

The concept of Peace in Islam and the Misunderstanding of some verses in the Qur'an and the Sunnah

Dr. Zoubir BOUZERZOUR*

Algiers-1 university, faculty of Islamic sciences- Algiers
zoubir.ibrahim@yahoo.com

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Abstract:

This paper attempts to trace the concept of peace, in peace studies, and more focused on the Islamic perspective. It mentioned that Peace in Islam is more comprehensive and holistic because it is a fruit of belief that starts within the individuals, the society and then the entire Muslim nation. The article then discusses and analyzes some allegations addressed against Islam. For instance, there are certain verses in the Qur'an and some traditions in the *Sunnah* that convey injunctions to kill non-Muslims. This research also demonstrates that the Prophet Mohammed (p.b.u.h) was never an aggressive leader who was after power, or even used his power to weaken his enemies; rather it was the opposite. Furthermore, this paper is intended to be a small step along the path proposed by many scholars for achieving and maintaining peace in our beautiful world.

Keywords: peace; Islam; sunnah; Qur'an; Prophet Mohammed (pbuh)

*Author corresponding

Introduction :

Islam has been at the center of religious-political debates following the horrific terror of Islamic State in the Arab region (Iraq, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Libya) and some European nations (France and Ankara). Plenty of research, mostly by non-Muslims, has been conducted since then to examine the religion of Islam and whether a call for violence is central to this faith. Some Muslim scholars have exerted parallel efforts as well. Most of the latter, however, were primarily apologetic in quality, adopting a defensive posture to counter the perceived attack on their religious identity in the wake of these events. As a result, most research has focused on studying the relationship between Islam and violence, which leaves the relationship between Islam and peace largely unexamined.

Confining the discussion to the relationship between Islam and violence legitimizes, rather than questions, the relationship. Broadening the horizon to include the relationship between Islam and peace is critical, as it has the advantage of shifting the debate on Islam into a dialogue between partners and equals rather than an interrogation in which Muslims feel compelled to defend their faith.

This article highlights the fact, usually overlooked by most literatures, that Islam can be employed as a resource to build peace. Highlighting the peaceful insights of Islam may both improve conditions in Muslim communities over the long term and provide them with a discourse while engaging in a dialogue with others.

Furthermore, it is the duty of Muslim scholars and intellectuals to come forward and study the Qur'an and Sunnah in totality, refute all misunderstanding that non-Muslims or even Muslims have of Islam, and develop the concept of war and peace in Islam.

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We should show to all of humanity the path of truth and peace. We should never forget that Islam is primarily a religion of faith and peace and that these two concepts have absolute priority over war and fighting.

The Concept of Peace:

Johan Galtung once argued "an important task in peace research has always been and always be the exploration of the concept of peace"⁽¹⁾.

One of the things infinitely more difficult than maintaining peace is defining it. Peace is a word that is expressed nearly as frequently as 'truth', 'beauty' and 'love' and thus may be as elusive in being defined as the aforementioned virtues.

John Macquarie asserts in this regard that "...Thinking about peace is not as simple as it may seem. In the first place the word itself is ambiguous."⁽²⁾

The following lines, will locate the root of the word 'peace' in English dictionaries and encyclopedias while attempting to trace its usage in different religions and civilizations. Following that, I will present a comprehensive definition of the concept of 'peace' from both Muslim and non-Muslim perspectives.

The Word "Peace":

In reference to the English language, the word peace is defined in many ways. In the *Oxford English Dictionary*, 'Peace' is defined as:

"...a freedom from or cessation of war or hostilities; the condition of a nation or community when it is not at war with another"⁽³⁾

The Encyclopedia of Violence, Peace and Conflict has a different perspective on its definition. The following definition is derived from the encyclopedia: "Peace quiet from suits or disorder, unrest from any commotion, stillness from riots or tumult, rest, quiet content, freedom from terror, a heavenly rest; and silence"⁽⁴⁾.

When referring to *The Universal Dictionary of the English Language*, we find that the first definition of 'Peace' is the cessation of, or freedom from strife and warfare. The second definition has it as a treaty of peace between hostile nations. The third type goes on to understand it as a "freedom from civil disorder, disturbance, agitation..." and "freedom from strife, controversy or agitation."

In sharp contrast however, the *Random House Dictionary* provides a more positive definition, as it implies through the use of the word "normal". The full definition can be seen as follows:

"Peace: The normal, non-warning condition of a nation, group of nations or the world, the normal freedom from civil commotion and violence of a community, public order and serenity." ⁽⁵⁾.

Another source, *The Century Dictionary*, provided interesting insights into the explanation of 'Peace'. The definition is as follows:

"A state of quiet and tranquility, freedom from disturbance and agitation, calm, quietness, repose, freedom from agitation or disturbance by the passions. A state of reconciliation between parties at variance; concord, public tranquility that quiets order and security which is guaranteed by the laws." ⁽⁶⁾.

"Freedom from disturbance; tranquility, and freedom from or the ending of war." ⁽⁷⁾.

In reference to encyclopedias however, the word 'Peace' is seen differently. For example, the *Encyclopedia Britannica* offers the following definition in this context:

"Peace; the contrary of war or turmoil, the condition that follows their cessation. Its sense in international law is not being at war." ⁽⁸⁾.

The *World Book Encyclopedia* also gives a similar form to 'Peace', defining it as the state of being calm, quiet, and free of disturbance. From military and political view points; peace means freedom of such violent disturbance such as wars and riots ⁽⁹⁾.

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One would infer from the various English dictionaries and encyclopedias that peace from a Western perspective means a freedom from all kinds of violence and disturbances such as wars and riots while also maintaining tranquility and public order. However, it is worthy of note that the West did not pay attention to inner peace; as they limited the concept of peace only to the physical aspect while ignoring its spiritual counterpart.

While examining the meaning of the word “peace” in various religions and civilizations, the following can be observed:

The origin of the word ‘peace’ is somewhat elusive, although, generally speaking there is no difficulty in tracing the word through the Romans to the Greeks. It is also possible that part of the contact between the Greeks and Indians/Tibetans gave the Greeks the word ‘*pax*’ as it seemed to correspond well with the *Tiptan* ‘*pah-cio*’ which implied some form of tranquility pervading the whole of nature⁽¹⁰⁾.

The Chinese language offers the word *heping* as the equivalent of ‘peace’. It is a combination of two: *he*; which denotes smoothness, harmony and peace and *ping*; which comes to mean evenness, tranquility and peacefulness.⁽¹¹⁾

The Hebrew word of peace is *shalom*, and the basic meaning which the dictionary assigns to it is “completeness” or “wholeness”. The word *shalom* is derived from the verbal form *shalem*, which in one of its various possible forms can mean: “to be complete”. Therefore, when the word *shalom* was used for peace, the original users had in view a condition of the world or of a human society in which there are; completeness, unity, wholeness and fullness.⁽¹²⁾

In the Bible, peace is referred to as an external quality that gives the entire society security and helps to remove the shackles of political enslavement. “Peace” is also the intra-Christian greeting, but its meaning in this regard differs from its other comprehensive meaning.

In Islam, as in Christianity, it strictly refers to spiritual and deep peace brought by Jesus.⁽¹³⁾ C.F. Evans writes concerning the Old Testament's teaching:

“Peace is the normal and proper condition of men in relationship with one another.”⁽¹⁴⁾

The word peace in Islam, as used by the Qur'an, is “*al-salam*”⁽¹⁵⁾ or “*al-silm*”⁽¹⁶⁾.

Furthermore in Arabic, the word peace (*'salam' in Arabic*)⁽¹⁷⁾ carries many shades of meaning that mostly revolve around concepts of safety, security, and kind treatment. It also refers to the state of forsaking war. The word *salam* originates from the Arabic word '*al-tasliym*', which refers to the act of shaking hands, and thus imparts a sense of kindness and affectionate feelings during interaction with other humans.⁽¹⁸⁾

While examining the above definitions of the word 'peace', it may be observed that English dictionaries and Encyclopedias both generally referring to a more negative notion of peace, denoting the mere absence of war. Realistically however, the religious concept of the word is much more comprehensive and closer to a positive concept of 'peace' than was defined as I will discuss in the following pages:

A Comprehensive View on the Concept of Peace :

In recent years, work in peace research, peace studies, peace science has expanded greatly in many parts of the world. The work has been truly global and interdisciplinary. However, the concept of peace remains controversial, where many sociologists, and political analysts, divided the term into two categories namely; positive peace and negative peace. These terms were first introduced by one of the founders and main figure in peace research, Johan Galtung (1964). According to the Peace Research Institute, Oslo who published the Journal of Peace Research.⁽¹⁹⁾

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In the 1960's Galtung expanded the concepts of peace and violence to include indirect or structural violence and this was a direct challenge to the prevalent notions about the nature of peace. The expanded definition of violence led to an expanded definition of peace. According to Galtung, peace research is a research into the conditions for moving closer to peace or at least not drifting closer to violence. Thus, negative peace is the absence of violence, absence of war, and positive peace is the integration of human society⁽²⁰⁾.

Negative peace:

Woolman defined negative peace; “as a state requiring a set of social structures that provide security and protection from acts of direct physical violence committed by individuals, groups or nations. The emphasis is on the control of violence. The main strategy is disassociation, whereby conflicting parties are separated”⁽²¹⁾.

In his book, *The Concept of Peace*, John Macquarie defines peace as “... the mere absence of war.”⁽²²⁾. Reardon provides a slightly broader explanation for the term, insisting that peace is the absence of violence in all forms: physical, social, psychological, and structural⁽²³⁾.

Prof. Masatsugu noted: in the early years of peace studies, it was assumed that peace is the opposite of war. Peace was defined as the absence of war, partially because the early peace studies was strongly motivated by the reflection on the tragedies of the Second World War and by a sense of crisis of human survival caused by the danger of a total nuclear war between the two superpowers. From our perspective, it can be said that the peace concept at the time consisted of only one peace value, that is, the absence of war⁽²⁴⁾.

Positive peace:

O'Kane defines positive peace as a pattern of cooperation and integration between major human groups. He states that "it is about people interacting in cooperative ways; about social organizations of diverse groups of people who willingly choose to cooperate for the benefit of all humankind, and that it calls for a system in which no winners or losers exist; as all are winners." O'Kane finally states that; it is a situation of such high value that institutions are built around it to protect and promote it. ⁽²⁵⁾

In offering another broad positive view of peace, MacLeod says: "Peace is the awareness that all humans should have the right to a full and satisfying life. For the individual, this means the development of his own and his loved one's potential growth, and for reaching out to his neighbors to help assure that they have the same chance. For communities, this means developing fair regulations for living together, and encouraging programs that will enhance fellowship among its many diverse elements. For nations, this means encouraging its citizens to strive for enhancement of a benign attitude toward all elements of their own society and toward all other nations." ⁽²⁶⁾

According to Galtung, the inspiration behind the original positive peace idea was the health science, where health can be seen as a mere absence of disease as well as something more positive: making the body capable of resisting disease. Likewise, two types of remedies obtaining from health analogy are useful for peace research: curative aimed at negative peace and preventive aimed at positive peace.

Similarly, the role of peace studies is to study both negative as well as positive aspects of peace, both the conditions for absence of violence and the conditions for peace. ⁽²⁷⁾

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Looking to the above definitions of peace it can be observed that non-Muslim scholars have followed two different approaches in defining the term “peace”. Some writers have used the term with a distinctive relationship to war; this is negative peace.

However, some writers gave a positive definition. This may entail the absence of injustice and inequalities in the lives of different groups and the presence of tolerance, cooperation, and mutual regard between individuals and society.

On the other hand, if one were to examine the opinions and analysis of experts and scholars in the field of peace studies, the majority would be found criticizing the negative approach regarding the definition of the term ‘Peace’. For instance, O'Kane sees that defining peace as the mere absence of war is vacuous, passive, simplistic, and an unresponsive escape mechanism too often resorted to in the past without success. This definition also commits a serious oversight: it ignores the residual feelings of mistrust and suspicion that the winners and losers of a war harbor towards each other.⁽²⁸⁾

Johan Galtung in most of his work has sought to project positive peace as a higher ideal than negative peace. This is because according to Galtung, peace research shouldn't merely deal with the narrow vision of ending or reducing violence at a direct or structural level but seek to understand conditions for preventing violence. For this to happen, peace and violence need to be looked at in totality at all levels of human organization. So, inter-gender violence is no less important than inter-state violence and positive peace promotion has to address issues of violence at all levels. This requires an understanding of the civilizations, development, peace and conflict studied eclectically⁽²⁹⁾.

In short, positive peace is feasible according to Galtung's theory and that though negative peace is useful for the short term; the longer-term remedies are only achievable with the positive peace approach. After all, prevention is the best cure.

The proponents of the positive definition argue that a state of negative peace does not mean that the society is in peace until the society enjoys freedom, justice, and a satisfying life as a whole. John Macquarie observes:

“People who speak or write about peace often mean, simply, the absence of war. This negative definition conceives peace in terms of something else that is not happening, namely war. Less common but ultimately more satisfactory is a positive definition, one in terms of what is happening. This state of peace is one of harmony, mutual regard, and indeed, active cooperation among the groups or nations involved and ultimately the whole world.”⁽³⁰⁾

In contrast, advocates of the concept of negative peace argue that the only kind of peace that can exist is a negative peace through which society becomes free from violent disturbances such as wars and riots. They claim that peace does not mean a complete harmony amongst people. This is easily apparent in the fact that people partake in forms of conflict even during times of peace, examples in which include debates, sports contests etc.

On the other hand however, there is a third view offered by a number of scholars that suggests that positive peace and negative peace are complementary to one another. These scholars argue that the presence of war and other direct forms of violence not only disrupts the immediate peace, but also promote social injustices (the notable absence of positive peace) as they promote widespread violations of human rights in all of its respective definitions.

But the reverse also holds true. The presence of social injustice (the absence of positive peace) not only provides an immediate violence of repression and oppression but rather, also creates breeding grounds conducive to the development of war or other direct types of violence such as crime⁽³¹⁾.

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The third view in my opinion is the strongest. If we were to look at commonly found facts we would find that the absence of positive peace in Algeria for example, lead to the development of violence and civil war that killed more than two hundred thousand people.

Similarly, the state of war, as seen in Iraq, Libya and Syria did not only disrupt peace. Rather, it also promoted economic deprivation, social neglect and the lack of freedom (the absence of positive peace).

The Concept of Peace in Islam:

As mentioned above, linguistically peace (*Salam / Silm*) is derived from the same root in Arabic, (س ل م). Two words that share the same root in the Arabic language also share a relationship in meaning, that is, they carry the same meaning in essence while referring to different things at face value. *Salam* was used in the Qur'an basically to refer to: one of the attributes of *Allah*, or "God" in Arabic, the same as the God of Abraham, Moses, and Jesus; staying away from the use of violence; greeting people, as well as agreement among people. In the traditions of the Prophet, ⁽³²⁾*salam* carries some additional meanings, such as security from violence and corruption. ⁽³³⁾ The meaning of Islam then becomes "the inner peace of spirit that comes from submitting one's life to the will of God."

Technically the word peace as explained by Dr. Siddiqi: Peace in the full sense of the word is not just an absence of war: peace means wholeness, completeness, being without any inadequacy, being perfect and being full⁽³⁴⁾. Another fine attempt at defining peace was presented by Sayyid Qutb⁽³⁵⁾. He said in regards to the issue: "The Islamic definition of peace has a wider and deeper significance than that adopted by statesmen. Peace must imply freedom, justice, and security for all people. Following the Islamic criterion, peace cannot be established by abstaining from war when there is oppression, corruption, despotism and the denial of God's supremacy."⁽³⁶⁾

Sayyid Qutb also stated in this context; “Peace emerges as a preamble to the principle of harmony. Peace means harmony in the universe, the laws of life and the origin of man, while war is the result of the violations of harmony as injustice, despotism and corruption.”⁽³⁷⁾.

In his book *The Prophet’s Concept of War*, Ahmed Gulzar attempts to clarify the Islamic concept of peace. He says, “In Islam, peace is a comprehensive word that refers to the state of complete harmony between all the senses in an attempt to strike a balance between internal and external engagements⁽³⁸⁾”.

It is clear that peace is not the mere absence of war and instability. Rather, it is the true submission to the will of God and His order. It is the promotion of social justice, free development within democratic means, and the right to a full and satisfying life for all human beings.

Regarding the above definitions of peace, it can be said that; they contain a number of important elements; Peace in Islam is initiated through the belief of God and the adherence to His rules. It is the absence of all kinds of harm or violence thus understood as the establishment of justice, freedom, and security in its widest sense; on the personal, social, legal, and international levels.

Prof. Ahmet Akgunduz argues: Islam treats peace in the *eschatological* sense, as the ultimate goal of human life; almost synonymous with salvation.

A second way in which Islam looks at peace might be called the *psychological* sense; as tranquility and peace of mind, an inner confidence born of faith that enables the religious believer to face adversity without anxiety or despair. Particularly when one is facing the approach of death, the believer can attain a peace of mind, which will enable the person to overcome spiritual turmoil and fear.

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A third aspect of peace is *universal* peace. It reflects the widespread conviction of the time that humankind can sink no lower in criminality towards its own kind and expresses the hope for a time of peace and prosperity for all mankind⁽³⁹⁾.

Based on the different definitions of peace that have been presented, one can claim that the Islamic concept of peace is much more comprehensive and holistic. This is due to its combination of negative and positive peace as presented by non-Muslims while adding an important feature; that of faith (the obedience of God) which non-Muslims, especially the West, disregarded. Islam, on the contrary, gives strong consideration towards this aspect.

When referring to the Qur'an we observe that peace is generally attached to the obedience of God. Almighty Allah says: "Let them worship the Lord of this house, who provides them with food against hunger, and with security against fear (of danger)." ⁽⁴⁰⁾ Allah also says: "It is those who believe and mix not their beliefs with wrong that are (truly) in security, for they are on (right) guidance." ⁽⁴¹⁾

What should be understood from the above verses is that the worship of God will harmonize our lives with nature and apply our free will to our energies (desires, thoughts, and actions) to keep them within the limits established by God. If such limits are not recognized, we would seize one another's property, seek illicit relationships, involve ourselves in crimes and indulge in other sins. As a result, violence, terrorism, disorder, and revolution would occur more frequently in society.

In other words, peace is always displayed as the recommended state of life in the Qur'an, and its absence is portrayed negatively, except in the few cases *qital* (war) is allowed as a temporary state. Since war is one way through which *fasad* (environmental destruction) takes place, it cannot be asserted as the way of the true believers. And those who transgress or initiate war in a way that contradicts the

teachings mentioned above are sinful in Islam and are punished by the authorities for committing the crime of *hiraba* (equivalent to terrorism).

This is another way in which the emphasis is placed upon limiting the use of *jihad-al-qital*: as a strict exception and not the norm. The norm should be a never ending spiritual struggle, both within the self and with other creatures in the universe. Consequently, the principles mentioned hereafter can be considered as forms of the greater *jihad* for the cause of peace and justice in Islam⁽⁴²⁾. In conclusion, it could be said that a proper definition of ‘peace’ must include positive characteristics that are held over and above the mere absence of war or negative peace. Instead of simply focusing on the negative side of things, it must include a religious aspect as well. This is because, as Muslims, we believe that religion is vital and necessary in creating self sacrifice and the willingness to help our fellow human beings and treat them as our brothers and sisters, and love them as we love ourselves⁽⁴³⁾.

Furthermore, Peace in Islam isn't merely an enforcement of law that urges people to be peaceful to one another and if they fail they will be punished. Peace in Islam is more comprehensive and holistic because it's a fruit of belief that starts within the individuals first. The total submission and obedience towards God; this in turn will create inner spiritual peace and tranquility and consequently result in harmonious relationship with creations, then flows outside them to garb all their activities with peace. Islam paints all the social links among Muslims and non-Muslims with peace; creating a peaceful Islamic civilization. Islam instills peace in the hearts of its followers by stimulating their souls and inclinations towards peace, virtues and all good.

**The Misunderstanding of Some Related Verses of the Qur'an
and the *Sunnah*:**

There are certain verses in the Qur'an⁽⁴⁴⁾ and some traditions in the *Sunnah* that convey injunctions to kill non-Muslims, in contradiction with what has been stated that Qur'an and *Sunnah* are sources of peace. For instance, in *Surat Al-Tawbah* Allah says: "But when the forbidden months are past, then fight and slay the Pagans wherever ye find them and seize them, beleaguer them, and lie in wait for them in every stratagem (of war), but if they repent and establish regular prayers, and pay *zakat*, then open the way for them for Allah is oft-forgiving, most merciful."⁽⁴⁵⁾ And in *Surat Al-Baqarah* Allah says: "And slay them wherever ye catch them and turn them out from where they have turned you out, for persecution is worse than slaughter..."⁽⁴⁶⁾ There is also a famous tradition indicating the killing of unbelievers, where it was reported that the Prophet (p.b.u.h) said: "I have been ordered to kill people until they confess that there is no god but Allah and Muhammad is the messenger of Allah..."⁽⁴⁷⁾.

Referring to the above verses and tradition, there are some who attempt to give the impression that Islam is a religion of war and terrorism. They even claim that the tolerance and peaceful preaching of Islam appears in early Islam as a strategic arrangement, since they were weak and powerless. And following the Prophet's (p.b.u.h) immigration to Medina, where he received overwhelming support, he changed his policy and became aggressive and forced people to accept Islam or face the sword.

Jason Burke, emphasized this misunderstanding in the following text:

Early Islamic scholars dealt with the ambiguities by showing how Mohammed's injunctions were appropriate to the various stages of his struggle. Early Qur'anic verses, delivered to Mohammed between 610 and 623 CE while his community was small, unpopular and barely tolerated by vastly superior forces, urge patience and the spreading of the word of Islam through non-violent means alone. "There is no compulsion in religion, for the right way is clear from the wrong way, the Qur'an says (2: 256). After the time of the hijra, Allah appears to have given permission for Muslims to engage in defensive warfare. Later verses, received by Mohammed when at the height of his power, enjoined an offensive against unbelievers: "fight and slay the pagans wherever ye find them and seize them, beleaguer them and lie in wait for them" (9: 5). These verses, known as the 'sword verses', were held by the *'ulama* of the powerful and expansionist Ummayyad and Abbasid dynasties to abrogate the previous more pacification Qur'anic injunctions. This interpretation provided a religious justification for armed expansion by the newly confident dominant ruling group⁽⁴⁸⁾.

Furthermore, in his article "*The Two Faces of Islam Still Smiling*", David Wood says: "Muhammad fled Mecca and moved to Medina, where his political power rapidly increased. Soon he and his followers began raiding caravans to support the fledgling religion, and while Muhammad's enemies multiplied, so did his followers. What followed can only be described as a reign of terror for those who refused to submit to Islam. Both men and women were slaughtered...

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hundreds of Jews were beheaded for standing against Muhammad (case of Bani Qurayzah)” .

David Wood continues:“Discussion about Islam typically revolves around certain verses in the Qur'an, but such discussions are often fruitless. The reason for this is that the Qur'an is very inconsistent in its approach towards unbelievers.”⁽⁴⁹⁾

Rev. Richard P. Bailey says: Although Muslims scholars believe that God replaced some earlier verses by substituting later verses, there is a great difference of opinion among them as to which of the verses supersede the other. Nevertheless, most are agreement that *sura* (9: 5) called, “The Verse of the Sword” supersedes most of the previous verses regarding *Jihad*. Some believe it supersedes as many as 111 previous verses.

In spite of this general agreement, many today quote the previous replaced verses in order to validate their perception of Islam being a peaceful religion. Thus modern liberal Muslim leaders, especially here in the west, are teaching what could be called “The Islam of Mecca” with its emphasis on non violence and tolerance, at the same time, “The Islam of Medina” with its more aggressive, totalitarian nature is what is being practiced and taught by orthodox, fundamentalist Muslims in most parts of the Muslim world. The Verse of the Sword (9:5) abrogates earlier verses encouraging tolerance and peace; such as the verse (2:256)⁽⁵⁰⁾.

Such speakers also rely on certain alleged assassinations and murders committed by the Prophet (p.b.u.h), such as the killing of the *Qurayzah* (Jewish tribe) and the assassination of Ka'b bin al-Ashraf. The above allegations rely on two important arguments.

First Argument:

This is the strongest one focusing on the concept of abrogation⁽⁵¹⁾. They claim that the verses related to free faith, mercy, and friendly dealing with non-Muslims (some call them verses of Mecca), have been abrogated by the verses of Medina; verses of the sword i.e. verse (9:5, 9:29, 9:36) and (2:190). They rely on Ibn Al-‘Araby’s opinion who claims that verse 39 from *Suratal-Hajj* has abrogated all verses of forgiveness, Ibn Salama’s view that claims that 238 verses have been abrogated and, al-Nahhas who says that 138 verses have been abrogated⁽⁵²⁾.

They also quote what Imam Zarkashi narrates regarding what some scholars have said: “Verses #5 and #29 of *Suratat-Tauba* have abrogated 114 verses that call for tolerance and pardon⁽⁵³⁾. Furthermore, Ibn Zayd says: The verse (2:190) was abrogated by the verses (9:36).⁽⁵⁴⁾ And in Al-Nahhas’s opinion he said: “The scholars differed concerning Allah’s saying: “There is no compulsion in religion”⁽⁵⁵⁾, some said: “It has been abrogated; for the Prophet (p.b.u.h) compelled the Arabs to embrace Islam and fought them and did not accept any alternative other than their acceptance of Islam: the abrogating verse is (9: 73)”⁽⁵⁶⁾.

In addition, they also count on the tradition of Abdullah Ibn Umar who narrated that the Prophet (p.b.u.h) said: “I have been ordered to kill people until they confess that there is no god but Allah and Muhammad is the messenger of Allah...”⁽⁵⁷⁾. This is in line with the verses of the sword.

Second Argument:

This argument focuses on historical facts:

The first one being the case of the Qurayzah Jews. As historians say:

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The Jews of Bani Qurayzah resisted Muhammad and attempted to form an alliance against him. When the alliance faltered, Muhammad acted quickly. His armies surrounded them and “besieged them for twenty-five nights until they were sore pressed and God cast terror into their hearts.” Muhammad selected Sa’d bin Mu’adh to decide their punishment. Sa’d declared that “the men should be killed, the property divided, and the women and children taken as captives.”⁽⁵⁸⁾

The second is the case of Ka’b bin al-Ashraf. As Jabir narrates, the Prophet (p.b.u.h) said: “who is ready to kill Ka’b bin Ashraf?” Muhammad bin Maslama replied “Would you like me to kill him?” The Prophet (p.b.u.h) replied in the affirmative. Muhammad bin Maslama then said, “Then allow me to say what I like.” the Prophet (p.b.u.h) replied “I do”⁽⁵⁹⁾.

The above allegations are quite critical and need some attention to refute them, as they are not based on solid evidences. Despite the lack of solid evidences, many people hold such views; even Muslims. For this reason, I feel thoroughly addressing this issue is appropriate.

In order to refute this misunderstanding and prejudice, it becomes imperative to handle their arguments one by one; thoroughly analyzing and discussing them. Additionally, I will try to provide the correct answer pertinent to each case, to the best of my ability, relying on the Qur’an, authentic traditions of the Prophet (p.b.u.h), the principles of *Shari’ah*, and the correct opinions of Muslim scholars.

Discussing the First Argument:

The first argument focused on the issue of abrogation in the Qur’an. Before discussing this issue, it is crucial to comprehend some important principles that Muslim scholars have agreed upon as general rules in the study of Qur’an and its sciences.

a. Any claim of abrogation must be carefully examined. The entire Qur'an is definitively authentic. Any claim of abrogation must be definitive and not based on mere opinion or speculation.

b. The few texts must be interpreted in the light of the many texts. For example, the Qur'an repeatedly affirms the freedom of conscious and rejects compulsion in religion. However, we encounter some verses in the Qur'an, which allow fighting non-Muslims. To understand these later verses as permission to fighting against others because of their rejection of Islam or to force and coerce them in any way to accept Islam is to disregard many Qur'anic texts that are inconsistent with that interpretation.

c. The Qur'an explains itself. Since the Qur'an is not ordered by topic [i.e. textbook chapters], it is necessary for a scholar to be thoroughly familiar with other texts in the Qur'an, which deal with the same topic or relate directly to it. Failure to do so may lead to a high degree of selectivity, which may distort the overall message of the Qur'an concerning that topic. In fact, other texts in the Qur'an may determine, in a significant way, the true meaning of a given text.

d. Consideration of the occasion of revelation (*Asbaab al-Nuzul*) of certain verses, if known and authentic, as this affects the interpretation of that verse.

e. It is also important to consider the section in which a particular verse occurs. One of the most common serious mistakes is to quote only a part of a verse or one verse in an interrelated section of a *Surah* in such a way that its meaning is changed.

f. If there is an authentic *Hadith* dealing with the same topic as the Qur'anic verse, *Hadith* takes precedence over mere opinion or speculation

g. Three factors are essential for understanding any verse in the Qur'an:

- **The textual context of the verse within the Qur'an.**
- **The historical context of the verse.**
- **The manner in which the Prophet (p.b.u.h) implemented the verse.**

Regarding the issue of abrogation: Muslim scholars have deeply discussed the concept of abrogation (*naskh*), and they also put forward some important rules and conditions to help in understanding it without any mistakes or exploitation. They stated that abrogation cannot be accepted until it has fulfilled the following conditions:

1-The abrogated verses (*al-mansukh*) should be a legitimate rule (*Hukum shar'iy*).

2-The abrogating verse (*al-naasikh*) should be legitimate evidence.

3-The abrogating verse should follow the abrogated verse, in terms of revelation.

4-There must be a real contradiction between (*al-naasikh* and *al-mansukh*). Whenever it is possible to reconcile between the two verses then we must do so. The scholars affirm that implementing both evidences is recommended as opposed to implementing one and abolishing the other.

In this regard, there is an important juristic principle saying: "*al-assal baqaa' al-hukmi la naskhuh*": i.e. "the default principle is the existence of the rule, not the abrogation of it". It is also worthy of note that there is a consensus amongst the scholars regarding the above conditions⁽⁶⁰⁾.

Furthermore, there are methods that we should follow concerning abrogation:

1-We should have clear evidence that indicates the abrogating verse has been revealed after the abrogated one.

2-We should have authentic evidence from the companions of the Prophet (p.b.u.h) that specify the abrogating verse and the abrogated one⁽⁶¹⁾.

Besides that, there are also matters which should not be accepted as evidence for proving abrogation;

1.*Ijtihad* of any scholar without authentic evidence is not accepted.

2.The opinion of any *Mufasir* (Qur'an interpreter) indicating that certain verse is an abrogated verse cannot be accepted. Scholars argue that the view of the *Mufasir* is not a *dalil* (legal evidence)⁽⁶²⁾.

It may also be helpful to note that there is no single person or authority in Islam whose interpretation is seen or accepted as the only valid one, let alone being on par with the texts of the Qur'an and *Hadith*.

An important point that should be emphasized here is the scope of abrogation. The scholars unanimously agree that abrogation must only be limited to *Al-Ahkaam* (legal rules), but that it does not relate to matters such as: faith, belief, ethics, and moral issues⁽⁶³⁾.

After presenting the principles and rules that explain abrogation, which any honest researcher must consider and observe, our refutation to the first argument is as follows:

A) Refuting the claim of abrogation:

I should note that earlier Muslims used the term “*Naskh*” to refer also to “*Takhsees*” or specifying and limiting the ruling rather than abrogating it. This issue is of paramount importance as Muslim heritage includes writings that went into unreasonable excesses in their claims of *Naskh*. While some claimed that hundreds of verses were abrogated, others like Jalal Al-din Al-Suyooti narrowed them down to 19 verses; other scholars like Shah Waliyyullah Al-Dahlawi and Sobhi Al-Saleh narrowed them down to a lesser number.⁽⁶⁴⁾

In addition, Al-Zarqani has explained the stand of some scholars concerning abrogation, he says:

“There are three categories of scholars; those who deny it and they said: “it does not exist” (*al-muqasirun*)⁽⁶⁵⁾, the second group are those who go so far as to have considered what is not *naskh* as *naskh* relying on unauthentic arguments (*al-ghalun*). Among them, Abu Ja'far al-Nahhas, Ibn Hazm⁽⁶⁶⁾, and Hibatuallah Ibn Salama⁽⁶⁷⁾, and others, those scholars have committed a lot of mistakes concerning the issue of abrogation, the reason behind these mistakes is that they considered what *al-Salaf* call *naskh*, as the real *naskh*, even they do not know that our *salaf* when they mention *al-nasakh* they did not mean the legal term of *naskh* but rather they meant the broader meaning of *naskh* which includes; *Bayaan al-Mujmal*, *Taqyid al-Mutlaq*, *Takhsiys al-'Aam*, etc... the third group are (*al-Muqtasidun*) who are in the middle.”⁽⁶⁸⁾

From the above we learn that one should not accept any claim of *naskh* without clear proof that indicates its validity. For instance, in his interpretation to the verse “but if the enemy inclines towards peace, do thou (also) incline towards peace, and trust in Allah...”⁽⁶⁹⁾ Al-Tabariy has quoted the opinions of those who stated that the verse was abrogated by the verse (9:5) of *SuratAl-Tawbah*. Among them are Qatada and Al-Hassan Al-Basriy. He then concluded: “The view of Qatada and those who followed him is baseless and does not have any

authentic proof from the Qur'an, *Sunnah* or rationale that could support their opinion. He then proved that the verse is still *muhkama* and has certain applications⁽⁷⁰⁾.

The following points will try to prove the weakness of the opinions presented by Ibn al-'Araby, Ibn Zayd, Ibn Salama, and others.

The First Point:

Keeping in mind the conditions mentioned above, our scholars unanimously agree that abrogation can be valid only in the case that there is a real contradiction between (*al-naasikh and al-mansukh*). Furthermore, if we look to the verses of fighting and the verses calling for peace, co-existence and free will, we find no contradiction⁽⁷¹⁾.

Rashid Ridha argues: the claim of abrogation is baseless and does not have any valid evidence, and the concept of abrogation - as explained by Islamic law - can be accepted only if there is a real contradiction. However, there is no contradiction between the verses of fighting and the verses of peace and tolerance⁽⁷²⁾.

Additionally, Wahbah al-Zuhayli remarks: the verses of fighting must be understood altogether without singling out any verse (this is due to one of the most common serious mistakes being to quote only a part of a verse or one verse in an interrelated section of a Surah in such a way so as to change its meaning). He then added, verses broad in meaning (*Al-Ayaat Al-Mutlaqa*), such as verses (2:191) and (9:5) should be interpreted according to the clarifying verses (*Al-Ayaat al-Muqayadah*) which limited fighting in cases of aggression and oppression. Therefore the verses calling for peace are *Muhkama* and not *mansukha*. Thus, the verses of fighting will be implemented in cases where there is no way to peace, and the verses of fighting will be implemented in cases of aggression...⁽⁷³⁾.

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Therefore, it becomes clear that there is no real contradiction between the verses of peace and the verses of fighting and that each verse should be understood with the consideration of its context, and the time in which it was revealed. Also our Jurists maintain that; general rules should always be interpreted in association with the particular rules, no matter whether the one is more recent than the other or whether this is unknown.

The Second Point:

It is not acceptable to accept the opinion of abrogation and ignore all the verses and traditions which have been mentioned concerning “Peace in the Qur'an” and “Peace in the *Sunnah*”. We have presented plenty of evidence that clearly emphasized the freedom of religion, tolerance and peaceful dealing with non-Muslims. Which are authentic and categorized as *Muhkam* as they relate to high morality and ethics? As I have mentioned earlier, such verses cannot be abrogated in all circumstances (*Ahkaam Mu'badah*).

The Third Point:

Regarding the claim of Ibn Zayd that the verse (2:190) was abrogated by the verse (9:36), Ibn Abass said: “The verse (2:190) is *Muhkama* and the meaning of ‘do not transgress limits’⁽⁷⁴⁾, means do not kill woman, children, old people and those with whom we have a peace treaty, and whoever fights them is a ‘transgressor’.” Al-Imam Al-Tabari comments: “This is the best opinion according to *Al-Sunnah* and *Shar'iyah*.”⁽⁷⁵⁾

The Fourth Point:

Regarding the opinion of Ibn al-'Araby that the verses of the sword have abrogated 111 verses, Imam Zarkashi responded:

“The claim that the Qur’anic verses which order Muslims to be lenient with non-Muslims was abrogated by the verse of the sword (*ayat al-sayf*) is totally wrong, because these verses are of *al-mansa’*, which means that such verses are related to *‘ilat al-tashri’* (the cause of legislation) so we should deal with them accordingly. But they are not abrogated because abrogation means sweeping the verse absolutely, and we are no more allowed to use it.”⁽⁷⁶⁾

On the other hand, Imam Suyuti has refuted Ibn ‘Araby’s claim saying: “There are twenty-one instances in the Qur’an where a revelation has been abrogated by another. He also indicates that there is a difference of opinion about some of these abrogating verses.”⁽⁷⁷⁾ However, Subhi Salih has reduced this number to only ten verses. After discussing the view of Suyuti, he said: “What can be considered as abrogated verses (*al-ayat al-mansukha*) may not even reach ten verses.”⁽⁷⁸⁾

In addition, Ibn Kathir and Al-Tabariy say: “Muslim interpreters have differed concerning the verses of the sword.” Al-Dhahaak and Al-Sudiy say: “It was abrogated by Allah’s saying ‘therefore (is the time for) either generosity or ransom...’”⁽⁷⁹⁾ “Qatada says the opposite. Al-Tabariy concluded: “The right opinion in my view is of those who said that there is no abrogation in this case because there is no authentic evidence that indicates that we must kill infidels without any reason...”⁽⁸⁰⁾

Furthermore, in his interpretation to the verse (9:5), al-Tabariy says: “Those who think that this verse indicates that the believers should kill any (*Mushrik*) infidel after the fourth month⁽⁸¹⁾ is wrong. The right opinion is the opposite, because the next verses (9:6-7) strengthens our standing and disproves their view.” He explains that Allah ordered the believers in the verse (9:7) to be true to the infidels as long as they stand true to them⁽⁸²⁾.

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In supporting the opinions of Al-Tabariy, Al-Qurtobi argues that in verse (9:6) Allah ordered Muslims to give full asylum to the enemies of Islam if they requested it, even those actively fighting against Muslims, and give them the opportunity to hear the word of Allah..., and that they should be safely escorted to a safe-haven. This opinion is agreed upon⁽⁸³⁾. He concluded that: "This verse is *Muhkama* as Al-Hassan says: it is *Muhkama* and a *Sunnah* up to the Day of Judgment⁽⁸⁴⁾. Al-Qurtobi comments, it is the right opinion and the verse is *Muhkama*⁽⁸⁵⁾.

The Fifth Point:

Since it is important to consider the reasons of revelation (*asbaab al-nuzul*) in order to correctly understand of the verses of *al-Tawbah*, it becomes interesting to note that Al-Tabari narrated that Ibn Ishaq said: "The first verses of *Surat al-Tawbah*: 'A (declaration) of immunity from Allah and His Messenger, to those of the pagans with whom ye have contracted mutual alliances...' ⁽⁸⁶⁾ were revealed concerning Arab infidels who have treaties⁽⁸⁷⁾ with Muslims." ⁽⁸⁸⁾

Qataada and Mujaahid also touch on this subject, stating: "The verses of *al-Tawbah* were revealed concerning the infidels from *Quraysh* who had made treaties with the Prophet (p.b.u.h) in *Hudaybiyyah*⁽⁸⁹⁾.

Thus, the rule in the first verses of *al-Tawbah* is not a general rule that can be implemented in all circumstances, for all non-Muslims, and at all times. What have been mentioned in the fourth point supports this standing argument. Furthermore, there is some evidence from the traditions of the Prophet (p.b.u.h) that indicate that we should not kill non-Muslims except in certain conditions, which contradict the first verses of *al-Tawbah*. For instance, traditions specifically forbid the killing of women, children, and elderly people, ⁽⁹⁰⁾ and are a clear limitation to the general meaning that can be understood from the verses of the sword.

Also, in the famous *Hadith* of Buraydah, he narrates that the Prophet (p.b.u.h) said: "...if you meet your enemies from the infidels call them to three things (Islam, *Jizya* and fighting), if they agree, you should accept them, and stop fighting them..."⁽⁹¹⁾. This *Hadith* clearly contradicts the verses of *al-Tawbah*, as the Prophet (p.b.u.h) did not order the direct killing of infidels but asked Muslims to accept from them one of the three things. However, the verses of *al-Tawbah*, order Muslims to kill infidels and to not accept from them anything except Islam. In order to avoid these contradictions, the majority of scholars state that the verses of *Al-Tawba* were revealed concerning the Arabs during the Prophet's time.

Ibn Taymiyyah remarks: "Fighting is for those who fight against us and prevent us from preaching Islam." He also quoted Allah's saying: "Fight in the cause of Allah those who fight you but do not transgress limits; for Allah loveth not transgressors."⁽⁹²⁾ He also added: "That is why the Prophet (p.b.u.h) did not allow the killing of women, children, and innocent people...because Allah legitimizes the fighting for one reason; that is the well-being of humanity."⁽⁹³⁾ Allah says: "Fighting therein is a grave offence but worse than it, in the sight of Allah is to prevent access to the path of Allah and deny Him..."⁽⁹⁴⁾.

It is worthy to summarize here the above discussion with the following statement from Imam Mahmud Shaltut; after discussing the verses of fighting and pardon he says: "There is no contradiction or incompatibility between the different verses of fighting and there is no room for opinions that some of them have been abrogated by others, since abrogation may only be applied when there is a contradiction. These verses are therefore fixed and unassailable. They all amount to the same thing and establish one and the same rule, one and the same reason and one and the same end.

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As for the verses of forgiveness and pardon, they are meant to shape morality. They are valid within their own range as long as they do not infringe on pride and honor. As there is a separate legislation for every situation, these verses are also fixed and unassailable.”⁽⁹⁵⁾

Conclusively, one may conclude that the majority of scholars agree that there is no such abrogation in the Qur'an at all and that what they claim to be abrogation may merely be considered *takhsis*, *taqyyid* or *mansa'*.

B) Refuting the contradiction between the *hadith* of Abdallah bin Omar and verses of the Qur'an :

In examining the tradition of Abdallah bin Omar, we find that the Prophet (p.b.u.h) said: “I have been ordered to kill people until they confess that there is no god but Allah and Muhammad is the messenger of Allah...”⁽⁹⁶⁾. This tradition is also misunderstood by some writers, and has created controversial views even among Muslim scholars. For a correct understanding of this *Hadith* we must first understand the difference between *'uqaatil* and *Aqtul* i.e. fight and kill. Had the Prophet (p.b.u.h) said: ‘I have been ordered to kill (*Aqtul*) people...” this would be a problem and the meaning would contradict all of the verses that ordered Muslims to deal peacefully with unbelievers. But the Prophet (p.b.u.h) said: “I have been ordered to fight (*'uqaatil*)...” In this respect, scholars of *Hadith* have all unanimously narrated the word *'uqaatil* (fight) which means that the Prophet (p.b.u.h) is commanded to fight against only those people who want to fight Muslims or those who suppress the propagation of Islam. In this context, al-Bayhaqi narrated that al-Imam al-Shafii' has said: “Fighting is not as killing at all, and in some circumstances it may be permissible to fight a man but not permissible to kill him”⁽⁹⁷⁾.

ليس القتال من القتل بسبيل، وقد يحل قتال الرجل ولا يحل قتله

On the other hand however, the majority of Muslim scholars⁽⁹⁸⁾ declare: “This *Hadith* only clarifies the reason for fighting.” They go on to explain that the Prophet (p.b.u.h) has declared that he was ordered to fight the infidels purely in the path of God alone and not for any other reason.⁽⁹⁹⁾ He did not mean that he will fight them until they became Muslims. Acceptance of Islam through coercion is not acceptable legally nor rationally for Allah says: “If it had been thy Lord’s will thy would all have believed, all who are on earth! Wilt thou then compel mankind, against their will, to believe!”⁽¹⁰⁰⁾ Al-Amin Al-Shanqiti, the famous interpreter said: “The verse (10:99) in the chosen opinion is *Muhkama* and is not abrogated.”⁽¹⁰¹⁾

Upon further examination, we find many examples from the life of the Prophet (p.b.u.h) where he never coerced anyone to embrace Islam; rather, he would let them go free. One such example can be seen when the Prophet (p.b.u.h) forbade the killing of monks, the elderly, women and children⁽¹⁰²⁾, who kept their faith and did not fight the Muslims. Ibn Rushd says: “There is a disagreement regarding the prohibition of killing women and children.”⁽¹⁰³⁾

He also accepted *Jizyah* from non-Muslims on behalf of their security and residing in Muslim lands. Thus, it is obvious that this *Hadith* did not mean the complete fighting of unbelievers. Had the meaning of the *Hadith* indicated so, the Prophet (p.b.u.h) would have killed everyone who rejected the faith of Islam, not accept *Jizyah* from non-Muslims and kill every non-combatants.

In addition to the above interpretations, some scholars added: “The people mentioned in this *Hadith* are only the Arab infidels.”⁽¹⁰⁴⁾ Imam Shafii‘ further supplements this position by saying: “This *Hadith* is only related to the infidels who worship idols.”⁽¹⁰⁵⁾ After these explanations one may be completely convinced that this *Hadith* cannot be accepted as proof for the killing of non-Muslims, or the legalization of the all-out fighting of infidels. No one can also claim that this *Hadith* abrogated the texts of free faith and tolerance.

Discussing the Second Argument:

This argument focused on the historical events in which they claimed that the Prophet (p.b.u.h) was very aggressive with the Jews in Medina. They present as examples the attack on Bani Quraytha and the case of Ka'b bin al-Ashraf. Before answering these allegations, I must first discuss the nature of the relationship between the Jews and the Muslims in Medina.

It is well known the Prophet (p.b.u.h) immigrated to Medina in the fifty third year of his life. He had been driven out by his own people and the people of Medina welcomed him with open arms.

The immediate problem which the Prophet (p.b.u.h) faced was the "Jewish problem". The Jews, as well as the Arabs, were a part of the new community. The Prophet (p.b.u.h) thus made efforts to win over the Jews and get himself accepted as a Prophet. In order to please the Jews and Christians, he initially directed his followers to pray in the direction of Jerusalem, and observe fasting on the Day of '*Ashura*' (the Jewish Day of Atonement)⁽¹⁰⁶⁾.

Henceforth, Jewish law, religion and institutions became a sacrosanct trust whose protection, safe keeping and perpetuation became a Muslim responsibility imposed by the religion of Islam itself.⁽¹⁰⁷⁾ However, the Jews never took kindly to the Prophet (p.b.u.h) and his efforts to persuade them ultimately failed. Maxime Rodinson accepts this view. He says:

"The Jews did not on the whole respond to these advances as Muhammad expected...Muhammad's followers for their part—quite apart from their adherence to the fundamental ideas of Judaism and to the precepts of Noah—showed perfect willingness to conform to a number of Jewish rituals. In theory, therefore, there was no reason why the two communities should not have lived peaceably together. But the Jewish people of Medina had probably not abandoned the idea of exerting a considerable political influence over the Oasis as a whole.

It was quite obvious to them, probably before very long, that Muhammad's behavior and the importance he was assuming were likely to interfere with this objective." ⁽¹⁰⁸⁾.

Therefore, The Prophet's (p.b.u.h) first act was to negotiate a treaty with the people of Medina (*Ansaar* and *Muhajirin*) and the Jews. This was the first treaty he ever signed. The treaty accorded the Jews certain rights and also put them under certain obligations.

Some of the important clauses of this treaty were as follows; (a) Those among the Jews who side with us shall be liable to equality and help. They shall neither be wronged nor shall their enemies be given any help, (b) No polytheist of Medina shall afford protection to the property or life of any *Qurayshite*, nor shall he intervene against a believer on their behalf, (c) The Jews shall also bear the expenses of war, like the believers, for as long as it lasts, (d) The Jews shall be considered as one community along with the believers, they shall have the freedom of their religion and the believers shall be free to profess their faith. They shall have full freedom to deal with their allies, slaves and to settle their affairs."

The treaty also made both parties liable to help one another in the event of war and, in accordance to the divine injunctions, promote mutual co-operation, goodwill and cordial relationships between the confederates. One of its clauses stated that: "If *Yathrib* were attacked by an enemy, both the Jews and the Muslims shall join hands in her defense." ⁽¹⁰⁹⁾.

In spite of these clear undertakings, the Jewish people of Bani Qurayzah and Ka'b bin al-Ashraf breached this treaty, and co-operated with the *Quraysh* in fighting against the Muslims.

1) Regarding the action against *Banu Qurayzah*:

We find that *Banu Qurayza* was won over by Huyayy bin Akhtab al-Nadriy and made to go back on their word in order to help the *Quraysh*. As a matter of fact, when Huyayy bin. Akhtab went to *Banu Qurayzah* with the purpose of convincing them to become allies against the Muslims, their chief Ka'b bin Asad replied: "I have always found Muhammad (p.b.u.h) truthful, trustful and trustworthy." However, K'ab bin Asad broke his word and absolved himself of every responsibility stipulated upon him by the covenant⁽¹¹⁰⁾.

When the Prophet (p.b.u.h) heard of the betrayal of *Bany Qurayzah*, he dispatched a few people including Sa'd bin. Mu'aath and Sa'd bin 'Ubaadah, the two chiefs of al 'Aus and *Khazraj*, to see if the report was true. What they actually discovered was that the situation is even worse than they had anticipated. *Baniy Qurayzah* spoke disparagingly of the Prophet (p.b.u.h) and said: "Who is the apostle of God? We have no pact or pledge with Muhammad."

Banu Qurayzah then started making preparations for an armed conflict with the Muslims; they threatened to betray him and actually placed the Apostle and his followers between the hammer and the anvil. In actuality, the situation would not have been hazardous had the Jews declared their intention in the very beginning to breach their covenant with the Muslims. The plight of the Muslims has been shown by the Qur'an where Allah says: "Behold! They came on you from above you and from below you, and behold, the eyes swerved and the hearts gaped up to the throats, and ye imagined various (vain) thoughts about Allah! In that situation where the believers tried: they were shaken as by a tremendous shaking."⁽¹¹¹⁾

It was natural that the Muslims felt hurt by the perfidy of the Jews. How hard it had stricken the Muslims can be judged from the prayer sent up fervently by Sa'd bin. Mu'aath. As the chief of Aus, he had been in partnership with these Jews for many years and was thus, their ally and sympathizer. Upon being struck by an arrow that severed the vein of his arm, and losing hope of surviving, he supplicated to God, saying: "O Allah, do not let me die until I have set my eyes on the destruction of *Bany Qurayzah*." ⁽¹¹²⁾

After the Battle of the Trenches (*Ahzaab*), the Prophet (p.b.u.h) was instructed by Divine Revelation to punish *Banu Qurayzah* for their treason. As related by tradition, Gabriel came to the Prophet (p.b.u.h) and asked, "O Apostle of God, have you put aside your arms?" when the Apostle replied that he had; Gabriel said: "But the angels have not put away their arms." "Allah commands you..." continued Gabriel, "...to march towards *Bany Qurayzah*. I am also going there to destroy them." ⁽¹¹³⁾ So he marched against them and besieged them, until they surrendered after twenty five days. The people of Aus, who had long been friends with the Jews, had sympathy for them in their hearts. They said to the Apostle: "O Messenger of Allah, they were our allies against the *Khazraj* and you very well know what they have done jointly with *Bany Qaynuqa'*, the Allies of our brothers." The Apostle listened to them patiently and then asked, "Would you agree to place the decision in the hands of an arbitrator from amongst you?" They agreed and the role was entrusted to their chief, Sa'd bin. Mu'aadh.

When Sa'd arrived, his clansmen begged him to be lenient to *Bany Qurayzah*; for, they insisted, the Apostle had made him arbitrator so he might be considerate to his allies. When they persisted with their demands, Sa'd gave his decision: "I decide that the men should be killed, the property divided, and the women and children taken as captives." The Prophet (p.b.u.h), upon hearing the sentence given by Sa'd remarked: "You have decided for them God's ruling." ⁽¹¹⁴⁾

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It is interesting to note that the decision pronounced by Sa'd bin. Mu'aadh was nothing more and nothing less than what is laid down by the Israelite Law of War.⁽¹¹⁵⁾ The fifth Book of Moses; called Deuteronomy, which contains the sacred law of the Jews on the subject runs: "When you approach a city to fight against it, you shall offer it terms of peace. If it agrees to make peace with you and opens to you, then all people who are found in it shall become your forced labor and shall serve you. However, if it does not make peace with you, but makes war against you, then you shall besiege it. When the Lord, your God, gives it into your hand, you shall strike all the men in it with the edge of the sword. Only the women, children, animal, all that is in the city and all of its spoil you shall take as booty for yourself; and you shall use the spoil of your enemies which the Lord, your God, has given you...only in the cities of these peoples that the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance, you shall not leave alive anything that breathes."⁽¹¹⁶⁾

This was the practice followed by the Jews since the olden times. We find in the Book of Numbers: "and the Lord said to Moses in the plains of Moab by the Jordan at Jericho, Say to the people of Israel, When you pass over Jordan into the land of Canaan, then you shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you, and destroy all their figured stones, and destroy all their molten images, and demolish all their high places; and you shall take possession of the land and settle in it, for I have given the land to you to possess it"⁽¹¹⁷⁾.

We also find in the Book of Numbers: "...and they warned against the Midianites, as the Lord commanded Moses; and they slew all the males. And they slew the kings of Midian, beside the rest of them that were slain; namely, Evi, and Rekem, and Zur, and Hur, and Reba, five kings of Midian; Balaam also the son of Beor they slew with the sword. And the children of Israel took all the women of Midian captives, and their little ones, and took the spoil of all their cattle, and

all their flocks, and all their goods. And they burnt all their cities wherein they dwelt, and all their goodly castles, with fire.”⁽¹¹⁸⁾ This law not only enjoyed the approval of Moses but was also enforced by him.

We find also in the book of Numbers: “...and Moses, and Eleazar the priest, and all the princes of the congregation, went forth to meet them without the camp. And Moses was wroth with the officers of the host, with the captains over thousands, and captains over hundreds, which came from the battle. And Moses said unto them; have ye saved all the women alive?”⁽¹¹⁹⁾

From the above discussion we conclude the following:

1- The offences of *Bani Qurayzah* which included, treason, clear cooperation with the enemy to kill the Muslims, and the insulting of the Prophet (p.b.u.h) were so grave that they deserved a harsh punishment.

2- There is no doubt that the sentence pronounced by Sa’d bin. Mu’aadh was in line with Jewish law.

3- It is obvious that the Prophet (p.b.u.h) did not interfere in this judgment, so we should not blame him nor accuse him with something he did not do. In addition to this the Jews themselves have accepted Sa’d bin. Mu’aadh as an arbitrator, and he freely announced his decision.

Some Western scholars such as Maxime Rodinson and W. Montgomery Watt argue:

It is not correct to judge the incident by twentieth century standards. This was a very primitive society far more primitive than the Jewish society in which Jesus had lived and promulgated his gospel of mercy and love some 600 years earlier. At this stage the Arabs had no concept of a universal natural law, which is difficult-perhaps impossible-for people to attain unless there is a modicum of public order, such as that imposed by a great empire in the ancient world. At

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the time of Muhammad, Medina was probably more like the Jerusalem of King David, who was a mighty slayer of the enemies of God and who on one occasion massacred two hundred Philistines, castrated them and sent the grisly pile of foreskins to their king. Many of the psalms attributed to David were in fact composed centuries later-some as late as 550 BCE-but they still describe in gruesome detail the horrible things the Israelites hoped to do to their enemies. In the early seventh century, an Arab chief would not be expected to show any mercy to traitors like *Qurayzah*⁽¹²⁰⁾.

4-The sentence pronounced by Sa'd b. Mu'adh, ensured that Medina would be safer from the devious and scheming Jews. The Muslims could now be confident that none would be traitors. Karen Armstrong notes that "...nobody seems to have been shocked by the massacre and the *Qurayzah* themselves seem to have accepted its inevitability. The executions sent a grim message to the Jews at Khaybar. And the Arab tribes would have noted that Muhammad was not afraid of any friends or allies of *Quraydah* avenging their deaths in a blood-feud. It was a symbol of the extraordinary power that Muhammad had achieved after the siege, when he had become the leader of the most powerful group in Arabia."⁽¹²¹⁾.

2) Concerning the case of Ka'b bin. al-Ashraf:

The punishment of death was inflicted upon Ka'b bin Al-Ashraf because he was condemned by committing high crimes against the state of Medina. Among these crimes:

1- He had done his utmost to incite the Quraysh against the Muslims. Since he was a respected noble in Medina his act was considered as "an offence of high treason against the state". Also, this act was a clear breach of the treaty mentioned earlier between the Muslims and the Jews.

2- He slandered the Apostle of Allah and had written poems denigrating him and the Muslim women of Medina.

3- Also, he had shown a strong enmity towards the Muslims and their religion, and he did his utmost to spread mischief (*fitnah*) between Muslims. Imam Al-Tabariy narrated that Ka‘b bin. Al-Ashraf went to Makkah after the battle of Badr and had provoked Quraysh against the Prophet (p.b.u.h) and his followers. He also showed great sympathy and support for the infidels who were killed in the battle of Badr. Directly after his return to Medina, he started insulting the Prophet (p.b.u.h) and the Muslim women, which lead them to complain to the Prophet (p.b.u.h) about his insults⁽¹²²⁾.

Karen Armstrong states that: “Immediately after the victory (in the battle of Badr), for example, Ka‘b bin al-Ashraf, a Jewish poet of the Nadir tribe, went directly to Makkah and started to compose inflammatory lines of poetry, urging Quraysh to march against Muhammad and avenge their dead.”⁽¹²³⁾.

From the above, it is obvious that such offences committed by Ka‘b bin. Al-Ashraf were grave and deserved a severe punishment. Thus, the verdict issued by the Prophet (p.b.u.h) to assassinate Ka‘b bin. Al-Ashraf was just, fair and in line with modern laws. One may ask why the Prophet (p.b.u.h) did not make such punishment public or have Ka‘b bin. Al-Ashraf brought to court. Mr. Stanley Lane Pool has answered this question in his introduction to Mr. E.W. Lane’s *Selections from the Qur’an*: he said: “The execution of the half-dozen marked Jews (among them was Ka‘b bin. Al-Ashraf) is generally called assassination, because a Muslim was sent secretly to kill each of the criminals. The reason is almost too obvious to need explanation. There were no police or law-courts, or even courts-martial in Medina; someone from the followers of Mohammad must therefore, be the executer of the sentence of death, and it was better it should be done quietly, as the executing of a man openly before his clan would have

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caused a brawl and more bloodshed and retaliation, till the whole city had become mixed up in the quarrel...»⁽¹²⁴⁾.

It is apparent that the assassination of such criminals was an act of law since there was no established court at that time, and it was the best way to save other lives, and limit the punishment only to those who deserved it.

This kind of punishment also removed the source of danger eagerly willing to generate new trouble for the emerging community in Medina. It also struck terror into the Jewish tribes of Medina, prevented them from harming others, and remind them of the treaty they made with the Prophet (p.b.u.h) and the Muslims.

Regarding the characteristics of the Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h), after his immigration, it is important to note, (as this has caused great misunderstanding!) that he was not only a Prophet (p.b.u.h) like any other Biblical Prophet, but also a founder and head of a state of Medina. His behavior as a statesman did clash with his behavior as a religious head. As a religious head, he was a lawgiver, visionary and idealist. Whereas, as the head of a state, he had to make compromises, enter into alliances, give concessions to win over enemies, and devise strategies to humble them.⁽¹²⁵⁾.

Conclusion:

The “Islamic concept of peace” is much more comprehensive and integral, as it combines the negative and positive peace presented by non-Muslims. In addition to this, Muslims have also added an important feature; namely faith which non-Muslims disregarded. Islam, however, gives strong consideration to this aspect because in the Qur'an we find that peace is generally attached to the obedience of God.

In addition, this study focused on the fact that peace is not simply the mere absence of war and instability. Rather, it is the real submission to the will of God and His order, the promotion of social justice, the free development within democratic means, and the right to a full and satisfying life for all human beings. Which is in line with the efforts provided by Johan Galtung.

Moreover, it is worth emphasizing that the Prophet Mohammed (p.b.u.h) was never an aggressive leader who was after power, or even used his power to weaken his enemies. Rather, it was the opposite. As we have discussed in this article, the Prophet (p.b.u.h) changed little in his methods and strategies after the emigration to Medina. However, his duty as a peaceful preacher remained his main occupation until his death.

To substantiate and affirm the conclusion I must quote the following testimony from Karen Armstrong who noted that:

“As Muhammad became more and more of a statesman, he was in the deepest sense, still inspired and he was gradually evolving a solution that would bring peace to the Arabs...Muhammad had arrived in Medina in September 622 as a refugee who had narrowly escaped death. He would continue to be in mortal danger for the next five years, and during this time the Ummah faced the possibility of extermination.

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In the West, we often imagine Muhammad as a warlord, brandishing his sword in order to impose Islam on a reluctant word by force of arms. The reality was quite different. Muhammad and the first Muslims were fighting for their lives and they had also undertaken a project in which violence was inevitable...no radical social and political change has ever been achieved without bloodshed, and because Muhammad was living in a period of confusion and disintegration, peace could be achieved only by the sword.”⁽¹²⁶⁾

Religion in general, and Islam in particular, can play positive role in reviving common values for mankind and uniting people for peace, justice and equality. Today, people should interact with each other much more than the past. There should be open dialogue and greater understanding of other values and norms. All religions must stand together in fighting all types of violence, injustice and inequalities. We must work for global solidarity, and struggle for the protection of our well-being, develop peace and tackle all aspects of terrorism.

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- 15) Allah says: "But if the enemy inclined towards peace, do thou (also) incline towards peace", Surat Al-Anfal, ayat: 61.
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- 30) The Prophet (p.b.u.h) also emphasized that: "A true Muslim is the one who avoids harming Muslims with his tongue and hands, and a true believer is the one on whose part Muslims fear no aggression."
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- 39) Surat Quraish, ayat: 3-4.
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- 41) Khaled M. Abou El Fadl, **The Great Theft: Wrestling Islam from the Extremists**, p 242.
- 42) In this regard Almighty Allah says: "It is those who believe and mix not their beliefs with wrong that are (truly) in security, for they are on (right) guidance. Surat Al-An'am, ayat: 82. Also Allah says: "Ye are the best of people, evolved for mankind. Enjoining what is right, forbidding what is wrong, and believing in Allah." Surat Al-Imran, ayat: 110.
- 43) See: verses: (2: 190, 9: 5, 9:29, 9:36 and others)
- 44) Qur'an, At-Tawba, ayat: 5.
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- 46) Al-Bukhari, **Al-Sahih**, *kitaab al-Imaan*, Hadith No. 24. Muslim, **Al-Sahih**, *Kitaab al-Imaan*, Hadith No. 33.
- 47) Jason Burke, **Al-Qaeda the True Story of Radical Islam**, pp 31-32.
- 48) The writer later has introduced some verses that talk about peace and tolerance which contradict the verses of fighting, and concluded that Islam has two faces. For more detail see his article at: <http://www.answering-islam.org.uk/terrorism/peace>.

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- 54) Surat Al-Baqara, ayat: 256.
- 55) Al-Shaykh Mahmud Shaltut explains the reason behind the opinion of some interpreters, he says: A group of Koran-interpreters whom religious zeal has driven to harmonize between supposed inconsistencies within the Koran and who are inclined to consider some verses as having abrogated other verses. Some of them let themselves be carried away to such an extent that they seem to have prepared the road, unintentionally, for attacks by adversaries of the religion. As for the adversaries, they have examined the relations between the different verses of fighting and between the verses of fighting as a whole and the verses of pardon and forgiveness. They then said: Whereas you see that some verses of fighting only allow fighting, there are others that make it incumbent and urge onto it. And whereas you see that some of these verses order to fight aggressors and forbid committing aggression, there are other verses that order to fight them all without mercy and clemency and without distinguishing between aggressors and others. And whereas you see that these verses as a whole order to fight and regulate fighting, there are many other verses to be found in all chapters of the Quran, instructing to

- be forgiving, to counter evil with good and to summon to Allah with wisdom (16:125). Rodolph Petters, **Jihad in Medieval and Modern Islam**, the Chapter on the Treatise “Koran and Fighting” by the late Shakh Al-Azhar, Mahmud Shaltut, E. J. Brill, Leiden, Netherlands, 1977, pp. 52-53.
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- 60) Al-Zarqani, **Manaahil Al-’Irfaan fi ‘Uloom al-Qur’an**, p 150. Subhi Al-Saalihi, **Mabaahith fi 'Uloom Al-Qur'an**, 19th Edition, *Daar al-'Ilm Lilmaalayin*, Lebanon, 1996, p 272-273.
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- 63) <http://answering-islam.org.uk/Qur'an/abrogating-satan.htm>.
- 64) Among them, Abu Muslim al-Asfahani (322 H), Mu’tazily, a famous *mufasir*, one of his important work **Jaami’ Al-Ta’wil**.
- 65) For example; Ibn Hazm al-Andalusi, the author of **al-Naasikh wa al-Mansukh**, informs us that there are 114 verses that speak of tolerance in early Islam, but all were abrogated by one verse, “Slay the idolaters wherever you find them.” (9:5) before the death Mohammad.

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- 66) Concerning Ibn Salamah it is interesting to refer to Subhi Al-Saalih, **Mabaahith fi 'Uloom Al-Qur'an**, he has discussed his views in a good and convincing way. p. 266, and 26-273.
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- 68) Surat Al-Anfal, ayat: 61.
- 69) For more detail see: **Al-Tabariy**, vol. 6, p. 278.
- 70) Rashid Ridha, **Tafsiyr Al-Manaar**, *Daar Al-Fikr*, ND. Vol. 10, p. 166 Vol. 11 p. 116. Also see: Ramadan Al-Butiy, **Al-Jihad Fi Al-Islam Kayfa Nafhamuh wa Kayfa Numaarisuh**, pp. 55-58.
- 71) Rashid Rida, **Tafsiyr al-Manaar**, Vol. 11, p. 116.
- 72) Wahbah Al-Zuhayliy, **Al-Álaqaat Al-Dawliyah Fi Al-Islam**, p. 94-96. Also see: Wahbah Al-Zuhayli, **Athaar Al-Harb Fi Al-Fiqh Al-Islamiy**, *Daar Al-Fikr*, 3rd Edition, Damascus, 1981, pp. 106-120. These two books have discussed the above issue deeply. I wish the reader would be able to refer to them.
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- 78) Surat, Muhammad, ayat: 4.
- 79) Imam al-Tabariy, **Tarikh al-Tabariy**, Vol. 6, p. 332. *Daar Al-Kutub Al-'Ilmiyyah*, Lebanon, 1992.
- 80) The four forbidden months in which warfare by ancient Arabian custom was unlawful, are, Rajab, Zul-Qi'dah, Zul-Hijah, and Muharram. See Yusuf Ali, **The Holy Qur'an**, footnote, 1247. p. 496.
- 81) Imam al-Üabariy, **Tarikh al-Tabari** Vol. 6, p. 305.

- 82) Imam Al-Qurtobi, **al-Jami' Li Ahkaam al-Qur'an**, Vol. 8, *Daar Ihyaa' al-Turaath al- 'Arabi*, Lebanon, 1985, pp. 75-77.
- 83) It is obvious from the verse (9:6) which is talking about *ijaaratu al-mushrik*, that Muslims do not have the right to kill any *mushrik*, even enemies; so long as they are interested in Islam or are seeking asylum in Muslim lands.
- 84) Ibid, Vol. 4, p.50.
- 85) Surat *Al-Tawbah*, ayat: 1.
- 86) Yusuf Ali says: The pagans and enemies of Islam frequently made treaties of mutual alliance with the Muslims. The Muslims scrupulously observed their part, but the pagans violated their part again and again when it suited them. After some years of experience it became imperative to denounce such treaties altogether. This was done in due form, with four months' notice, and a chance was given to those who faithfully observed their pledges, to continue their alliance. The Holy Qur'an, footnote No: 1246. p. 496.
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- 90) Imam Muslim, **Al-Sahih**, *Kitaab Al-Jihad wa Al-Siyar*, *Hadith* No. 3261. Al-Tirmithy, **Al-Sunan**, *Kitaab Al-Diyyat*, *Hadith*, No. 1542.
- 91) Surat, *Al-Baqara*, ayat: 190.
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- 93) Surat *Al-Baqara*, ayat: 217.

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- 94) See, Rodolph Peters, **Jihad in Medieval and Modern Islam**, the Chapter on the Treatise “Koran and Fighting” by the late Shaykh Al-Azhar, Mahmud Shaltut, p.54.
- 95) See p. 110.
- 96) It is interesting to refer to Ibn Hajar, **Fath al-Baary**, 1st Edition, Vol. 1, *Daar al-Hadith*, Cairo, 1998, p. 95. Ramadan Al-Buty, **Al-Jihad fi Al-Islam** P. 60.
- 97) Abu ‘Ubayd al-Qaasim bin Salam, **Kitaab Al-Amwaal**, 1st Edition, *Daar Al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah*, Lebanon, 1986, p. 24-26. also Wahbah al-Zuhayli, **Athaar Al-Harb**, *Daar al-Fikr*, Damask, 1981, p. 121. Also Ramdan al-Buty, **Al-Jihad fi Al-Islam**, *Daar al-Fikr al-Mu‘aasirah*, 1993, 1st Edition, pp. 58-62. Muhammed Sadiq Afifiy, **Al-Islam wa Al-‘Alaqaat Al-Dawliyyah**, p. 67.
- 98) Fighting in Islam is meant supporting the right, getting rid of injustice. Ensuring justice, peace, security and establishing mercy- a mission for which the Prophet (peace be upon him) was sent to humanity, to take it out of the clutches of darkness into the era of light: the message of mercy which will eliminate terrorism in all its forms.
- 99) Surat Yunus, ayat: 99.
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- 101) See: Al-Bukhari, **Al-Sahih**, *kitaab al-Jihad wa al-Siyar*, *Hadith* No. 2792. Muslim, **Al-Sahih**, *kitaab, al-Jihad wa al-Siyar*, *Hadith* No. 3279.
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- 103) Wahbah al-Zuhayli, **Al-‘Alaqaat Al-Dawliyyah fi Al-Islam**, p. 97. And Ramadan al-Buty, **Al-Jihad fi Al-Islam**, p.62.
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