The verses in Surah 9 should be seen in the context of these other verses as they are part of the same, complete word of God in the form of a single book: The Holy Quran.

Even Sūrah *At-Taubah* (Chapter 9) itself points out that the Prophet Muhammad^{sa} is not a pro-violence Prophet seeking to destroy his opponents or fight them without just cause:

Surely, a Messenger has come unto you from among yourselves; grievous to him is that you should fall

*into trouble; he is ardently desirous of your welfare; and to the believers he is compassionate, merciful.*⁵

In other words, Prophet Muhammad^{sa} is a prince of peace and it gave him no pleasure to fight these battles which were in self-defence. At another place, God addresses Prophet Muhammad^{sa} and says:

*So haply thou wilt grieve thyself to death for sorrow after them if they believe not in this discourse.*⁶

This was the main goal for Prophet Muhammad^{sa}. He only wanted to peacefully share the truth of Islam with all his opponents and convey the message and teachings of the Holy Quran, and leave it to them to see the beauty of these teachings. He had no desire to fight with anyone and even when he had to defend himself against the onslaught of his enemies, it caused him a great deal of grief and anguish due to the casualties. To suggest that his conduct in life displays a trajectory or a growing tendency to violence is a gross misrepresentation of clear-cut facts of history.

In earlier chapters, we have demonstrated this by taking the reader through glimpses from the life of Prophet Muhammad^{sa} that he was always looking to establish peace and eschew armed conflict. He became a Prophet at the age of 40 and for the next 13 years he did not fight a single battle. Even after migration, no battles were fought for nearly two years. Then, after four years of warfare, the treaty of Hudaibiyya was signed for the sake of peace even though its terms were evidently not favorable to the Muslims. Another two years later, Muslims took over Makkah, because of a violation of the treaty of Hudaibiyya by the Makkans, and instead of taking a bloody revenge, Prophet Muhammad^{sa} declared a general amnesty for all Makkans, except a handful who had committed the most atrocious crimes against humanity. Many of these culprits were also forgiven, later on.

It is true that Muslims had to fight bigger battles as their numbers grew, but this reflected the fact that with the rise in the number of Muslims the resistance to Islam also grew increasingly fierce and it caused rising military adventurism among the erstwhile powers. At any rate, it is quite evident as a historical fact that the treaty of Hudaibiyya and the

general amnesty granted to the opponents of Islam at the time of the fall of Mecca are clear examples which demonstrate that Muslims always yearned for and desired for peace. Their greatest Jihad was a Jihad for peace, self-reformation, and communion with God.

HOW TO STUDY AND UNDERSTAND THE HOLY QURAN?

The alleged issue of Sūrah At-Taubah (Chapter 9) and the so-called escalation of violence in the Holy Quran cannot be fully understood until one understands the proper methods of the study and exegesis of the Holy Quran. In this short book, we cannot attempt to address the full scope of this immense field of study. Instead, we will reproduce below the seven criteria necessary to properly understand the Holy Quran as outlined by the Promised Messiah^{as} in his book, *Blessings of Prayer*:

The first and foremost criterion for an accurate commentary of the Holy Quran is the testimony of the Holy Quran itself. One should bear well in mind that the Holy Quran is not like other books that are dependent upon extraneous sources for the proof or disclosure of their verities. The Holy Quran is like a perfectly balanced structure, the whole dynamics of which are disturbed by the displacement of a single block. The Holy Quran possesses no verity that is not supported by at least ten or twenty testimonies contained within itself. So, when we interpret a verse of the Holy Quran in a certain way, we should try to find out whether or not there are other testimonies present in the Holy Quran which support this interpretation. If there are no other testimonies, and the interpretation is found to be clearly opposed to some other verses, then we should conclude that this interpretation is false, for there is no possibility of contradiction in the Holy Quran. The touchstone of a true interpretation is that it should be supported by a host of clear and supporting testimonies of the Holy Quran itself.

The second criterion is the interpretation of the Holy Prophet^{sa}. There can be no doubt that our beloved and revered Prophet^{sa} was the one who best understood the

Holy Quran. Thus, if an interpretation made by the Holy Prophet^{sa} is available, then a Muslim is duty-bound to accept it without any hesitation or reservation, otherwise he will appear to be feeble of faith and under the spell of philosophy.

The third criterion is the interpretation of the Companions of the Holy Prophet^{sa}. There is no doubt that the Companions^{ra} were the first to inherit the light of the Holy Prophet^{sa} and were the foremost inheritors of his knowledge. Allah blessed them abundantly and helped them in their understanding, for they practiced what they preached.

The fourth criterion is to meditate upon the meanings of the Holy Quran with the purity of one's own self, because purity of the self has a certain affinity with the Holy Quran, as Allah says⁷:

لَا يَمْسُةَ إِلَّا الْمُطَهَّرُونَ

which means that the verities of the Holy Quran are disclosed only to a person of pure heart, for the two have an affinity with one another. Such a person recognizes these verities, and smells them, and his heart cries out that this indeed is the true way. The light of his heart is

an excellent criterion for evaluating the truth. Unless a person is endowed with this quality and treads on the narrow path which the Prophets^{as} have tread, it is only prudent that he should refrain from impertinently and arrogantly assuming the role of a commentator of the Holy Quran. Otherwise his commentary will be based upon his own inference, and this is something which the Holy Prophet^{sa} has forbidden. He has said⁸:

مَنْ فَسَّرَ الْقُرْآنَ بِرَأْيِهِ فَاصَابَ فَقَدْ أَخْطَأَ

That is, he who interprets the Holy Quran based on his own inference, does an erroneous interpretation even though he thinks he has done well.

The fifth criterion is the Arabic lexicon. Since, the Holy Quran itself has provided sufficient means for its understanding, recourse to Arabic lexicon seems unnecessary. But there is no doubt that it helps in enhancing our understanding, and sometimes, when we consult the lexicon, our attention is drawn to some hidden subtleties of the Holy Quran and we discover some mystery.

The sixth criterion for understanding the spiritual order is the understanding of the physical order, for there is complete harmony between the two.

The seventh criterion is the revelation granted to saints and the visions of the Muḥaddathīn^{9,10}

THE BATTLE OF TABUK

CRITICS WOULD HAVE one believe that Muslims just decided one day that they should attack Tabūk and showed up in Tabūk for loot and plunder. These critics completely and purposely ignore the historical background of this battle.

In the 9th year of Hijra Calendar, or the year 630 CE, Prophet Muhammad^{sa} sent his delegate to Ḥārith bin Abī Shamr, the ruler of Ghassān. This area was considered under the rule of Caesar. In his letter given to Ḥārith, Prophet Muhammad^{sa} of Islam invited the ruler of Ghassān to accept Islam and said that God through this blessing would extend his governance and he would be blessed. When this letter was read out, Ḥārith became enraged and threw the letter away and said, “Who has the power to take my country away from me? Rather, I myself would attack this claimant and even if I had to fight all the way to Yemen I would

do so in order to capture this man". He then gave the order for his cavalry to get ready to charge. He also wrote a letter to Caesar in order to seek his permission for launching a military assault upon Muslims. This created an atmosphere of hate and intolerance against Muslims in the whole region. As a result of this, Muslims of Madīnah lived in a state of expectancy of an imminent attack.

Secondly, the battle of Mu'ta (629 CE) had just recently taken place in which the Muslims had been victorious, against the expectations of their enemies, and the perception was that Muslims were emerging as a power to reckon with in Arabia. The neighboring powers of Caesar did not look kindly at this development for it meant losing their support in the Arabian Peninsula.

Thirdly, a major method of communication in those days was to convey the message by word of mouth. Usually, the caravans travelling in the area would bring news and information that was conveyed through them. Muslims were given information by a caravan that came from that area under the influence of Caesar that an army consisting of 40,000 soldiers was preparing to attack the Muslims.

It is with this background that Muslims under the leadership of Prophet Muhammad^{sa} started preparation for war against the peril of an impending attack on the Muslims. In the month of September, Muslims prepared themselves for the long journey to Tabūk which was 375 miles towards Syria. There were around 30,000 Muslims, of whom less than 10,000 were cavalry.

After a hot and thirsty march, the army arrived at Tabūk, where there was plenty of shade and water and they made a halt there. The rumors of an impending invasion had, by this time, died away. There seemed nothing at the time to threaten the border. This entire journey took place as a precautionary measure with the sole purpose of self-defense.

Hence, it is abundantly clear from a historical perspective that Muslims did not just *attack* Tabūk without any justification. First, the ruler of the area himself had pronounced war intentions and plans. Second, after having announced war intentions, he sought legitimization from his superiors to pursue and fulfil that announcement. Third, the news that Muslims received from different traveling caravans was that there was military planning of an

imminent march on Muslims, as also recorded by Aḥādīth.¹ In light of all this, one cannot simply ignore the gathering storm of belligerence and just allege that Muslims attacked without reasonable cause and provocation.

ARE WOMEN VIOLENTLY OPPRESSED IN ISLAM?

WHEN IT COMES to critiquing Islam, critics do not just see violence in the actions of Prophet Muhammad^{sa} during times of war, but also in other teachings, such as those related to women. The narrative is that Islam is a violent religion in every aspect, including in its treatment of women. In this chapter, we will prove that women hold such great respect and honor in Islam that is unparalleled in all other teachings, religions, and ideologies. First, it must be understood that the Holy Quran treats men and women as equals in the sight of God. The reward for good works is the same for both males and females:

*Whoso does good whether male or female, and is a believer, shall enter Paradise and they shall not be wronged a whit.*¹

Of the believers whoso acts righteously, whether male or female, We will surely grant such a one a pure life; and We will certainly reward them according to the measure of the best of their works.²

The Holy Quran also assigns a very high status and position to mothers:

And We have enjoined on man to be good to his parents. His mother bears him with pain, and brings him forth with pain. And the bearing of him and his weaning takes thirty months, till, when he attains his full maturity and reaches the age of forty years, he says, 'My Lord, grant me the power that I may be grateful for Thy favour which Thou hast bestowed upon me and upon my parents, and that I may do such good works as may please Thee. And make my seed righteous for me. I do turn to Thee; and, truly, I am of those who submit to Thee.'³

Prophet Muhammad^{sa} was so ahead of his time that in a land where women were thought of as property and considered a dishonor, he gave them the rights and honor that would not be given to them by non-Muslims even centuries afterwards. He said:

*The best of you is the one who is best to his wife, and I am the best of you to my wives.*⁴

*You will be rewarded for whatever you spend for Allah's sake even if it were a morsel which you put in your wife's mouth.*⁵

*Paradise lies at the feet of your mother.*⁶

Similarly, once a person asked Prophet Muhammad^{sa} who is the most deserving of best treatment by him, and he responded, "Your mother". He was asked, "Then who else after that?" He said, "Your mother". He again asked, "Then who else after that?" He replied for the third-time, "Your mother". When he was persistently asked again the fourth time, he said, "Your father".⁷ If anything, the status of a man (a father) is lesser here as compared to that of a woman (a mother). In a similar way, regarding the status of daughters and sisters, Prophet Muhammad^{sa} is reported to have said:

*Whoever had a daughter born to him... and he did not prefer his son over her, Allah will admit him to Paradise because of her.*⁸

*There is no one who has three daughters, or three sisters, and he treats them well, except that he enters paradise.*⁹

*I will enter the Garden with someone who brings up two daughters until they come of age, and we will be like these two (and he indicated this with his index finger and middle finger joined together).*¹⁰

Prophet Muhammad^{sa} also highly praised equal treatment of daughters as illustrated by this narration:

*A woman entered upon 'Ā'ishah^{ra} with her two daughters, and she gave her three dates. (The woman) gave each of her daughters a date, then she split the last one between them. She ('Ā'ishah^{ra}) said, "Then Prophet Muhammad^{sa} came and I told him about that". He said, "Why are you surprised? She will enter Paradise because of that".*¹¹

Prophet Muhammad^{sa} also encouraged his followers to spend on family as he said:

There are four dinars: a dinar which you give to a poor person, a dinar you give to free a slave, a dinar you spend

*in the Way of Allah, and a dinar which you spend on your family. The best of them is the dinar which you spend on your family.*¹²

Prophet Muhammad^{sa} himself had wives and daughters and he treated them very kindly and gave us an excellent model in terms of acting on these teachings and his personal precept. Due to this kind and compassionate treatment, history attests to the fact that all the wives of Prophet Muhammad^{sa} were devoted to him. One example that illustrates this fact is that of Hazrat Maimūna^{ra} who cherished her first meeting with Prophet Muhammad^{sa} as a great memory. She lived for many years after the death of Prophet Muhammad^{sa} and had great appreciation for the time she spent in marriage with Prophet Muhammad^{sa}. At the time of her death at the age of 80, she asked to be buried at precisely the spot where she had first met Prophet Muhammad^{sa}. This shows the great degree of love she had for him and how the decades that passed since that first meeting did not diminish the significance of that memory in her mind.

Prophet Muhammad^{sa} would regularly seek the counsel of his wives in all important matters. He

helped them in household chores and cared for them. His compassion extended to mothers in general and this is illustrated by the fact that on one occasion, when he heard a child crying during a prayer service, he quickly concluded the service. He explained later that he was concerned that the child's crying may cause distress to the mother, if the prayer service had been long.

He was also kind to women at large. During any of his journeys, if women were travelling with the caravan, he would give instructions that they should move at a gentler pace and take breaks to ensure their comfort. Once during a battle, there was some confusion and the animals became agitated and unmanageable. Prophet Muhammad^{sa} fell from his horse and some women also fell. A companion ran towards him to help him as his foot got stuck in the stirrup. Prophet Muhammad^{sa} managed to get his foot out quickly and said to his companion, "Do not worry about me, go and help women". At the time of his death, one of his last injunctions to Muslims was that they should treat women with kindness and consideration.¹³

All these examples show how much Prophet Muhammad^{sa} emphasized equal, dignified, and

good treatment of women, and demonstrated this with his own excellent model. Given this context, it is hard to assume that Islam violently oppresses women.

DOES ISLAM PROMOTE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE?

One of the most unjust claims against Islam is that husbands have been given permission to beat their wives. Such critics ignore the fact that prior to Islam, women in Arabia had no rights whatsoever. Islam provided them the right to choose their own spouse, the right to hold jobs, the right to manage their own property, the right to inherit from their brothers, husbands, fathers and sons, as well as the right to divorce. Such rights were not afforded to women until some 1300 years later in the western world, but Islam granted women all these rights more than fourteen centuries ago.

Such critics also ignore the fact that using physical violence against women is a problem that extends beyond any specific community – Muslim

or otherwise. Domestic violence will affect 1 in 4 women and 1 in 6 men in their lifetimes in the UK.¹⁴ The latter statistic is often ignored or neglected, since violence against women often has more serious consequences than violence against men; however, each of these can be as psychologically injurious as the other.

In the UK currently, alcohol is one of the biggest contributory factors for domestic violence. Research has shown that it contributes directly to between 30-40% of all cases of domestic violence.¹⁵ The Institute of Alcohol Studies describes the relationship between alcohol and domestic violence in the following way:

Research with police officers in the North East of England found some officers unable to remember the last time they went to a domestic incident where alcohol was not involved, with 93% of them regarding alcohol as having a 'large impact' on domestic violence. Cases involving severe violence are twice as likely as others to include alcohol, and other research found that the risk of rape was twice as high for attacks involving drinking offenders.¹⁶

It should be clear then that the Islamic injunction of prohibiting alcohol is an extremely significant step in curtailing and preventing domestic abuse. This is a reality often ignored by critics of Islamic teachings.

The basis for the allegation that Islam sanctions the beating of wives is sought to be invoked on the basis of the following verse of the Holy Quran:

*Men are guardians over women because Allah has made some of them excel others, and because they (men) spend of their wealth. So virtuous women are those who are obedient, and guard the secrets (of their husbands) with Allah's protection. And as for those on whose part you fear nushūz, admonish them and leave them alone in their beds, and chastise them (idribūhunna). Then if they obey you, seek not a way against them. Surely, Allah is High, Great.*¹⁷

The salient points in this verse for the reader to be aware of are that a man is permitted three avenues against a wife who behaves in a way that is described in the Holy Quran as *nushūz*, which we

have left untranslated in the above quotation, as it has multiple meanings. *Al-Mufridāt Fī Gharībīl Qurān* by Imām Rāghib is the most widely accepted, authentic dictionary of the Holy Quran, and under the root letters for *nushūz*, it has the following entry:

نُشُوْزُ الْمَرْأَةِ بَعْضُهَا زَوْجَهَا وَرَفْعُ نَفْسِهَا عَنْ طَاعَتِهِ وَعَيْنِهَا
عَنْهُ إِلَىٰ غَيْرِهِ

Nushūz by a woman means: (1) She holds a grudge against her husband, and (2) rebels against him, and (3) has an extra-marital relationship.

In other words, there are three stages of *nushūz* which correspond to the three avenues the husband can take in order to save his marriage:

1. At the first stage of *nushūz*, he should advise and admonish.
2. At the second stage, he should temporarily cease sexual relationships with the wife.
3. At the final stage of the wife's rebellion from the marriage where she intends to, or begins

to, have an extra marital relationship, the husband is allowed to lightly chastise her.

Thus, it is not that husbands are allowed to “beat” wives at the slightest disagreement with their husbands, or a show of disregard for marriage itself. They have to take other means and a steps-based approach.

Furthermore, Lane’s lexicon discusses the word *nushūz* and gives the following meanings:

1. To rise and stand up in opposition
2. To contend and fight with someone
3. To cause someone to vomit with fright
4. To hate someone
5. To act injuriously against another
6. To desert someone
7. An evil companion

It is clear then that the word *nushūz* covers a variety of types of behaviours, from simply altercating with someone, all the way to hating them, deserting them and plotting against their well-being. As such, we can understand if a wife adopts a behaviour that

is destructive to a healthy, loving relationship, and insists on it, is disobedient, expresses hatred, and even physically abuses or injures the husband, the Quran instructs the husband at this stage to *not* immediately resort to chastisement, even lightly. Instead, he is instructed to adopt a step-based approach that can take days, or even weeks to implement effectively. This form of restraint and patience that the husband is expected to demonstrate, in reaction to an abusive wife, is a unique form of teaching that cannot be found anywhere else.

The steps that the husband is instructed to take are as follows¹⁸:

1. If the wife's behavior is *nushūz*, the first step for the husband is to advise and admonish her. He is not allowed to chastise her. What is important to note here is that the length of time or number of times are not specified. No one can claim that the Quran specifies a number of attempts to advise before proceeding to the next step. In this sense, this step can take a long period of time, and step

- two is to be adopted only after this step fails to work after fulfilling all its conditions.
2. If the wife's behavior continues to be *nushūz* despite sufficient attempts at reform, the husband's next step is to cease sexual relationship with the wife. This step is again harder for the husband to fulfill as compared to the wife. What is important to note is that it is not stated that the husband should force the wife out of the bedroom. Instead, the husband is the one who has to make the sacrifice and leave the wife, and sleep in another room or another bed. The hope is that this separation will create the environment so that a proper reformation is achieved, and the marriage can return to normalcy.
 3. Despite the cessation of sexual relationship, if the wife continues to act in a way that is destructive and continues to exercise behavior that can be defined as *nushūz*, which makes life difficult for the husband, and is harmful to the marriage, the husband is allowed at this point to lightly chastise her.

In the event that the husband has to take this recourse to chastisement, Prophet Muhammad^{sa} has clarified that it should not be the form of chastisement which is on the face or that which leaves a mark on the body.¹⁹ As a result, this is a symbolic form of punishment left for the most exceptional of situations. No wonder then that there is no incident in the life of Prophet Muhammad^{sa} when he had to chastise any of his wives. On the other hand, if the husband abuses this last recourse afforded to him, and is harsh with his wife in any way, the wife has the option to take the matter to an Islamic judge for resolution.

A great scholar of the Holy Quran, Hazrat Ibn ‘Abbās^{ra}, was once asked about this chastisement in the following narration²⁰:

عن عطاء قال قلت لابن عباس: ما الضرب غير مبرح؟ قال
السواك وشبهه يضربها به

That is, Hazrat ‘Atā asked Hazrat ‘Abbās, “What do the words *ghaira mubarraḥ* mean?” He said, “Chastising them [that is, one’s wife] with *miswāk* or

something similar to it". Here the word *miswāk* refers to small twigs used for teeth-cleaning in ancient times. They were also commonly used by Prophet Muhammad^{sa} and others in his time. In other words, the form of chastisement that is allowed here is extremely small. The reality is that even holding a woman strongly leaves a mark on her, which is not allowed. Hence, the real form of chastisement mostly becomes symbolic, and to a very limited extent.

Another point to be understood here is that the Holy Quran lays out both general commandments and principles, along with detailed commandments pertaining to specific situations. All verses on a given topic must be considered, analyzed, and understood collectively. The Holy Quran itself explains that only those have true knowledge of the Holy Quran who judiciously consider a matter by looking at all the relevant verses in the whole of the Quran instead of reading verses in isolation or cherry-picking quotes to suit preconceived notions:

He it is Who has sent down to thee the Book; in it there are verses that are decisive in meaning — they

*are the basis of the Book — and there are others that are susceptible of different interpretations. But those in whose hearts is perversity pursue such thereof as are susceptible of different interpretations, seeking discord and seeking wrong interpretation of it. And none knows its right interpretation except Allah and those who are firmly grounded in knowledge; they say, 'We believe in it; the whole is from our Lord.' — And none heed except those gifted with understanding.*²¹

Thus, we should first look at the general context within which Islam teaches that a husband and a wife should live together in problem-free and amicable circumstances. Subsequently, it will be easier to comprehend the teachings of Islam on how to behave under strained and difficult circumstances.

The Holy Quran teaches that a husband and wife are created for each other to attain happiness and peace:

And one of His Signs is this, that He has created wives for you from among yourselves that you may

*find peace of mind in them, and He has put love and tenderness between you. In that surely are Signs for a people who reflect.*²²

*O ye who believe! it is not lawful for you to inherit women against their will; nor should you detain them wrongfully that you may take away part of that which you have given them, except that they be guilty of a flagrant evil; and consort with them in kindness; and if you dislike them, it may be that you dislike a thing wherein Allah has placed much good.*²³

The above words in particular lay down a key principle in dealings between husband and wife: *consort with them in kindness*. The key word, translated as kindness, is *ma'rūf*, which according to Lane's Lexicon means "that which is accepted by all parties as good and beneficial" or "that which is acknowledged as beneficial by all". It means that a husband should interact with his wife in a manner that is recognized by her as acceptable and agreeable, thus rendering the relationship consensual.

Islamic teachings remind men that their relationships should be a means of attaining “peace of mind” and that the relationship should be one of “love and tenderness”. They are further reminded to behave in a manner that is forgiving; and that if one dislikes something about one’s wife, one should realise that there may be many latent benefits and elements of saving grace in the very thing one dislikes. Men are further prohibited from “inheriting women against their will”, cutting to the root of forced marriages that are so prevalent in some cultures. Such teachings demonstrate that a wife is not a slave, but an equal companion, whose rights must be respected and safeguarded.

It is in this particular context of the above-described ideal relationship between a husband and his wife that the teaching is given to a husband who is faced with a recalcitrant, abusive, hating and injurious wife. The man is advised to begin with relevant advice and necessary words of admonition as measures to ameliorate the situation and address the issues involved. If this approach persistently fails to bring about the desired results and the wife continues to behave in physically or verbally

abusive ways, the husband is commanded next to proceed to the stage of temporarily forsaking sexual relations with his wife.

This particular step is in fact the key to the process of reconciliation. It is very likely that during this period of time, the feelings of erstwhile emotional ties, and memories of earlier happy experiences together, would lead them both to lowering their egos and reconciling without letting the situation get worse and further escalate.

In the case that such temporary cessation of sexual relations does not bring about reconciliation and the wife continues in a manner that is abusive, injurious to the relationship, and goes to the extent of seeking another man, the husband is given permission to take a physical action in a limited and contained way, to try to protect the family from break-up based on what is manifested as rebelliousness that may well be possible to address. This is a sort of 'last ditch effort' for the husband to not just sit idly by while his spouse is veering towards an extra-marital arrangement. This is the *n-th degree scenario*, not a common prescription to be adopted in everyday disagreements in family life.

The word used for such a physical action is *iḍribūhunna*. Translating this word as “beating” or “striking”, both of which in English carry the connotation of injury and harm, is to misrepresent the teachings of the Holy Quran. It should be noted that according to current legislation in the United States and United Kingdom, “physical abuse” is defined in a manner very similar to how Prophet Muhammad^{sa} of Islam defined it 1400 years ago: “an intentional act that causes injury or trauma to another person, through bodily contact”. Islamic teachings are vehemently opposed to any such “physical abuse” perpetrated by any man against his wife. Serious action should be taken against such people who abuse their wives with violence and try to justify their actions in light of the verse under discussion.

A study of the narrations of Prophet Muhammad^{sa} makes it clear that physical abuse is forbidden in Islam, and has nothing to do with what is allowed in this verse. For instance, he makes a categorical statement against physical abuse in the following narration:

*It is narrated by Mu'āwiyah al-Qushayri, "I went to the Messenger of Allah^{sa} and asked him, 'What do you instruct us in regards to our wives?' He replied, "Provide them with the food that you have for yourself, and provide them the clothing which you have for yourself, and **do not beat them, and do not make them miserable.**"²⁴*

At another occasion, he said, "*Do not beat Allah's handmaidens*" and condemned those men who chastise their wives even lightly.²⁵ These narrations show how the fundamental teaching in Islam is kind treatment of wives and to never chastise them in any way. The permissibility of chastisement is only there in the rarest and most extreme of cases, and as a last resort to save the marriage from breakdown. This is further demonstrated by the following words of Prophet Muhammad^{sa}:

Adopt righteousness in regards to women, because you have taken them from Allah through a contract (of marriage), and you have established intimate relationships with them with the permission of Allah. It

*is your right on them that they do not let anyone on your bed whom you dislike. If they do this, you are permitted to chastise them, but this chastisement should not be harsh (or physically harmful: ghaira mubarraḥin). Their right on you is that you provide them their food, and appropriate clothing.*²⁶

In this narration, Prophet Muhammad^{sa} is being clear that the chastisement is allowed only in the extreme case where the wife is guilty of infidelity, and this permission is there only to save the marriage. Even so, the man is told that he should exercise this with extreme caution and ensure that he does not physically abuse his wife.

The fact is that Prophet Muhammad^{sa} himself acted upon these teachings and even on such occasions when his wives became displeased with him or argued with him, he showed much patience and never ever resorted to “beating” them or even lightly chastising them in his entire life time.

This verse of the Holy Quran under discussion, when read in light of Prophet Muhammad’s^{sa} own words and precept, is not providing license to men to hit and beat their wives. This verse is, in fact,

laying down a stepwise approach by which a man must act to demonstrate his displeasure in response to continuous and repeatedly hating and injurious behaviour from the wife. First, admonition is prescribed; secondly, the postponement of all sexual relations and thirdly, a man is permitted to make his displeasure clear through a physical act that does not cause explicit, or permanent, bodily harm. This is the strict limit within which a man is permitted to display his displeasure.

Given that one in six men experience domestic violence even today in the UK, it is extremely important that the Holy Quran gives guidance on how a man should go about responding to abuse and violence, without recourse to a violent response at the very outset, which many men, unfortunately, may be prone to. By commanding men to respond in a stepwise approach, the Holy Quran diffuses the anger a man may be prone to, and channelizes it into ways that are more likely to bring about spousal reconciliation. As a result, this verse is a restriction, not a validation and open-ended permission for husbands to engage in spousal violence.

On the contrary, Muslims should look to the example of Prophet Muhammad^{sa} regarding whom God says:

*Say, 'If you love Allah, follow me: then will Allah love you and forgive you your faults. And Allah is Most Forgiving, Merciful.'*²⁷

In this verse, the mark of love for Allah that a Muslim has is demonstrated by the extent to which he follows the example of Prophet Muhammad^{sa}. The Quran again emphasizes the importance of following Prophet Muhammad^{sa} when it says:

*...whatsoever the Messenger gives you, take it; and whatsoever he forbids you, abstain from that.*²⁸

In light of these teachings, when we look towards Prophet Muhammad^{sa}, we see that he said:

*The best of you is the one who is best to his wife, and I am the best of you to my wives.*²⁹

Muslim men should emulate Prophet Muhammad of Islam^{sa} by treating their wives in the best way, and by doing what his own wife Hazrat 'Ā'ishah^{ra} stated:

*The Messenger of Allah^{sa} never beat any of his servants, or wives, and his hand never hit anything.*³⁰

GUIDANCE FOR WOMEN WHO FACE MARITAL ABUSE

Many critics ignore the fact that the Holy Quran also gives advice to a woman whose husband is the one who behaves in a way that is *nushūz* (meaning: “recalcitrant”, “over-bearing”, and “injurious”, as described earlier). The very fact that the Holy Quran acknowledges this possibility of misconduct by husbands, clearly indicates that it does not give a free license to husbands to behave towards their wives as they please, but also expects them to behave as caring and affectionate companions to their wives, not as their masters.

The Holy Quran gives the following advice as regards a woman who suffers in such a way:

*And if a woman fear nushūz or indifference on the part of her husband, it shall be no sin on them that they be suitably reconciled to each other; and reconciliation is best. And people are prone to covetousness. If you do good and are righteous, surely Allah is aware of what you do.*³¹

The method of such reconciliation is elaborated as follows:

*And if you fear a breach between them, then appoint an arbiter from his folk and an arbiter from her folk. If they (the arbiters) desire reconciliation, Allah will effect it between them. Surely, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Aware.*³²

What this demonstrates is that if a woman suffers from hateful, injurious, over-bearing, aggressive or abusive behaviour from her spouse, third parties should be involved. This is evidently different to the teaching given for men. Why is that?

It is obvious that if a woman is suffering under difficult and fearful conditions with a potentially abusive husband, advising her to forego sexual relations or to take physical acts to respond to his violence or abuse may likely endanger her even further by inciting his anger. In such a situation, the best approach would be to involve third parties from both the husband's side and the wife's side, to assess the degree of damage to the relationship that may have occurred, and to see if there is potential for reconciliation and also to see if it would be essential to make an onward referral to the appropriate legal authorities whose proper domain it is to provide redress under the law.

If reconciliation cannot be brought about, the wife has the permission in Islam to divorce her husband, regardless of the husband's feelings in the matter.³³ Indeed, the following incident in the life of Prophet Muhammad^{sa} is illustrative of how women have the right to divorce even for such reasons as simple incompatibility between spouses:

The wife of Thābit bin Qais came to Prophet Muhammad^{sa} and said, "O Allah's Messenger^{sa}! I do not

blame Thābit for defects in his character or his religion, but I, being a Muslim, dislike to behave in un-Islamic manner (if I remain with him)". On that Allah's Messenger^{sa} said (to her), "Will you give back the garden which your husband has given you (as dowry)?" She said, "Yes". Then Prophet Muhammad^{sa} said to Thābit, "O Thābit! Accept your garden, and divorce her at once".³⁴

Another narration records her excuse as "I cannot endure to live with him".³⁵ Let alone enduring domestic abuse from husbands, Islam allows women to divorce simply on the basis that they do not like their husbands. This is the absolute freedom that Islam has granted to women that is not found in any other religion.

COMPARISON WITH THE BIBLE

It is strange that often the foremost critics of the above teachings are Christians, who take guidance from a book that provides no rights to women in relation to inheritance from their brothers, sons or

fathers. Below we quote both Old Testament and New Testament teachings regarding women:

*You shall also say to the Israelites, "If a man dies, and has no son, then you shall pass his inheritance on to his daughter. If he has no daughter, then you shall give his inheritance to his brothers".*³⁶

In other words, a woman does not inherit anything from her father if she has a brother. Moreover, while the Holy Quran gives explicit teachings that a woman cannot be *inherited against her will*,³⁷ and must also give her own consent to her marriage, no such, comparable or otherwise, teaching exists in the Bible. Indeed, the Bible states that a man may sell his daughter as a slave:

*When a man sells his daughter as a slave, she will not be freed at the end of six years as the men are. If she does not satisfy her owner, he must allow her to be bought back again. But he is not allowed to sell her to foreigners, since he is the one who broke the contract with her.*³⁸

Furthermore, the daughter of a priest who behaves immorally is to be punished in the following inhuman fashion:

And the daughter of any priest, if she profane herself by playing the whore, she profaneth her father: she shall be burnt with fire.³⁹

If a man rapes a woman in the town, she is to be stoned to death along with the rapist, since it is presumed that she did not scream loudly enough to be found and therefore consented to the act:

Suppose a man meets a young woman, a virgin who is engaged to be married, and he has sexual intercourse with her. If this happens within a town, you must take both of them to the gates of that town and stone them to death. The woman is guilty because she did not scream for help. The man must die because he violated another man's wife. In this way, you will purge this evil from among you.⁴⁰

In addition to the above, women are commanded to be subservient to their husbands⁴¹ and women,

according to Paul, are to be forbidden from teaching or exercising authority over men.⁴² The reason Paul gives is that this is because Eve led Adam into evil and so for this, women must be below men in all regards. In short, Christians are requested to look to their own book prior to levelling accusations against the Holy Quran.

As compared to the above-mentioned horrific teachings, the Islamic teachings are categorical and clear in affording women a number of rights that were unthinkable in Western society prior to the 20th Century. Women are described as having spiritual equality with men in the Holy Quran,⁴³ the right to choose their own spouse,⁴⁴ the right to divorce,⁴⁵ no discrimination as regards the right to work⁴⁶ and the right to maintenance, support and receiving kind treatment from husbands, as well as numerous other rights.

We have not delved deeper into these other aspects of Islamic teachings, as we have sought to focus on dispelling the misinformation present about the Quranic teachings regarding marital conflict resolution.

In short, the teachings of Islam are deeply rooted in the psychology of human behaviour. The Holy Quran gives such teachings to men that diffuses their anger, by advising a man to forego sexual relations with his wife, before proceeding further. Women, on the other hand, are taught to quickly involve third parties if there has been any ill-treatment on the part of the husband. In such teachings, the Holy Quran has struck a balance between the importance of individual rights on the one hand, and the importance of the institution of marriage on the other. While doing this, the Holy Quran has continually drawn attention to God's attributes of Knowledge, Authority and Power, to remind men, in particular, but also women that God is aware of their behaviour and will call them to account for any injustices against one another.

Here below is the most beautiful description of the ideal relationship between a husband and a wife as given by God in the Quran:

*...they are a garment for you and you are a garment for them...*⁴⁷

In these few words the Holy Quran has described the status of women, and the importance of marriage as an institution, and of marital relations. The real object of marriage is the comfort, protection, and the embellishment of both husband and wife – just as these are the main function of garments. Marriage is not just a device to satisfy sexual urge in human beings. The husband and wife both safeguard each other against numerous evils and scandals.

When critics read the Quran in bits and pieces without reading the context, they tend to reach faulty conclusions and this is what has happened when it comes to their understanding of the treatment of women in Islam. As proven above, there is no such thing as violence against women in Islam. Far from that, they hold the utmost respect in Islam.

SLAVERY AND PRISONERS OF WAR

A COMMON QUESTION that Dr. Qureshi and other critics of Islam have raised many times over is in regards to female prisoners of war and their treatment in Islam. Critics always link this subject matter with Jihad in order to support their narrative that Islam is a violent and oppressive religion. They seem to suggest that just as Islam is aggressive and violent in war, it also mistreats those who are captured during times of warfare. It is alleged that Islam promotes slavery and the turning of prisoners of war into slaves and concubines. This could not be any further from the truth and only shows either ignorance or mischief on the part of such accusers.

First, it is a fact that Islam did not introduce slavery. It was a part and parcel of the very fabric of the world in which Islam came into being. There

were a great number of slaves that were already a part of the society where Islam began. In fact, Islam condemned slavery in unequivocal terms and prohibited all forms of making slaves except in a very restricted sense, during war. According to Islam, it is sinful to take away the liberty of a person by kidnapping him or her or by any other means, with the exception of soldiers during a battle.

All human beings as such are equal in the sight of God and enjoy equal human rights. Islamic teaching on this point is quite clear, unequivocal and emphatic. The Holy Quran for instance enjoins the Muslims to treat the slaves kindly:

*And worship Allah and associate naught with Him, and show kindness to parents, and to kindred, and orphans, and the needy, and to the neighbour that is a kinsman and the neighbour that is a stranger, and the companion by your side, and the wayfarer, and those whom your right hands possess (i.e. slaves). Surely, Allah loves not the proud and the boastful.*¹

Emphasizing the same, Prophet Muhammad^{sa} said:

Slaves are your brothers whom Allah has put under your control, so feed them with the same food that you eat,

*clothe them with the same clothes you wear, and do not burden them with so much that they are overwhelmed; if you do burden them, then help them.*²

There are many other similar statements of Prophet Muhammad^{sa} and if these teachings are followed in letter and spirit, a slave would become like a member of the family and would not be treated any differently, and would cease to be a 'slave'.

On top of this, Islam emphasizes the emancipation of slaves as the Holy Quran states:

*And what should make thee know what the ascent is? It is the freeing of a slave.*³

*It is not righteousness that you turn your faces to the East or the West, but truly righteous is he who believes in Allah and the Last Day and the angels and the Book and the Prophets, and spends his money for love of Him, on the kindred and the orphans and the needy and the wayfarer and those who ask for charity, and for the emancipation of slaves...*⁴

Prophet Muhammad^{sa} emphasized the same when he said:

*He who emancipates a slave, Allah will set free from Hell, limb for limb.*⁵

In light of these teachings, Muslims played a great role in the emancipation of slaves. According to historical records, Prophet Muhammad^{sa} himself freed 63 slaves during his life-time, Hazrat ‘Ā’ishah^{ra} freed 67, Hazrat ‘Abbās^{ra} freed 70, Hazrat ‘Abdullāh bin ‘Umar^{ra} freed 1,000, and Hazrat ‘Abdur Raḥmān bin ‘Auf^{ra} freed 30,000.⁶

A question may arise here that when Islam came with such a strong message of freedom for the slaves, why did it not give general orders for the emancipation of *all* slaves at once? The answer to this question is that Islam did not come to make an empty show of greatness by doing something like this. Instead, its objective was to slowly and gradually reform and improve the society at large. It was neither feasible, nor wise, to suddenly abolish the institution of slavery which had become interwoven into the very texture of society since pre-Islamic times.

The slaves were dependent upon their masters for food, clothing, and shelter, and a sudden abolishment would have caused a large number of people to lose a source of income and livelihood, without there being any social safety-net in place to prevent the potential crisis which such a measure would have plunged the society into. A portion of them would then have turned to illegal ways of earning a living, and the society as a whole would have taken a moral downturn. Therefore, although Islam sought to abolish all slavery, it proceeded to do it gradually and effectively.

With this goal, Islamic teachings followed two steps. First, a teaching was given that put an end to forcing a free person into becoming a slave. Second, it was taught that slaves who already existed should be treated kindly and with love so that they start to live independent lives and be gradually set free.

The first teaching is expressed very strongly in the following narration:

Prophet Muhammad^{sa} said, "Allah says, 'I will be displeased with three persons on the Day of Resurrection: (1) One who makes a covenant in My Name, but does not fulfill it; (2) One who sells a free person (as a slave) and

personally usurps the sale-proceeds; (3) and one who employs a laborer and gets the full work done by him but does not pay him his wages".⁷

The second teaching was followed in two ways. Either the Muslims set free the slaves in their possession as a virtuous act in accordance with Islamic teachings, or the slaves were given the option of earning their freedom through a system called *mukātabat*.

Through this system, the master was obliged to set a slave free if he made himself qualified for emancipation. This is something to be judged by the court or the government. The Holy Quran says:

And such as desire a deed of manumission in writing from among those whom your right hands possess, write it for them if you know any good in them; and give them out of the wealth of Allah which He has bestowed upon you.⁸

Here, the Holy Quran is very clear in its teaching that if a slave desires to have freedom by payment of an amount, the master is obliged to fulfill the slave's wish and to set him free provisionally, so

that the slave has an opportunity to earn the amount fixed for his release. On top of this, the master is told that he should return some of this money back to the freed slave. This is a system of *mukātabat* through which Islam ensures that slavery comes to an end eventually.

All these teachings make it clear that emancipation of slaves is a top priority in Islam. The only question that remains is: Can prisoners of war be turned into slaves?

PRISONERS OR SLAVES?

It is a great misconception to think that prisoners of war are the same as slaves as per Islamic teachings. It is true that prisoners of war tended to be called “slaves” perhaps due to the fact they lived with Muslim families without liberty. However, clear injunctions in the Holy Quran show that prisoners of war are very different from slaves. For instance, the Holy Quran states prisoners of war can only be obtained from among the enemy during a time of a pitched battle:

*It does not behove a Prophet that he should have captives until he engages in regular fighting in the land. You desire the goods of the world, while Allah desires for you the Hereafter. And Allah is Mighty, Wise.*⁹

Then, the Holy Quran says that after the war is over, the prisoners should not be kept:

*...[after the battle] either release them [i.e. prisoners] as a favour or by taking ransom — until the war lays down its burdens.*¹⁰

This means that prisoners are to be released in good will after the battle or by taking ransom in some way (such as money from the family, exchange of prisoners, or some other such means). Further, the Holy Quran states that prisoners are only to be treated strictly to the extent that the enemy is strict to Muslim prisoners:

And if you desire to punish the oppressors, then punish them to the extent to which you have been

*wronged; but if you show patience, then, surely, that is best for those who are patient.*¹¹

Even here the Muslims are told to restrain themselves and to exercise patience. In brief, regarding prisoners of war, the Quranic teaching is as follows:

1. The term of imprisonment should terminate with the termination of fighting
2. No prisoner is to be put to death
3. No prisoner should be called upon to do anything which is beyond his abilities
4. The comfort of the prisoner should not be neglected

As a result, it is clear that there is no trace of slavery in Islamic teachings regarding prisoners of war. If terrorist organizations have made slaves out of prisoners of war, or kidnapped people who are free and not even engaged in battle, they have clearly acted against these teachings.

DISTRIBUTION OF PRISONERS OF WAR

It is a fact that when Muslims engaged in battle during the time of Prophet Muhammad^{sa}, prisoners were distributed among the Muslim soldiers. It is in fact this distribution that causes the confusion between slaves and prisoners of war. This issue cannot be understood properly unless we study the context in which this was done.

First, it must be understood that this practice was not an essential teaching in Islam. It finds no mention in the special instructions which have been given in the Quran with regards to prisoners of war. It was only a retributive measure which was taken recourse to as an answer to the extremely aggressive conduct of the enemy who made slaves out of Muslim prisoners by distributing them among their soldiers. However, as shown in the previous section, the Islamic teachings clearly forbade turning any prisoner into a slave. These teachings clearly stated that the prisoners are to be set free as soon as the war is over.

One practical reason why prisoners used to be distributed among the soldiers is that there were no

state prisons at that time. It was common practice in the world at that time that prisoners were distributed among the soldiers, and the Muslims did the same. Over time, this system changed and today there are state prisons where such prisoners are kept.

Due to the beautiful teachings of Islam in regard to the prisoners of war, the reality is that the prisoners in possession of Muslim soldiers enjoyed a comfortable stay as compared to being in a state prison. The prisoners of war ended up living as members of the families to which they were assigned. This also became the reason for prisoners of war to convert to Islam as the kind treatment served to them was unparalleled.

Regardless, due to the fact that the old ways have changed and now the prisoners of war can easily be accommodated in state prisons, it is no longer necessary to assign them to families. In fact, such a practice would be un-Islamic, as the Promised Messiah^{as} also notes:

It is a matter of gratification that in the present times non-Muslim nations have abandoned the aggressive

practice of making slaves of Muslim captives, therefore, now the Muslims are also not allowed to enslave their prisoners, for, the Holy Quran says that the punishment inflicted on the enemy should be proportionate to the wrong the enemy has been the first to inflict on the Muslims. Hence, when the conditions have changed and the people hostile to the Muslims no longer go to the extent of making slaves of Muslim men and women in times of war, but treat them as State prisoners, it would be unlawful for the Muslims to make slaves of the prisoners of war taken from a belligerent army.¹²

Hence, treating prisoners of war as slaves does not have a place in Islam in modern times.

FEMALE PRISONERS OF WAR

In relation to the subject of prisoners of war, the most contentious issue is that of female prisoners of war. Dr. Qureshi alleges, for instance, "Truth be told, the Holy Quran and hadith contain many references to sex slavery. The Holy Quran explicitly allows Muslim men to use their captive women for

sex (23:6; 33:50; 70:30).”¹³ As we have demonstrated however, this is not the “truth” at all.

This is because the word “slave” cannot be truly applied to prisoners of war. As demonstrated earlier, the Holy Quran is very clear in stating that prisoners of war can only be taken in specific circumstances. Even when these prisoners are taken, there is no commandment in the Holy Quran that they should be distributed among the Muslim soldiers. It only happened in the early days of Islam due to practical reasons, such as the unavailability of state prisons, and due to the fact that Muslim prisoners were treated as slaves by the enemy. Even in such a case, the Holy Quran forbade the Muslims from turning their prisoners into slaves and to not keep them after the conclusion of the war.

In the same context, the female prisoners of war were taken due to the prevalent conditions and exigencies of the time. The existence of state prisons in the modern times has obviated the need to distribute prisoners among Muslim soldiers. It is no longer required to put prisoners into the custody of individuals.

Regardless, there is no such thing as “sex slavery” in Islam. Hazrat Mirza Bashir-ud-din Mahmud Ahmad, the second Khalīfa of the Aḥmadiyya Muslim Jamā‘at has commented on this issue at length in his commentary of the Holy Quran, known as *Tafsīr-e-Kabīr*. In the discussion of verse 7 of chapter 23 of the Holy Quran, he lists the following conditions that had to be met before a female prisoner could be handed over to a Muslim soldier:

1. Prisoners can only be obtained during times of war
2. They should be released through ransom
3. If the prisoner cannot afford to pay the ransom, or his/her people or his/her home country is unable to pay the ransom, then the Muslim government should release him/her as a gesture of good will
4. If the government has reasons to not do that, then *Zakāt* funds should be used for the release¹⁴
5. If that is also not possible, then the prisoner should be given the option of *mukātabat*

If the female prisoner chooses not to use option 5, it clearly means that something is preventing her from going back to her home country as she has clearly refrained from exercising her right to earn her release. In such a case, her Muslim master was allowed to marry her involuntarily as a last resort.

As Islam is a religion that promotes moral values, this last step is one of necessity. If the prisoner is allowed to stay with her master without marriage, it has the danger of leading to fornication and other possible vices which can in turn lead to immorality in the Islamic society. After all this, if the female prisoners gives birth to a child, she automatically becomes a free woman.¹⁵

We have discussed this issue here in principle but it is clear that none of this applies in the modern age due to the existence of state prisons and penitentiaries.

COMPARISON WITH THE BIBLE

It is worth noting here that the Bible has been used as supportive text in favour of slavery. During the civil war of the United States, some would quote the following passages to justify their support for slavery:

*Slaves, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, in singleness of heart, as you obey Christ.*¹⁶

*Tell slaves to be submissive to their masters and to give satisfaction in every respect; they are not to talk back.*¹⁷

*When a slave-owner strikes a male or female slave with a rod and the slave dies immediately, the owner shall be punished. But if the slave survives a day or two, there is no punishment; for the slave is the owner's property.*¹⁸

Here, the slaves are told to be so submissive to their masters as Christians obey God. This sharply contrasts with the following teaching of Prophet Muhammad^{sa}:

*Slaves are your brothers whom Allah has put under your control, so feed them with the same food that you eat, clothe them with the same clothes you wear, and do not burden them with so much that they are overwhelmed; if you do [need to] burden them, then help them.*¹⁹

In addition, Prophet Muhammad^{sa} strictly forbade ill-treatment of slaves as illustrated by the following narration:

*Abū Mas'ūd^{ra} said, "I was beating a slave of mine when I heard a voice behind me, 'Know, Abū Mas'ūd^{ra}, that Allah is able to call you to account for this slave'. I turned around and there was the Messenger of Allah^{sa}. I said, 'Messenger of Allah^{sa}, he is free for the sake of Allah!' He said, 'If you had not done that, the Fire would have touched you (or the Fire would have burned you)'."*²⁰

He also said:

*If anyone slaps or beats his slave, the atonement due from him [for this act] is to set him free.*²¹

Hence, the Islamic teachings show much more compassion as compared to the Biblical teachings and this especially demonstrates the double standards of some evangelical Christians who venture to criticize Islam on issues like slavery and prisoners of war.

WHAT IS SHARIAH?

THE ISSUE OF Shariah law has been widely used as a bogey with which to terrify those who may have little knowledge of Islam. To them Shariah law is what makes Islam a violent religion; and that Shariah law is a tool to compel people to adopt a very restrained way of life and endanger other existing lifestyles and value systems. Hazrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad^{rh}, the fourth Khalīfa of the Aḥmadiyya Muslim Jamā'at, addressed this issue at length in a speech delivered at the Inter-religious Consults, Suriname, on 3rd June, 1991, published under the title, *Shariah Relationship Between Religion and Politics in Islam*.¹

In this chapter, we present some of the points taken from this speech in response to what critics allege regarding this much misunderstood topic. In this speech, he argued that imposing Shariah has practical issues that would need resolution. For

instance, there are so many interpretations, of so many different sects. Whose interpretation would apply? The fact is that the Islamic Shariah has many aspects that are to be voluntarily acted upon by individuals. No government is, or can be, required to tell a sincere, devout Muslim that he should pray five times a day, behave honestly in everyday life, speak the truth, observe fasting in the month of Ramadhan, and so on. On top of that, what will be the situation in those countries where an environment does not exist for the enactment of Shariah? Hazrat Mirza Tahir Ahmadth notes:

Every prophet - not only Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of God be upon him) - every prophet first created that healthy climate for the law of God to be imposed, willingly not compulsorily. And when the society was ready, then the laws were introduced and stiffened further and further, until the whole code was revealed. That society was capable of carrying the burden of the law of religion, whether you call it Shariah law or any other law.²

A society where theft is common, for instance, cannot have Shariah law. Harsh punishments

cannot be meted out to all individuals who commit the crime of theft. It is only when a pious society has been created that Shariah law can be introduced over a period of time.

The reality is that extremist organizations only cunningly use Shariah law as a cover to play with the religious sentiments of average Muslims, so as to sway them and take power and then rule despotically, in the name of God. As far as the issue of imposing Shariah law by force is concerned, the answer is clear as stated in the Holy Quran:

*There shall be no compulsion in religion*³

Thus, this Shariah law is there only to be obeyed by people by their own volition. There can be no coercion or force. The idea that a Muslim government can impose Islamic law on the population is absurd. The only requirement for a Muslim government that the Holy Quran provides is that it should govern with absolute justice – and that is also the ideal definition of a secular government.

Even Prophet Muhammad^{sa} gave the teaching that force should not be used to implement Shariah:

*Admonish, therefore, for thou art but an admonisher; Thou hast no authority to compel them.*⁴

This makes it clear that according to the Holy Quran the true objective of Muslims is to *admonish*, or give advice of goodness, and peacefully preach. They are not allowed to use force on anyone. As discussed earlier, a government is not even needed to be in place to “implement” Shariah. Shariah is a part of Islam and sincere and pious Muslims can follow it in any free society.

A common question arises in regard to the resolution of disputes. In the Aḥmadiyya Muslim Jamā’at, we have a Qaḍā Board and those members of the community who, of their own volition, do not wish to take their case through the processes of the common law can bring it to this Board for arbitration and resolution, in light of Islamic teachings.

Many in the West fear that there is a “Shariah creep” that is planned, and some Islamophobes tend to assume that Muslims have a hidden agenda to impose Shariah upon them. Our discussion thus far should suffice to remove such misconceptions.

However, this question leads to the broader issue of the role of government in Islam. Do Muslims believe that a government should adopt Shariah as part of their legislation?

Hazrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad has noted that the reality is that Islam advocates a secular form of government, more than any other religion. The very core of secularism is that absolute justice is practiced and this is exactly what the Holy Quran advocates:

*Allah orders you to always practice justice.*⁵

It also says:

*No amount of enmity between you and any other people, should permit you to deviate from absolute justice. Be always just that is nearer to righteousness*⁶

Therefore, according to the Holy Quran, a Muslim government is one which decides its affairs based on the principles of justice and does not permit decisions to be biased due to religion, creed, caste, or sex. This also nullifies the allegation of an Islamic

Shariah law that can be “imposed” on non-Muslim citizens of a country. If absolute justice is the central theme of the government, how could Islamic law be *imposed* upon non-Muslims?

This is the example we see in practice in the life of Prophet Muhammad^{sa} when he migrated to Madīnah and all communities unanimously accepted him as their leader. They agreed to make a recourse to him for all their disputes and trust his superior judgement to resolve all the contentions between various parties, in accordance with their own religious principles, as agreed to in the Treaty of Madīnah. The Islamic law had already been revealed at that time. When the Jews came to him for decisions, without exception, every time he enquired from them: “Would you like your dispute to be settled according to the Jewish law or Islamic law or through arbitration?” Prophet Muhammad^{sa} never imposed Islamic law on a non-agreeing party, which did not belong to the faith of Islam. This is indeed the absolute justice that the Holy Quran requires any Islamic government to employ.

This, of course, was the practice adhered to, at the time of Prophet Muhammad^{sa}. However, in the modern age, when there are numerous groups

belonging to various faiths living under the same government, it would not be possible to make different laws for different groups. Instead, what the example of Prophet Muhammad^{sa} shows is that a secular form of government, i.e. based on principles of absolute justice, and non-discriminatory on the basis of creed, color, race, etc. should be established with laws applicable to all citizens through a democratic process.

Therefore, Shariah law is not a law that can be “imposed” on others by force; nor is it something that can be enacted arbitrarily, without the creation of a suitable and salutary environment in the society for its implementation.

DOES SHARIAH LAW IMPOSE HARSH PUNISHMENTS?

Having understood what Shariah is, it now becomes easier for the reader to understand some of the prescribed punishments in Shariah. Critics of Islam speak about death by stoning, beheading, flogging, amputation of limbs, and other punishments, for crimes that are otherwise very

insignificant in nature. The reality is that none of these punishments can be meted out in a corrupt society, as the extremists have wrong-headedly done. Further, many of these punishments such as death by stoning for adultery do not even have any basis whatsoever in the Holy Quran. The extremists tend to follow the self-styled stern opinions of some of the medieval scholars, on many occasions, to mete out their arbitrary punishments that have no grounds in the Holy Quran or the practice of Prophet Muhammad^{sa}.

This short treatise is not the place for a lengthy note on each of these punishments. However, in order to shed some light on this issue, let us take the example of the punishment for theft in Islam. The Holy Quran says:

*And as for the man who steals and the woman who steals, cut off their hands in retribution of their offence as an exemplary punishment from Allah. And Allah is Mighty, Wise.*⁷

To fully understand the purport of this verse, the Islamic philosophy of punishment has to first be

examined, in the context of Islamic moral teachings. As we have shown earlier, Islam endeavours to form a society that practices high moral values in everyday life. That is exactly what Prophet Muhammad^{sa} did.

In fact, Prophet Muhammad^{sa} took unimaginable pains to create such a society. He, along with his followers, sacrificed everything in this pursuit, as is expressed by the following verses:

*So haply thou wilt grieve thyself to death for sorrow after them if they believe not in this discourse.*⁸

*Surely, a Messenger has come unto you from among yourselves; grievous to him is that you should fall into trouble; he is ardently desirous of your welfare; and to the believers he is compassionate, merciful.*⁹

This resulted in the creation of a society practising high moral values in the early days of Islam. Once a society rises to such moral and ethical heights, and crimes of this nature become rare and is looked

upon as completely against the norm that is keeping the social equilibrium, that is the scenario when some of these harsh punishments can be meted out in certain cases. Without the fulfillment of this condition in a society, as described above, if such punishments are given effect to, there would be much injustice and it cannot be attributed to the teachings of Islam. Islam condemns such injustices. For instance, if a person steals because hunger compels him, no such punishment is to be meted out to him.¹⁰

It was in the context of having created such a society that Prophet Muhammad^{sa} is reported to have said:

*The world is a prison for the believer and a paradise for the disbeliever.*¹¹

This is not a reference to a prison made out of coercion. On the contrary, this is a metaphorical “prison” of self-restraint and piety that is self-imposed by a devout Muslim on his or her own self, to keep away from all immoral, illegal, and

unethical acts. If a society of such individuals has not been created, then the above punishment can not, and must not, be meted out. At the same time, it would be extremely rare to find individuals deserving of such a harsh punishment in such a society.

We see examples of this from the time of Prophet Muhammad^{sa}. During his time, more often than not those people who received such harsh punishments themselves came forward and told him that they have committed such crimes and asked for the punishment in this world so as to absolve themselves in this world and to be forgiven in the Hereafter.¹²

In this ideally reformed society, not only would it be next to impossible to find individuals who deserve these punishments, but crime itself would almost disappear from such society. Hazrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad^{rh} once remarked on the specific issue of cutting off of hands of those who steal by saying that the philosophy of law is to protect the innocent. If a law fails to protect the innocent for the sake of showing mercy to the criminal, it must be considered inadequate for the need of the society. In

contrast, if a law appears to be barbaric but the harsh punishments meted out are so few and far between with the ultimate result that the public at large are saved from daily harassments of criminals, then this law is much more beneficial. These things have to be considered before the Islamic point of view is well-understood.

On top of that, Islam upholds a high standard for testimony against crime as Hazrat Mirza Tahir Ahmadth says:

...the system of evidence as proposed by Islam, is so strict and so deeply bonded with the sense of morality that a witness is required to hold certain moral values. In any immoral society...where witnesses can be bought or influenced...where the moral standard unfortunately to our detriment is very low, Islamic laws cannot be implemented. It is wrong to implement any law in the name of Islam before preparing that atmosphere. It would be like trying to plant a tree of cherry in the heart of the desert. The atmosphere in the desert is not promotive to the growth of cherries...So, Islam not only speaks of laws. It's a religion. So, it speaks of the preparation for the implementation of laws as well. This is why according to

*Islam the Prophets first attend to the moral values of the country. They transform the society, raise the standard to a high degree. Then to maintain that standard and to safeguard its values, some stern measures are taken which are very seldom applied in reality. But the society in bargain is much happier and safe.*¹³

DOES ISLAM ALLOW FREEDOM OF SPEECH?

When discussing Shariah, a common allegation that further helps develop the narrative that Islam is an oppressive religion is that it does not allow freedom of speech and freedom of expression. This however is a gross injustice to Islam. Freedom of conscience is one of humanity's most precious heritage. In fact, a religion which does not give unqualified recognition to this right of human beings, brings them down to a much-degraded position. The following verses of the Holy Quran demonstrate how Islam advocates freedom of speech and conscience:

*And say, 'It is the truth from your Lord; wherefore let him who will, believe, and let him who will, disbelieve.'*¹⁴

*Say, 'O ye men, now has the truth come to you from your Lord. So whosoever follows the guidance, follows it only for the good of his own soul, and whosoever errs, errs only against it. And I am not a keeper over you.'*¹⁵

*There should be no compulsion in religion. Surely, right has become distinct from wrong; so whosoever refuses to be led by those who transgress, and believes in Allah, has surely grasped a strong handle which knows no breaking. And Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.*¹⁶

The above injunctions are not mere words. They were carried into actual practice by Prophet Muhammad^{sa} and his companions, even if following such divine ordinances meant a serious financial loss to them. Let us illustrate this point with three examples.

Before the arrival of Islam in Madīnah, the Aus and Khazraj tribes had a highly superstitious and degrading practice that if a father remained childless for a long time he would take a pledge that if a son were born to him, he would have him converted to Judaism and actually raised up by the Jews. When the Jewish tribe, Banū Nadhīr, due to their repeated acts of deceit were ordered to leave Madīnah, they were ready to take a large number of boys with them who belonged to the above two tribes. The Aus and Khazraj tribes, who had since then embraced Islam resented their own children being taken away by the Jews and insisted on their being kept back and converted to Islam, by force, if necessary. This became a delicate situation when the dispute arose regarding the custody of the boys – whether they were to remain with their real parents, or their adopted parents. Muslim parents could not entertain the idea of allowing their own sons to go into banishment with the Jews. The Jews on the other hand were equally insistent on taking them along.

When the dispute was brought to Prophet Muhammad^{sa}, he made a decision using the golden

principle of the Holy Quran that there should be no use of force in matters of religion and conscience. Hence, the choice was left to the youth themselves. They were allowed to go with the Jews if they themselves so liked; and many freely chose not to change their religion. The whole history of religion fails to produce such a noble example of religious tolerance and freedom of conscience. These young men were the kith and kin of the Muslim tribes in Madīnah. The Jewish tribe, on the other hand, was utterly at the mercy of the Muslims. The Muslims could have compelled them to hand over their own children but this was against the religion of Islam.

This is obviously not a solitary example of the broad-mindedness which the Muslims displayed in religious matters. Asbāq, a Christian slave of Hazrat ‘Umar^{ra}, narrates that he tried to persuade him on several occasions to accept Islam but he always refused and when his persistent refusal to accept Islam would hurt the Khalīfa, the latter consoled himself by reciting this verse of the Holy Quran, “There is no compulsion in religion”. Such was the importance of freedom of speech and conscience in Islam. If extremist groups openly act against these

teachings, then the religion and teachings of Islam cannot be held accountable for their un-Islamic behaviour.

The third example entails another subject that is much misunderstood by Muslims and non-Muslims alike and that is in regard to blasphemy. The Holy Quran says:

*And He has already revealed to you in the Book that, when you hear the Signs of Allah being denied and mocked at, sit not with them until they engage in a talk other than that; for in that case you would be like them. Surely, Allah will assemble the hypocrites and the disbelievers in Hell, all together.*¹⁷

*And when thou seest those who engage in vain discourse concerning Our Signs, then turn thou away from them until they engage in a discourse other than that. And if Satan cause thee to forget, then sit not, after recollection, with the unjust people.*¹⁸

Here the Muslims are clearly commanded that if someone commits blasphemy and makes fun of their faith, or God, or even Prophet Muhammad^{sa} himself, he should just turn away and leave such a place where blasphemy is being committed. At no occasion are Muslims instructed to become violent or react aggressively.

A great form of blasphemy for Muslims today is one made against the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{sa}. The Holy Quran specifically mentions this, too, when it quotes the words of ‘Abdullāh bin Ubayy bin Salūl, who is known in the history of Islam as the *chief of the hypocrites*. Once, when returning from an expedition, ‘Abdullāh said in front of others that the moment they return to Madīnah, the noblest among them would expel the meanest among them. The Holy Quran records this as follows:

*They say, ‘If we return to Madīnah, the one most honourable will surely drive out therefrom the one most mean;’ while true honour belongs to Allah and to His Messenger and the believers; but the hypocrites know not.*¹⁹

These words were so offensive to the Muslims, and because of this utterance their tempers were running so high, that no less a person than the son of ‘Abdullāh came to Prophet Muhammad^{sa} seeking permission to kill his father. However, Prophet Muhammad^{sa} refused to grant him his request, and forbade others from harming ‘Abdullāh.

‘Abdullāh continued to live his life peacefully despite the above incident, but when he died, Prophet Muhammad^{sa} gave his own shirt to be used as a shroud to cover his body. In addition to that, Prophet Muhammad^{sa} decided to lead his funeral prayer. Such an act of forgiveness and compassion was so astounding that some companions did not understand the wisdom behind this decision. Hazrat ‘Umar^{ra} even came to Prophet Muhammad^{sa} to express his unease. The narration is as follows:

Allah’s Messenger^{sa} had hardly got up to observe the prayer for [‘Abdullāh bin Ubayy] that ‘Umar^{ra} stood up and caught hold of the garment of Allah’s Messenger^{sa} and said: “Allah’s Messenger^{sa}, are you going to conduct prayer for this man, whereas Allah has forbidden you to offer prayer for him?” Thereupon, Allah’s Messenger^{sa}

said: Allah has given me an option as He has said: 'You may beg pardon for them or you may not beg pardon for them, and even if you beg pardon for them seventy times' [Allah will never forgive them], and I am going to make an addition to the [number of] seventy". He was a hypocrite and Allah's Messenger^{sa} offered prayer for him...²⁰

This was the great and noble example of Prophet Muhammad^{sa} who chose to seek forgiveness more than seventy times for a person who insulted him publicly in the cruellest manner. Therefore, it is utterly unjust to insinuate that Islam does not tolerate freedom of speech.

IS ALLAH AN IMPERSONAL GOD?

SINCE TIME IMMEMORIAL, Christian critics of Islam have been arguing that the way God has been presented in the Holy Quran is impersonal as God is not called the “Father”, unlike the Bible. This is a very old allegation that was even being made more than a hundred years ago during the days of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the Promised Messiah^{as}. A Christian presented this argument in a book and the Promised Messiah^{as} responded to him effectively in his book, *Nūrul Quran*.

The Promised Messiah^{as} reasons that the first thing that is surprising about this persistent discussion on the word “Father” is that the critic has not considered what honour and greatness the lexicons have attributed to this word. We must judge every word based on the position assigned to

it by a lexicon. We cannot give it more honour than is accorded it in a lexicon. Even when discussing the Word of God, we consult the lexicons to improve our understanding of the words and usage.

In this case, the lexicon says that when a person is born of the seed of another, the person who drops the seed and has no further connection with his birth, is called his *abb* (Father). The Promised Messiah^{as} then notes:

If it should be desired to indicate that Almighty God is Himself the Conscious Creator of a person, and Himself leads him towards perfection, and out of His great mercy bestows appropriate bounties on him, and is Himself his Guardian and Supporter, the lexicon does not permit that these connotations may be expressed by the employment of the word 'Father'; the lexicon provides another term for the expression of this concept, and that word is Rabb... We are not at all entitled to invent our own lexicon, and must follow the division of words established by God from the beginning.¹

What is more is that the word "Father" is derogatory and disrespectful when applied to God because it does not connote nurturing and love for

another. The Promised Messiah^{as} gives the example of a goat that mates with a she-goat and deposits its seed, or a bull that satisfies its lust with a cow and turns away from it without any thought of a calf that will be born out of it, or a pig satisfies its lust and has no idea that this action would result in the birth of a piglet. Each of these animals does this and is called the “Father” of its young.

What is remarkable is that the word *abb* does not imply that a father has to take any action after dropping the seed. In fact, this word does not even necessarily imply any desire to have progeny, and all that the lexicons say is that a person who drops the seed is called *abb*, based on this fact alone.

In light of this, how can it be possible for us to apply such a term to the All-Powerful God, Whose works are manifested by His perfect actions, knowledge and power? How can the same word which is used in the ordinary sense for a bull and for a pig, should be used in a special sense for God Al-Mighty? It is only some among the Christians who can come up with such arguments and claim at the same time that the Islamic concept of God is impersonal.

On the contrary, the Holy Quran says:

...celebrate the praises of Allah as eagerly as you used to celebrate the praises of your forefathers, or even with greater eagerness²

In other words, Allah should not just be remembered or thought of as a father figure. Instead, He should be so personal that He should have a status greater than that of a father in the eyes of every Muslim.

IS THE HOLY QURAN MORE VIOLENT THAN THE BIBLE?

IN HIS BOOK, *Answering Jihad*, Dr. Qureshi writes that the Bible is a very different book as compared to the Holy Quran, and it “recounts many events not endorsed by God”. Hence, only those battles which were commanded by God in the Bible should be compared with the Holy Quran. He gives the example of Genesis 34 where Jacob’s sons are mentioned as seeking revenge from the men of a Canaanite city as one of them raped their sister. Dr. Qureshi argues that this is not sanctioned by God, as compared to Deuteronomy 20:16-18 which refers to specific commands by God for violence.

The problem with this argument is that the account of Jacob’s sons in Gen. 34 does not show God condemning such actions either. Even though

there is no specific phrase there, which says that “God approves the violence” committed by Jacob’s sons, the fact remains that this story is mentioned in the Torah – a holy book for the Christians – and the lack of condemnation of such violence is a form of approval in and of itself.

If the story had been mentioned just as an historical account in a book of history, this argument could have made some sense. But the Bible is not just a book of history. It is a holy book about holy people of God and Jacob was one such holy man. In Gen. 35, following the horrific and brutal actions of Jacob’s sons, the Biblical God appears to be unaware of their heinous crimes and during a journey, it says, “a terror from God fell upon the cities all around them”.¹ Is this how a Just God is supposed to ignore such genocidal crimes committed by the same people he is protecting by casting “terror” on the cities that happen to be located around them?

Not only that, but God says to Jacob:

I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall come from you, and kings shall spring from you. The land that I gave to Abraham

*and Isaac I will give to you, and I will give the land to your offspring after you.*²

The same people who committed such violence are honored by God and given lavish promises. If this is not a condoning by the God of the Bible for their crimes, then what is it?

It should be noted here that the Quran speaks positively about Jacob^{as} as a great Prophet of God, and Muslims are told by God to revere all the Prophets sent by God. However, Muslims also believe that the Bible's message has been interpolated over time by human hands. As such, our criticisms above should be seen as a criticism of what the human authors of the Bible have written, not a criticism of the Prophets of God.

It is further argued by some Christians that the example of Jesus^{as} is one of grace and mercy and that this example replaces Old Testament teachings. Since Jesus^{as} never fought any wars and never committed any violence and even died for the sins of his enemies, we are now expected to follow his model. The problem with this position is that there is an internal inconsistency here. The same inconsistency was so strongly felt by an early

Christian known as Marcion that he started a sect that believed in 2 Gods - a God of the Old Testament and a God of the New Testament. He could not reconcile the actions of the Old Testament God and those of what he believed to be the God of the New Testament. At the very least, this position is more consistent in light of Christian differentiation of violence in the Old Testament as compared to the New Testament.

Anyhow, this is not the case with most Christians today. They believe that Jesus is the same as the God of the Old Testament, as God is actually a Trinity or a Triune God - God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. God the Son is Jesus Christ^{as}, which means that all of the Old Testament violence, whether ordered directly (as in Deut. 20:16-18) or ignored completely (as in Gen. 35), was sanctioned by Jesus^{as} himself as he is the co-eternal, co-equal partner of God, according to Christian doctrine.

As a result, the distinction between Old Testament and New Testament teachings in relation to violence is simply unwarranted and invented by the Church. According to the Christian concept of God, Jesus^{as} was the one who ordered the violence of the Old Testament. In fact, Jesus^{as} himself says

that he did not come to abolish the law, but to fulfill it (Matt. 5:17), and that he expects Christians to follow his example (John 13:15). This means that the Torah should not be set aside by Christians as *Old Testament* as it gives the impression that it has become *obsolete* whereas Jesus^{as} himself did not consider it obsolete. Therefore, in light of these statements of Jesus^{as}, all the teachings and commandments of the Torah are applicable to Christians today just as they did in the past.

At one point, this is illustrated when Jesus^{as} rebuked the Jews for not keeping the commandment of Moses to kill those children who are disobedient to their parents (Mk 7:9-10). If he considered the law *old* or *obsolete*, he would not have made this statement.

There are numerous examples of the kind of violence that *God-Jesus* sanctioned and ordered in the Old Testament, and they are such that they cannot be attributed to a Beneficent and Merciful God. Here are a few examples:

1. **Exodus 21:20-21:** *When a slave-owner strikes a male or female slave with a rod and the slave dies immediately, the owner shall be punished.*

But if the slave survives a day or two, there is no punishment; for the slave is the owner's property.

2. **Leviticus 20:27:** *A man or a woman who is a medium or a wizard shall be put to death; they shall be stoned to death, their blood is upon them.*
3. **Deuteronomy 2:31-35:** *The Lord said to me, "See, I have begun to give Sihon and his land over to you. Begin now to take possession of his land." So when Sihon came out against us, he and all his people for battle at Jahaz, the Lord our God gave him over to us; and we struck him down, along with his offspring and all his people. At that time we captured all his towns, and in each town we utterly destroyed men, women, and children. We left not a single survivor. Only the livestock we kept as spoil for ourselves, as well as the plunder of the towns that we had captured.*
4. **Deuteronomy 7:2:** *And when the Lord your God gives them over to you and you defeat them, then you must utterly destroy them. Make no covenant with them and show them no mercy.*

5. **1 Samuel 15:** *Now go, attack the Amalekites and totally destroy all that belongs to them. Do not spare them; put to death men and women, children and infants, cattle and sheep, camels and donkeys.*
6. **Deuteronomy 17:2-5:** *If there is found among you, in one of your towns that the Lord your God is giving you, a man or woman who does what is evil in the sight of the Lord your God, and transgresses his covenant by going to serve other gods and worshiping them—whether the sun or the moon or any of the host of heaven, which I have forbidden—and if it is reported to you or you hear of it, and you make a thorough inquiry, and the charge is proved true that such an abhorrent thing has occurred in Israel, then you shall bring out to your gates that man or that woman who has committed this crime and you shall stone the man or woman to death.*
7. **Deuteronomy 20:10-18:** *When you draw near to a town to fight against it, offer it terms of peace. If it accepts your terms of peace and surrenders to you, then all the people in it shall serve you at forced labor. If it does not submit to you peacefully, but makes war against you, then*

you shall besiege it; and when the Lord your God gives it into your hand, you shall put all its males to the sword. You may, however, take as your booty the women, the children, livestock, and everything else in the town, all its spoil. You may enjoy the spoil of your enemies, which the Lord your God has given you. Thus you shall treat all the towns that are very far from you, which are not towns of the nations here. But as for the towns of these peoples that the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance, you must not let anything that breathes remain alive. You shall annihilate them—the Hittites and the Amorites, the Canaanites and the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites—just as the Lord your God has commanded, so that they may not teach you to do all the abhorrent things that they do for their gods, and you thus sin against the Lord your God.

8. **Deuteronomy 21:18-21:** *If someone has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey his father and mother, who does not heed them when they discipline him, then his father and his mother shall take hold of him and bring him out to the elders of his town at the gate of that*

place. They shall say to the elders of his town, "This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious. He will not obey us. He is a glutton and a drunkard." Then all the men of the town shall stone him to death. So you shall purge the evil from your midst; and all Israel will hear, and be afraid.

9. **Leviticus 21:9:** *When the daughter of a priest profanes herself through prostitution, she profanes her father; she shall be burned to death.*
10. **Leviticus 24:13-16:** *The Lord said to Moses, saying: ...And speak to the people of Israel, saying: Anyone who curses God shall bear the sin. One who blasphemes the name of the Lord shall be put to death; the whole congregation shall stone the blasphemer. Aliens as well as citizens, when they blaspheme the Name, shall be put to death.*

In the chapter on Shariah, we discussed the philosophy of certain harsh punishments in Islam. However, their harshness pales in front of some of the laws of the Torah quoted above. These examples are just a few among many which demonstrate that the Bible is a very violent book.

In contrast, the Holy Quran says:

Take to forgiveness, and enjoin kindness, and turn away from the ignorant³

And the recompense of an injury is an injury the like thereof; but whoso forgives and his act brings about reformation, his reward is with Allah. Surely, He loves not the wrongdoers.⁴

O ye who believe! be steadfast in the cause of Allah, bearing witness in equity; and let not a people's enmity incite you to act otherwise than with justice. Be always just, that is nearer to righteousness. And fear Allah. Surely, Allah is aware of what you do.⁵

And if they incline towards peace, incline thou also towards it, and put thy trust in Allah. Surely, it is He Who is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.⁶

O mankind! there has indeed come to you an exhortation from your Lord and a cure for whatever disease there is in the hearts, and a guidance and a mercy to the believers.⁷

*... and lower thy wing of mercy for the believers.*⁸

*And We are gradually revealing of the Quran that which is a healing and a mercy to the believers...*⁹

*You are the best people raised for the good of mankind; you enjoin what is good and forbid evil and believe in Allah.*¹⁰

Hence, the essential teachings of the Holy Quran are based on peace, mercy, and compassion for others.

This comparison of the Holy Quran with the Bible in terms of violence has also been done by independent researchers. A software engineer, Tom Anderson, processed the texts of the three holy books - the Old Testament, the New Testament, and the Holy Quran - to find out which contained more violence. According to an article on his findings published by *The Independent*, he used a text analytics software named Odin Text, and categorized words into eight emotions - Joy, Anticipation, Anger, Disgust, Sadness, Surprise, Fear/Anxiety and Trust. The analysis found that "the Bible scored higher for anger and much lower for trust than the Holy Quran".¹¹

His analysis also showed that killing and destruction was more frequently found in Christian texts than the Holy Quran. In his blog post, Anderson writes:

Killing and destruction are referenced slightly more often in the New Testament (2.8%) than in the Holy Quran (2.1%), but the Old Testament clearly leads—more than twice that of the Holy Quran—in mentions of destruction and killing (5.3%).

He later summarizes:

In fact, of the three texts, the content in the Old Testament appears to be the most violent.

Furthermore, the author was “surprised” to find that the Holy Quran mentioned the concept of mercy far more than the Christian texts.¹² This analysis is yet further evidence that critics of Islam cherry pick verses of the Holy Quran due to their bias.

Coming back to the specific comparison between Jesus^{as} and Prophet Muhammad^{sa}, one more thing that should be kept in mind is that this is not a fair

comparison at all. While Jesus^{as} spent a life in subjugation according to the Gospels, Prophet Muhammad^{sa} attained authority and power near the end of his life and forgave his bitterest opponents. Jesus^{as} never had the chance to do that, as he never gained any power. His ascendancy to power is left to be demonstrated in future on the occasion of his long-awaited “second coming”. Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as} expresses this sentiment when he writes:

...the moral qualities of Haḍrat Masīḥ [Jesus Christ^{as}], peace be on him, cannot be established to a perfect degree... rather... they cannot be established even with regard to one type. Because the Masīḥ showed patience under distress, the perfection of this quality would have been demonstrated only if the Masīḥ had obtained authority and power over his persecutors and had forgiven his oppressors from the bottom of his heart, as did Haḍrat Khātamul-Anbiyā’ [Seal of Prophets, in reference to, Prophet Muhammad], peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, who obtained complete victory over the Makkans and others and after virtually having his sword upon their throats, forgave them their crimes, and he punished only those few who had been condemned by a

special decree of Allah the Almighty to undergo punishment. Besides these eternally accursed few, every sworn enemy was pardoned. And having achieved victory, he announced to them: "No blame shall lie on you this day".¹³

Hence, there is no doubt that Prophet Muhammad^{sa} cannot fairly be compared to Jesus^{as} as the former's forgiveness and magnanimity was properly demonstrated by his ascendancy to a kingdom. Regarding Jesus^{as}, we cannot possibly know what he would have done if he had come to power. Would he have taken revenge on his enemies? Would he have put them all to the sword? We cannot know because it never happened. In the case of Prophet Muhammad^{sa}, it did happen and we saw that he forgave his enemies, and he demonstrated that he was truly the prince of peace.

EPILOGUE

THIS BOOK OBVIOUSLY does not attempt a full-scale exegesis of the Holy Quran. Although the questions raised by the critics and Islamophobes have been addressed fully within their scope, yet we have done this in a concise manner. As we hinted earlier, the study of the Holy Quran is a vast field, with various branches. By responding to the questions of critics, we have barely touched upon some areas of this field. It is our hope that this book would allow the sincere seekers of truth to explore Islam fairly and without prejudice.

For a deeper study of the subjects discussed in this book, and a fuller and deeper understanding of Islam, we recommend the following books:

1. *The Philosophy of the Teachings of Islam*
2. *The British Government and Jihad*
3. *World Crisis and the Pathway to Peace*

4. *Islam's Response to Contemporary Issues*
5. *Murder in the Name of Allah*
6. *Islam and Slavery*

All of these books are available on www.alislam.org. It is our prayer that God makes the truth prevail and falsehood vanish. Āmīn.

Peace be on those who follow the guidance!

APPENDIX I: VERSES OF PEACE

Below are selected verses of the Holy Quran on peace, absolute justice, mercy, and compassion for others.

PEACE

[8:62] And if they incline towards peace, incline thou also towards it, and put thy trust in Allah. Surely, it is He Who is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.

[49:10] And if two parties of believers fight *against each other*, make peace between them; then if *after* that one of them transgresses against the other, fight the party that transgresses until it returns to the command of Allah. Then if it returns, make peace between them with equity, and act justly. Verily, Allah loves the just.

ABSOLUTE JUSTICE

[4:59] Verily, Allah commands you to make over the trusts to those entitled to them, and that, when you judge between men, you judge with justice. And surely excellent is that with which Allah admonishes you! Allah is All-Hearing, All-Seeing.

[4:136] O ye who believe! be strict in observing justice, *and be* witnesses for Allah, even though it be against yourselves or *against* parents and kindred. Whether he be rich or poor, Allah is more regardful of them both *than you are*. Therefore follow not low desires so that you may *be able* to act equitably. And if you conceal *the truth* or evade *it*, then *remember that* Allah is well aware of what you do.

[5:9] O ye who believe! be steadfast in the cause of Allah, bearing witness in equity; and let not a people's enmity incite you to act otherwise than with justice. Be *always* just, that is nearer to righteousness. And fear Allah. Surely, Allah is aware of what you do.

[16:91] Verily, Allah enjoins justice, and the doing of good to others; and giving like kindred; and forbids indecency, and manifest evil, and wrongful transgression. He admonished you that you may take heed.

MERCY

[10:58] O mankind! there has indeed come to you an exhortation from your Lord and a cure for whatever *disease* there is in the hearts, and a guidance and a mercy to the believers.

[15:89] ...and lower thy wing of *mercy* for the believers.

[17:83] And We are *gradually* revealing of the Quran that which is a healing and a mercy to the believers

COMPASSION FOR OTHERS

[3:111] You are the best people raised for the good of mankind; you enjoin what is good and forbid evil and believe in Allah.

[2:84] And *remember the time* when We took a covenant from the children of Israel: 'You shall worship *nothing* but Allah and *show* kindness to parents and to kindred and orphans and the poor, and speak to men kindly and observe Prayer, and pay the Zakat;' then you turned away in aversion, except a few of you.

[4:37] And worship Allah and associate naught with Him, and *show* kindness to parents, and to kindred, and orphans, and the needy, and to the neighbour that is a kinsman and the neighbour that is a stranger, and the companion by *your* side, and the wayfarer, and those whom your right hands possess. Surely, Allah loves not the proud *and* the boastful.

[7:200] Take to forgiveness, and enjoin kindness, and turn away from the ignorant.

[30:39] So give to the kinsman his due, and to the needy, and to the wayfarer. That is best for those who seek the favour of Allah, and it is they who will prosper.

[17:24] Thy Lord has commanded, "Worship none but Him, and *show* kindness to parents. If one of them or both of them attain old age with thee, never say unto them any word expressive of disgust nor reproach them, but address them with excellent speech.

[17:25] "And lower to them the wing of humility out of tenderness. And say, 'My Lord, have mercy on them even as they nourished me in *my* childhood.'"

[17:29] And if thou hast to turn away from them while seeking thy Lord's mercy for which thou hopest, *even then* speak to them a gentle word.

[49:12] O ye who believe! let not one people deride *another* people, who may be better than they, nor let women *deride other* women, who may be better than they. And defame not your own people, nor call *one another* by nicknames. Bad *indeed* is evil reputation after *the profession of* belief; and those who repent not are the wrongdoers.

[31:19] 'And turn not thy cheek away from men in pride nor walk in the earth haughtily; Surely, Allah loves not any arrogant boaster.

[25:64] And the servants of the Gracious God are those who walk on the earth in a dignified manner, and when the ignorant address them, they say, 'Peace!'

APPENDIX II: TRADITIONS OF PEACE

The following Ahādīth are taken from the book, “Gardens of the Righteous” (translated by Sir Zafrullah Khan^{ra}). The traditions are numbered in accordance with the numbers attached to them in the book. They emphasize kindness, compassion, and love for others.

Abū Hurairah^{ra} relates that the Holy Prophet^{sa} said: Allah, the Lord of honour and glory, will say on the Day of Judgment: Son of Adam, I was sick and you did not visit me. The man will exclaim: Lord, how could I visit You and You are Lord of the worlds! Allah will say: Did you now know that My servant So and So was sick and you did not visit him. Did you not realize that if you had visited him you would have found Me with him? Son of Adam, I

asked you for food and you did not feed Me. The man will exclaim: Lord, you could I feed You while You are the Lord of the worlds! Allah will say: Did you not know that My servant So and So asked you for food and you did not feed him? Did you not realize that if you had fed him you would have found your reward with Me? Son of Adam, I asked you for drink and you did not give Me to drink. The man will exclaim: Lord, how could I have given You to drink when You are the Lord of the worlds! Allah will say: My servant So and So asked you for a drink and you did not give him to drink. Did you not realize that if you had given him to drink you would have found its reward with Me? (Muslim) #900

Abū Dharr^{ra} relates: I asked the Holy Prophet^{sa}: What is most meritorious? He said: Faith in Allah and striving in His cause. I asked: The freeing of which slave is best? He said: Of that one whom the master likes best and whose value is highest. I asked: If one is not able to do that? He said: Then help someone with his work, or make something for someone who is not able to make it himself. I asked:

If one should not have the strength? He said: Restrain thyself from doing harm to anyone for that also is charity towards thyself (Bukhārī and Muslim) #117

Abu Hurairah^{ra} related that the Holy Prophet^{sa} said: O Muslim women, let not a neighbor refrain from sending her neighbor even a goat's shank (Bukhārī and Muslim) #124

Abu Hurairah^{ra} relates that the Holy Prophet^{sa} said: A man proceeding along a track became very thirsty. Arriving at a well he descended into it and came out after taking a drink and saw a dog with its tongue lolling out trying to lick up mud from extreme thirst. The man thought this dog is suffering from thirst as I was suffering. So he descended once more into the well, filled his leather sock with water and came up holding it by his teeth and gave the dog a drink. Allah appreciated his action and forgave his sins. The Holy Prophet^{sa} was asked: Messenger of Allah^{sa}, are we rewarded for kindness to animals also? He answered: There is a reward for kindness to every living thing (Bukhārī

and Muslim). Bukhārī's version concludes with: Allah appreciated his action, forgave his sins and admitted him to Paradise. Another version is: A dog was going round the brink of a well in an extremity of thirst, when a loose woman of the Bani Israel espied it. She lowered her leather sock into the well, drew up some water and gave the dog to drink. She was forgiven on account of this. #126

Jābir^{ra} relates that the Holy Prophet^{sa} said: If a Muslim plants a tree, then whatever is eaten from it is charity on his part and whatever is stolen is charity and whatever is subtracted from it is charity (Muslim). Another version is: If a Muslim plants a tree or sows a field and men and beasts and birds eat from it, all of it is charity on his part. #135

Abū Mūsā Ash'arī^{ra} relates that the Holy Prophet^{sa} said: Charity is incumbent upon every Muslim. He was asked: If a person should have nothing? He answered: He should work with his hands to his own benefit and also give alms. If he is not able to work? He should help a needy helpless one. If he cannot do even that? He should urge others to

goodness. If he lacks that also? He should restrain himself from doing evil. That too is charity (Bukhārī and Muslim). #141

‘Ā’ishah^{ra} relates that some desert Arabs came to the Holy Prophet^{sa} and asked: Do you kiss your children? He answered: Yes. They said: We never kiss them. He said: Can I help it if Allah has stripped your hearts of compassion? (Bukhārī and Muslim) #228

Jarīr ibn ‘Abdullāh^{ra} relates that the Holy Prophet^{sa} said: Allah has no mercy for him who has no mercy for his fellows (Bukhārī and Muslim). #229

Abū Qatādah Ḥarīth ibn Rabī’ relates that the Holy Prophet^{sa} said: I stand up to lead the Prayer having it in mind to lengthen it. Then I hear the cry of an infant and I shorten the Prayer fearing lest I should make it burdensome for its mother (Bukhārī). #233

Anas^{ra} relates that the Holy Prophet^{sa} said: No one believes truly until he desires for his brother that which he desires for himself (Bukhārī and Muslim). #238

Anas^{ra} relates that the Holy Prophet^{sa} said: Go to the help of your brother whether he commits a wrong or is wronged. Someone asked: Messenger of Allah, I would help him if he is wronged, but tell me how shall I help him if he is committing a wrong? He answered: Stop him from committing a wrong; that is helping him (Bukhārī). #239

Abū Hurairah^{ra} relates that the Holy Prophet^{sa} said: Allah will cover up the faults on the Day of Judgment of him who covers up the faults of another in this world (Muslim). #242

Abū Hurairah^{ra} relates that the Holy Prophet^{sa} said: Charity is incumbent upon every human limb every day on which the sun rises. To bring about just reconciliation between two contestants is charity. Helping a person to mount his animal, or to load his baggage on to it is charity. A good word is charity. Every step taken towards the mosque for salat is charity. To remove anything from the street that causes inconvenience is charity (Bukhārī and Muslim). #250

Umm Kulthūm^{ra} relates that she heard the Holy Prophet^{sa} say: He who brings about peace between people and attains good or says that which is good is not a liar (Bukhārī and Muslim). Muslim's version adds: I did not hear him let people have a latitude in what they said except in three situations: war, making peace, and talk between husband and wife. #251

'Ā'ishah^{ra} relates that the Holy Prophet^{sa} heard two men contending with one another in loud voices outside his door. One of them begged the other to agree to reduce the amount of the debt he owed him and to deal kindly with him. The other said: By Allah, I shall not do it. The Holy Prophet^{sa} went out to them and asked: Which is the one who swears by Allah he will not act kindly? The man said: It is I, Messenger of Allah, and for him is whatever he prefers (Bukhārī and Muslim). #252

Sahl ibn Sa'd^{ra} relates that the Holy Prophet^{sa} said: He who takes care of an orphan, and me, will be like this in Paradise; and he raised his forefinger and middle finger by way of illustration (Bukhārī). #264

Abū Hurairah^{ra} relates that the Holy Prophet^{sa} said: He who takes care of an orphan, whether related to him or a stranger, will be like these two in Paradise; and the narrator raised his forefinger and middle finger by way of illustration (Muslim). #265

Abū Dardā'^{ra} relates that he heard the Holy Prophet^{sa} say: Look for me among the weak ones, for you are helped and provided for, on account of the weak ones among you (Abu Daud). #274

Abū Hurairah^{ra} relates that the Holy Prophet^{sa} said: The most perfect of believers in the matter of faith is he whose behavior is best; and the best of you are those who behave best towards their wives (Tirmidhi). #280

Abū Dharr^{ra} relates that the Holy Prophet^{sa} said: Abu Dharr^{ra}, when you prepare broth put plenty of water in it and take care of your neighbours (Muslim). Another version is: My friend advised me: When you prepare broth put plenty of water in it, then find out about the families of your neighbours and share it with them as may be suitable. #306

Abū Hurairah^{ra} relates that the Holy Prophet^{sa} called out: By Allah he does not believe, by Allah he does not believe, by Allah he does not believe. He was asked: Who does not believe, Messenger of Allah^{sa}? He said: He whose neighbor is not secure against his mischief (Bukhārī and Muslim). Muslim's version is: That one will not enter Paradise whose neighbor is not secure against his mischief. #307

Abū Hurairah^{ra} relates that the Holy Prophet said: He who believes in Allah and the Last Day must not put his neighbor to inconvenience; he who believes in Allah and the Last Day must honour his guest; and he who believes in Allah and the Last Day must speak beneficently or keep quiet (Bukhārī and Muslim). #310

Abū Shuraiḥ Khuzā'ī^{ra} relates that the Holy Prophet^{sa} said: He who believes in Allah and the Last Day should be benevolent towards his neighbor; he who believes in Allah and the Last Day should honour his guest; he who believes in Allah and the Last Day should speak beneficently or should keep quiet (Muslim). #311

‘Ā’ishah^{ra} relates that she asked the Holy Prophet: I have two neighbours; to which of them shall I send a present? He said: To the one whose door is nearer to yours (Bukhārī). #312

‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Umar^{ra} relates that the Holy Prophet^{sa} said: The best companion in the sight of Allah is he who behaves best towards his companions, and the best neighbor is he who behaves best towards his neighbours. (Tirmidhī). #313

Abū Hurairah^{ra} relates that a man came to the Holy Prophet^{sa} and asked: Messenger of Allah^{sa}, which of all the people is best entitled to kind treatment and the good companionship from me? He answered: Your mother. The man asked: And after her? He said: Your mother. And after her? He said: Your mother. And after her? Your father (Bukhārī and Muslim). Another version is: The man asked: Messenger of Allah^{sa}, who is best entitled to my good companionship? He answered: Your mother, and then your mother, and then your mother, and then your father, and then your near relations, your near relations. #318

'Abdullāh ibn Amr ibn 'Ās^{ra} relates that a man came to the Holy Prophet^{sa} and said: I wish to make a covenant with you to emigrate and fight in the cause of Allah, seeking my reward from Him. He inquired: Is either of your parents alive? The man said: Indeed, both of them. The Holy Prophet^{sa} asked him: Do you seek reward from Allah? The man said: Yes. The Holy Prophet^{sa} said: Then return to your parents and serve them well (Bukhārī and Muslim). Another version is: A man came and asked permission to join in the fighting. The Holy Prophet^{sa} asked him: Are your parents alive? The man said: Yes. He said: Then find your fighting in serving them. #323

'Abdullāh ibn Amr^{ra} relates that the Holy Prophet^{sa} said: One who reciprocates in doing good is not the one who upholds the ties of kinship. It is the one who upholds them when the other party sunders them (Bukhārī). #324

Amr ibn Shu'aib^{ra} relates on the authority of his father who heard it from his father, that the Holy Prophet^{sa} said: He who has no compassion for our

little ones and does not acknowledge the honour due to our older ones, is not of us (Abu Daud and Tirmidhī). #358

Miqdād ibn Aswad^{ra} relates: I asked the Messenger of Allah^{sa}: Tell me, if I am fighting a pagan and he cuts off one of my hands with his sword and then takes shelter behind a tree and says: I submit to Allah; shall I kill him after he has said this? He said: No. Do not kill him. I expostulated: Messenger of Allah^{sa}, even after he cuts off one of my hands and thereafter says this? He said: Do not kill him, for if you kill him, he will be in the position in which you were before you killed him, and you will be in the position in which he was before he uttered the words that he did utter (Bukhārī and Muslim). #395

‘Abdullāh ibn Amr ibn ‘Ās^{ra} relates that man asked the Holy Prophet^{sa}: What in Islam is best? He answered: To feed people and to greet everyone with the greeting of peace whether you know them or not (Bukhārī and Muslim). #553

‘Ā’ishah^{ra} relates that the Holy Prophet^{sa} said: Allah is Gentle and loves gentleness in all things (Bukhārī and Muslim). #636

Anas^{ra} relates that the Holy Prophet^{sa} said: Make things easy and do not make them hard; and cheer people up and do not repel them (Bukhārī and Muslim). #640

Jarīr ibn ‘Abdullāh^{ra} relates that he heard the Holy Prophet^{sa} say: He who lacks gentleness lacks all good (Muslim). #641

Brā’a ibn ‘Āzib^{ra} relates: The Holy Prophet^{sa} enjoined the following seven upon us: Visiting the sick, following a funeral, calling down the mercy of Allah upon one who sneezes, supporting the weak, helping the oppressed, multiplying the greeting of peace, and fulfilling vows (Bukhārī and Muslim). #850

Ibn ‘Umar^{ra} relates that the Holy Prophet^{sa} said: A woman was tormented on account of a cat which she had shut up till it died. On that account she

entered the Fire. She did not give it to eat or drink when she shut it up, nor did she leave it free to pick up its nourishment from among the rodents and insects of the earth (Bukhārī and Muslim). #1605

Ibn ‘Umar^{ra} relates that he passed by some Quraish youths who were shooting arrows at a bird they had tied down, having made a bargain with the owner of the bird that he should have every arrow of theirs that missed. When they saw Ibn ‘Umar^{ra} they dispersed. Ibn ‘Umar^{ra} said: Who has done this? May Allah’s curse be upon him who has done this. The Holy Prophet^{sa} has cursed him who makes a target of a living thing (Bukhārī and Muslim). #1606

Anas^{ra} relates that the Holy Prophet^{sa} forbade an animal being made a target (Bukhārī and Muslim). #1607

Hishām ibn Ḥakīm ibn Ḥizām relates that he passed by some non-Muslim peasants in Damascus who had been ordered to stand in the sun and over whose heads olive oil has been poured. He inquired: What is this? And was told: They are

being tormented for recovery of tax. On this Hishām said: I bear witness that the Holy Prophet^{sa} said: Allah will chastise those who torment people in this life. Then he went to the Governor and told him this, and he ordered the men to be released (Muslim). #1611

Jābir ibn ‘Abdullāh relates that the Holy Prophet^{sa} passed by a donkey that had been branded on its face and said: Allah’s curse be on him who branded it (Muslim). #1613

Ibn Mas‘ūd^{ra} relates: We were with the Holy Prophet^{sa} in the course of a journey when he drew apart and in his absence we saw a red bird which had two little ones with it. We caught them and the mother bird came and started beating the earth with its wings. By that time the Holy Prophet^{sa} returned and exclaimed: Who has distressed this bird on account of its young? Return them to her. He also noticed a mound of ants to which we had set fire. He inquired: Who has set fire to this? We answered: We have. He observed: It does not behove any to torment with fire except the Lord of the fire (Abu Daud). #1615

NOTES

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24. The Holy Quran, 22:40-41
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28. The Holy Quran, 3:65
29. The Holy Quran, 16:126
30. *Life of Muhammad^{sa}*, page 194
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