

Islam: the Religion of Peace?

Hayati AYDIN¹

Abstract

The word *islam* as a verb is derived from the infinitive Arabic triliteral root of *silm*, *salamet* (peace and security). So, if Islam is characterized by peace and salvation, how can we interpret jihad verses? This article focuses on this point. I will discuss the subject and the impact of this apparent paradox with reference to Islam according to Qur'anic texts. The interpretation of jihad that I will explore best fits the religion that is characterized by peace and salvation.

The intention of this article is to show evidence from religious sources that assert that Islam is not a religion that endorses terrorism but one that emphasizes peace and salvation.

1. INTRODUCTION

As a noun, the term *islam* is a system of beliefs revealed by Allah to Muhammad. But, as a verb, *islam* is derived from the infinitive of the transitive fourth category of verbs, namely *if'al*. *Islam* is the infinitive form *ef'ale-yüf'ilu*. The root of this also comes from the infinitive Arabic triliteral root of *silm*, *salamet* (peace and security). For this reason Islam is not only submission,² resignation³ (oneself or one's person to God or the will of God), or surrender to the will of Allah (God), as R. Bell, H. A. R. Gibb, A. J. Wensinck and some writers claim,⁴ but also has the transitive meaning (*ta'diyat*) of becoming (*sayrurat*), becoming of anything over an adjective and preterite ion (*ta'ridh*). Thus, Islam is not only submission, the believer's submission to Allah, but also enjoying peace, safety, and conveying

¹ Professor at Faculty of Divinity of Yuzuncu Yil University in Van, Turkey.

² Richard Bell, *Bell's Introduction to the Qur'an (Completely Revised and Enlarged by W. Montgomery Watt)*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1970), p. 119; H.A.R. Gibb., *Mohammedanism*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953), p. 1; Wensinck, "Müslim," *İslam Ansiklopedisi* (Encyclopedia of Islam), (Istanbul: M. E. B., 1993); Darkot Besim, "İslam," *İslam Ansiklopedisi* (Encyclopedia of Islam), (Istanbul: M. E. B., 1993).

³ T.W. Arnold, "Islam," *First Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 1987), p. 539; Faruq Sherif, *A Guide to Contents of the Qur'an* (Garnet, 1995), pp. 117-18; Thomas Patrick Hughes, *A Dictionary of Islam*, (Lahore: Premier Book House), p. 220.

⁴ Bell, *op. cit.*, p. 119; H. A. R., Gibb, *Mohammedanism*, p. 1; Wensinck, *ibid.*, Darkot, *ibid.*, H.A.R. Gibb, and J. H. Kramers, *Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Leiden and London: Brill, 1953), p. 176; *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. 6, p. 409; M. Arkoun, *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'an*, vol. 2 (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2002), p. 565.

peace to others. It is therefore not only a benefit to the individual but also to society, including that individual.

According to Mustafa Sadiq Al-Rafi'i, Arabic terms, especially those in the Qur'an, are very rich in meaning and contains many derivatives, since the words were created by Allah in their primary use. For this reason, the meaning of the word *islam* comes from its divine character.⁵ This is the *i'jaz* of the Qur'an, i.e. that inimitable ellipticism that often deliberately omits intermediate clauses in order to express the final stage of an idea as pithily and concisely as possible within the limitations of human language. This method is a peculiar, integral aspect of the Arabic language, and has reached perfection in the Qur'an.⁶

As already stated, the word *islam* is very polyvalent. But I want to focus on its meaning of "becoming" (*sayrurat*). It is this dimension that has both individual and social implications. Here, to say "aslama" means "sare zâ silmin/to find confidence and to reach safety."⁷ On the basis of this etymology, we understand, first, that to be Muslim is to find confidence and security, to find calm. Therefore, Islam gives confidence and security to the souls. For instance, the Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) wrote a letter to Haraklius that included the following crucial statement:

Feinnî ad'uka bidi'ayati al-Islam. Aslim taslim / I invite you to be Muslim. Be Muslim and find peace of mind.⁸

As seen in this letter, being a Muslim means finding peace of mind. So it is implying that, if one is a Muslim, one will attain higher states of existence that yields tranquillity and serenity, calm. To be a Muslim is to reach a new fulfilling world of the soul. Because religious terms are symbolic, the term *salam* conveys many

⁵ Mustafá Sâdiq al-Râfi'î, *Tarikh Adâb Al-Arab*, 4th ed., vol. 1 (Beirut: Dar al-kitab al-arabî, 1974), pp. 178-79.

Mustafá Sâdiq al-Râfi'î, says about this subject: "If some one seriously gives himself/herself to the mystery of the Arabic language, inquires about its words, contemplates their ways, examines their place in the language, sets each example to the places where necessary in accordance with the aim and places them according to their categories and measures, he/she obtains most of *wadh'* (the setting down, placing of nouns in first time), mysteries (of the Arabic language); (then), unbelievably, he/she unveils the wisdom that is found in the fineness of this strange language, understands that this language is the language of natural intelligence. But nature is steadily exposed to a divine plane. This language shows the origin of the perfection in it, not perfection itself. This language is virtually a miracle. If a person says that this language was established by Allah at the point of 'harmony and inspiration,' this is not an exaggeration. The impact of this is brought up in Qur'an" (al-Râfi'î, vol. 1, pp. 178-79).

⁶ See Muhammad Asad, *The Message of the Qur'an* (Gibraltar: Dar al-andalus, 1980), pp. V-VI.

⁷ See Sad al-Din Masud ibn Umar ibn Abd Allah al-Taftazani, *Tadrij al-Adani Sharh Al-Zanjani* (Istanbul: Salah Bilici. A.H. p. 24.

⁸ Abu Ja'fer Muhammad ibn 1407), p. 130; Hamidullah Muhammad, *Al-Vesaiq as-Siyasiyyah* (Beirut: Dar al-nafais, 1985), p. 109; Muhammad Hamidullah, *The Prophet of Islam* (Was translated into Turkish by: Salih Tuğ) 4th ed., vol. I (Istanbul: İrfan p.h., 1980), p. 361.

functional meanings from the angle of safety, security, and salvation. Since *salam* is evidence of being safe, secure, and a greeting in Islam, it is *salam* that comes from the same root as safety, security (*silm*). For example, the other form of this term (*salam*) is to be far from physical and spiritual disaster.⁹ The complement of this and its internal, spiritual dimension of *iman* comes from the *e-m-n* root. *E-m-n* is the soul's confidence and the disappearance of fear.¹⁰ This is why Muhammad Iqbal says: "*Iman* is not merely a passive belief in one or more propositions of a certain kind; it is living assurance begotten of a rare experience."¹¹

So, Isutsu elaborates on this meaning, namely, the meaning of becoming (*sayrurat*), and in particular that *islam* is to have a new life:

God Himself has chosen this as the name of the new Arabian religion. But it is also due to the fact that Islam, as an inner personal religious experience of each individual person, means the occurrence of an important event that marks the initial point from which real obedience and humbleness begin. It marks a decisive turning point in the life of man. A turning point the religious sense of which cuts his whole length of life into two halves (A, B) that will hence forward stand diametrically opposed to each other. Grammatically speaking, the verb *aslama* belongs to a particular group of verbs called inchoative. In other words, instead of denoting permanent nature, it signifies something new that comes into being for the first time; it marks the beginning of a new situation, the birth of new nature. Only in the participial form Muslim does it signify a more or less permanent attribute. But even then the implication is that it is an attribute which has ensued from the decisive step taken.¹²

Because Islam provides a very good spiritual condition for the soul, its rituals have an immense effect. Since the biggest *dhikr* is prayer (*salat*), the prayer transmits the human's soul from this body to a spiritual realm. Owing to this peculiarity of the prayer, the Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) said to Bilal¹³ at the time of *azan* "(O Bilal) stand up, make us quiet by *azan*."¹⁴ As Muhammad Iqbal said, the timing of the daily prayer restores self-possession to the ego by bringing it into

⁹ Abul-Qasim Husayn ibn Muhammad Al-Raghib al-Isfahani, *Al-Mufradat fi gharib al-Qur'an* (Beirut: Dar al-ma'rifa, p. 239).

¹⁰ Al-Isfahani, *op. cit.*, p. 239.

¹¹ Mohammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (Lahor: Shaikh Muhammad Ashraf, 1954), p. 109.

¹² Izutsu Toshihiko, *God And Man In The Koran* (Ayer, 1987), p. 200

¹³ Bilal was a friend of the Prophet Muhammad (p.b. u.h.). When it was time for prayer, he called people to prayer by *azan* (the invitation to prayer).

¹⁴ Abu Dawud Sulayman ibn. Ash'ath al- Azadi al-Sijistani, *Sunan/Al-Adab*, (İstanbul: Çağrı p.h., 1992) nos. 4985, 4986; Ahmad ibn Hanbal, *Sunan*, vol. 5: (İstanbul: Çağrı p.h., 1992), p. 364.

closer touch with the ultimate source of life and freedom and is intended to save the ego from the mechanising effect.¹⁵

It is this dimension of prayer that provides calmness; the *tesbihat* starts by repeating the first rosary after prayer "Allahümme ante salamu ve minkessalam/ My Allah you are provider of soundness and calmness, the soundness and calmness is from you." Essentially, this *tesbihat* is a transmission to the name of Allah "as-Salam/who gives soundness, calmness" which is found in the verse 23 of al-Hashr (59).¹⁶

This dimension has a close relationship with the social dimension too. If the individuals of an association are restless, then the social structure of this association will be in crisis and chaotic. Naturally, the basic elements of social tranquility, serenity, and a structure of calm are individuals, so if the individuals are restless they will infect the association.

2. As for the basis of social association, to be Muslim, to enter into safety, implies *silm* (peace), namely, to be in social reconciliation. When Muhammad Hamdi Yazır explains the expression of *islam*, he describes it as "a mutual entering into safety."¹⁷ Nevertheless, the Islamic expression is a template relating to *if'al vazin* (measure) and this *bab* (category) of transmitting peace to others does not imply partnership and surrender. It implies, as Muhammad Hamdi Yazır holds, that the meaning of the expression requires a second party to be the receiver of the peace in order to move from a purely individual state to a social state. Thus, it implies the meanings of both partnership and surrender. The best example of this dimensional meaning can be found in the following saying of the prophet: Some people asked Allah's Apostle (p.b.u.h.)¹⁸ "Whose Islam is the best?" i.e. who is a very good Muslim? He replied: "Al Muslimu men salima al-Muslimune min lisanihi ve yadihi/The Muslim is the one whose hand or tongue need be feared."¹⁹ Someone

¹⁵ Iqbal, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

¹⁶ In this verse, the term "al-Salam" is a noun infinitive that employs a hyperbolic meaning. In the first dimension, the meaning is (He it is) "who is far from deficiency", and second (He it is) "who gives tranquillity, serenity, calmness" Mahmud ibn 'Umar al-Zamakhshari, *Al-Kashshâf 'an Haqâ'iq al-Tanzîl wa 'Uyun al-Aqâwil fi Wujuh' al-Ta'wil*, vol. 4 (Beirut: Dâr Al-Kitab Al-Arabî, 1987), p. 509; Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, *Al-Tafsîr al-Kabîr*, vol. 10 (Tahran: Dâr al-kütub al-ilm), p. 513; Maḥmūd ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Ālūsī, *Ruh Al-Ma'āni fi at-Tafsîr al-Qur'ân al-Azîm wa al-Sab' al-Mathânî* vol. 28: (Beirut: Dar al-fîkr, 1987), p. 63.

¹⁷ Muhammad Hamdi Yazır, *Hak Dini Kur'an Dili*, vol. 2 (Istanbul: Eserp.h., 1979), p. 1062.

¹⁸ Bukhârî, *Iman/Belief*, 10, *Riqâq/To make the Heart Tender*, 26 (Istanbul: Çağrıp.h., 1992); Muslim, *Iman/Belief*, 64-65 (Istanbul: Çağrıp.h., 1992); Abu Dawud, *Jihâd*, 2; Tirmidhi, *Qiyâmah*, 52 (Istanbul: Çağrı p.h., 1992); Al-Dârimi, *Riqâq*, 4, 8 (Istanbul: Çağrıp.h., 1992); Ahmad ibn Hanbal, *Sunan* (Istanbul: Çağrı p. h., 1992), 2: 160, 163, 178, 191, 193, 195; 5: 2, 206, 209, 212.

asked him "What sort of deeds or (what qualities of) Islam are good?" The Prophet (p.b.u.h.) replied, "Tut'imu't-teame ve takrau's-salame alâ men arafte we man lem ta'rif/To feed (the poor) and greet those whom you know and those whom you do not know,"²⁰ by which the Prophet emphasized that the best of the Muslims are those who reinforce the social peace and harmony as a prerequisite of Islam.

Another *Hadith* says, "Lâ tadkhulune'l-Jannata hatta tü'minu wala tü'minu hatta tahâbbu. Avala adüllüküm alâ şey'in idhâ fealtümuhû tehababtüm. Afşüsselâme/Spread *salam*. As long as you don't believe (in God) you will never go the heaven. You cannot be a believer until you love one another. Do I not show you a thing when you do it, that you love one another. Spread *salam* among you."

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The Qur'an says the following:

O you who have believed, enter into *silm* (peace) completely; And do not follow in the footsteps of Satan. Indeed, he is to you a clear enemy. (Al-Baqarah [2]: 208)

This verse implies that the religion of Islam aims at finally bringing a universal peace to humanity, uniting all humankind. This is community in which everybody respects the rights of others, and all love one another like brothers. Muslims play an important role in this universal peace, and it is stipulated that believers must strive for global reconciliation. This *silm* expression in the verse shows that Islam means reconciliation.²² Therefore, characterizing Islam as "surrender" arises indeed because it contains the notion of surrender. According to Fakhr al-Din Al-Razi, *silm* is generally used for reconciliation, for ceasing to engage in warfare. Using it with this meaning implies that, in reconciliation, each of the two parties

¹⁹ Bukhârî, *Iman/Belief*, 10, *Riqâq/To make the Heart Tender*, 26; Muslim, *Iman/Belief*, 64-65; Abu Dawud, *Jihâd*, 2; Tirmidhi, *Qiyâmah*, 52; Al-Dârimi, *Riqâq*, 4, 8; Ahmad ibn Hanbal, *Sunan*, 2: 160, 163, 178, 191, 193, 195; 5: 2, 206, 209, 212.

²⁰ Bukhârî, *Iman/Belief*, 20, *İstizan*, 9, 19; Muslim, *Iman/Belief*, 63; Abu Dawud, *Al-Adab*, 131; Nasâî, *Iman/Belief*, 12 (Istanbul: Çağrıp.h., 1992); ibn Hanbal, *op. cit.*, 2: 169.

²¹ Bukhârî, *Iman/Belief*, 20; Tirmidhi, *At'ima*, 45.

²² On the statement's coming to mean surrender and peace see Abu Abdillah Muhammad ibn Ahmad Al-Qurtubi, *Al-Jâmi li-Ahkâm al-Qur'ân*, vol. 3 (Beirut: Dâr Al-Kütub Al-İlmiyye, 1988), p. 17;

Abd Allah ibn Umar al-Baydawî, *Anvar al-tanzil wa Asrar al-ta'wil* (Min Hashiyati Shaikhzâde), vol. 1 (Istanbul: Hakikatp.h., 1991), p. 510.

For example Razi says that the statement has come to mean surrender and peace. For this, if we take the verse to mean peace, this would mean ending war and disputes. The verse therefore can be interpreted as follows:

"O Believers, enter into *silm* [complete peace], namely with the help of religion and for sake of Him resist difficulties, be in harmony, don't follow in the footsteps of Satan in being inclined to the world and encouraging arguments among one another, your acknowledged foe" (Al-Baqarah [2]: 208).

Razi, *op. cit.*, 2, p. 353.

submits to the other.²³ In that case, it is more precise to understand that this Qur'anic expression means both surrender and reconciliation together. That is, this common global *silm* can only be achieved through Islam. In the same way, Muhammad Hamdi Yazır understands the verse in this way and says that it is implied on the basis of this verse that Allah wants all believers to enter into a common, global reconciliation with the Islamic religion. This verse partly wishes to express that. Believers will establish such a perfect social organization, such perfect reconciliation and peaceful environment by submitting to Allah's prescriptions, and nothing will arise through insurrection, separation, an offense against Allah's rights and his servants among them. Everyone will live in reconciliation and peace; everyone will do their tasks in safety and love and in an entire presence, win their world and future life. They will thwart disturbances and defeatisms that vitiate this.²⁴

In the *Hadith* (mentioned above) a Muslim described it in this way:

Al Muslimu men salima al-Muslimune min lisanihi ve yadihi/The Muslim is one whose neither hand nor tongue needs to be feared.²⁵

In the *Hadith*, the hand represents bodily action, the tongue spiritual. So Muslims bring security and safety to society through body and soul. The word *islam* includes the meanings *silm* and *salamat*, which shows Islam's function regarding security and safety for the individual and society. So, we can see that those believing in Islam aim at creating a person whose soul is at peace, and a society at peace. Islam's perfect heart is the heart of the human.

Of course, with the Islamic creed, belief in the Oneness of God leads to the unity and brotherhood of humankind, and this destroys all of the barriers separating humans. For example, *tawheed* means to see God as one. The individuals of society unite in the One (Allah) and this yields the unification of souls.

In my opinion, in this context, one of the great functions of Islam is to constitute a powerful conscience and soul that accepts society as a family of individuals in society. This conscience and soul have led them to great devotion and heroism. But this phenomenon was seen only in the period of Muhammad, Abu Bakr, and Umar. The period of Uthman and part of Ali's were completely different because of inner warfare and disturbances. Islam brings this conscience and soul into being through faith and worship.

²³ See Razi, *op. cit.*, 2, p. 352.

²⁴ Yazır, *op. cit.*, 5: 736.

²⁵ Bukhâri, *Riqâq*, 26; Muslim, *Īman/Belief*, 64- 65; Abu Dawud, *Jihâd*, 2; Tirmidhi, *Qiyâmah*, 52; Al-Dârimi, *Riqâq*, 4, 8; Ahmad ibn Hanbal, *Sunan*, 2: 160, 163, 178, 191, 193, 195; 5: 2, 206, 209, 212.

Islam aims to bring about a unified community (*wahdat* community). According to common understanding, if one wants to understand an achievement well, one must go through the process in which such achievements were gained. So, for the best understanding of Islam's contribution to peace we must go to the time of Muhammad.

In Eastern cultures (as in the history of Western society), enmities continue across generations. At the time of Muhammad (p.b.u.h.), there were two tribes, the Aws and Khazraj. The enmity between these tribes extended across generations, as confirmed by Jung's common collective unconscious theory (the verse mentioned above uses a style to confirm this). This enmity brought about a phenomenon that was incorporated into the chromosomes of the two tribes. This collective unconscious operated in a small way, and, consequently, there was a great deal of bloodshed. In addition, the tribe's pride and the culture of ignorance (the culture of *jahiliyah*) fed the enmity. In spite of this, Islam reconciled them. This was an amazing revolution.

The power of Islam to bring about peace at the time of Muhammad (p.b.u.h) manifests itself in the following verse and shows how it has the ability to unite enemies and allow them to live in peace.

And brought together their hearts. If you had spent all that is in the earth, you could not have brought their hearts together; but Allah brought them together. Indeed, He is Exalted in Might and Wise. (Al- Anfâl [8]:63)

So, the Islamic faith caused a major revolution in their souls, softened their hearts and united them. This verse mentioned above explains the eternal enmity that had existed between the Aws and Khazraj was stopped by Islam, and the mercy wrought by Islam was intensified in the community.

The word Islam is derived from the words for peace (*silm* and *salamet*), so the religion of Islam means to live in peace. This is why Islam does not permit terrorism. But some people, by referring to the wars waged in Islamic history, attempt to equate Islam with violence and terrorism.²⁶ If one looks at the life of Muham-

²⁶ Many Western authors have a prejudicial approach to Islam and Muslims (Gibb, *Mohammedanism*; see Firestone, *op. cit.*, p. 13; Rudolph Peters, *Jihad in Classical and Modern Islam* [Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2005], pp. 5-7, 103. 7; Peters, *op. cit.*, p. 5- 6) They claim that the Islamic state, which is regarded as the instrument for universalizing a certain religion, must perforce be an ever-expanding state. The Islamic state, whose principal function was to put God's law into practice, sought to establish Islam as the dominant reigning ideology 1955], p. 51; Bernard Lewis, "Politics and War": the Legacy of Islam [Oxford: 1974], p. 175; Ülken Hilmi Ziya, *İslam Düşüncesine Giriş* [İstanbul: İbrahim Horoz p.h., 1954], p. 17, note 2).

They always view Muslims superciliously and think their world is superior to the Muslim world and that the latter depends on the former (Edward, W. Said, *Orientalism* [Penguin Booksp. 7; Valery Kennedy, *Edward Said: A Critical Introduction* [Polity Press], p. 23). They always want to dominate, restructure, and rule the Orient. This is their method constantly (Said, *op. cit.*, p. 3; Kennedy, *op. cit.*, p.

mad (p.b.u.h.), it will be evident that the Prophet Muhammad waged wars for defensive purposes and when it was unavoidable. The following verse substantiates this claim that Islam is a religion of peace and salvation.

Because of that, We decreed upon the Children of Israel (for their book being the first divine book) ²⁷ that whoever kills a soul unless for a soul or for corruption [done] in the land – it is as if he had slain mankind entirely. And whoever saves one – it is as if he had saved mankind entirely (Al-Mâ'idah [5]:32)

Islamic scholars interpret this verse as follows. All spirits have the right to life; to kill one of them is an offense against the right to life that everyone has. To kill a person unjustly is a crime against humanity: killing one person is like killing all humanity.²⁸

This emphasizes the sanctity of human life. It is essential for the preservation of human life that everyone should regard the lives of others as sacred and help to protect those lives. Anyone who takes the life of another unjustly does not only commit an injustice against that person but also proves that he has no feeling for the sanctity of human life and mercy for others. Hence, he is most surely the enemy of the whole human race, for if every individual suffered from the same kind of hard-heartedness, the whole human race would come to an end. On the contrary, if one helps to preserve a single human life, he is indeed a helper of all humankind, for he possesses those qualities on which the survival of whole human race depends.²⁹ Taking a life affects all of humanity whereas saving one man's life is like saving all humanity.

According to Islamic scholars, the aim of the simile in the two rulings of this verse is to emphasize the sanctity of human life, to indicate that killing human beings is wrong, that there is a public advantage to preserving life in a clear and effectual way, to discourage humans from murder, and to encourage preserving lives.³⁰ If a person who kills zealously thinks that it is as wrong as killing all peo-

21). This perspective between Europe and the Orient resulted in the European expansion that came with imperialism and colonialism (Kennedy, *op. cit.*, p. 22).

²⁷ Ibn Al-Arabi and Baydawi say that having the rule of Kabil's murder in the Old Testament for the first time is an indication of its being the first divine book (see Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Abdillah Ibn Al-Arabi, *Ahkâm al-Qur'ân*, vol. 2 [Beirut: Dâr al-kütub al-ilmiyye, 1988], p. 88; Baydawi, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 210). If this statement was a general unwritten statement before the Old Testament, one should deduce that it should be a general anonymous statement. Ibn Al-Arabi, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 88.

²⁸ Qutub Sayyid, *Fî Zilâl Al-Qur'ân*, vol. 2 (Cairo: Dâr al-shuruk, 1980), p. 877.

²⁹ Al-Baydawi, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 210; Yazır, *op. cit.*, vol. 3, p. 1658; S. Abul A'la Mawdudi, *The Meaning of the Qur'an*, 3rd ed., vol. 1 (Islamic Publications Ltd., 2002), p. 447.

³⁰ Zamakhsharî, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 627; Baydawî, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 210; Razî, *op. cit.*, vol. 4, p. 344; Muhammad Ali ibn Muhammad al-San'ani ash-Shawkani, *Fath Al-Qadir*, vol. 2 (Egypt: Mustafa al-babî al-halabi), p. 34; Yazır, *op. cit.*, vol. 3, p. 1658; Mawdudi, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 421.

ple, he will give up killing, and if he thinks that preserving a person's life has an advantage as great as preserving the lives of all people, then (by waiving his right to retaliation) his wishes and willingness to forgive murder and helping those who are in danger increases.³¹

So if this is what the term means, i.e., peace and salvation, how are we to interpret the verses about jihad?

2. JIHAD

The Arabic word jihad is a very comprehensive term: it includes every kind of effort, exertion, struggle, conflict, and war. Jihad is derived from the root j-h-d, which means doing one's utmost or exerting oneself to the utmost with respect to efforts, endeavours, toil, or hard work, and the ability to contend with an object of disapprobation.³² Because the root carries this meaning, *ijtihad*, which comes from the same root, means one works at achieving something that is difficult. Al-Tahanawi says for the reason that this word is used especially with respect to the difficulty involved. Arabs say "Ijtahada fi hamli al-hajar /He struggled bearing the rock." They do not use this word for easy tasks. That is, they do not say things like as "Ijtahada fi hamli al-Khardala/He struggled bearing the mustard."³³ The original meaning is used, for instance, in the sentence "Jahada ash-Shakhsu: Jadde, kane yajhadu li'an yukmila dirasatahu fi waktin mubakkirin. s'aa hatta wasala ila al-ghaya/The man struggled (*Jadde, kane yajhadu*) to finish his lesson early and finally reached his goal."³⁴ So, jihad refers to the maximum struggle and sacrifice of a Muslim – physically, orally, mentally and materially – in the cause of Islam; one should strive for Allah, as the struggle for Him demands.³⁵

³¹ Zamakhshari, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 627; ash-Shawkani, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 34.

³² Muhammad Ibn Manzur Abu Al-Fadl Jamaluddin, "Jahd," *Lisan Al-Arab*, vol. 3 (Beirut, 1955), pp. 133-35; Muhammad Ali ibn Ali ibn Muhammad Al-Tahanawi, *Kashshafu istlahati al-Funun*, vol. 1 (Beirut: Dar al-kutub al-ilmiyya, 1998), p. 267; Louis M'aluf, *Al-Munjid* (Beirut: Al-Matbaa al-katulikiyya, 1951), p. 101; Steingass, Ph. D., *Arabic-English Dictionary* (London: 1884), p. 250; Jemaatun min al Kubarai'-Lugaviyyin al-Arab, *Al-Mu'cam al-Arabiyyah al-Asasiyyah* (Matbaatu li At-Terbiyyeti wa As-Sakafa, 1989), pp. 281-82; Baalbaki Rohi, *Al-Mawrid* (Dar al-ilm lilmalayin, 1997), p. 437; Reuven Firestone, *Jihad: The Origin of Holy War in Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 16; Farida Khanam, "Jihad," in: N. K.- Singh and A.R. Agwan (eds.), *Encyclopaedia of the Holy Qur'an*, vol. 2 (Delhi: Global Vision, p. h. 2000), p. 669.

³³ Al-Tahanawi, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 267.

³⁴ Jemaatun min al Kubara-i'-Lugaviyyin Al-Arab, *op. cit.*, p. 281.

³⁵ Al-Tahanawi, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 267; Regis Blachere *et al.*, *Dictionnaire Arabe-Francais-Anglais*, vol. 3 (Paris: G.-P. Maisneuve et Larose, 1976), p. 1823; Louis, *ibid.*, p. 101; Afzalur Rahman, *Islam Ideology and the Way of Life* (London: Seerah Foundation, 1988), p. 170.

So, jihad not only means the struggle against enemies but has other meanings as well. This is why jihad is used in *Hadith* sources with the following meanings: "the (true) believer and he who struggles against his nature" (Tirmidhi, *Fadâ'il Al-Jihad*, 2), "The most deserving fight is (to speak) just words before an iniquitous sovereign" (Abu Dawud, *al-Malâhim*, 17; Tirmidhi, *al-Fitan*, 13), "An individual's combat against his self/personality in serving his parent is jihad" (Bukhari, *Jihad*, 138; Müslim, *Kitab al-Birr*, 5), "The best jihad accepted is the pilgrimage to Mecca" (Bukhari, *Jihad*, 1), "Mumin (Believer) combat by his sword and tongue" (Ahmed ibn Hanbal, *Musnad*, 3: 124).

Although the use of the word jihad shows that it generally means war against enemies, this is not its only meaning. This misunderstanding is a consequence of wars carried out on the basis of a very broad interpretation of the meaning of the term, which is in fact only a very small element. Other more peaceful interpretations are generally ignored. Jihad is used in the Qur'an generally to mean "struggle." Another word, *qital* is used for fighting and war. *Qital* is to engage in war at the time of aggression by enemies. This *qital* or war is purely in self-defense to counter aggression. Since fighting in self-defense in accordance with God's command also involves a struggle, this came to be called jihad as well.³⁶ *Qital* is one aspect of jihad, but is its final stage. *Qital* is waging holy war in the defense of one's life, religion, country, home, property, or religious brothers who are being oppressed, i.e. against any aggressors.

In reality, the doctrine of jihad mobilizes and motivates Muslims to defensiveness in all areas. This mobilization and motivation are strongly nurtured by the Qur'an. If a person acts in accordance with Qur'anic verses and obtains God's consent, he will go to paradise. Jihad manifests its true character in the Qur'an when it depicts a change from aimlessness to an aim for the sake of Allah. The characteristic term used in the Qur'an is "Jihad fi sebilillah/Strive in the way of Allah," which shows that the aim of jihad has to be for the sake of Allah in war as well.

There are certain verses in the Qur'an that convey the command to go to war (*qital*) (Al- Hajj [22]:39). The first point in this connection is that the launching of an offensive by the believers is not totally forbidden. It is permissible under certain conditions. For example, "Fight (*fa qatilu*) in the way of Allah against those who fight you (*yuqatilukum*) but do not transgress. Indeed, Allah does not like transgressors" (Al-Baqarah [2]:190). This clearly shows that defensive war is permitted in Islam. Believers are allowed to fight in self-defense. According to the verse, Muslims are not allowed to initiate hostility.

³⁶ Khanam, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 670.

In particular, there are two verses in the Qur'an that are normally quoted by those most eager to criticize the Qur'anic teaching on war: Al-Baqarah (2):191 and At-Taubah (9):5; the latter is called the Sword Verse. This verse has become the basis of the critique of Islam. But according to some Islamic scholars, the true sword verse is At-Taubah (9):36,³⁷ whereas some other scholars say that both or other verses are sword verses.³⁸

In my view, every verse that includes *qital* (war) has a historical context and a revealed cause (*sabab al-nuzul*) that is related primarily to its first event and manifests a character that pertains to this event. To understand these verses properly, we need to look at their historical background. These two verses were revealed in Medina, especially At-Taubah (9):5 revealed in the later period in Medina. The contents of the *sura* are related to events arising from the Treaty of Hudaibiyah. The ancient Jahiliyah tribe of Arabia resorted to desperate acts of belligerency. Other tribes loyal to the Jahiliyah mustered their military forces at the Battle of Hunayn in a bid to prevent the spread of Islam's reformative revolution that, after the capture of Mecca, had almost reached its zenith.³⁹

The enemies of Islam, both the idolaters and People of the Book, refused to allow the Message to be spread peacefully and engaged in war with Islam in a fight that was bound to end in their defeat. They refused to acknowledge the truth and to refrain from aggression, behaving like a fox who pretends to be dead in order to gain time and resume its treachery and killing. Individuals and groups formed coalitions hampering and attacking Muslims.⁴⁰

The Muslims have always kept and will continue to keep the peace with those who keep the peace with them and make war on those who make war on them, as understood on the basis of Al-Baqarah (2):190. For example, during the 22 years before the revelation of Sura at-Taubah, Arab paganism was dealt with in the wisest and most merciful way. In Mecca, Islam was an outlawed religion without any possibility of self-defense. After the Hijra to Medina, Muslims engaged in about 30 battles and expeditions against their enemies, in the course of which only about 200 unbelievers were killed.⁴¹

³⁷ Zamakhshari, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 235.

³⁸ Muhammad Rashid Rida, *Al-Manar*, vol. 10 (Beirut: Dar al-marife, p. 166.

³⁹ Mawdudi, *op. cit.*, vol. 3, p. 177.

⁴⁰ Muhammad, *A Journey Through the Qur'an Themes and Messages of the Holy Qur'an* (Dar al-takva, 1998), p. 115.

⁴¹ Ghazali, *op. cit.*, p. 117.

In reality, the first permission given for *qital* is found in Al-Hajj (22):39-40.⁴² When Muslims were persecuted by all and threatened by the Quraysh of Mecca who were now waging war against them, God gave permission to fight back in these words: "Permission [to fight] has been given to those who are being attacked, because they were wronged. And indeed, Allah is competent to give them victory. [They are] those who have been evicted from their homes without right – only because they say: "Our Lord is Allah" (Al-Hajj [22]:39- 40). This was the first passage in the Qur'an to allow Muhammad and his companions to defend themselves against their enemies by force and was revealed sometime before the emigration to Medina.

Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) had not been given permission to fight (*qital*) nor was he allowed to shed blood before the revelation of this verse. He (p.b.u.h.) had simply been commanded to call people to God and to endure insult and to forgive the ignorant.⁴³ Until that time, the Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) had exhorted Muslims to suffer the injuries offered them with patience, which is also commanded in more than 70 different places in the Qur'an. Commentators say that Allah connected the cause of this permission to persecution. Until this time, Muhammad's companions had been coming to Him (p.b.u.h.) wounded. He (p.b.u.h.) had always advised them to be patient and said: "I haven't been commanded to engage in war."⁴⁴ This, was the first verse that allowed Muslims to engage in war after some 70 verses had been revealed (sent down) that rejected going to war.⁴⁵

The translator of Ibn Ishaq, A. Guillaume, explains this period as follows. The Apostle (Hz. Muhammad [p.b.u.h.]) had not been given permission to fight or to shed blood before the second 'Aqaba. He had simply been commanded to call men to God and to endure insult and forgive the ignorant. The Quraysh had persecuted his followers, seducing some to abandon their religion, and exiling others from their country. When the Quraysh became insolent towards God and rejected His gracious purpose, accused His prophet of lying, and mistreated and exiled those

⁴² See Muhammad ibn Jerir al-Tabari, *Jami 'Al-Bayan fi Tafsir Al-Qur'an*, vol. 9 (Beirut: Dar al-ilmiiyya, 1999), p. 161.

⁴³ See A. Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad: An introduction to Ishaq's Sirat Rasul Allah* (London: Oxford university Press, 1955), p. 212.

⁴⁴ Abu Hasan Ali ibn Ahmad al-Wahidi, *Asbab Al-Nuzul* (Dimashq: Daru ibn kathir, 1988), p. 258; Alauddin Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Ibrahim al-Khazin, *Tafsir Al-Khazin (Lubab Al- Ta'wil fi Ma'ani Al-Tanzil)*, vol. 3 (Beirut: Dar al-fikr), p. 291; Abu Muhammad Al-Huseyn ibn Mas'ud al-Baghawi, *Tafsir Al-Baghawi (Maa'lim Al-Tanzil)*, vol. 3 (Beirut: Dar al-ilmiiyye, 1993), p. 344; Ash-Shawkani, *op. cit.*, vol. 3, p. 456.

⁴⁵ Zamakhshari, *op. cit.*, vol. 3, p. 160; Baydawi, *op. cit.*, vol. 3, p. 386; Razi, *op. cit.*, vol. 8, p. 228; Al-Andulusi Abu Hayyan, *Al-Bahr Al-Muhit*, vol. 6 (Beirut-Lebanon: Dar al-kutub al-'ilmiiyya, 2001), p. 346; Alusi, *op. cit.*, vol. 17, p. 162.

who served Him and proclaimed His unity, believed in His prophet, and remained faithful to His religion, Allah gave permission to His apostle to fight and to protect himself against those who wronged them and treated them badly (Al-Hajj (22):40-42).⁴⁶

There were only three instances of Muslims actually entering the field of battle: Badr, Uhud, and Hunayn. On all three occasions war had become inevitable. The prophet (p.b.u.h.) was compelled to fight the aggressors in self-defense. The Qur'an allows limited violence and killing only in war. All the battles that took place during the Prophet's lifetime, under the guidance of the Qur'an and the Prophet, have been studied and shown to have been waged only in self-defense or to pre-empt an imminent attack. For more than ten years in Mecca Muslims had been persecuted, but before permission was given to fight they were instructed to restrain themselves and to endure with patience and fortitude (Al-Baqarah [2]:109; An-Nahl [16]:41-42) After the Muslims were forced out of their homes and their towns and those who remained behind were subjected to even more abuse, God gave His permission to fight (Al-Hajj [22]:39-40).⁴⁷

Clearly, this command to fight back was given to the Muslims for self-preservation and self-defense. It should be noted that the Qur'an, in treating the theme of war, as with many other themes, regularly gives the reasons and justifications for any action it demands. The Quran says "Permission [to fight] has been given to those who are being attacked because they were wronged." Permission had been given to them because Muslims were being oppressed and treated cruelly. This tells us that there must be valid justifications for Muslims to participate in war and strict conditions must be fulfilled. So, because of events like these, war may sometimes become necessary for Muslims to stop attacks against them. Under these circumstances, fighting becomes obligatory for all Muslims to protect not only their ideology and beliefs but their homes, lives, property, and everything else. Thus, whenever a Muslim state is attacked by any other state or states, it becomes the religious duty of every Muslim of that state to join in fighting (*qital*) the invaders.⁴⁸

Thus, under some conditions wars become necessary. For example, we can see from (Al-Baqarah [2]:217-18) that fighting is necessary in defense of sacred things and faith. If Muslim people are faced with people who are determined to

⁴⁶ A. Guillaume, *op. cit.*, p. 212

⁴⁷ Muhammed Abdel Haleem, *Understanding the Themes and Style* (London, New York: I.B. Tauris, 1999), p. 61.

⁴⁸ See Afzalur Rahman, *op. cit.*, p. 173.

make them abandon their religion, they have no choice but to fight and will be held accountable for it if they do not.

Thus, the Qur'an teaches that war becomes an obligation for self-defense (as we discussed above in connection with Al-Baqarah [2]:190, Al-Hajj [22]:39-40), defending religious freedom (Al-Hajj [22]:39-41), and defending those who are oppressed: men, women, and children who cry out for help (An-Nisâ [4]:75). Similarly, it is the duty of Muslims to help oppressed Muslims who cry for help, except against people with whom they have a treaty (Al-Anfal [8]:72).

Thus, we understand that the use of jihad use is different from *qital* in the Qur'an. Actually, the root of jihad is *j-h-d*, which means, as stated above, striving one's utmost. For instance, in Arabic we say, "Bazala juhduhu" (I struggle to the utmost"); jihad or *ijtihad* thus means "striving to do one's utmost in any matter."⁴⁹ For that reason, jihad does not *only* mean fighting and killing for the propagation of Islam. Faith is a matter of conviction and conscience, and no amount of force and coercion can ever bring someone to believe in something of which he is not convinced. Faith cannot, therefore, be thrust upon anyone by force nor is this method recommended by Islam (Al-Baqarah [2]:256).⁵⁰ Nowhere in the Qur'an is changing people's religion a cause for waging war. The Qur'an states clearly that there is no compulsion in religion (Al-Baqarah [2]:256). Humans will always have different religions and ways, and this is an unalterable fact (Al-Mâ'idah [5]:48).⁵¹

If we look carefully at the revealed cause of the verses of the Qur'an in question and read them according to a background of the Qur'an as whole, we will see that *qital* is an attempt against transgressors who wronged Muslim people and treated them badly. "And if they break their oaths after their treaty and defame your religion, then fight [*fa qatilu*] the leaders of disbelief" (At-Taubah [9]:12). In this verse, which seems to command Muslims to fight unbelievers unconditionally, the general condition that fighting is only allowed as defense can be detected here. "And when the sacred months have passed, then kill [*faqtulu*] the idolaters wherever you find them, and capture them and besiege them and sit in wait for them at every place of ambush" (At-Taubah [9]:5).

But there are differences in the interpretation of these verses concerning war (*qital*). Some classical Muslim interpretations hold that this Sword Verse, with the

⁴⁹ Muhammad ibn Ya'kub al-Firuzabadi, "Jahd," *Al-Qamus Al-Muhit (Isa al-babi al-halabi)*, vol. 1, p. 286; Ibn Manzur, *op. cit.*, "Jahd," vol. 3, pp. 133-35; Az-Zabidi, *Sharh Al-Qamus Al-Musamma Taju Al-Arus min Jawahir Al-Qamus*, vol. 2, p. 329; Khanam, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 669.

⁵⁰ Rahman, *op. cit.*, p. 174.

⁵¹ Haleem, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

unconditional command to fight unbelievers, abrogated all previous verses concerning relations with non-Muslims.⁵²

According to Islamic scholars, Al-Baqarah (2):190 is directed against the Quraysh.⁵³ Zamakhshari says that the verse is directed against the Quraysh idolaters who attacked Muslims and not against the Quraysh idolaters who did not attack Muslims. On this point 2:190 has been abrogated by At-Taubah (9): 36. According to Rabi ibn Anas, the verse is the first on war that was revealed in Medina.⁵⁴ Qurtubi is of the same opinion. According to him, Al-Baqarah (2):190 is the first verse that concerns engaging in war. War was prohibited before Hicre (by Al-Mâ'idah, An-Nisâ [4]:13, Fussilat [41]:34, Al-Muzzammil [73]:10, Al-Ghashiyah [88]:22). Like 2:190, none of the verses revealed in Mecca allowed Muslims to instigate war. The verse Al-Baqarah [2]:190 was revealed when the Prophet Muhammad moved to Medina.⁵⁵ According to Zamakhshari, the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) only fought against those who fought against Him until At-Taubah (9):36.⁵⁶ But, according to Qurtubi, the Prophet continued to act this way until At-Taubah [9]:5. This verse, however, was abrogated by At-Taubah [9]:36 and had contained commands to go to war against all idolaters.⁵⁷ According to Ibn Al-Arabi, there is no abrogation. According to him, the first verse on war is Al-Hajj (22):39, and it gave permission for war, whereas in the second verse, 2:190, the permission turns to obligation, including war against all those who attacked Muslims. The third verse, 9:5, commanded Muslims to fight all idolaters.⁵⁸

Suyuti did not accept any abrogation of the verses that mentioned relations with the *mushrik* (idolater) either. He defined this kind of Qur'anic verse in the traditional understanding of Islamic theology, namely, *munṣaat*. This means that when the situation and the condition of necessity arose, whatever Qur'anic verses coincided with those events, they could be applied to their own meaning in the context of time. The systematic method of Qur'anic interpretation evaluates verses under different conditions. But we use one of the propositions of the Qur'anic hermeneutical method: if the primary categorical condition disappears on any occasion, the secondary categorical Qur'anic verses could be applied in their own meanings in the context. For instance, the Qur'an advised the Muslims how to deal

⁵² Peters, *op. cit.*, p. 2; Rida, *op. cit.*, vol. 10, p. 166.

⁵³ Wahidi, *op. cit.*, p. 46; Zamakhshari, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 289.

⁵⁴ Zamakhshari, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 235.

⁵⁵ Qurtubi, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, pp. 231-32.

⁵⁶ Zamakhshari, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 235.

⁵⁷ Qurtubi, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 232.

⁵⁸ Ibn Al-Arabi, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 144.

with idolaters. When the Muslims were in a weaker position, such verses advised Muslims to be patient; but when their power increased, they were instructed to defend themselves or to fight against their oppressors.⁵⁹ So, regarding the wisdom of the gradual introduction of the verses, Fakhr al-Din Al-Razi and Ibn Kathir say that the first emerged during the first period of Islam. During this time, Muslims were weak, and the conditions of the time required this kind behavior. But once the strength of Muslims increased, Taubah [9]:5 commanded them to fight against all idolaters.⁶⁰

But Ash-Shankiti analyzes the reality according to laws of the soul and says the wisdom of the gradual change is this: when Allah desires behavior that is hard on souls, its legalization is accorded gradually (*tadric*), otherwise the reality of the new law being imposed suddenly would be too hard on those obliged to follow it. Jihad is like this because jihad is very hard on souls, since it involves death and the surrender of property. The reality of jihad is that Muslims were first told "Permission is given to those ..." (Al-Hajj [22]:39). Later on, when the minds of the people were used to jihad, they were commanded "Fight in the way of Allah those who fight you" (Al-Baqarah [2]:190). It changes from permission into a specific proposal. Finally, when such people were even more used to the new condition (namely, acting according to war as commanded in Al-Baqarah [2]:190), God commanded to them to fight against their enemies completely.

"And when the sacred months have passed, then kill the idolaters wherever you find them ..." (At-Taubah [9]:5), and "fight against the disbelievers collectively as they fight against you collectively ..." (At-Taubah [9]:36), etc. The reality is a gradual progression in all the requirements of difficult conduct in the Qur'an. The prohibition against alcohol and fasting is like this as well.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Jalal al-Din al Suyuti, *Al-Itqan fi Ulum al-Qur'an*, vol. 2 (Beirut: Dar ibn kathir, 1987), pp. 703-04.

⁶⁰ Razi, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 288; Ibn Kathir, *Tafsiru Al-Qur'an Al-Karim*, vol. 5 (Cairo: Dar al-hadis, 2002), pp. 446-47.

⁶¹ Muhammad ibn Muhammad Ash-Shankiti, *Adwa'u'l-Bayan fi lydahi Al-Qur'an bi Al-Qur'an*, vol. 5 (Beirut: 'Alam al-kutub,), pp. 700-01. The prohibition against alcohol is as follows: to stop drinking is hard on people. For this reason, when Allah wanted to prohibit alcohol He prohibited it gradually. First, He told about the harm alcohol causes: "They ask you of (intoxicants,) wine and gambling. Tell them: *There is great enervation though profit in them for men; but their enervation is greater than benefit ...*" (Al-Baqarah [2]:219). Later, when they become used to it, the negative effects are greater than the benefits. Allah prohibited alcohol during prayer: "*O you who believe, do not perform your service of prayer when you are intoxicated ...*" (An-Nisâ [4]:43). After this verse was revealed, people drank alcohol only when its effects would not continue into prayer time. These times were after the *Isa* and *fecr* prayer. The prohibition was gradual and began with the explanation of the harmful effects of alcohol. When people became used to these prohibitions, Allah prohibited it completely by saying: "*O believers, this wine and gambling, these idols, and these arrows you use as divination, are all acts of Satan (evil); so keep away from them. You may haply prosper*" (Al-Ma'idah [5]:90). Similarly, with fasting Allah gradually legislated fasting, for the abstinence from lust and food was difficult for

Islamic scholars giving these explanations show that At-Taubah (9):5, 36 are the latest verses concerning war⁶² and concern the struggle against the Quraysh's idolaters and their partners. But these verses do not simply contain a command to kill; they also command that slaves and prisoners be taken and looked after appropriately.⁶³ According to Islamic scholars, the People of the Book and Zoroastrians are not to be attacked until they have broken their promises and have caused harm and have to pay a protective tax (*jizya/jaziyah*)⁶⁴ according to At-Taubah

the people to comprehend completely and suddenly. First, He gave people freedom to fast or give food to the poor "Those who find it hard to fast should expiate by feeding a poor person. For the good they do with a little hardship is better for men. And if you fast it is good for you, if you knew" (Al-Baqarah [2]:184). When people had become accustomed to this, Allah commanded fasting as such: "So when you see the new moon you should fast the whole month ..." (Al-Baqarah [2]:185). Cf. Ash-Shankiti, *op. cit.*, vol. 5, p. 701.

Some scholars say the legislation of fasting happened in three stages. First, Allah commanded people to engage in light fasting, such as Asura fasting; every month people were to fast for three days. Later, when Allah wanted fasting during Ramadan, He imposed this command gradually, as we stated above, in two stages. Cf. Ash-Shankiti, *op. cit.*, vol. 5, p. 701.

⁶² See Alusi, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 74; Qurtubi says that Sura At-Taubah was revealed about two years after Al-Baqarah Qurtubi, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 234.

⁶³ Rida, *op. cit.*, vol. 10, p. 166; Muhammad Jamaluddin Qasimi, *Tafsir al-Qasimî (Mahasin al-ta'wil)*, vol. 7 (Beirut: Dar al Fkir), p. 132; Mustafa Maraghi, *op. cit.*, vol. 10, p. 57.

⁶⁴ See Tabari, *Jami 'Al-Bayan*, vol. 2, p. 190; Alusi, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 76. These verses do not concern the People of Book. According to Islamic scholars, the People of the Book have to pay the poll tax under the Islam ruler. (Alusi, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 236). They are free to practice their religion. (This reality is supported by some of the People of the Book) The People of the Book were not to be converted by force but allowed to live as protected peoples (*dhimmis*) if they paid a special tax and lived humbly (see Firestone, *op. cit.*, p. 53). For example, the Jews of Medina were not attacked by the Messenger until they had broken their promise and began to offer resistance, just as the polytheists had done before. The Messenger fought only those who fought him, and his fighting had no other aim than repelling oppression, warding off rebellion and aggression, and putting an end to religious persecution (see Mahmud Seltut, *Al-Qur'an Wa Al-Kital* [Cairo: Matbaatu'n-nasr, 1948], pp. 60-61). The letter of Umar b. Khattab to the people of Jerusalem (636-37) supports this:

"In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate. This is the assurance of safety (*amman*) which the servant of God, Umar, the Commander of the Faithful, has granted to the people of Jerusalem. He has given them an assurance of safety for themselves, for their property, their churches, their crosses, the sick and the healthy of the city, and for all the rituals that belong to their religion. Their churches will not be inhabited (by Muslims) and will not be destroyed. Neither they, nor the land on which they stand, nor their cross, nor their property will be damaged. They will not be forcibly converted. No Jew will live with them in Jerusalem. The people of the (other) cities, and they must expel the Byzantines and the robbers. As for those who will leave the city, their lives and property will be safe until they reach their place of safety; and for those who remain, they will be safe. They will have to pay the poll tax like the people of Jerusalem. Those of the people of Jerusalem who want to leave with the Byzantines, take their property, and abandon their churches and their crosses will be safe until they reach their place of safety. Those villagers [*ahl al-ard*] who were in Jerusalem before the killing of so-and-so may remain in the city if they wish, but they must pay the poll tax like the people of Jerusalem. Those who wish may go with the Byzantines, and those who wish may return to their families. Nothing will be taken from them before their harvest is gathered. If they pay the poll tax according to their obligations, then the contents of this letter are under the covenant of God, are the responsibility of His Prophet, of the caliphs, and of faithful. The persons who attest to it are Khalid ibn al-Walid, Amr ibn al-Asi, Abd al-Rahman ibn Awf, and Mu'awiyah ibn Abi Sufyan. This letter was

[9]:29,⁶⁵ but women, children, old people, men who want live in peace, monks, men who have made a promise, and sick people are excluded from fighting under all conditions as long as they have not been involved in private action against Muslims.

Islam protects the People of the Book as long as they pay the *jizya* / *jaziyah* and remain peaceful. When Umar saw a Jew begging in the streets, he called the appropriate official from the Bayt al-Mal and said, swearing by God, that he would not allow an old person who had been useful in his youth to perish in his later years. He ordered him to find and make list of all such people,⁶⁶ which is an extraordinary historical anecdote.

Again, when Ibn Taymiyah met Kutlushah, the commander of the Mongols, to negotiate regarding the slaves being held, he strongly declared that “unless the last of the Muslim, Jewish, and Christian slaves are released, the war will go on. Jews and Christians are under our protection. We don’t accept any single one of them remaining a slave.” In response to this determined attitude and not daring to risk a new war, the Mongol commander Kutlushah released all prisoners.⁶⁷

The following statement by Abu Bakr reveals the sensitivity of Muslims towards other minorities. When Abu Bakr sent Usamah’s army to war, he said to them:

O army, stop and I will order you (to do) ten (things); learn them from me by heart. You shall not engage in treachery; you shall not act unfaithfully; you shall not engage in deception; you shall not indulge in mutilation; you shall kill neither a young child nor an old man nor a woman; you shall not fell palm trees or burn them; you shall not cut down

written and prepared in the year 15/636-37” (Abu Ja’fer Muhammad ibn Jerir Tabari, *The History of Al-Tabarî*, trans. and annotated by Yohanan Friedmann, vol. 12 [Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992], 191- 92).

The Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) ordered that *jizya* should be collected from the Hajar people who were Zoroastrians (see Ibn al-Arabi, *op. cit.*, vol. 10, pp. 156-57). The Hajar people confirm that they were living as a People of the Book: “Umar accepted no tribute from the Zoroastrians until ‘Abd ar-Rahman ibn Avf testified that the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) had collected tribute from the Zoroastrians of Hajar (in southern Bahrayn) and had said: ‘Establish for them the same custom as for the people of the book, for they have a similar book.’” Thus, they are regarded as possessing the Book. See Helmut Gatje, *The Qur’an and its Exegesis Selected Texts with Classical and Modern Muslim Interpretations*, trans. and ed. by Alford T. Welch (London and Henley: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971), pp. 138-39; Alusi, *op. cit.*, vol. 10, p. 79.

⁶⁵ “Fight those People of the Book who do not believe in God and the Last Day, who do not prohibit what God and His apostle have forbidden, nor accept divine law, until all of them pay protective tax in submission” (Taubah [9]:29). *Jaziyah* is a tax levied on non-Muslims for protection and other services.

⁶⁶ Abu Yusuf Ya’kub ibn Ibrahim, *Kitab al-Kharaj* (Maktabat al-mishkat al-islamiyya,), p. 126.

⁶⁷ Ahmad Emin, *Yevm al-Islam/Islamin Bugunu*, translated into Turkish by Abdulvahhab Ozturk (Ankara: Publisher, 1977), p. 137.

(any) fruit-bearing tree; you shall not slaughter a sheep or a cow or a camel except for food. You will pass people who occupy themselves in monks' cells; leave them alone, what they busy with themselves in which are varieties of food; if you eat anything from (those dishes), mention the name of God over them.⁶⁸

So, according to the interpretations by classical scholars, Taubah [9]: 5 and 36 abrogated all the 124 verses that encouraged positive attitudes such as forgiveness, refraining from evil, establishing good relations and working towards peace.⁶⁹ Examples of the verses that aim at establishing good in this world are Al-Baqarah [2]:190, 217, An-Nisâ [4]:90, 94, Al- A'raf [8]:61, Al-Mumtahinah [60]:11.⁷⁰ It goes without saying that this classical and radical interpretation implies that 90% of the verses on the same theme were abrogated. Indeed, with due respect, this cannot be accepted. The failure of these great commentators is that they did not adopt a holistic and integrated approach, despite their immense contribution to the hermeneutics of the Qur'an. If we take Ibn Al-Arabi's opinion (without abrogation) on the subject, which in my view is the most logical approach, we can see there is a gradual change that infers Islam does not want war. This opinion is the best opinion on the subject, according to the Qur'anic perspective, and its holistic background as a whole because the Qur'anic universal rule is "there shall be no compulsion in [acceptance of] the religion" (Al-Baqarah [2]: 256).

So, Taubah [9]:5 and 36 are referring to the Quraysh and the idolaters of the Arab Peninsula who were persecuting Muslims, exhibiting extreme behavior against them, breaking their promises, and beginning to offer resistance, wanting new Muslim converts to revert to being idolaters. All this showed that they were a great danger to the new religion. That is why we understand Taubah [9]:5 and 36 to be referring to the Quraysh and the idolaters of the Arab Peninsula.

According to this view, any unabrogated verses offer an explanation and yield a meaning in their context. This is the best interpretation since it fits the religion that is peace and salvation. Moreover, Ibn Al-Arabi says the Sword Verse (At-Taubah [9]:5) refers to the idolaters who attacked Muslims.⁷¹ Similarly, Jassas says "Wa anna dhalike innama kane khassen fi qavmin minhum kanu ahla ghadrin ve khiyanatin/the verse is a specific rather than general verse, the aim of which is

⁶⁸ Tabari, *The History of al-Tabarî*, vol. 10, p. 16.

⁶⁹ Qasimi, *op. cit.*, p. 134; Rida, *op. cit.*, vol. 10, p. 166.

⁷⁰ Abu Jafar Ahmad ibn Muhammad al-Nahhas, *Al-Nasih wa Al-Mansuh* (Muassasatu al-risale, 1991), pp. 487-88; Suyutî, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 712.

⁷¹ Ibn al-Arabî, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 457; Vahba Zuhayli, *al-Fiqh al-Islamiyya wa adilatuhu*, vol. 10 (Dimashq: Dar al-fikr, 1989), p. 110.

the idolaters who had been misleading Muslims.”⁷² This was because they were initiating this and oppressing Muslims, they wanted Muslims to convert, to be like them, i.e. idolaters.⁷³ This view is the most appropriate one in the context of the Qur’an’s holistic background as a whole. Indeed, it is revealed as such in the Qur’an for the other idolaters: “Allah does not forbid you from those who do not fight you because of religion and do not expel you from your homes – from being righteous toward them and acting justly towards them. Indeed, Allah loves those who act justly” (Al-Mumtahinah [60]:8).

This shows us that those who have good relations with Muslims do not wage war, and the Qur’an suggests that any action against them will adversely affect their good relations with them. That is why Abu Hanifa’s idolaters in the Arab Peninsula had to become Muslim or be killed; no *jizya* would be collected from them. There was no other alternative for them. This is a rigid view (*ijtihad*).⁷⁴

On this point, the best analysis is that of Ibn Qayyim Al-Jawziyya. He says in his book *Ahkam Ahl Al-Dhimma*, that *jizya* (the protection tax) was collected from all unbelievers. No unbeliever should be exempt from *jizya*; it should not only be the People of the Book who pay it. According to a *Hadith*,⁷⁵ when the Messenger of

⁷² Abu Bakr Ahmad ibn Ali Jassas, *Ahkamu al-Qur’an*, vol. 3 (Dimashq: Dar al-fikr, 1993), p. 126; Zuhayli, *op. cit.*, vol. 10, p. 111.

⁷³ See Razi, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 291.

⁷⁴ Alusi, *op. cit.*, vol. 10, p. 79; Ibn Qayyim Al-Jawziyya, *Ahkam al-Dhimma* (Beirut: Dar al-ilm li al-malayin, 1961), p. 3; see also Zuhayli, *op. cit.*, vol. 10, p. 108.

⁷⁵ It has been reported about Sulaiman b. Buraid through his father that when the Messenger of Allah (p.b.u.h.) appointed someone as the leader of an army or detachment he would charge him specifically to fear Allah and to be good to the Muslims who were with him. He would say: “Fight in the name of Allah and in the way of Allah. Fight against those who disbelieve in Allah. Make a holy war, do not embezzle the spoils; do not break your pledge; and do not mutilate (the dead) bodies; do not kill the children. When you meet your enemies who are polytheists, invite them to three courses of action. If they respond to any one of these, you also accept it and withhold yourself from doing them any harm. Invite them to (accept) Islam; if they respond to you, accept it from them and desist from fighting against them. Then invite them to migrate from their lands to the land of Muhajirs and inform them that, if they do so, they shall have all the privileges and obligations of the Muhajirs. If they refuse to migrate, tell them that they will have the status of Bedouin Muslims and will be subjected to the Commands of Allah like other Muslims, but they will not get any share from the spoils of war or *Fai’* except when they actually fight with the Muslims (against the unbelievers). If they refuse to accept Islam, demand they pay the *jizya*. If they agree to pay, accept it from them and hold off your hands. If they refuse to pay the tax, seek Allah’s help and fight them. When you lay siege to a fort and the besieged appeal to you for protection in the name of Allah and His Prophet, do not accord to them the guarantee of Allah and His Prophet, but accord to them your own guarantee and the guarantee of your companions for it is a lesser sin that the security given by you or your companions be disregarded than that the security granted in the name of Allah and His Prophet be violated. When you besiege a fort and the besieged want you to let them out in accordance with Allah’s Command, do not let them come out in accordance with His Command, but do so at your (own) command, for you do not know whether or not you will be able to carry out Allah’s behest with regard to them.” Muslim, *Jihad wa Siyar*, 3; Ibn Majah, *Jihad*, 38, no. 2858; Al-Darimi, *Siyar*, 5, 8.

Allah (p.b.u.h.) appointed someone as leader of an army or detachment he would specifically exhort him: "If they [the unbelievers] refuse to accept Islam, demand they pay the *jizya*. If they agree to pay, accept it from them and do not harm them."

So collecting *jizya* from the People of the Book only is in line with the Qur'an,⁷⁶ but collecting it from unbelievers in general is in accordance with the *Sunnah*. The Apostle of God (p.b.u.h.) himself collected *jizya* from the Zoroastrians, and there is no difference between the Zoroastrians and idolaters. If one is asked why the Apostle of God (p.b.u.h.) did not collect *jizya* from them even though there were many wars with idolaters, one can affirm that he did not take *jizya* from them.

This is because the verse concerning *jizya* was revealed in the year of Tabuk, i.e. the ninth year of Hicrah after the Arab Peninsula's idolaters were converted to Islam. After the verse was revealed to the Apostle of God (p.b.u.h.), he collected *jizya* from Zoroastrians and Christians. At that time there were no idolaters in the peninsula. After revealing the verse, the Apostle of God (p.b.u.h.), collected *jizya* from the Zoroastrians and Christians who remained on the peninsula. After the arrival of the Apostle of God (p.b.u.h.) in Medina, He did not collect *jizya* from Medina's and Haybar's Jews either because the Apostle of God (p.b.u.h.) had made an agreement of peace with them before the *jizya* verse had been revealed.⁷⁷

This shows us the rights idolaters were granted if they paid *jizya*. The verses within the context of the killing of idolaters were revealed before the verses of *jizya* and addresses mainly those idolaters who were antagonistic to Islam.

In spite of all these premises, in my view, the interpretation by some classical commentators who say that idolaters have not been given the right to live is a psychological consequence of living under conditions of war. But, according to modernist authors, this is due to the prevalent situation during the first centuries of Islam, since the Islamic state was then surrounded by hostile enemies. The believers were at war.⁷⁸ Since the second half of the nineteenth century, modernist authors have asserted that the relationship between the Islamic and other states and tribes was essentially of a peaceful character. They argue that this principle is

⁷⁶ "Fight those People of the Book who do not believe in God and the Last Day, who do not prohibit what God and His Apostle have forbidden, nor accept divine law, until all of them pay protective tax [*jizya*] in submission" (At-Taubah [9]:29).

⁷⁷ Ibn Qayyim Al-Jawziyya, *Ahkam al-Dhimma*, p. 6.

⁷⁸ Muhammad Asad, *The Message of the Qur'an* (Gibraltar: Dar Al-Andalus, 1980), p. 256; Muhammad 'Izzat Darwaza, *Al-Tafsir al-Hadith*, transl. into Turkish by Mehmet Baydas and Vahdetin Ince, vol. 7 (Istanbul: Ekin p.h. year?), pp. 279-80; Suleyman Ates, *Yuce Kur'an'in Cagdas Tefsiri*, vol. 1 (Istanbul: Yeni ufuklar p.h.), pp. 332-35.

firmly rooted in the Qur'an and cite the following verses:⁷⁹ "Allah" "If they withdraw from you, and do not fight you, and offer you peace, then God assign not any way to you against them" (An-Nisâ [4]: 90): " ... Do not say to him who offers you a greeting [*salam*, which also means peace] 'Thou art not a believer,' seeking the change in goods of the present life" (An-Nisâ [4]:94), and "And if they incline to peace, do thou incline to it; and put thy trust in God" (Al-Anfal [8]: 61).

For example, Muhammad Asad says:

Every verse of the Quran must be read and interpreted against the background of the Quran as whole. The Taubah, 9 / 5 verse, which speaks of a possible conversion to Islam on the part of "those who ascribe divinity to aught beside God" with whom the believers are at war, must, therefore, be considered in conjunction with several fundamental Qur'anic ordinances. One of them, " there shall be no coercion in matters of faith" (Al-Baqarah, 2 / 256), lays down categorically that any attempt at a forcible conversion of unbelievers is prohibited – which precludes the possibility of the Muslims' demanding or expecting that a defeated enemy should embrace Islam as the price of immunity. Secondly, the Qur'an ordains, "Fight in God's cause against those who wage war against you; but do not commit aggression, for, verily, God does not love aggressors" (Al-Baqarah, 2 / 190); and the verse An-Nisâ, 4 / 91. Thus, war is permissible only in self-defence.⁸⁰

There is no other way here. The only way of Muslims is to avoid hostility.

Modernist interpreters prefer this view, and I agree with them. Perhaps the classical interpretation of the jihad verses had an important function at a certain time. Perhaps the great expansion of Islam in the short time after its inception was largely due to the combative spirit of the new faith. The jihad verses of this kind had a large role in creating a conquering spirit in the past, but this may not be the case in today's modern world. Jihad expresses the struggle of intelligence and persuasion. I agree with Said Nursi's view: "The jihad of this time is that of love not by terror. The external jihad comes by the glory of the certainty of Islam. Because external enemies are civilized people, we must perform jihad through evidences of Shari'a."⁸¹

As a result, one can see that the word *islam* comes from the root meaning peace, and, because of its root, Islam aims to bring about peace in the world. The differences among some commentators on the issue of jihad stem from their approach to the Qur'an. Some of them hold that the Qur'anic verses are partial and exceptions to the chronological fact of the verses. As can be seen in other issues and subjects, when they comment on verses in line with the Qur'anic holistic

⁷⁹ See Peters, *op. cit.*, p. 112.

⁸⁰ Asad, *op. cit.*, p. 256.

⁸¹ Said Nursi, *Ictima-i Receteler*, vol. 2 (Istanbul: Tenvir Nesriyat, 1990), pp. 273, 298.

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