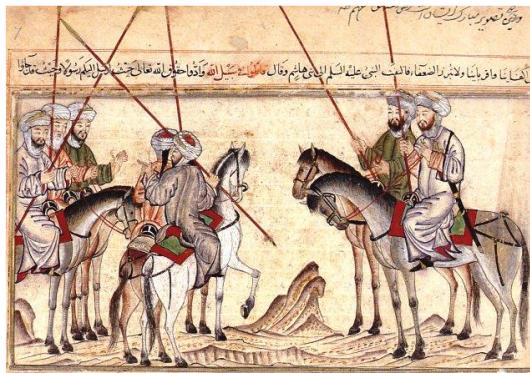




The Qur'an as Reportedly Practised and Preached by Mohammed: Part 2

Violent Jihad

(Political violence for the furtherance of Islam)



Introductory notes

[Note to reader: This and the following two pages are common to all the papers in this series]

Structure

In this series of papers, ten instructions contained within the Qur'an are considered.

Over the centuries the instructions contained within the Qur'an have been the subject of a range of different applications by different Islamic traditions. Surveying the full range of such interpretations is outside the scope of these papers. Rather the aim is to present clearly and accurately, on the best evidence available, what one might call 'true' or 'primitive' Islam: what the words of the Qur'an instruct, as it was intended to be understood at the time that it was announced. That is to say the instructions of the Qur'an as it was practised and preached by Mohammed.

To achieve this, and avoid any suggestion of 'cherry picking' or presenting verses out of their original context, in each case the verse or verses containing the instruction will be presented in full within the context of:

The circumstances in which the verse was said to have been announced

Any report describing the circumstances in which Mohammed came to announce a verse, the **Asbab al Nuzul** (principally those collected by **Ali ibn Ahmed al Wahidi (d. 1075)**) are given to give it its traditionally understood immediate context.

16 leading translations

The author principally uses *The Study Quran* (2015). However, this translation is cross-referenced with **fifteen other leading English translations** of the Qur'an from a wide variety of traditions, and compared with:

related verses of the Qur'an



The example of Mohammed

Incidents from the recorded life of Mohammed in the *sira* or *hadith* showing how Mohammed wished the verse to be understood, or how he himself applied it.

Sharia application

Rulings on the application of the verse by the founders of the **four major schools of Sharia jurisprudence (Hanifa, Maliki, Shafii and Hanbali)**.

Tafsir commentary

Commentary from the major *Quranic commentaries*.

Sources

Information concerning the life, words and deeds of Mohammed comes chiefly from two sources:

The sira is the life story of Mohammed as written in the early centuries after his death. Of these the biography of Mohammed, *Sirat Rasul Allah*, (The Life of the Messenger of God) by **Ibn Ishaq**, written approximately 120-130 years following Mohammed's death for the Abbasid caliph, is by far the fullest extant source of historical information concerning the life of Mohammed and the establishment of Islam. The full text of Ibn Ishaq's work is now lost, but lengthy extracts have survived as they were copied into two later works: the *Sira an-Nabawiyah*, (The Biography of the Prophet) by ibn Hisham in the mid-ninth century and *Annals of Prophets and Kings* by Al Tabari (early tenth century). These two extracts are most frequently read in English language as reconstructed by Alfred Guillaume and published as *The Life of Mohammed* in 1955.

Although Ibn Ishaq's biography gives a relatively early and full account of Mohammed's life, Muslims traditionally afford greater prescriptive authority to the **hadith**: accounts of the words and actions of Mohammed, each with a proven chain of narration leading back to one of Mohammed's companions. These tend to be fragmentary, often written with little or no context. The first collections of hadith were collected by jurists to establish authority for their rulings on Sharia law. From the mid-ninth century (about a century after Ibn Ishaq completed *Sirat Rasul Allah*) larger collections were compiled. There are six major collections of hadith recognised by Sunni Islam. All Islamic scholars accept that some hadith are forgeries, and scholars and judges differ over which may be considered authentic. However most treat those contained in the two 'sahih' ('trusted') collections of **Bukhari** and **Muslim** as the most reliable evidence available to Muslims of Mohammed's words and actions.

In the eleventh century **Ali ibn Ahmed al Wahidi** (d. 1075) compiled a collection of hadith relating specifically to the circumstances in which individual verses of the Qur'an came to be announced, the **Asbab al Nuzul**.

Translation of the Qur'an

All quotations from the Qur'an are, unless otherwise indicated, taken from *The Study Quran* (2015). However, this translation is cross-referenced with the following fifteen other English translations of the Qur'an, representing secular scholarship and the full spectrum of Islamic traditions¹:

The Meaning of the Glorious Quran (1930) by Muhammad Marmaduke **Pickthall**, British convert to Islam;

The Holy Qur'an: Text, Translation and Commentary (1934) Abdullah **Yusuf Ali**, a civil servant of the British Raj, said to be the most used English translation;

The Koran Interpreted (1955) Arthur John **Arberry**, non-muslim scholar;

The Meaning of the Quran (1972) by Syed Abul A'la **Maududi**, the founder of *Jamaat-e-Islami*, the largest Islamic organisation in Asia;

The Glorious Qur'an by Abdul-Majid **Dariyabadi** (Indian, d.1977);

The Holy Quran (Koran), Muhammad Habib **Shakir** (the Ahmadiyya Community – a minority Islamic sect - have asserted that Shakir's translation was plagiarised from a translation by a member of their own community, Maulana Muhammad Ali);

The Holy Qur'an (1982) by Shaykh Muhammad **Sarwar**, US Shia;

Al-Quran, A Contemporary Translation (1984) by **Ahmad Ali**;

The Noble Qur'an (1985) by Muhammad Muhsin Khan and Muhammad Taqi-ud-Din al-Hilali (**Khan & Hilali**), said to be Saudi funded and reflecting Wahabi theology;

The Qur'an, English Meanings (1997) **Sahih International**, three US born female converts, Saudi published;

The Meaning of the Glorious Qur'an (2001) by Grand Shaykh Hasan Qaribullah and Shaykh Ahmad Darwish (**Qaribullah & Darwish**), of Umm Durman University, Cairo;

The Qur'an With a Phrase-by-Phrase English Translation (2005) by **Ali Qarai** of the Islamic College of Advanced Studies;

The Qur'an: A New Translation (2009) by Maulana **Wahihuddin Khan**, Indian, peace activist, a former member, later critic of *Jamaat-e-Islami*;

The Clear Quran (2012) by **Talal Itani**, Lebanese former engineer;

The Quranic Arabic Corpus, a collaborative online research project (corpus.quran.com) administered by the University of Leeds.

¹ All accessed via QuranX.com

Mohammed's Military Campaigns

The verses in the Qur'an that exhort the early Muslim community to political violence to establish the first Islamic state are heavily context dependent and a knowledge of the history of that community is essential to understanding them.

The following is a brief overview to help the reader navigate this paper:

According to orthodox Muslim tradition Mohammed started preaching what became Islam in Mecca in AD 610, when he was forty years old. His message gained some followers there, but his preaching also provoked hostility amongst other Meccan tribes that is traditionally portrayed in Islam as a persecution. This hostility included a boycott of Mohammed's clan, which was forced temporarily to camp outside Mecca.

In 620-2 Mohammed received assurances of support from converts to his message who travelled to Mecca from an oasis at Yathrib (later to be renamed Medina) to hear him. These assurances are referred to as the First and Second Pledges of Aqaba, and the Yathrib converts are traditionally referred as the Ansar (or helpers).

In reliance on these assurances Mohammed and his followers migrated to Yathrib, an event known as the hijra. The Islamic calendar takes the date of this event as its starting point.

At Yathrib Mohammed organised his followers into a military force and over the following decade until his death in 632 he led or ordered over one hundred armed expeditions.

Mohammed's military expeditions might be most easily seen as comprising three distinct but connected campaigns.

1. Best known is his struggle with his former home city of Mecca. This campaign commenced with raids on Meccan caravans. This led to three large scale military confrontations between Muslims and Meccans: the Battles of Badr, Uhud and the Trench, after which the two parties agreed a ten year truce: the Treaty of Huddaybiyya.

Two years later, asserting that the Meccans had breached the treaty, Mohammed marched a Muslim army to Mecca which surrendered to him without a fight.

2. Connected with the campaign against Mecca, Mohammed extended his influence over Bedouin tribes in the surrounding area by assassinations and raids. Partly this was to strangle Mecca's trade routes, but it also had the advantage of acquiring booty for his supporters, which in turn served to attract more fighters to the cause of Islam and persuade tribes to declare loyalty to, or convert to, Islam.
3. In tandem with these expeditions abroad, Mohammed secured unchallenged control over Yathrib/Medina, especially through the gradual elimination of the three major Jewish tribes there, one after each of his confrontations with Mecca.

Mohammed's Military Expeditions

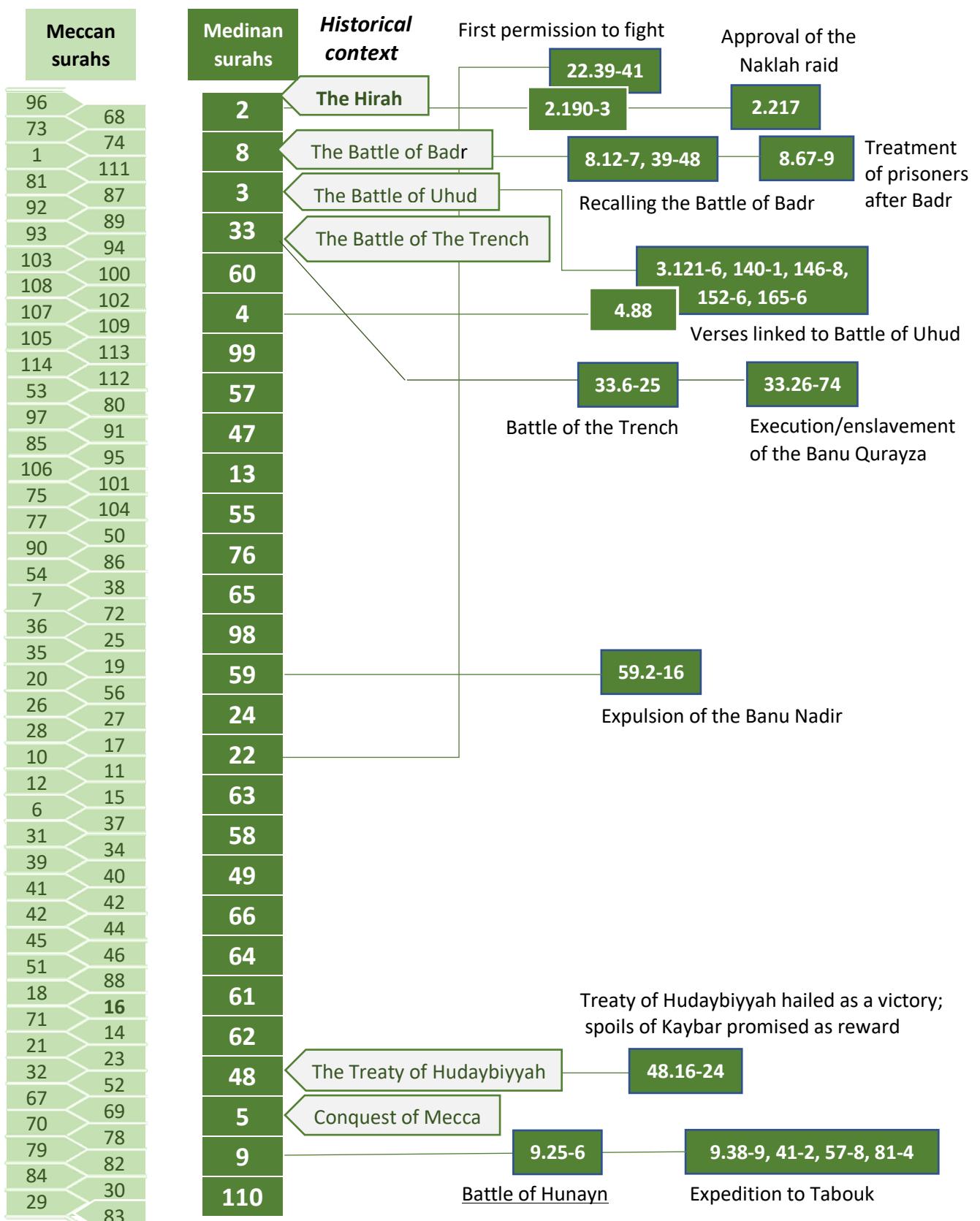
Year	In Yathrib/ Medina	Conflict with the Meccans	In the wider region
1 AH (622- 623)	The hijra (Mohammed's migration to from Mecca to Yathrib/Medina)		
		Several aborted raids planned against Meccan caravans	
2 AH (623- 624)	Expulsion of the Banu Qaynuqa from Yathrib/Medina.	 Expedition to Naklah Muslims' first successful raid on a Meccan caravan.  Battle of Badr Muslims defeated a Meccan force sent to protect a caravan.	Assassination of three poets who had criticised Mohammed.  Raid on Banu Salim, north of Yathrib.
3 AH (624- 625)		Raid on Meccan caravan secures large haul of silver.  Battle of Uhud Meccan victory. Mohammed was wounded but not pursued.	 1 st raid against Banu Ghatafan tribes, NW of Yathrib. Six Muslim missionaries killed by Banu Lahyan.
4 AH (625- 626)	Expulsion of the Banu Nadir from Yathrib/Medina.	'Second Battle of Badr' (Meccans fail to attend a battle agreed to after Battle of Uhud)	 Raid on Banu Asad ibn Khuzaymah (Red Sea coast). Mohammed ordered assassination of the chief of the Banu Lahyan. 40 or 70 Muslim missionaries killed by the Banu Salem.
5 AH (626- 627)	Beheading of all men of Banu Qurayza; enslavement of women/children	 Battle of the Trench (Meccans unsuccessfully besiege Muslims at Yathrib/Medina)	 2 nd raid against Banu Ghatafan.  1 st expedition to B. Kalb at Dhumat al Jandal (near border of Byzantine Empire).  1 st raid on Banu Mustaliq (Red Sea coast).

6 AH (627-628)	Pursuit and execution of Bedouins who killed a Muslim shepherd.	 Further lucrative raid on large Meccan caravan. Mass 'pilgrimage' to Mecca leading to Treaty of Hudaybiyyah .	 Raids into Arabian interior.  2 nd raid on B. Mustaliq: females captured securing loyalty of tribe.  2 nd raid to Dhumat al Jandal; Banu Kalb pledge loyalty.
7 AH (628-629)		Mohammed makes peaceful pilgrimage to Mecca.	 Many further expeditions to subdue Bedouin tribes in interior.  Siege and capture of Jewish settlements at Kaybar , Fidak and Wadi al Qura . Jewish tribes agree to submit half produce to Muslims as <i>jizya</i> (tax).  1 st raid to border with Yemen.
8 AH (629-630)		Conquest of Mecca (Mohammed asserts Meccan breach of treaty and marches on Mecca which surrenders, most residents converting to Islam.)	 Further raids including first outside the Arabian Peninsula (unsuccessful retaliation for a killed Muslim emissary sent to Basra.)  Battle of Hunayn (Muslim victory) and unsuccessful siege of Ta'if to confront Banu Hawazin, south of Mecca. Expeditions throughout Southern Arabia to destroy pagan shrines.
9 AH (630-631)			 Further raids throughout Arabia (incl Banu Tamim, Banu Kilab and Banu Tai) to enforce conversion or payment of <i>jizya</i> .  Siege and capture of Tabouk on the Byzantine border. Ta'if surrenders.

10 AH (631-632)	<p>Announcement of 9.5 of Qur'an:</p> <p>Pagans in Mecca permitted four months to convert to Islam or be put to death.</p> <p>Mohammed's Farewell Pilgrimage to Mecca and Farewell Sermon during return journey to Medina.</p>	<p>Expeditions to Yemen including destruction of main Yemeni pagan shrine at Dhul Khalassa.</p> <p>'Year of Delegations': 15 tribes from across Arabia (incl Bahrain) seek alliances with Mohammed.</p>
11 AH (632)		<p>Mohammed orders expedition to Palestine (it departed Mecca on the day Mohammed died).</p> <p>Death of Mohammed</p>

Verses of the Qur'an in chronological order²

Principal verse considered in this paper



² There is no consensus on the exact order of Qur'an verses. This is a simplified version adapted from *The History of the Quran* by Allamah Abu Abd Allah al-Zanjani.

Miscellaneous verses preaching Jihad

2.216, 244

3.195

4.71, 74-77, 84, 89, 91, 94, 100-2, 104, 141

5.32-3, 54

8.57-61, 65

9. 12-14, 19-20, 24, 44, 73, 88, 111, 120, 123

16.110

22.58, 78

24.53

25.52

29.6, 69

47.4, 20, 31, 35

48.28

49.15

61.4, 10

66.9

73.20

Note on the word 'Jihad'

The politically charged word 'jihad' in one of its forms – eg: *jahidi* ("Do jihad"), *jahidhum* ("Do jihad against them"), *mujahiduna* ("those who do jihad") - appears forty one times in the Qur'an in the following thirty verses.³

<u>2.218</u>	<u>3.142</u>	<u>4.95</u>	<u>5.35 and 54</u>	<u>8.72, 74 and 75</u>
<u>9.3, 16, 19, 20, 24, 41, 44, 81, 86 and 88</u>				
<u>16.110</u>	<u>22.78</u>	<u>25.52</u>	<u>29.6, 8 and 69</u>	<u>31.15</u>
<u>47.31</u>	<u>49.15</u>	<u>60.1</u>	<u>61.11</u>	<u>66.9</u>

Jihad has a literal meaning of 'to strive' or 'to struggle' and on some occasions in the Qur'an the word may be translated in this general sense. On two occasions in the Qur'an it is actually the unbelievers who are depicted as committing jihad against the Muslims, in (the identically worded) {29.8} and {31.15}:

"But if they urge thee [in the Arabic 'jahadaka': literally to 'do jihad against you'] to ascribe a partner unto me that whereof thou hast no knowledge, then obey them not."

However the word is most commonly used in the more specific and widely understood sense of engaging in warfare in the cause of Islam.

{3.142}: "Or did you suppose that you would enter the Garden [paradise] without God knowing those amongst **you who strived** ['jahadu': 'make jihad'] and without knowing those who were patient";

{47.31}: "And we shall test you until We know those amongst **you who strive** [the 'mujahidina'] and those who are patient and We shall test your proclamations."

On several occasions the word jihad takes an interactive meaning of 'strive against', as for example in the identically worded {66.9} and {9.73}:

"O Prophet! **Strive against** [jahidi] **the disbelievers and the hypocrites** and be harsh with them. Their refuge is Hell. What an evil journey's end!"

or in {25.52}:

"So obey not **the disbelievers**, but **strive against them** [jahidun] by means of it with a great striving [jihadan]"

³ *Jihad in the Qur'an: The Truth from the Source*, Louay Fatoohi

Sometimes, as in [**{4.95}**](#): the context clearly requires this to be understood as strenuous physical (effectively in the circumstances of the early Muslim community, military) action.

"Those who stay behind among the believers, save those that are disadvantaged, and those who strive [mujahidun] in the way of God with their goods and their lives are not equal. God favours those who strive with their goods and their lives a degree above those who stay behind. Unto both God has promised that which is most beautiful. But He favours those who strive with a great reward above those who stay behind."

That the meaning of the verse is to promise reward for physical action, is implicit in the caveat that is made for '*those that are disadvantaged*' - normally read to relate to physical infirmity.

In [**{9.19}**](#) Jihad is specifically contrasted with performing peaceful works of charity:

"Or do you consider giving drink to the pilgrims and maintaining the sacred Mosque to be like those who believe in God and the Last Day and strive [jahada] in God's way?"

Given the significance of the term, on each occasion that it is used within a passage of the Qur'an reproduced below, its use is indicated.

I. 22.39-41 and 2.190-193: The First Permission to fight

According to Islamic tradition the first permission to fight to be given to Muslims in the Qur'an appears in two passages announced by Mohammed after receiving the Second Pledge of Aqaba from the Ansar, immediately before he ordered his followers to move from Mecca to Yathrib (Medina).



Surah 22 'The Pilgrimage'

39. "Permission is granted to those who are fought, because they have been wronged. And truly God is able to help them.
40. Who were expelled from their homes without right only for saying 'Our Lord is God'.

Were it not for God's repelling people, some by means of others, monasteries, churches, synagogues and mosques, wherein God's name is mentioned much, would have been destroyed.

And God will surely help those who help him - truly God is Strong, Mighty - [41] who, were we to establish them upon the earth would perform the prayer, give the alms, enjoin right and forbid wrong. And unto God is the end of all affairs."

Surah 2 'The Cow'

190. "And **fight in the way of God against those who fight against you** but do not transgress.

Truly, God loves not the transgressors.

191. And **slay them wheresoever you come across them and expel them whence they have expelled you, for strife is worse than slaying.**

But do not fight them near the Sacred Mosque until they fight with you there. But if they fight you then slay them.

Such is the recompense of the disbelievers.

192. But if they desist, then truly God is forgiving, merciful.

193. **And fight them until there is no strife and all is for God.** But if they desist then there is no enmity save against the wrongdoers."

I. The First Permission to fight

Translation notes

'...but do not transgress'

The Study Quran footnote to the word 'l'tada', translated as 'do not transgress', reads:

"Many commentators use this passage to discuss the usual rules of war, such as the prohibition against killing women, children, monks hermits, the chronically ill, old men and peasants ... The Umayyad Caliph Umar ibn Adul Aziz commented on this passage in a letter saying it meant 'Fight not those who do not fight you'... This passage is among the most direct in describing the limits of warfare. Muslims are commanded to fight those who fight them first, to expel those who expel them but in doing so they are subject to limits."

Eight of the fifteen alternative translations considered in this series translate the phrase as 'do not transgress', 'do not exceed/transgress the limits' or in the translation of Khan & Hilali:

"... but transgress not the limits. Truly, Allah likes not the transgressors. [This Verse is the first one that was revealed in connection with Jihad, but it was supplemented by another (V. 9:36)]".

On the other hand:

Ahmad Ali, Arberry, Maududi, Qaribullah & Dawish, Talal Itani and Wahihuddin Khan all use forms of the word 'aggress' such as 'do not aggress', 'do not be aggressive', 'do not commit aggression'.

Pickthall renders the phrase: 'begin not hostilities'.

Therefore, it is suggested that the translations of the Qur'an, reveal an evenly balanced difference of opinion concerning whether {2.190} instructs Muslims to refrain from commencing hostilities, or merely to conduct those hostilities in which they engage within rules of war.

2.191, 193 'Strife is greater than slaying', 'Fight them until there is no strife'

The word *fitna*, that is translated as 'strife' in *The Study Quran*, is variously translated as 'persecution', (Pickthall, Arberry, Ali Qarai, Maududi, Talal Itani, Shakir and Wahihuddin Khan), 'oppression' (Ahmad Ali and Corpus), 'tumult and oppression' (Yusuf Ali), 'dissension' (Quaribullah & Darwish), 'disbelief' (Sarwar – in the most provocative translation: 'disbelief is worse than murder') or 'temptation' (Dariyabadi).

The word 'fitnah' has a complex significance in Muslim history. It clearly carries a literal meaning of strife but in some contexts it is also used as a term specific to the persecution of Muslims by Meccans before the Hijra; at other times it carries the more general meaning of temptation to sin; and sometimes it may refer to civil discord. The first four civil wars fought within the early Muslim community following the death of Mohammed are referred to as the four Fitnahs.

The common feature would seem to be the discord that results between the following of Islam prescribed in the Qur'an and disbelief or disobedience to God's will.

Circumstances in which verses 22.39-41 and 2.190-193 were announcement

Ibn Ishaq wrote the following account of the announcement of the two verses cited above:⁴

SIRAT RASUL

ALLAH



Earliest
biography of
Mohammed,
c.760

"The apostle had not been given permission to fight or allowed to shed blood before the second [pledge of] Aqaba⁵, he had simply been ordered to call men to God and to endure insult and forgive the ignorant. The Quraysh had persecuted his followers seducing some from their religion and exiling others from their country. They had to choose whether to give up their religion, be maltreated at home or flee their country, some to Abyssinia some to Medina."

When the Quraysh became insolent towards God and rejected His gracious purpose, accused His prophet of lying and ill-treated and exiled those who served Him and proclaimed his unity, believed in His prophet and held fast to His religion he gave permission to his prophet to fight and to protect himself against those who wronged them and treated them badly.

The first verse that was sent down on this subject from what I have heard from Uwra bin al Zubayr and other learned persons was {22.39}.

The meaning is:

'I have allowed them to fight only because they have been unjustly treated while their sole offence against men has been that they worship God. When they are in the ascendant they will establish prayer pay the poor tax, enjoin kindness and forbid iniquity le the Prophet and the companions, all of them.'

Then God sent down to him {2:190-193}.

When God had given permission to fight and this clan from the Ansar had pledged their support to him in Islam and to help him and his followers and the Muslims who had taken refuge with them, the prophet commanded his companions, the emigrants of his people and those Muslims who were with him in Mecca to emigrate to Medina and to link up with their brethren, the Ansar."

⁴ 313-4

⁵ [2nd Pledge]

I. The First Permission to fight

Al Wahidi's explanation of **{22.39}** is brief⁶:



Hadith recording the circumstances in which a verse was announced, as compiled by Ali ibn Ahmed

Al Wahidi
(d.1095)

"The idolaters from among the people of Mecca were in the habit of harming the Companions of the Messenger of Allah, Allah bless him and give him peace. These Companions used to come always either beaten or with their skulls bashed in. They complained to the Messenger of Allah, Allah bless him and give him peace, about this situation and he persistently told them:

'Be steadfast, for I have not been commanded to fight'.

*This continued until the Messenger of Allah, Allah bless him and give him peace, migrated, upon which Allah, exalted is He, revealed this verse **{22.39}**'*

Al Wahidi also reports Ibn Abbas, Mohammed's uncle as having said:

'When the Messenger of Allah, Allah bless him and give him peace, was taken out of Mecca, Abu Bakr, may Allah be well pleased with him, said about him:

'We are unto Allah, and unto Him we shall return; we shall surely perish'.

Allah, exalted is He, then revealed ('Sanction is given unto those who fight because they have been wronged; and Allah is indeed Able to give them victory').

Abu Bakr said:

'I knew at that point that there will be fighting.'"

⁶ Al-Wahidi is of the opinion that **{2.190}** was announced around the time of the Treaty of Hudaybiyyah, or possibly the pilgrimage to Mecca that Mohammed undertook the following year. However both Ibn Ishaq and Ibn Kathir, the author of the most widely used tafsir (Quranic commentary) place the narration of **{2.190}** before the Hijrah, Ibn Kathir citing a hadith that it:

"Was the first Ayah about fighting that was revealed in Al-Madinah."

I. The First Permission to fight

Tafsir (Qur'an commentary)

Ibn Kathir offers the following reflection upon [{22.39}](#) which is based upon the likely outcome of a potential conflict between the Meccans and Muslims before and after the hijra:



(c.1360)

Most widely used Qur'an commentary

"Allah prescribed Jihad at an appropriate time, because when they were in Makkah, the idolaters outnumbered them by more than ten to one. Were they to engage in fighting at that time, the results would have been disastrous..."

"When they settled in Al-Madinah and the Messenger of Allah joined them there, and they gathered around him and lent him their support, and they had a place where Islam prevailed, and a stronghold to which they could retreat; then Allah prescribed Jihad against the enemy, and this was the first Ayah to be revealed for it."

Ibn Kathir reports a hadith that [{2.190}](#) was later abrogated by [{9.5}](#)

'then kill [the polytheists] wherever you find them'

although he himself doubts this interpretation, relying upon a hadith that Muslims should fight only those who fight them:

"as a law of equality in punishment."

Concerning the '**transgressions**' that [{2.190}](#) instructs Muslims to avoid, Ibn Kathir cites one Al Hasan al-Basri who lists them as:

*"Mutilating the dead;
theft (from the captured goods);
killing women, children and old people who do not participate in warfare;
killing priests and residents of houses of worship;
burning down trees and killing animals without real benefit."*

Concerning the phrase '**Strife is greater than slaying**' Ibn Kathir, equates *fitnah* with the sin of *shirk*: associating others with God.

'Since Jihad involves killing and shedding the blood of men, Allah indicated that these men are committing disbelief in Allah, associating with Him (in worship) and hindering from His path, and this is a much greater evil and more disastrous than killing. Abu Malik commented about what Allah said:

'[And fitnah is worse than killing] means what disbelievers commit is much worse than killing.'

II. 2.217 The raid on a Meccan caravan near Naklah

Six months after Mohammed had arrived at Yathrib, he ordered the first of several Muslim raids on Meccan caravans travelling across Arabia. The first six such raids were aborted for several reasons, but sixteen months after Mohammed's arrival in Mecca the first successful raid took place near Naklah, close to Mecca.

However when the raiders returned to Yathrib/Medina the raid proved controversial since it had taken place in the month of Jumada, traditionally a month when Arabs observed a general truce.

{2.217} was announced by Mohammed retrospectively endorsing the raid and the use of lethal violence despite the sacred month.



Surah 2 'The Cow'

217. "They ask thee about the sacred month - about fighting therein. Say:

'Fighting therein is grave but turning [others] from the way of God and disbelieving in Him - and from the Sacred Mosque and expelling its people is graver in the sight of God. Strife is graver than slaying.'

And they will not cease to fight you until they make you renounce your religion, if they are able. Whosoever amongst you renounces your religion and dies as a disbeliever, their deeds have come to naught in this world and the Hereafter, and they are the inhabitants of the fire, abiding therein."

Translation notes

'Fighting therein is grave but turning others from the way of God and believing in Him - and from the Sacred Mosque and expelling its people is graver in the sight of God.'

All translations considered maintain the essential meaning that, though conflict within the sacred month is presented as undesirable (Pickthall and Ahmad Ali use the word 'sin' and Maududi 'offence' within the translated text, although most translators place 'sin', 'transgression' or 'offence' in parentheses) to do so is a lesser wrong than righting the two offences that had been committed against the Muslims, namely:

'hindering/keeping/preventing/turning /averting' them from the way of God; and

'barring/preventing' access to the place described as the Holy or Sacred Mosque in ten of the fifteen translations; '*the Inviolable Place of Worship*' (Pickthall) and named as al Masjid al Haram in Maududi, Khan & Hilali, Sahih International and Corpus.

Fitnah: 'Strife is greater than slaying.'

This phrase is repeated from **{2.191}** (see the translation notes above).

Circumstances in which the verse 2.217 was announced

Ibn Ishaq's wrote the following account of the raid of Naklah and its controversy resulting in the announcement of {2.217}:⁷

SIRAT RASUL

ALLAH



Earliest
biography of
Mohammed,
c.760

"The apostle sent Abdullah bin Jahsh ... with eight emigrants without any of the Ansar [the Muslim converts from Yathrib/Medina]. He wrote for him a letter and ordered not to look at it until he had journeyed for two days. And to do what he was ordered to do but not to put pressure on his companions ... When Abdullah had travelled for two days he opened the letter and looked into it and this is what it said:

'When you have read this letter of mine proceed until you reach Nakhla between Mecca and al Ta'if. Lie in wait there for Quraysh and find out for us what they are doing...'

... [At Naklah] A caravan of Quraysh carrying raisins and leather and other merchandise of Quraysh passed by them, Amr bin al Hadrami, Uthman bin Abdullah, and his brother Naufal, and al Hakam bin Kaysan being among them.

When the caravan saw them they were afraid of them because they had camped near them. Ukkasha (one of the Muslims) who had shaved his head looked down on them. and when they saw him they felt safe and said:

'They are pilgrims, you have nothing to fear from them'.

The raiders took counsel amongst themselves for this was the last day of Rajab and they said: 'If you leave them alone tonight they will get into the scared area and will be safe from you.; and if you kill them you will kill them in the sacred month. So they were hesitant and feared to attack them. Then they encouraged each other and decided to kill as many as they could of them and take what they had. Wakid [another of the Muslims] shot Amr bin al Hardrami with an arrow and killed him and Uthman and Al-Hakam surrendered. Naufal escaped and eluded them.

Abdullah and his companions took the caravan and the two prisoners and came to Medina with them ... When they came to the apostle he said:

'I did not order you to fight in the sacred month'

and he held the caravan and the two prisoners in suspense and refused to take anything from them. When the apostle said that, the men were in despair and thought they were doomed.

Their Muslim brethren reproached them for what they had done. And the Quraysh said:

⁷ 423-6

II. The raid on a Meccan caravan near Naklah

'Mohammed and his companions have violated the sacred month, shed blood therein, taken booty and captured men'.

The Muslims in Mecca who opposed them said that they had done it in Shaban. The Jews turned this raid into an omen against the apostle. ...

*But God turned this against them not for them, and when there was much talk about it, God sent down to his apostle '**They will ask you about the sacred month...**'*

Al Wahidi contains three hadith accounts for the narration of **{2.217}**. Each contains different elements of the story from which Ibn Ishaq presents as a composite narrative.⁸ One of the hadith contains the detail, consistent with Ibn Ishaq's *Sirat Rasul Allah*, that Amr bin al Hadramai 'was the first idolater to be killed by a Muslim'.

Ibn Kathir recites a large part of Ibn Ishaq's account of the raid. He also offers the explanation:



(c.1360)

Most widely used Qur'an commentary

"This Ayah means If you had killed during the Sacred Month, they (disbelievers of Quraysh) have hindered you from the path of Allah and disbelieved in it; they also prevented you from entering the Sacred Mosque, and expelled you from it, while you are its people, this is a greater transgression with Allah than killing whom you killed among them.

Trying to force the Muslims to revert from their religion and re-embrace Kufr after they had believed, is worse with Allah than killing."

⁸ One contains the detail that Abdullah bin Jahsh ordered Ukashah to shave his head to give the caravan false reassurance that the Muslims' were pilgrims only.

III. 54.45; 8.12-7, 39-48 and 67-9 The Battle of Badr

The first major conflict occurred between Mohammed and the Meccans when Abu Sufyan, who was leading a large caravan from Syria to Mecca, discovered that Mohammed was planning to attack it and summoned reinforcements from Mecca. The Meccan relief force met the Muslims in battle at a valley called Badr but were defeated. Muslim tradition give prominence to two meteorological events that have traditionally been interpreted as constituting divine assistance:

- ❖ On the eve of the battle an unexpected rain shower took place that had the effect of making the sandy ground upon which the Muslims were to fight firmer, whilst making the land between them and the Meccans muddier and more difficult to traverse.
- ❖ Just as the Meccans prepared to charge a high wind arose blowing sand into their eyes.

{54.45} traditionally contains words spoken by Mohamed as he left his tent on the morning of the battle.



Surah 54 'The Moon'

- 45. The whole shall be routed and they will turn their backs.**
- 46. Nay! The hour is their tryst and the Hour is more calamitous and more bitter.**
- 47. Truly the guilty are astray and mad.**

Circumstances in which verses 54.45-46 were announced

Ibn Kathir refers to an hadith included within Sahih Bukhari placing the announcement of this verse on the morning of the Battle of Badr:



[*Isnad (chain of transmission)*]

"On the day of the battle of Badr, the Prophet said:

*'O Allah! I appeal to You (to fulfill) Your Covenant and Promise.
O Allah! If Your Will is that none should worship You (then give
victory to the pagans).'*

Then Abu Bakr took hold of him by the hand and said:

'This is sufficient for you.'

The Prophet came out saying:

'Their multitude will be put to flight and they will show their backs.'
(54.45)."

Sahih Bukhari (5.59.285)

III. The Battle of Badr

Ibn Ishaq's describes how the Meccan caravan leader Abu Sufyan detected spies from the Muslim raiding party and sent a message to Mecca to summon assistance, whilst changing their route to avoid Mohammed's ambush.

SIRAT RASUL

ALLAH



Earliest
biography of
Mohammed,
c.760

[The Meccan caravan] hastened on beyond the reach of danger and when Abu Sufyah decided the caravan had reached safety he sent a message to the Quraysh army telling them they could return to Mecca.

But Abu Jahl refused to return to Mecca without giving a display of strength at Badr:

'We shall stay there three days, slaughter cattle, feast the people, drink wine, and be entertained by singing-girls. All Arabia will hear of us, of our march, of our festivity, and they will respect us ever afterwards! Therefore, let us proceed. '...

The Quraysh army marched until they reached the sandy foothills on the western side of the valley of Badr but they were impeded by rain and mud sent by Allah. In the valley itself Muhammad and his force were not so hampered, and they reached the wells of Badr first and halted at the nearest of them. Al-Hubab inquired of the apostle if this halting-place were the choice of Allah, and when the apostle replied that it had been selected according to his own strategy and according to no higher instruction. Al-Hubab said:

'Then let the people arise and march to the well next to the enemy; on the way, let us close up all the wells except the last. Around that, let us make a reservoir and fill it with water; then, when we fight, we shall drink, but not the enemy.'

The apostle replied: 'Thy advice is good!' and they acted accordingly.

Some of the Quraysh, however, went down to the reservoir and the apostle said, 'Let them drink', but only one man of those who drank survived the next day's battle. This was Hakim, who later professed Islam...

Utba rose and addressed the Quraysh:

'You will gain nothing by attacking Muhammad and his companions! If you conquer him, many of his men being our kinsmen, you will never escape the loathing of those fellow Quraysh whose kinsmen you have slain. Return therefore, and let Muhammad fight with other Arabs.'

But Abu Jahl sneered:

'His lungs are swollen with fear at the sight of Muhammad and his companions! We shall not retreat until Allah decides between us and Muhammad',

and he sent a message to Amir, the man whose brother had been killed at Nakhla, the first man killed in Islam:

III. The Battle of Badr

'Your ally wishes to turn back. Arise, therefore, and avenge the murder of your brother by leading the people on to fight.'

Thus the flame of war was fanned, the Quraysh became fixed in their evil course, and the advice of Utba was spurned.

When Utba heard of Abu Jahl's insult he cried:

'We shall see which of us two is the coward!'

and sought a helmet to put on his head; but he could not find one in the whole army to fit because his skull was so great. So he wrapped a piece of cloth around his head.

Soon the apostle of Allah saw the Quraysh entering the valley, and he prayed:

'Allah! These are the Quraysh with their arrogance and vanity, who have offended Thee and accused Thy apostle of falsehood. O Allah! Grant me Thy promised aid and annihilate them this day!'

The battle of Badr took place on Friday morning, the seventeenth day of Ramadan.

One man of the Quraysh, a vicious, quarrelsome fellow, now stepped forth from the army and said:

'I call Allah as witness that I shall drink from their reservoir and destroy it, or die in the attempt.'

Hamza advanced to do battle with him and when they met Hamza struck him violently and severed his leg between the knee and the foot. The man fell on his back and the blood from his leg spurted towards the Quraysh army, but he dragged himself on to the reservoir to redeem his vow. Hamza slew him there.

Next, Utba came forth, flanked by his brother and his son, and uttered the challenge to single combat. Three men of the Helpers stepped forward, but the Quraysh refused to fight with them and cried:

'Let us fight with equals from our own tribe!'

So the apostle of Allah gave them Ubayda and Hamza and Ali, and they said, 'Agreed. These are noble and our equals!' Ubayda confronted Utba, Hamza confronted the brother of Utba, and Ali the son. Ubayda and Utba wounded one another, but Hamza and Ali killed their opponents at once and then turned and slew the wounded Utba. Thereafter, they carried Ubayda back to his companions.

The apostle of Allah took up a handful of gravel, and threw it in the direction of the Quraysh. 'May confusion strike them!' he cried, and ordered his companions to attack.

Victory was theirs, and Allah slew many of the Quraysh chiefs, and caused many of their nobles to be taken prisoner. According to one of Muhammad's followers, on the day of Badr one Abu Daud 'followed an idolater in order to strike him down, and lo! his head fell off ere my sabre reached it; then I knew that some other agency had killed him'. Turbans are the diadems of the Arabs, and the sign of the angels on that day was white turbans, flowing at the back; only Gabriel wore a yellow turban. The angels never fought with distinguishing marks except on the day of Badr. They were present at other battles, but merely to increase the numbers, not to fight.

{8.1-17} deals with the distribution of the spoils of the battle and then proceeds to an instruction to recall the words said to have been announced by Mohammed before the battle.



Surah 8 'The Spoils of War'

1. "They question thee concerning the spoils. Say:

'The spoils belong to God and the messenger'

So reverence God and set matters right amongst yourselves.
And obey God and His Messenger if you are believers.

2. Only they are believers whose hearts quake with fear when God is mentioned and when his signs are recited unto them, they increase them in faith and they trust in their Lord [3] who perform the prayer and spend from that which We have provided them.
4. It is they who are believers. For them are ranks in the sight of their Lord and forgiveness and a generous provision.
5. [Remember] how thy Lord brought thee forth from thy home in truth. While a group of the believers were adverse. [6] disputing with thee concerning the truth after it had become clear as though they were being driven to death as they looked on.
7. And [remember] when God promised you that one of the two companies was to be yours and you wished that the unarmed one would be yours. But God desires to verify the truth through His Words and to cut off the last remnant of the disbelievers [8] so that He may verify the truth and prove falsehood to be false. Though the guilty be adverse.

9. When you sought succour from your Lord He responded to you

'I shall aid you with a thousand angels, rank upon rank'

10. God made it not save a glad tiding that your hearts may be at peace thereby. And victory comes from God alone.

Truly God is Mighty, Wise

11. Behold, He covered you with sleepiness, security from Him and sent down upon you water from the sky to purify you thereby to remove the defilement of Satan from you, to fortify your hearts and to make firm your steps thereby

12. Behold thy Lord revealed unto the angels:

'Truly I am with you so make firm those who believe. I shall cast terror into the hearts of those who disbelieve. So strike above their neck and strike their every fingertip'

13. That is because they are in schism with God and His Messenger. And so whosoever opposes God and His Messenger, **truly God is severe in retribution.**

14. Thus it is so taste in and [know] that the disbelievers shall have the punishment of the Fire.

15. O ye who believe. When you meet the disbelievers arrayed [for battle] **turn not your backs to them.**

16. And whosoever turns his back on them that day - unless it be a stratagem of battle or to withdraw to another company - shall certainly earn wrath from God. And his refuge shall be Hell. What an evil journey's end!

17. You did not slay them but God slew them. And thou threwest not when thou threwest but God threw that he might try the believers with a beautiful trial from him."

Translation notes

***'I shall cast terror into the hearts of those who disbelieve.
So strike above their neck and strike their every fingertip'***

In all sixteen translations considered, God threatens to cast either 'fear', 'terror' or (Dariyabadi) 'horror' into the hearts of people defined by either their current lack of belief - 'disbelievers', 'unbelievers', 'those who disbelieve', 'infidels' (Ahamd Ali) 'the faithless' (Ali Qarai) or 'those who deny the truth' - or, in four translations (Dariyabadi, Khan & Hilali Sahih International and Corpus) their past lack of belief: 'those who disbelieved'.

Every translation includes the instruction to strike both their enemies' necks - or in two translations (Sarwar and Shakir) to 'strike off their heads' - and also at their enemies' extremities. Of the second limb of the instruction eleven of the sixteen translations considered specify either fingers, fingertips, or 'finger joints'. All except one of these (Qaribullah & Dawish) are specific that the Muslims are instructed to strike off etc 'every'/'all' each of their enemies' fingers/fingertips, implying a degree of precision and thoroughness that would be impossible to apply in the heat of battle.

The five less specific translations of the verse are:

Ahmad Ali: "... and every joint, (and incapacitate them)";
Ali Qarai: "... and strike their every limb joint!";
Khan & Hilali: "... and smite over all their fingers and toes";
Maududi: "... and strike at every pore and tip";
Sarwar : "... and [strike their] limbs".

'... thou threwest not when thou threwest but God threw ...'

This verse is sometimes thought to relate to the wind that blew sand into the eyes of the Meccans. There is also a tradition that Mohammed himself symbolically threw some sand or stones at the Meccans.⁹

Sarwar makes the connection with the sand explicit in the translated text:

"It was not you (Muhammad) but God who threw dust at them"

Four other translations achieve this connection through explanatory words in parenthesis:

A. Ali: "You *did not throw what you threw, (sand into the eyes of the enemy at Badr)"*

Maududi: "... *it was not you when you threw [sand at them], but it was Allah Who threw it, (and the believers were employed for the task)*

Wahihuddin: "when you [Prophet] threw [sand] at them it was not you but God who threw it"

Yusuf Ali: "... *it is not ye who slew them; it was Allah: when thou threwest (a handful of dust), it was not thy act, but Allah's".*

⁹ Recorded by Ibn Ishaq 445.

III. The Battle of Badr

Shakir contains no reference to throwing at all. Talal Itani uses the verb '*launched*', which may imply the more idiomatic launching of an attack and seems less consistent with throwing sand.

Circumstances in which verses 8.1-17 were announced

Al Wahidi provides three narration accounts for {8.1}. One refers to a Muslim fighter who had asked for permission to take the sword that had killed his brother; the other two describe a more general squabble amongst Mohammed's fighters concerning the booty. The fuller of the two states:

ASBAB AL NUZUL



Compiled by
Ali ibn Ahmed
Al Wahidi
(d.1095)

"When the enemy was defeated on the day of Badr, a group of men followed them to exterminate them, while one group surrounded the Messenger of Allah, Allah bless him and give him peace, [to protect him] and another group seized the booty and spoils. When Allah banished the enemy and those who went after came back, they said:

"The booty belongs to us, we have chased the enemy and it is through us that Allah has defeated and banished them".

Those who surrounded the Messenger of Allah, Allah bless him and give him peace, said:

"By Allah, you do not have more right to it than we do. We have surrounded the Messenger of Allah, Allah bless him and give him peace, lest the enemy attack him by surprise. Therefore, the booty is ours".

Those who had seized the spoils and booty said:

"By Allah, you do not have more right to it than we do. We have seized, it is therefore ours".

*Allah, exalted is He, then revealed (**They ask thee (O Muhammad)** of the spoils of war) and so the Messenger of Allah, Allah bless him and give him peace, divided it on them in equal shares".*

Al Wahidi contains no narration account for {8.12-16}. Concerning {8.17}, he refers to a view that the passage in fact refers to an episode during the Battle of Uhud (which took place a year after the Battle of Badr) in which Mohammed stabbed at Ubayy ibn Khalif through a chink in his armour, but then notes that:

"Most Qur'anic commentators are of the opinion that the above verse was revealed about the handful of valley dust that the Messenger of Allah threw on the idolaters on the Day of Badr. On that occasion he threw the handful of dust and said:

*'Let the faces be distorted',
and some of this dust went into the eyes of every single idolater."*

III. The Battle of Badr

A commentary on the passage is provided by the tafsir of Ibn Kathir:



(c.1360)

Most widely used Qur'an commentary

"[And to strengthen your hearts] means with patience and to encourage you to fight the enemies, and this is inner courage; and 'make your feet firm thereby' involves outer courage. Allah know best.

Allah said next: '(Remember) when your Lord revealed to the angels, 'Verily, I am with you, so keep firm those who have believed.'

This is a favour that Allah has made known to the believers, so that they thank Him and are grateful to Him for it. Allah, glorified, exalted, blessed and praised be He, has revealed to the angels - whom He sent to support His Prophet, religion and believing group - to make the believers firmer.

Allah's statement 'I will cast terror into the hearts of those who have disbelieved' means 'You - angels - support the believers, strengthen their battlefield against their enemies', thus, implementing My command to you. I will cast fear, disgrace and humiliation over those who defied My command and denied My Messenger.

[So strike them over the necks, and smite over all their fingers and toes]: strike them on their foreheads to tear them apart and over the necks to cut them off, and cut off their limbs, hands and feet.

It was said that 'over the necks' refers to striking the forehead, or the neck, according to Ad-Dahhak and Atiyyah Al-Awfi.

In support of the latter, Allah commanded the believers,

'So, when you meet (in fight Jihad in Allah's cause) those who disbelieve, smite (their) necks till when you have killed and wounded many of them, then bind a bond firmly (on them, take them as captives' [{47:4}]

Ar-Rabi bin Anas said:

'In the aftermath of Badr, the people used to recognize whomever the angels killed from those whom they killed, by the wounds over their necks, fingers and toes, because those parts had a mark as if they were branded by fire.'

Ibn Jarir commented that this Ayah commands:

"O believers! Strike every limb and finger on the hands and feet of your (disbelieving) enemies."

Al-'Awfi reported, that Ibn 'Abbas said about the battle of Badr that Abu Jahl said:

'Do not kill them (the Muslims), but capture them so that you make known to them what they did, their ridiculing your religion and shunning Al-Lat and Al-'Uzza (two idols)."

Allah then sent down to the angels “Verily, I am with you, so keep firm those who have believed. I will cast terror into the hearts of those who have disbelieved, so strike them over the necks, and smite over all their fingers and toes.”

In that battle, Abu Jahl (may Allah curse him) was killed along with sixty-nine men. ‘Uqbah bin Abu Mua’it was captured and then killed¹⁰, thus bring the death toll of the pagans to seventy’.

At an uncertain time after the Battle of Badr, a further series of verses were announced that celebrated Mohammed’s victory at Badr:

Surah 8 ‘*The Spoils of War*’

- 39. “And fight them until there is no strife and religion is wholly for God. But if they desist then truly God sees whatsoever they do.** [40] and if they turn away know that God is your Master – an excellent Master, an excellent Helper.
- 41. And know that whatsoever you take as spoils a fifth is for God and the Messenger and for kinsfolk, orphans, the indigent and the traveller, if you believe in God and what We sent down upon Our servant on the Day of Discrimination [the Battle of Badr] the day the two hosts met. – and God is powerful over all things. [42] and when you were on the near slope and they were on the far slope and the caravan was below you.**

And had you made a tryst with each other you would have failed the tryst. But [it came to pass] so that God may conclude a matter that was to be done. So that whosoever should perish perishes according to a clear proof, and whosoever should live, lives according to a clear proof.

And truly God is hearing, Knowing

- 43. Remember when God showed them in thy dream as being few. And hadst thou seen them as being many, you would have surely faltered and quarrelled over the matter.**

But God delivered [you].

Truly He knows what lies within breasts.

¹⁰ See footnote 11

44. And [remember] when he showed them to you when you met them as being few in your eyes. And made you appear to be few in their eyes. So that God may conclude a matter that was to be done. And unto God are all matters returned

45. O you who believe! **When you meet a company in battle be firm and remember God so that haply you may prosper.**

46. And obey God and His Messenger and do not quarrel amongst yourselves lest you falter and your good fortune depart. And be patient, truly God is with the patient.

And be not like those who left their homes boastfully and to be seen of men and to turn [others] from the way of God.

And God encompasses whatever they do.

48. And [remember] when Satan made their deeds seem fair unto them, and said:

'None among mankind shall overcome you today, and I am indeed your defender'.

But when the two hosts saw each other he turned on his heels and said:

'I am quit of you. Truly I see you not. Truly I fear God and God is severe in retribution.'"

III. The Battle of Badr

According to hadith generally accepted in Islam, a discussion arose following the Battle of Badr concerning the fate of seventy Meccan prisoners taken by the Muslims, after which Mohammed announced the following verses.

Surah 8 'The Spoils of War'

67. "It is not for a prophet to have captives until he overwhelms [his enemy] in the land. You desire the ephemeralities of this world, while God desires the Hereafter.

And God is Mighty, Wise.

68. Were it not for a decree that had already gone forth from God, a great punishment would have befallen you for what you took.

69. So consume the spoils that you have taken, lawfully and in a good way and reverence God.

Truly God is Forgiving, Merciful."

Translation notes

A note on {8.67} in *The Study Quran* includes:

"In most accounts, before deciding what to do with the seventy prisoners taken at the Battle of Badr the Prophet consulted his companions ... The prisoners were eventually ransomed.

One interpretation of this passage is that some of the believers were hasty in taking spoils. It is an Islamic belief that up until this point no prophet was permitted to take spoils. Rather the spoils were destroyed. This may refer to the herem ban in the Torah tradition that required certain conquered cities to be utterly destroyed, including any spoils. Saul is rebuked by Samuel for sparing the king of the Amalekites and keeping their best cattle (I Sam 15) ...

The verb rendered by 'overwhelms' has the sense both of manifesting power and of sapping the power of one's opponent. It is often incorrectly translated as 'make wide slaughter' but this meaning applies only when the verb is in conjunction with the word 'slaughter/killing' which it is not here. To kill many of the enemy is an interpretation offered by some commentators, but this is not based upon the literal meaning of the word."

It is suggested that *The Study Quran* is, whilst no doubt properly anxious to avoid specifying an instruction to kill where such an instruction is not explicit in the text, has provided an unhelpful translation here that renders the verse hard to understand. It is hard to see how a prophet might 'overwhelm' his enemy in the land before taking captives – if not by killing them or forcing them to flee, and in the latter case, how might he later to take them captive? Any non-violent

III. The Battle of Badr

'overwhelming' – for example by force of argument or political dominance – is inconsistent with the division of the spoils of war, which this verse is clearly addressing.

Consequently it is unsurprising that the fifteen other English translations of the Qur'an considered in this series tend to give the passage a more constructive interpretation that they consider conveys the true meaning of the verse within its textual and historical context.

Pickthall: "*It is not for any prophet to have captives until he hath **made slaughter** in the land*";

Yusuf Ali: "*It is not fitting for a prophet that he should have prisoners of war until he hath **thoroughly subdued the land***";

Arberry: "*It is not for any Prophet to have prisoners until he **make wide slaughter** in the land*";

Maududi: "*It behoves not a Prophet to take captives until he has **sufficiently suppressed** the enemies in the land*";

Dariyabadi: "*It behoveth not a prophet that he should have captives until he hath **greatly slaughtered** in the land*";

Shakir: "*It is not fit for a prophet that he should take captives unless he **has fought and triumphed** in the land*";

Sarwar: "*The Prophet is not supposed to take any captives to strengthen his position on the earth*";

Ahmad Ali: "*No apostle should take captives until he has **battled and subdued** the country*";

Khan & Hilali: "*It is not for a Prophet that he should have prisoners of war (and free them with ransom) until he had **made a great slaughter** (among his enemies) in the land*";

Sahih International: "*It is not for a prophet to have captives [of war] until he **inflicts a massacre** [upon Allah 's enemies] in the land*";

Quaribullah & Darwish: "*It is not for any Prophet to have prisoners in order to **slaughter many** in the land*";

Ali Qarai: "*A prophet may not take captives until he has **thoroughly decimated** [the enemy] in the land*";

Wahihuddin Khan and Corpus: "*It is not right for a Prophet to keep captives unless he has **battled strenuously** in the land*";

and

Talal Itani: "*It is not for a prophet to take prisoners before he has **subdued** the land*".

Circumstances in which verses 8.67-69 were announced

Al Wahidi contains four broadly consistent narration accounts for {8.67}. All concern a discussion between Mohammed and some of his followers, notably Abu Bakr and Umar ibn Khattab (who were to later become the first and second caliphs of the Islamic community following Mohammed's death) concerning the fate of the seventy Meccan prisoners captured at Badr.

The fullest reads:



"When the prisoners were brought on the Day of Badr, the Messenger of Allah, Allah bless him and give him peace, said:

'What do you think we should do with these prisoners?'

Abu Bakr said:

'O Messenger of Allah, these are your people and kin, spare them and wait that haply Allah, glorious and majestic is He, may relent on them'.

Umar, on the other hand said:

'They have given you the lie and expelled you, bring them forward and chop their heads off'.

Abd Allah ibn Rawahah said:

'Look for a valley with abundant wood and burn them there', upon which al-'Abbas commented:

'You have severed your ties of kinship!'

The Messenger of Allah, Allah bless him and give him peace, did not answer them and then went in. Some people said: 'He will act on Abu Bakr's advice', others said: 'He will act on 'Umar's advice', while some said: 'He will act on 'Abd Allah's advice'.

The Messenger of Allah, Allah bless him and give him peace, then came out to them and said:

'Indeed, Allah, glorious and majestic is He, softens the hearts of some until they become softer than milk and hardens the hearts of some until they become harder than stones.'

The like of you, O Abu Bakr, is the like of Abraham when he said:

'But whoso followeth me, he verily is of me. And whoso disobeyeth me - still Thou art Forgiving, Merciful'.

And the like of you, O Abu Bakr, is the like of Jesus when he said:

'If Thou punish them, lo! They are Thy slaves, and if Thou forgive them, lo! Thou, only Thou art the Mighty, the Wise'.

[continued]

III. The Battle of Badr

And the like of you, O Umar, is the like of Moses who said:

'Our Lord! Destroy their riches and harden their hearts'

And the like of you, O Umar, is the like of Noah who said:

'My Lord! Leave not one of the disbelievers in the land'.

Then, the Messenger of Allah, Allah bless him and give him peace, said:

'Today, you are dependent: none of them shall be returned except in exchange for a ransom or he will be beheaded'."

Al Wahidi on 8.67

According to all accounts the captives were then ransomed (apart from either one or two who were executed as a punishment for having mocked Mohammed years earlier whilst Mohammed was preaching in Mecca¹¹) and that it was after this had occurred that {8.67} was announced.

In one of the four accounts Umar is said to have recalled hearing about the verse in the following terms:

"The following day, I [Umar] went to see the Prophet, Allah bless him and give him peace, and found him sitting with Abu Bakr. They were both crying. I said:

'O Messenger of Allah, what is it that makes you and your companion weep? If I can cry, I will cry with you, if not I will feign crying'.

The Prophet, Allah bless him and give him peace, said:

'I am crying because of the suggestion of ransoming the prisoners which your fellow believers advised me to do. Your chastisement was closer to you than this tree (and he pointed to a nearby tree). Allah, exalted is He, had revealed [8.67].'"

Al Wahidi on 8.67

¹¹ The Meccan who is generally accepted to have been executed after the battle of Badr was Nadr bin al Harith. Ibn Kathir notes, in his commentary on {8.31} that:

"An-Nadr visited Persia and learned the stories of some Persian kings, such as Rustum and Isphandiyar. When he went back to Makkah, He found that the Prophet was reciting the ayats of Quran sent from Allah to the people. Whenever the Prophet would leave an audience in which An-Nadr was sitting, An-Nadr began narrating to them the stories that he learned in Persia, proclaiming afterwards: 'Who, by Allah, has better tales to narrate, I or Muhammad?'

When Allah allowed the Muslims to capture An-Nadr in Badr, the Messenger of Allah commanded that his head be cut off before him, and that was done, all thanks are due to Allah.

A second Meccan sometimes said to have been executed after the battle was Uqba ibn Abu Muayt who had mocked Mohammed whilst Mohammed had preached in Mecca, and had once placed a camel's intestines over Mohammed as he prayed. According to Ibn Hashim's biography of Mohammed, Uqba was executed after the battle of Badr although several hadith report him as having been killed during the battle.

IV. 4.88, 3.121-6, 140-1, 146-8, 152-8 and 165-6 The Battle of Uhud

The second major conflict between Mohammed and the Meccans occurred a year following the Battle of Badr. A larger and better prepared Meccan army led by Abu Sufyan went to Yathrib/Medina to end Mohammed's disruption of their trade routes.

Mohammed led the Muslims out of Yathrib/Medina to confront the attackers at Mount Uhud but some Medinan Muslims refused to fight and returned to their homes.

In the battle the Muslims initially had the upper hand, but when a detachment that Mohammed had located on a hill to deter a the Meccan cavalry charge left their position to attack the Meccan camp, the Meccan cavalry routed the main Muslim force.

Mohammed was wounded and for a time feared dead by his followers, but he managed to rejoin them on the slopes of Mount Uhud from where he had a shouted conversation with Abu Sufyan, who left without attempting to capture Mohammed.

Ibn Kathir states that **{4.88}** and **{3.121-6}** were announced prior to the battle commencing.



Surah 4 'Women'

88. "What is with you that you are [divided into] two groups concerning the hypocrites [those who had returned to Medina], when God Himself has cast them back for that which they have earned? Do you seek to guide those whom God has led astray?

Whom God leads astray, you will not find a way for him."

Surah 3 'The Family of Imran'

121. "And remember when thou didst leave thy household at daybreak to assign the believers their position for the battle.

And God is Hearing, Knowing.

122. Remember when two companies among you were on the verge of losing heart, though God was their protector.

And in God let the believers trust.

123. God certainly helped you at Badr, when you were lowly.

So reverence God that haply you may give thanks.

[continued]

124. Remember when thou saidst unto the believers:

‘Is it not enough for you that your Lord should support you with three thousand angels sent down?’

125. Yea, if you are patient and reverent and they come at you immediately, your Lord will support you with five thousand angels bearing marks.

126. God made it not save a glad tiding for you and that your hearts may repose thereby and there is no victory, save from God, the Mighty the Wise.”

Al Wahidi contains no narration account for [**{4.88}**](#) or [**{3.121-6}**](#). However, Ibn Kathir offers the following reflection on [**{4.88}**](#):



(c.1360)

Most widely used Qur'an commentary

“Allah criticizes the believers for disagreeing over the hypocrites.

Imam Ahmad recorded that Zayd bin Thabit said that Messenger of Allah marched towards Uhud. However, some people who accompanied him went back to [Medina] and the Companions of the Messenger of Allah divided into two groups concerning them, one saying they should be killed and the other objecting. Allah sent down [{4.88-9}]

The Messenger of Allah said:

‘Medina is Taybah, and she expels filth, just as the billow expels rust from iron.’ ”

{3.140-1, 146-8, 152-6 and 165-6} were announced by Mohammed after the battle and seek to explain the Muslim defeat.



Surah 4 'The Family of Imran'

140. If a wound afflicts you a like wound has already afflicted that people. And such days we hand out in turns to mankind. And [this is] so that God may know those who believe and take witnesses from amongst you. – and God loves not the wrongdoers.

141. And so that God may assay those who believe and blight the disbelievers.

★

146. How many a prophet had many a devoted man to fight alongside him? They did not then falter in the face of what befell them in the way of God nor did they weaken, nor did they demean themselves. And God loves the patient.

147. Their words were but to say:

'Forgive us our sins and our prodigality in our affairs and make firm our steps and help us against the disbelieving people.'

148. And God gave them the reward of this world and the most beautiful reward of the Hereafter. And God loves the virtuous."

Surah 3 ‘The Family of Imran’

152. “And God certainly was true to His promise to you when you were eradicating them by His Leave, until the moment you lost heart and quarrelled with one another about the matter and disobeyed, after He had showed you that which you loved. Among you are those who desire this world and among you are those who desire the hereafter.

Then He turned you from them to test you and He certainly pardoned you - God is possessed of Bounty for the believers - [153] when you were climbing, casting a glance to no one while the Messenger was calling you from the rear.

So He recompensed you with sorrow upon sorrow, that you may not grieve over what escaped you or what befell you.

And God is aware of whatsoever you do.

154. Then He sent down upon you, after sorrow, security, a sleepiness enveloping a company among you whilst a company was anxious over themselves, thinking about God what is not true. - the thinking of the Age of Ignorance - saying ‘Do we have any decision in this?’? Say:

‘The decision belongs entirely to God’.

They hide in their souls what they do not disclose to you saying:

‘Had we any decision in this we would not be slain here.’

Say:

‘Had you stayed in your houses those who were destined to be slain would have gone out to their places of rest’

And this is so that God may test what is in their breasts and so that He may assay what is in their hearts. And God knows what lies within their breasts.

[continued]

155. Those of you that turned way on the day the two hosts met – Satan alone made them slip because of part of what they committed. And God certainly pardoned them: truly God is Clement, Forgiving.

156. O you who believe! Be not like those who disbelieve and say of their brethren when they travel upon the earth or campaign:

‘Had they stayed with us, they would not have been slain’

that God may make that a source of regret in their hearts. And God gives life and causes death, and God sees whatever you do.

And indeed if you die or are slain in the way of God truly forgiveness and mercy from God are better than what they amass.

And indeed if you are slain, truly unto God shall you be gathered.



165. “And when an affliction befell you though you wrought an affliction twice its like did you say: ‘Whence is this?’ Say: ‘It is from yourselves’

Truly God is powerful over all things.

166. And that which befell you on the day the two hosts met was by God’s Leave. And that He may know the believers [167] And that He may know the hypocrites. **And it was said unto them:**

‘Come fight in the way of God or defend [yourselves]’

They said:

‘Had we known there would be fighting we would have followed you’

That day they were closer to disbelief than to belief saying with their mouths what was not in their hearts. And God knows best what they conceal.”

Circumstances in which verses 3.140 and 152 were announced

Al Wahidi provides the following, broadly similar, accounts of the announcement of {3.140, and 152}.



[3.140] “When the Messenger of Allah, Allah bless him and give him peace, returned from Uhud, sad and dejected, women whose husbands and sons were killed went to him crying and slapping their faces.

Seeing this, the Messenger of Allah, Allah bless him and give him peace, exclaimed:

‘Is this how Your Messenger is treated?’

And Allah, exalted is He, revealed this verse [If ye have received a blow, the (disbelieving) people have received a blow the like thereof].

Al Wahidi on 3.140

“When the Messenger of Allah, Allah bless him and give him peace, returned to Medina after that with which they were afflicted at Uhud, some of his Companions said:

‘From whence did this come to us when Allah has promised us victory?’

And so Allah, exalted is He, revealed this verse [Allah verily made good His promise unto you] up to His saying (Some of you desired the world], i.e. the marksmen who did what they did at Uhud.”

Al Wahidi on 3.152

V. 59.2-16 Expulsion of the Banu Nadir

About six months following the Battle of Uhud Mohammed ordered his fighters to surround the Jewish tribe of Banu Nadir. The Nadir resisted at first but when they say the Muslims cutting down their palm trees they negotiated a peaceful retreat.



Surah 59 'The Gathering'

2. "He it is Who expelled those who disbelieve among the People of the Book from their homes at the first gathering. You did not think they would go forth and they thought their fortress would defend them from God.

Then God came upon them whence they reckoned not, and cast terror into their hearts as they razed their houses with their own hands and with the hands of the believers.

So take heed, O you who are possessed of sight.

3. Had God not ordained banishment for them he would have punished them in this world.

And in the Hereafter theirs shall be the punishment of the Fire.

4. **That is because they defied God and his Messenger. And whomsoever defies God and his Messenger truly God is severe in retribution.**

5. **Whatsoever of the palm trees you cut down or left standing upon their roots it was by God's Leave that he may disgrace the iniquitous.**

6. As for what God has given in spoils from them to the Messenger you spurred neither horse nor camel for it. But God grants his messengers authority over whomsoever he will and God is powerful over all things.

7. **That which God has given in spoils to His Messenger from the People of the Town is for God and His Messenger And for kinsfolk, orphans, the indigent and the traveller, that it not come to circulate among the wealthy. Whatsoever the Messenger gives you, take it and whatever he forbids to you forego and reverence God. Truly God is severe in retribution.**

[continued]

8. For the poor emigrants who were expelled from their homes and their property seeking bounty and contentment from God and who help God and his Messenger, it is they who are the truthful.
9. And those who were settled in the land and in belief before them love those who emigrated to them and find in their breasts no need for that which they were given. They prefer others over themselves even if they be impoverished. And whoever is shielded from the avarice of his soul, it is they who will prosper.

10. And those who came after them say:

‘Our Lord! Forgive us and our brothers who preceded us in faith and place no rancour in our hearts towards they who believe. Our Lord! Truly thou art Kind, Merciful.’

11. Has thou not seen those who act with hypocrisy saying to their brothers who disbelieve amongst the People of the Book:

‘If you are expelled, surely we shall go forth with you. And we shall never obey anyone against you. And if you are fought we shall help you’

God bears witness that they were surely liars.

12. Were they expelled they would not go forth with them and were they fought they would not help them. And were they to help them they would surely turn their backs. Then they would not be helped.
13. Truly you incite more intense dread in their breasts than God.

That is because they are a people who do not comprehend

[continued]

- 14. They will not fight you altogether, save in fortified towns or from behind walls. Their might is fierce amongst themselves.** You suppose that they are together, yet their hearts are divided. That is because they are a people who do not understand.
- 15. Like those who shortly before them tasted the evil consequences of their affair – and theirs shall be a painful punishment**
- 16. Like Satan when he says unto man 'Disbelieve'. Then when he disbelieves he says:**

'Surely I am quit of you. Truly I fear God, Lord of the worlds'.

The end of both is that they will be in the Fire, abiding therein."

Circumstances in which verses 59.2-16 were announced

Al Wahidi provides the following, broadly similar, accounts of the announcement of {59.2-8}.



"This verse was revealed about Banu Nadir. When the Prophet, Allah bless him and give him peace, moved to Medina, they signed a treaty with him in which they agreed not fight against him or with him and the Messenger of Allah, Allah bless him and give him peace, consented. Then when the Messenger of Allah, Allah bless him and give him peace, defeated the idolaters at Badr, Banu Nadir said:

'By Allah, he is the Prophet whose description we find in the Torah, he will not be defeated'.

However, when the Muslims were defeated at Uhud, they broke their pledge and showed enmity toward the Messenger of Allah, Allah bless him and give him peace, and Muslims. The Messenger of Allah, Allah bless him and give him peace, surrounded them and then they signed a settlement treaty in which it was agreed that they leave Medina".

Al Wahidi 59.2-8

V. The Expulsion of the Banu Nadir

A more specific account tells of a meeting between Mohammed and the Banu Nadir in which Mohammed was told of a plot to kill him:

"The unbelievers of Quraysh wrote the following to the Jews after the Battle of Badr:

"You are people of armaments and fortresses. Verily, you either fight our man or we shall do this and that, such that nothing will prevent us from the bracelets on your women's anklets".

When their letter reached the Jews, the Banu Nadir were unanimously in favour of treason. They sent to the Prophet, Allah bless him and give him peace, saying:

'Come with thirty of your men and we will send thirty of our men. Let us meet in a location halfway between you and us so that our men hear you and if they believe in you, we will all believe in you'.

However, when they reached a certain location, some Jews said:

'How are you going to get to him when he has with him thirty of his Companions who all desire to die before him? Send to him and say: 'How are we going to understand [what you are going to say to us] when there are sixty of us? Come along with three of your Companions and three of our scholars will meet you. If they believe in you, we will all believe in you and follow'.

The Prophet, Allah bless him and give him peace, proceeded with three of his Companions. On the other side, three Jews proceeded armed with knives, intending to kill the Messenger of Allah, Allah bless him and give him peace. A sincere woman advisor from Banu Nadir sent a message to her brother, a Muslim from the Helpers, informing him of the treachery which the Banu Nadir were planning against the Messenger of Allah, Allah bless him and give him peace. Her brother hurriedly set off to see the Prophet, Allah bless him and give him peace. He caught up with him and informed him of the plan, and so the Prophet, Allah bless him and give him peace, went back.

The following day, he sent troops to them. He besieged their fortress and fought them until they agreed to move out of Medina, carrying with them anything their camels could carry, except for armaments. They proceeded to destroy their own houses and take whatever wood they could take with them. Allah, exalted is He, therefore, revealed [59:5]. When the Messenger of Allah, Allah bless him and give him peace, headed toward Banu Nadir and they took refuge in their fortresses, he ordered the cutting down and burning of their palm-trees. The enemies of Allah were alarmed. They said:

"You claim, O Muhammad, that you seek goodness, is there any goodness in damaging productive trees and cutting down palm-trees?"

[continued]

They also said to him:

"Is corruption in the earth part of what you claim has been revealed to you?"

The Prophet, Allah bless him and give him peace, was distressed upon hearing this, and the Muslims were affected and feared that this may be an act of corruption. And they disagreed amongst themselves. Some said:

"Do not cut the palm-trees down for it is part of what Allah has given us as spoils".

Others said:

"We should rather cut them down!"

And so Allah, glorified and exalted is He, revealed [59.5 'Whatsoever palm-trees ye cut down'] confirming the opinion of those who warned against cutting the palm-trees down and, at the same time, stating the lawfulness of cutting them down. He informed that the cutting down of trees or

Ibn Kathir attributes the announcement of {59.11-14} to a reassurance to the Muslims that the Meccan tribes allied to the Banu Nadir - who had also pledged loyalty to Mohammed - would not come to the defence of the former against the latter.



(c.1360)

Most widely used Qur'an commentary

"Allah states that the hypocrites, Abdullah bin Ubayy and his like, sent a messenger to Bani Nadir promising them help.

Allah the Exalted said: ['Hast thou not seen those who act with hypocrisy...'] meaning, the hypocrites lied when they issued this promise, because it was just words that they did not intend to fulfil.

Also, what they said they would do, would never have been fulfilled by them, and this is why Allah said: ['Were they expelled they would not go forth with them, and were they fought they would not help them'] meaning the hypocrites will not fight along with the Jews ['And were they to help them they would surely turn their backs'] and even if the hypocrites did fight along their side they will not be victorious.

This Ayah contains good news, just as the good news that this following Ayah conveys, ['Truly you incite more intense dread in their breasts than God'] meaning, the hypocrites fear you more than they fear Allah ... This is why Allah said, ('That is because they are a people who comprehend not.')

Allah then said, ('They will not fight you all together, save in fortified townships, or from behind walls') meaning, they will not fight Muslims except from behind besieged fortified forts, because of their cowardice and fear of Muslims. They only fight when they have to defend themselves (even though they threaten Muslims of reprisals).

V. The Expulsion of the Banu Nadir

Allah the Exalted said: [‘Their enmity among themselves is very great’] meaning, the enmity they feel against each other is intense ... even though one might see them combining forces and think that these forces are harmonious, yet in reality, they are divided severely. Ibrahim An-Nakha'i said that this Ayah refers to the hypocrites and the People of the Scriptures,

Allah said: [‘Like those who shortly before them tasted the evil consequences of their affair’] refers to the Jewish tribe of Bani Qaynuqa [expelled from Mecca by Mohammed a year earlier] according to Ibn 'Abbas, Qatadah and Muhammad bin Ishaq.

Allah said ‘Like Satan when he says unto man ‘Disbelieve!’ meaning, the example of the Jews being deceived by the promises of the hypocrites, who said that they will help them if Muslims fight them, is that of the devil. When matters got serious and the Jews were besieged, the hypocrites betrayed them and abandoned them to taste utter defeat. Likewise, the devil lures mankind into disbelief and when they obey him, he disowns them and declares himself free of their actions. This is the recompense of every unjust person.’

VI 33.9-25 The Battle of the Trench

The third major military confrontation between the Muslims and the Meccans took place when a very large Meccan force, said to number ten thousand, besieged the Muslims at Yathrib/Medina. The Muslims defended their settlement with a deep ditch which prevented the Meccans using their cavalry and after a month the Meccans retreated, little fighting having occurred.

The battle is referred to in **{33.9-25}**. As with the verses relating to the Battle of Uhud (above) the focus is upon condemning those who had pledged loyalty to Islam in the hope of benefitting from plunder but who then failed to defend Medina when it was attacked.



Surah 33 'The Parties'

9. "O you who believe! Remember the Blessing of God upon you when the hosts came upon you. And we sent against them a wind and hosts that you saw not. – and God sees whatsoever you do – [10] when they came upon you from above you and below you, and when eyes swerved and hearts reached into throats and you thought many things regarding God.
11. It was there that the believers were tried and shaken in a manner most severe.
12. And when the hypocrites and those in whose hearts is a disease said:
'God and His Messenger promised us naught but delusion.'
13. And when a group among them sought permission from the Prophet saying: 'Truly our houses are exposed.'
through they were not exposed. They wanted naught but to flee.
14. Had they been entered upon from the sides of the city then were exhorted to treachery, they would have committed it and would not have hesitated, save a little [15] though previously they had made a pact with God that they would not turn their backs; and the pact with God is called to account.

[continued]

16. Say:

'Fleeing will not benefit you if you flee from death or killing. For you will not be granted enjoyment, save a little.'

17. Say:

'Who is it who will protect you from God if He desires evil for you or desires mercy for you?'

18. They will find no protector or helper for themselves apart from God. Surely God knows those amongst you who hinder and those who say unto their brethren "Come hither unto us" yet they come not to the battle, save a little, [19] greedy towards you.

But when fear comes thou seest them looking at thee with their eyes rolling like one whom death overwhelms. When fear subsides, they assail thee with sharp tongues greedy for good things.

Such as these have not believed, so God made their deeds come to naught and that is easy for God.

20. They suppose that the parties have not withdrawn and if the parties were to come they would wish they were in the desert with the Bedouin, seeking news of you. **And were they among you they would not fight, save a little.**

21. Indeed, you have in the Messenger of God a beautiful example for those who hope for God and the Last Day. And remember God much.

22: When the believers saw the parties they said:

'This is what God and His Messenger promised.: God and His Messenger spoke true.'

and it increased them in naught but faith and submission.

[continued]

23. Among the believers are men that have been true to that which they pledged unto God. Among them are those who have fulfilled their vow. And among them are those who wait, and they have not changed in the least [24] that God may recompense the truthful for their truthfulness and punish the hypocrites if he will or relent unto the, truly God is Forgiving, Merciful.

25. And God turned back those who disbelieved in their rage: they attained no good. **God sufficed the believers in battle.** And God is Strong, Mighty."

Circumstances in which verses 33.9-25 were announced

The following overview of the Battle of the Trench is provided by *The Study Quran*:

"[Surah 33] takes its name from the mention of the parties or confederates: an alliance consisting of the Makkan Quraysh and other Arab and Jewish tribes- who fought the Muslims at the Battle of the Trench (5/627) ...

The strength of the confederate armies is estimated to have been around ten thousand men with six hundred horses and many camels. The Madinans numbered around three thousand.

When news of the forces marching upon Madinah reached the Prophet, the outnumbered defenders of Madinah, mainly Muslims, had only six days to prepare ... They dug a trench on the northern outskirts of Madinah that connected its natural fortifications, large lava tracts to the east and west whose rough irregular surface impeded cavalry attacks. The earth and rocks excavated from the trench were heaped up on the defenders' side, giving them protection from projectiles and providing them with many rocks as ammunition. The trench also made it almost impossible for horses to leap to the other side. Hundreds of high walled gardens that created serpentine pathways already impeded attack from the south, because any attacking army would be forced to march in long columns that would be open to ambush.

The Muslim forces patrolled the approximately three and a half mile trench day and night. These defences limited the fighting to small skirmishes and turned the battle into test of wits and wills that resulted in a month-long siege. The confederate army made several attempts to cross the trench at night but repeatedly failed.

Hoping to make several attacks at once, the confederates persuaded the Jewish tribe of Banu Qurayzah, who resided in Madinah, to allow them through their fortifications to attack the city from the south. The Muslims however caught wind of this plan and managed to sow dissension between the Quraysh and the Banu Qurayza h and thus derail their negotiations.

They further weakened the confederacy by offering one of its key tribes, the Banu Ghatafan, one third of the date harvest of Madinah if they left the battlefield. Although the terms of the treaty with the Banu Ghatafan could not be agreed upon, the fact that a large part of the confederacy had entered into negotiations with the Prophet strained the already tense relations within the confederacy. The dissension between the parties, the sinking of confederate morale, and a sandstorm that lasted several days helped bring the siege to an end."

The issue of those who were tasked with defending Medina shirking their duty is noted in the history of the siege recorded by Ibn Ishaq¹²

SIRAT RASUL
ALLAH



Earliest
biography of
Mohammed,
c.760

"When the apostle heard of their intention [the Meccan army marching on Medina] he drew a trench about Medina encouraging the Muslims with hope of reward in heaven.

The Muslims worked very hard with him, but the disaffected held back from him and began to hide their real object by working slackly and by stealing away to their families without the apostle's permission or knowledge. A Muslim who had to attend to an urgent matter would ask the apostle's permission to go, and would get it and when he had carried out his business he would return to the work he had left because of his desire to do what was right, and his respect for the same. So God sent down concerning those believers [{24.62}]¹³.

Then God said to the disaffected who were stealing away from the work and leaving it without the Prophet's permission:

'Do not treat the call of the apostle amongst you as if it were one of you calling upon another. God knows those of you who steal away to hide themselves. Let those who conspire to disobey his order beware lest trouble or a painful punishment befall them'."

¹² 670

¹³ "Only they are believers who believe in God and His Messenger and who, when they are with him in a collective affair, go not forth until asking his leave. Truly those who ask thy leave, it is they who believe in God and his Messenger. So when they ask thy leave in some matter of theirs, give leave unto whosoever thou wilt. And seek forgiveness for them from God. Truly God is Forgiving, Merciful."

VII 33:26-27: The Massacre and enslavement of the Banu Qurayza

Immediately following the Battle of the Trench, Mohammed besieged the last remaining Jewish tribe at Yathrib/Medina, the Banu Qurayza.

Although the Qurayza had played no part in the battle, Mohammed had acted on the basis that they had betrayed him by failing to support him militarily and by admitting a messenger from the Meccans. The Qurayza agreed to surrender to Mohammed on condition that their fate be judged by a member of the Banu Aus tribe that had traditionally been an ally of theirs.

Mohammed chose Sa'd bin Mu'adh who ordered that the men of the Qurayza be put to death.

The incident was referred to in the verses that follow immediately from those reproduced above in relation to the Battle of the Trench.



Surah 33 'The Parties'

- 26. "He brought the People of the Book who supported them down from their strongholds and **cast terror into their hearts - some you slew and some you took captive.****
- 27. And He bequeathed unto you their land, their homes their property and a land you have not trodden.**

And God is powerful over all things."

Circumstances in which verses **33.26-27** were announced

The killing of the Banu Qurayza is possibly the most controversial single incident in the life of Mohammed and to understand its significance to Islamic ethics the actions of the Banu Qurayza that led up to it requires consideration in a little detail.

Of this incident Ibn Ishaq, wrote initially concerning the events during the siege¹⁴:

SIRAT RASUL

ALLAH



Earliest
biography of
Mohammed,
c.760

"The enemy of God, Huyay bin Akhtab al-Nadri went out to Ka'b. bin Asad al-Qurayzi [chief of the Banu Qurayza] who had made a treaty with the apostle. When Ka'b heard of Huyay's coming he shut the door of his fort in his face, and when he asked permission to enter he refused to see him, saying that he was a man of ill omen and that he himself was in treaty with Mohammed and did not intend to go back on his word because he had always found him [ie Mohammed] loyal and faithful.

Then Huyay accused him of shutting him out because he was unwilling to let him eat his corn. This so enraged [Ka'b] that he opened his door.

He [Huyay] said:

'Good heavens, Ka'b, I have brought you immortal fame and a great army. I have come with Quraysh with their leaders and chiefs which I have halted where the torrent-beds of Ruma meet, and the Ghatafan, with their leaders and chiefs which I have halted in Dhanab Naqma towards Uhud. They have made a firm agreement and promised me that they will not depart until they have made an end of Mohammed and his men.'

Ka'b said:

'By God you have brought me immortal shame and an empty cloud which has shed its water while it thunders and lightens with nothing in it. Woe to you, Huyay. Leave me as I am for I have always found him [ie Mohammed] loyal and faithful.'

Huyay kept on wheedling Ka'b until at last he gave way in giving him a solemn promise that if the Quraysh and Ghatafan returned to Mecca without having killed Mohamed he [Huyay] would enter his [Ka'b's] fort with him and await his fate.

Thus Ka'b broke his promise and cut loose from the bond that was between him and the apostle.

¹⁴ 674-690

VII. The Massacre and enslavement of the Banu Qurayza

Ibn Ishaq describes that Mohammed put an end to the alliance of the Qureshi and Qurayza by sending Nuaym bin Masud a Muslim convert from the Ghatafan first to the Banu Qurayza, then the besieging Meccans to sow distrust between them.

Nuaym first argued to the Qurayza of the Meccans that:

'If they [the Meccans] see an opportunity they will make the most of it but if things go badly they will return to their own land and leave you to face the man [Mohammed] in your country and you will not be able to do so if you are left alone. So do not fight along with these people until you take hostages from their chiefs who will remain in your hands as security that they will fight with Mohammed with you until they make an end of him'

Then Nuaym went to Abu Sufyan and said:

'You know my affection for you and that I have left Mohammed. Now I have heard something which it is my duty to tell you by way of warning but treat it as confidential. Mark my words, the Jews have regretted their action in opposing Mohammed and have sent to tell him so, saying: 'Would you like us to get hold of the chiefs of the two tribes Quraysh and Ghatafan and hand them over to you so that you may cut their heads off? Then we can join you in exterminating the rest of them'

As conditions amongst the besiegers worsened Abu Sufyan sent message to the Banu Qurayza that:

'They had no permanent camp and their horses and camels were dying: therefore they [the Banu Qurayza] must make ready for battle and put an end to Mohammed once and for all.'

The Banu Qurayza replied that:

'We will not fight Mohammed along with you until you give us hostages whom we can hold as security until we make an end of Mohammed; for we fear that if the battle goes against you and you suffer heavily you will withdraw at once to your country and leave us while the man is in our country and we cannot face him alone.'

When the messengers returned to the Meccans with this reply they said:

'Now we know that what Nuaym told us is the truth. So send to Banu Qurayza that we will not send a single man. And if they want to fight let them come out and fight';

VII. The Massacre and enslavement of the Banu Qurayza

and having received this message the Banu Qurayza said:

'What Nuaym told us is the truth. The people are bent on fighting and if they get an opportunity they will take advantage of it but if they do not they will withdraw to their own country. And leave us to face this man here. So send word to them that we will not fight Mohammed with them until they give us hostages.'

Ibn Ishaq concludes:

"The Quraysh and Ghatafan refused to do so and God sowed distrust between them and sent a bitter cold wind against them in the winter night which upset their cooking pots and overthrew their tents."

After the Meccan army withdrew it is said in a hadith from Sahih Bukhari that Mohammed returned to his living quarters but immediately announced a vision that he was instructed to pursue the Banu Qurayza:



[Isnad]

"When Allah's Messenger returned on the day of the battle of Al-Khandaq (i.e. Trench), he put down his arms and took a bath.

Then Gabriel whose head was covered with dust, came to him saying:

'You have put down your arms! By Allah, I have not put down my arms yet.'

Allah's Messenger said:

'Where (to go now)?'

Gabriel said 'This way' pointing towards the tribe of Bani Qurayza. So Allah's Messenger went out towards them.

Sahih Bukhari (4.52.68)

VII. The Massacre and enslavement of the Banu Qurayza

The Banu Qurayza initially resisted the siege but were persuaded by their Medinan allies the Aus to submit to Mohammed's judgment in the hope that the Aus would protect them.

**SIRAT RASUL
ALLAH**



"In the morning they submitted to the apostle's judgment and the al-Aus leapt up and said:

'O Apostle they are our allies...'

When the Aus spoke the apostle said:

'Will you be satisfied O Aus if one of your own number pronounces judgment on them?'

When they agreed he said that Sa'd bin Mu'adh was the man. ...

When Sa'd reached the apostle and the Muslims the apostle told them to get up and greet their leader... so they got up and said

'O Abu Amr, the apostle has entrusted to you the affair of your allies that that you may give judgement concerning them.'

Sa'd asked:

'Do you covenant by Allah that you accept the judgement that I pronounce on them?'

They said 'Yes' and he said ...

'Then I give judgment that the men should be killed, the property divided and the women and children taken as captives'... "

As the Banu Qurayza surrendered they were initially unaware of this judgment.

"Then they surrendered, and the apostle confined them in Medina in the quarter of al-Harith, a woman of Banu al-Najjar. Then the apostle went out to the market of Medina (which is still its market today) and dug trenches in it. Then he sent for them and struck off their heads in those trenches as they were brought out to him in batches.

Among them was the enemy of Allah, Huyayy bin Akhtab and Ka'b bin Asad their chief. There were 600 or 700 in all, though some put the figure as high as 800 or 900.

As they were being taken out in batches to the apostle they asked Ka'b what he thought would be done with them. He replied:

'Will you never understand? Don't you see that the summoner never stops and those who are taken away do not return? By Allah it is death!'

This went on until the apostle made an end of them.

Huyayy was brought out wearing a flowered robe in which he had made holes about the size of the finger-tips in every part so that it should not be

taken from him as spoil, with his hands bound to his neck by a rope. When he saw the apostle, he said:

'By God, I do not blame myself for opposing you, but he who forsakes God will be forsaken.'

Then he went to the men and said:

'God's command is right. A book and a decree, and massacre have been written against the Sons of Israel.'

Then he sat down and his head was struck off."

VIII: 48:16-24: The Battle of Kaybar

A year following the Battle of the Trench Mohammed led a large group of Muslims to Mecca purportedly to make a pilgrimage. The Meccans marched out to meet them and the two parties met and negotiated the Treaty of Hudaybiyya, agreeing a truce to last for the next ten years.

Shortly after this treaty Mohammed attacked the Jewish settlements at Kaybar, Fidak and Wadi al Qura. In {48.16-28} the Qur'an forbids Bedouins who join his army after the Treaty of Hudaybiyya from participating in the forthcoming assault on Kaybar etc, but promises them they will have an opportunity to fight '*a people possessed of great might*' for Islam in the future.



Surah 48 'Victory'

16. "Say to the Bedouin who stayed behind:

'You will be called against a people possessed of great might. You will fight them or they will submit. So if you obey, God will grant you a beautiful ward, but if you turn away, as you turned away before, He will punish you with a painful punishment'

17. There is no blame on the blind; nor is there blame upon the lame; nor is there blame upon the sick. Whosoever obeys God and His Messenger He will cause him to enter gardens with rivers running below. And whosoever turns away He will punish him with a painful punishment.

18. God was content with the believers when they pledged allegiance unto thee beneath the tree. He knew what was in their hearts and sent down Tranquillity upon them and **rewarded them with a victory nigh. [19] and abundant spoils that they will capture;** God is Mighty, Wise.

20. God has promised you spoils that you will capture - then he hastened this for you and restrained the people's hands for you. That it may be a sign for the believers. And that He may guide you upon a straight path. - [21] and others of which you were not capable God has encompassed them.; and God is Powerful over all things.

[Continued]

22. If those who disbelieve had fought you they would have turned [their] backs and then would have found neither protector nor helper. [That is] the wont of God [24] He it is Who restrained their hands from you and your hands from them in the valley of Makkah, after having made you victorious over them. And God sees whatever you do..."

Translation notes

The phrase that *The Study Quran* translates as "***He [God] ... rewarded them with a victory nigh, and abundant spoils that they will capture***" is an unusual formulation: God is said to be telling the Muslims, that as a result of the Treaty of Hudaybiyyah, God has announced a reward to Muslims of *future* victory and spoils.

This combination of past and future tenses is common to all except two of the sixteen translations considered in which God is said to have '*rewarded*' (or per Ali Qarai '*requited*') the Muslims with:

"*a near (or nigh) victory*" (Pickthall, Arberry, Shakir and Khan & Hilali);

"*a victory near at hand*" (Maududi, Dariyabdi, Ali Qarai and Wahihuddin Khan);

"*an immediate victory*" (Shakir);

"*a victory close by*" (Qaribullah & Darwish)

or "*an imminent conquest*" (Talal Itani and Sahih International);

and

"*many/much/abundant spoils (of war)/(war) booty*" (Pickthall, Arberry Maududi Dariyabdi, Sarwar, Ahmad Ali, Ali Qarai, Khan & Hilali, Sahih Int. and Corpus) or the less explicit "*gains*" (Yusuf Ali and Talal Itani) or "*acquisitions*" (Shakir);

"*that they will/were to take/capture/ acquire*" (Pickthall, Maududi, Shakir, Ahmad Ali, Ali Qarai, K&H, Sahih International and Corpus);

"*for them to take, capture*" (Arberry and Talal Itani);

"*that they are taking*" (Dariyabadi);

"*will they acquire (besides)*" (Yusuf Ali);

"*many future gains*" (Wahihuddin Khan).

Only two of the sixteen translations considered rendered the taking of spoils in the past tense (Sarwar and Qaribullah & Dawish). It seems clear that in **{48.18}** the Qur'an is announcing that those Muslims who had demonstrated their loyalty had been rewarded with the prospect of imminent future victories and plunder.

Tafsir

Concerning the phrase '**a people possessed of great might**' whom [{48.16}](#) states that new converts must be prepared to fight, Ibn Kathir notes:



(c.1360)

Most widely used Qur'an commentary

"Scholars of Tafsir differ over who the people mentioned here are. There are many opinions,

first, they are the tribe of Hawazin ...

The second view is that these people are the tribe of Thaqif ...

The third view is that they are Banu Hanifah ...

The fourth opinion is that they are the Persians,

Ka'b Al-Ahbar said that they are the Romans,

while Ibn Abi Layla, 'Ata, Al-Hasan and Qatadah -- in a different narration from him, said that they are the Persians and Romans.

Mujahid also said that they are the idolators.

In another narration Mujahid said, 'They are men given to great warfare' and did not specify any particular people. This last explanation is the view preferred by Ibn Jurayj and Ibn Jarir.

*Allah's statement '**Then you shall fight them, or they shall surrender**' means you are called to fight them in Jihad, through constant warfare, until you become victorious over them or they surrender. Or, they will embrace your religion without a fight, but with their full consent."*

IX. 9.25 The Battle of Hunayn

Two years into the ten-year truce agreed at between Mohammed and the Meccans at Hudaybiyyah, Mohammed declared that the Meccans had broken the treaty by permitting a tribe allied to them to fight a tribe allied with the Mohammed (over an issue that had no known connection to the wider Muslim-Meccan conflict). Mohammed led an army of ten thousand fighters to Mecca which surrendered to him without violent opposition.

Almost immediately he perceived a threat from the Meccans' long-standing rivals to the south, the Hawazin. Mohammed ordered his fighters who had marched upon Mecca, now accompanied by some Meccan tribes, to march upon the Hawazin. The Hawazin prepared an ambush in a narrow pass at Hunayn. The consequent battle is described by Ibn Ishaq:

SIRAT RASUL

ALLAH



Earliest
biography of
Mohammed,
c.760

"After the Prophet conquered Makkah and things settled, most of its people embraced Islam and he set them free. News came to the Messenger of Allah that the tribe of Hawazin were gathering their forces to fight him, under the command of Malik bin 'Awf An-Nadri, as well as, the entire tribe of Thaqif, the tribes of Banu Jusham, Banu Sa'd bin Bakr, a few people of Awza' from Banu Hilal and some people from Bani 'Amr bin 'Amir and 'Awf bin 'Amir. They brought their women, children, sheep and camels along, in addition to their armed forces and adequate supplies.

The Messenger of Allah marched to meet them with the army that he brought to conquer Makkah, ten thousand from the Muhajirin, the Ansar and various Arab tribes. Along with them came the Tulaqa' numbering two thousand men. The Messenger took them along to meet the enemy.

The two armies met in Hunayn, a valley between Makkah and At-Ta'if. The battle started in the early part of the morning, when the Huwazin forces, who were lying in ambush, descended on the valley when the Muslims entered. Muslims were suddenly struck by the ambush, the arrows descended on them and the swords struck them. The Huwazin commander ordered them to descend and attack the Muslims as one block, and when they did that, the Muslims retreated in haste, just as Allah described them.

The Messenger of Allah remained firm in his position while riding his mule, Ash-Shahba'. He was leading his mule towards the enemy, while his uncle Al-'Abbas was holding its right-hand rope and his cousin Abu Sufyan was holding the left rope. They tried to hold the mule back so it would not run faster toward the enemy. Meanwhile, the Messenger of Allah was declaring his name aloud and saying,

'O servants of Allah! Come back to me! I am the Messenger of Allah! I am the Prophet, not lying! I am the son of Abdul-Muttalib!'

There remained between a hundred and eighty Companions with the Prophet ... The Prophet commanded his uncle Al-Abbas, whose voice was rather loud, to call at the top of his voice:

'O Companions of the Samurah tree' referring to the Muhajirin and Ansar who gave their pledge under the tree during the pledge of Ridwan, not to run away and retreat. He also called, "O Companions of Surat Al-Baqarah."

Upon hearing that, those heralded started saying:

"Here we are! Here we are!"

Muslims started returning in the direction of the Messenger of Allah. If the camel of one of them did not obey him (as the people were rushing to the other direction in flight) he would wear his shield and descend from his camel and rush to the side of the Messenger of Allah on foot. When a large crowd gathered around the Messenger of Allah, he commanded them to fight in sincerity and took a handful of sand and threw it in the faces of the disbelievers, after supplicating to Allah,

'O Allah! Fulfill Your promise to me!'

Then he threw that handful of sand which entered the eyes and mouth of all the disbelievers, thus distracting them from fighting, and they retreated in defeat. The Muslims pursued the enemy, killing and capturing them. The rest of the Muslim army (returning to battle gradually) rejoined their positions and found many captured disbelieving soldiers kept tied before the Messenger of Allah.

The victory is noted in the Qur'an at:



Surah 9 'The Repentance'

25. "God indeed granted you victory on many a field and on the day of Hunayn when you were impressed at how numerous you were. But it availed you naught and the earth, despite its breadth, closed in upon you. Then you turned your backs.
26. Then God sent down his Tranquillity upon His Messenger and upon the believers and sent down hosts whom you saw not and **punished those who disbelieved.**

And that is the recompense of the unbelievers."

X. 9.38-39, 41-42, 44-7, 81-4 The Expedition to Tabouk

The year following the capture of Mecca, Mohammed led an army north to capture the Byzantine outpost town of Tabouk.

Prior to or possibly during the expedition he announced the following verses, apparently to exhort reluctant fighters to greater enthusiasm for conquest, associating preparedness to fight in the expedition to belief in God:



Surah 9 'The Repentance'

38. "O you who believe! What ails you that when it is said unto you:

'Go forth in the way of God'

you sink down heavily to the earth? Are you content with the life of this world over the Hereafter? Yet the enjoyment of the life this world compared to the Hereafter is but a little.

39. **If you go not forth He will punish you with a painful punishment** and will place another people in your stead, and you will not harm Him in the least. And God is powerful over all things....

41. "**Go forth in the way of God, lightly or heavily and strive [make jihad]** with your wealth and yourselves in the way of God.

That is better for you if you but knew.

42. Were it something ephemeral nearby or an easy journey, they would have followed thee. But the trek was too great for them. And they will swear by God 'If we had been able we would have gone out with you'. They destroy themselves and God knows they are liars."

Translation notes

{9.41}: '*Go forth in the way of God, lightly or heavily*'

The majority of translations of this verse use the same to two adverbs 'lightly or heavily'.

The Study Quran footnote offers the alternative explanations of the phrase as meaning either reluctantly or eagerly or lightly or heavily armed.

The latter meaning is adopted by four of the translations considered:

Pickthall: '*Go forth, light-armed and heavy-armed*';

Yusuf Ali: '*Go forth, whether lightly or heavily equipped*';

Sarwar: '*Whether unarmed or well equipped, march and fight for the cause of God*';

Wahihuddin Khan: '*Go ye forth, (whether equipped) lightly or heavily*'.

Khan & Hilali renders the phrase: '*March forth, whether you are light (being healthy, young and wealthy) or heavy (being ill, old and poor)*'.

Surah 9 'The Repentance'

44. "Those who believe in God and the Last Day ask of thee no leave from striving [making jihad] with their wealth and their selves. And God knows the reverent.

45. Only they ask leave of thee who believe not in God and the Last Day whose hearts are in doubt, and so they waver in their doubt. And had they desired to go forth they would have made some preparation for it. But God was averse to their being sent forth,

46. So He held them back and so it was said unto them:

'Stay back with those who stay back'

47. And had they gone forth with thee it would have increased thee in naught but troubles. And they would have hurried about in your midst, seeking to incite discord amongst you. And among you are some who harken to them.

And God knows the wrongdoers."

Surah 9 ‘The Repentance’

81. “Those who were left behind exulted in staying back, opposing the Messenger of God, **and were adverse to striving** [*making jihad*] with their wealth and with their selves in the way of God.
82. **So let them laugh little and weep much as a recompense** for that which they used to earn.
83. And if God returns thee to a group of them and they seek leave of thee to go forth, say:
‘You shall not go forth with me ever. Nor shall you shall you fight with me against any enemy. You were content to stay back the first time., so stay back with those who stay behind.’
84. **And never pray over one of them who dies, nor stand by his grave. Truly they disbelieved in God and His Messenger and died iniquitous.”**

Circumstances in which verses 9.38-42 were announced

Al Wahidi provides the following narration accounts for the above verses:

ASBAB AL NUZUL

Narration



Compiled by
Ali ibn Ahmed
Al Wahidi
(d.1095)

"This verse was revealed to prompt the believers to take part in the Battle of Tabuk.

When the Messenger of Allah, Allah bless him and give him peace, returned from al-Ta'if and the Battle of Hunayn, he gave orders to attack the Byzantines. This happened at a time when people were living in straitened circumstances, the land was suffering from drought; it was very hot and it was time to reap the dates which were by then ripe. People found it very hard to conquer the Byzantines; they preferred to stay at home and enjoy the shade. The idea of going out to fight was very hard to accept. When Allah knew people's slackness, He revealed this verse."

Al Wahidi on 9.38

"Allah then revealed about those hypocrites who stayed behind and did not take part in the Battle of Tabuk ('Had it been a near adventure and an easy journey they had followed thee').

He also revealed ('Had they gone forth among you they had added to you naught save trouble'). This is because when the Messenger of Allah, Allah bless him and give him peace, set forth, he camped his troops at al-Wada mountain trail while Abd Allah ibn Ubayy ¹camped his troops at a clear trodden path below the mountain trail of al-Wada. His troops were no less than the troops which were with the Prophet. When the Messenger of Allah, Allah bless him and give him peace, marched again, Abd Allah ibn Ubayy, the hypocrites and the doubters stayed behind. To console His Prophet, Allah bless him and give him peace, Allah, exalted is He, revealed ('Had they gone forth among you they had added to you naught save trouble')."

Al Wahidi on 9.42

Ibn Kathir offers the following reflections:



(c.1360)

Most widely used Qur'an commentary

{9.38}

"Allah admonishes those who lagged behind the Messenger of Allah in the battle of Tabuk, at a time when fruits were ripe and shades tempting in the intense and terrible heat: [What ails you that when it is said unto you 'Go forth in the way of God' you sink down heavily to the earth?]

Allah next diminishes the eagerness for this worldly life and increases it for the Hereafter.

Imam Ahmad recorded Al-Mustawrid said the Messenger of Allah said:

'The life of this world, compared to the Hereafter, is just like when one of you dips his finger in the sea, let him contemplate how much of it his finger would carry'

and the Prophet pointed with his index finger.

... Ibn 'Abbas said:

'Allah's Messenger called some Arabs to mobilize, but they lagged behind and Allah withheld rain... and this was their torment.'"

{9.41}:

Mutamir bin Sulayman narrated that his father said, Hadrami claimed that he was told that some people used to declare that they will not gain sin (if they lag behind the forces of Jihad) because they are ill or old. This Ayah was revealed: [Go forth in the way of God, lightly or heavily...] "

Allah commanded mass mobilization together with the Messenger of Allah for the battle of Tabuk, to fight the disbelieving, People of the Book, the Romans, Allah's enemies. Allah ordained that the believers all march forth with the Messenger regardless whether they felt active, lazy, at ease or had difficult circumstances,

Abu Talhah commented (on this Ayah):

"Whether you are old or young, Allah left no excuse for anyone."

Abu Talhah marched to Ash-Sham and fought until he was killed. In another narration, Abu Talhah recited Surah Bara'ah until he reached this Ayah. He then said:

"I see that Allah had called us to mobilize whether we are old or young. O my children! Prepare my supplies."

... As-Suddi said: A man came forward, and he was fat, complained, and asked for permission to stay behind from Jihad, but the Prophet refused. Then this Ayah - March forth, whether you are light or heavy - was revealed, and it became hard on the people. So Allah abrogated it with this Ayah.

Miscellaneous verses promoting violent jihad

The Qur'an contains many other verses that, with varying degrees of specificity, encourage Muslims to violence again non-Muslims for the advantage of the Muslim community. These include the verses reproduced below.

Due to the high number of verses involved, and the lack of a consensus as to the specific context in which they were announced, most are reproduced without comment.

Surah 2 'The Cow'

216. "Fighting has been prescribed for you though it is hateful to you. But it may be that you hate a thing though it be good for you; and it may be that you love a thing though it be evil for you.

God knows, and you know not."

{2.216} immediately proceeds one of the two verses in which fighting is first permitted, however it does not appear to be linked to it by the occasion of its narration.

Ibn Kathir writes of {2.216}.



"Jihad is made Obligatory. In this Ayah, Allah made it obligatory for the Muslims to fight in Jihad against the evil of the enemy who transgress against Islam. Az-Zuhri said,

"Jihad is required from every person, whether he actually joins the fighting or remains behind. Whoever remains behind is required to give support, if support is warranted; to provide aid, if aid is needed; and to march forth, if he is commanded to do so. If he is not needed, then he remains behind."

[Though you dislike it] means, fighting is difficult and heavy on your hearts; indeed, fighting is as the Ayah describes it, as it includes being killed, wounded, striving against the enemies and enduring the hardship of travel.

Allah then said: ['And it may be that you dislike a thing which is good for you'] meaning, fighting is followed by victory, dominance over the enemy, taking over their lands, money and offspring.



244. "So fight in the way of God, and know that God is Hearing, Knowing."

Surah 3 'The Family of Imran'

195. "So their Lord answered them [possessors of intellect]:

'I shall not let the work of any worker amongst you, male or female, be in vain.; each of you is like the other. So those who emigrated **and were expelled from their homes and were hurt in My way and who fought and were slain, I shall absolve them of their evil deeds and shall make them enter the Gardens with rivers running beneath**, a reward from God.'

And God, with Him is the most beautiful reward."



Surah 4 'Women'

71. "O you who believe! Take your precaution, then go forth in companies **or go forth altogether.** [72] Among you indeed is one who would tarry; then if misfortune should befall you he would say:

'God has blessed me in that I did not accompany them.'

73. But **should a bounty come to you from God** he wold surely say – as if there had been no affection between you and him –

'O would that I had been with them, so that I had attained a great triumph!'

74. Let them fight in the way of God those who would sell the life of this world for the Hereafter. And whosoever fights in the way of God - whether he is slain or victorious – We shall grant him a great reward.

75. And what ails you that you fight not in the way of God and for the weak and oppressed. – men, women and children – who cry out:

'Our Lord, bring us forth from this town whose people are oppressors and appoint for us from Thee a protector and appoint for us from thee a helper'? ¹⁵

¹⁵ Mecca

76. Those who believe, fight in the way of God, and those who disbelieve fight in three way of false deities. Fight therefore against the allies of Satan. Surely the scheme of Satan is ever feeble.

77. Has thou not seen those unto whom it was said:

‘Restrain your hands and perform the prayer and give the alms’.

But when fighting was prescribed for them behold a party of them feared men even as they should have feared God. Or with greater fear and they said:

‘Our Lord! Why has Thou prescribed fighting for us? If only Thou wouldest grant us reprieve for a term nigh.’

Say:

‘Scant is the enjoyment of this world, and the Hereafter is better for those who are reverent and you shall not be wronged so much as the thread of a date stone.’



84. “So fight in the way of God. Thou are accountable only for yourself and urge on the believers. It may be that God will restrain the might of the disbelievers, for God is stronger in might and more severe in punishment.”



89. “They wish you should disbelieve even as they disbelieve that you may be on a level with them. So take them not as protectors until they migrate in the way of God.

But if they turn their backs then seize them and slay them wherever you find them and take no protector or helper from amongst them. [90] save those who seek refuge with

people with whom you have a covenant, or those who come to you with hearts reluctant to fight you or to fight their own people.

Had God willed He could have given them authority over you and then surely they would have fought you.

So if they withdraw from you and do not fight you and offer peace, God allows you no way against them.

91. You will find others who desire to be secure from you and secure from their own people yet whenever they are tempted back into hostility they are plunged back into it.

So if they withdraw not from you nor offer you peace, nor restrain their hands, then seize them and slay them wheresoever you come across them."

{4.92} and **{4.93}** prescribe punishments for a Muslims who kills either a Muslim ['*It is not for a believer to slay a believer ...*' or a person '*who belonged to a people with whom you have a covenant*'.¹⁶

In these two verses, the only two in the Qur'an that prescribe a punishment for wrongful killing there is conspicuously no punishment for a Muslim who kills a non-Muslim other than where the killing is in breach of a specific treaty. **{4.94}** continues in this theme by requiring Muslims fighters to take care not to contravene the Qur'an's instruction against killing fellow Muslims in their anxiety for plunder.

94. "O you who believe! **When you go to war in the way of God, be discerning.** nd say not unto him who offers you peace:

'You are not a believer'

seeking the ephemeralities of the life of this world, for with God are abundant spoils. Thus were you yourselves beforehand, but God had been gracious to you. Therefore be discerning.

Truly God is aware of whatsoever you do."

¹⁶ See **Related verses from the Qur'an** below

Al Wahidi records six essentially similar narration accounts of the context for this verse. All involve a Muslim raiding party killing a man who had professed 'There is no God but God' and {4.94} being announced to condemn this. The following is one of the accounts.

"The Messenger of Allah, Allah bless him and give him peace, sent us in a military expedition to Idam. This was before his conquest of Mecca. It happened that 'Amir ibn al-Abbat al-Ashja'i passed by us and greeted us with the greeting of Islam, but we mistrusted him. Muhallim ibn Jathamah attacked him, due to some feud that they had with each other in the pre-Islamic era, and killed him. He seized from him as booty a camel, a bedding to sleep on and some provision. We then reported to the Messenger of Allah, Allah bless him and give him peace, and informed him about this incident. Allah, exalted is He, revealed (O ye who believe! When ye go forth (to fight) in the way of Allah, be careful to discriminate") up to the end of this verse".

Al Wahidi 4.94

95. "Those who stay behind among the believers, save those that are disadvantaged, and those who strive [make jihad] in the way of God with their goods and their lives are not equal.

God favours those who strive with their goods and their lives a degree above those who stay behind.

Unto both God has promised that which is most beautiful. **But He favours those who strive with a great reward above those who stay behind."**



100. "Whosoever migrates in the way of God will find upon the earth many a refuge and abundance., and whosoever forsakes his home, emigrating unto God and His Messenger, and death overtakes him, his reward will fall upon God, and God is Forgiving, Merciful.

101. When you travel upon the earth there is no blame upon you for shortening your prayers if you fear that the disbelievers may attack you; verily the disbelievers are your manifest enemy.

102. When thou art with them and leadest them in prayers, let one group of them stand with thee in prayer, taking their arms with them. When they have performed their prostrations, let them withdraw to the rear, and let another group come that has not prayed and let them pray with thee, taking precaution and their arms.

The disbelievers wish you to be heedless of your arms and your baggage that they might assault you all at once. There is no blame on you if you lay aside your arms when you are troubled by heavy rain or illness. But take your precaution.

Surely God has prepared for the unbelievers a humiliating punishment.

103. When you have completed the prayer remember [and invoke] god, standing, sitting or lying on your sides. Then when you are secure observe proper prayer, for prayer at fixed hours is prescribed for the believers.

104. Slacken not in the pursuit of these people. If you are suffering, verily they suffer even as you suffer, while you hope from God that for which they do not hope. Surely God is Knowing, Wise."



140. "He has already sent down upon you in the book that when you hear the signs of God being rejected and mocked do not sit with them until they engage in some other discourse, or else you will surely be like them. Truly God will surely gather the hypocrites and the disbelievers in Hell, all together [141] those who wait upon you. And if a victory comes to you from God they say:

'Were we not with you?'

But if the disbelievers have some success they say:

'Did we not overwhelm you and did we not protect you from the believers?'

God will judge between you on the day of resurrection and God will not grant the disbelievers a way over the unbelievers.

Surah 5 'The Table Spread'

32. "For this reason We prescribed for the Children of Israel that whoever slays a soul – unless it be for another soul or for working corruption upon the earth – it is as though he slew mankind altogether, and whosoever saves the life of one, it is as though he saved the life of mankind altogether. Our messengers have certainly come unto them with clear proofs. Yet even after that, many of them are prodigal on the earth.

33. **Verily, the recompense of those who wage war against God and His Messenger and endeavour to work corruption upon the earth is that they be killed or crucified or have their hands and feet cut off from opposite sides or be banished from the land. That is their disgrace in this world and in the Hereafter theirs shall be a great punishment [34]** save those who repent before you overpower them. And know that God is Forgiving, Merciful."



54. "O you who believe! Whosoever amongst you shall renounce his religion, God will bring a people whom he loves and who love him, humble towards the believers, **stern towards disbelievers, striving [making jihad] in the way of God,** and fearing not the blame of any blamer. That is the Bounty of God which He gives to whomsoever He will, And God is All-Encompassing, Knowing."

Surah 8 'The Spoils of War'

57. “So if thou comest upon them in war, use them to scatter those who will come after them., that haply they might be reminded.

58. And if thou fearest treachery form a people, withdraw from them in a just way. Truly God loves not the treacherous.

59. And let not those who disbelieve suppose that they have outstripped (anyone). Indeed they thwart nothing.

60. And prepare for them what you can of strength (of arms) and horses tethered (for battle) frightening thereby the enemy of God and your enemy and others besides them whom you know not. God knows them. Whatsoever you spend in the way of God shall be paid unto you in full. And you shall not be wronged.

61. And if they incline towards peace incline thou towards it and trust in God. Truly he is the Hearing the Knowing.”



65. “O Prophet! Rouse the believers to fight. If there be twenty steadfast amongst you they shall overcome two hundred. And if there be one hundred of you they shall overcome a thousand of those who disbelieve, because they are a people who understand not.”

Surah 9 'Repentance'

12. **"But if they renege on their oaths after having made their treaty, and vilify our religion, then fight the leaders of disbelief. – truly they have no oaths – that they might desist.**

13. **Will you not fight a people who broke their oaths, and intended to expel the Messenger, and opened (hostilities) against you first? Do you fear them? For God is worthier of being feared by you if you are believers**

14. **Fight them and God will punish them by means of your hands and disgrace them, and He will grant you victory over them and heal the breasts of a believing people [15] and He will dispel the rage within their hearts. God relents unto whomsoever He will and God is Knowing, Wise.**

16. **Or did you suppose that you would be left alone while God had yet to know whom among you strove [*waged jihad*] and took no friend apart from God., His Messenger and the believers.? And God is aware of whatsoever you do.**

★

19. **Or do you consider giving drink to the pilgrims and maintaining the sacred Mosque to be like those who believe in God and the Last Day and strive [*make jihad*] in God's way? They are not equal in the eyes of God. And God guides not a wrongdoing people.**

20. **Those who believe and emigrate and strive [*make jihad*] in the way of God with their wealth and their selves are greater in rank in the eyes of God. And it is they who are triumphant."**

★

24. "Say:

'If your fathers, your children, your brothers, your spouses your tribe, the wealth you have acquired, commerce whose stagnation you fear, and dwellings you find pleasing **are more beloved to you than God and His Messenger and striving [making jihad] in His way**, then wait till God comes with His Command.'

And God guides not iniquitous people."



73. "O Prophet! Strive [make jihad] against the disbelievers and the hypocrites and be harsh with them. their refuge is Hell What an evil journey's end!"



86. "And when a surah is sent down saying:

'Believe in God and strive [make jihad] with His Messenger'

The affluent amongst thee ask for leave and say:

'Let us be amongst those who stay back'

87. They are content to be among those who remain behind and a seal is set upon their hearts. And so they understand not.

88. "**But the Messenger and those who believe with him strive hard [make jihad] with their wealth and their selves. And they it is who shall have the good things and these it is who shall prosper.**

89. God has prepared for them Gardens, with rivers running below to abide therein. That is the great triumph.

90. Those who seek to be excused among the Bedouin came in order to be granted leave, whilst those who lied to God and His Messenger **held back**.

A painful punishment shall befall those among them who disbelieve.

91. No blame is there among the weak or the sick nor those who find nothing to spend if they are sincere towards god and His Messenger. There is no argument amongst the virtuous. – and God is Forgiving, Merciful.

92. Nor among those who when they came to thee to give them a mount and thou didst say to them

‘I find nothing amongst which to mount you’

Turned back their eyes flowing with grief, grieving that they found nothing to spend.”

◆

111. Truly God has purchased of the believers their souls and their wealth in exchange for the Garden being theirs. **They fight in God’s way, slaying and being slain.**

It is a promise which is binding upon them in the Torah, the Gospel and the Qur'an. And who is more faithful to his pact than God?

Rejoice therefore in the bargain which you have made; and that is the great achievement.”

◆

120. “It was not for the people of Medina and the Bedouin who dwell around to refuse to follow God’s Messenger, nor to prefer their own lives to his. That is because no thirst, no toil nor hunger befalls them in the way of God, **nor do they take any step enraging the disbelievers nor do they endure aught at the hands of an enemy but that a righteous deed is recorded for them on account of it.**

Truly God neglects not the reward of the virtuous.

121. Nor do they spend aught, be it small or large, nor traverse a valley, but that it is written down for them that God will reward them for the best of that which they used to do.

122. But it is not for the believers all to go forth. And why should not a party from each group go forth to gain understanding in religion and to warn their people when they return to them that haply they will beware?

123. O you who believe! **Fight those of the unbelievers who are near to you and let them find in you hardness; and know that God is with the reverent.”**

Surah 16 ‘The Bee’

110. “Then indeed thy Lord, for those who emigrated after being oppressed, **then strove [made jihad]** and were patient surely thy Lord thereafter is forgiving, Merciful.”

Surah 22 ‘The Pilgrimage’

58. “And those who emigrate for the cause of God, and are then slain or die, God will, surely, provide for them a beautiful provision.

And, surely, God is the Best of providers.”



78. “And strive [make jihad] for God as he should be striven for. He has chosen you and has not laid upon you a hardship upon you in your religion; the creed of your father Abraham. He named you Muslims aforesight and herein, that the Messenger may be a witness to you, and you may be witness for mankind.

So perform the prayer and give the alms and hold fast to God. He is your Master. How excellent a Master, how excellent a Helper!”

Surah 24 ‘Light’

53. “And they swear by God with their most solemn oaths that wert thou to command them they would surely go forth.

Say:

‘Swear not! [But give] honourable obedience!!’ Surely God is aware of whatever you do.’

Say:

‘Obey God and obey the Messenger’

54. But if they turn away he is only accountable for that wherewith he has been burdened and you are only accountable for that wherewith you have been burdened. But if you obey him you will be rightly guided and naught is incumbent upon the Messenger save the clear proclamation.

55. God has promised those amongst you who believe and perform righteous deed that He will surely make them viceregents upon the earth, as He caused those before them to be viceregents and that He will establish for them their religion, which He has approved for them, and that he will surely change them from a state of fear to [one of security]. They will worship me, not ascribing any partners unto me. And whosoever disbelieves thereafter, it is they who are iniquitous.”

Surah 25 'The Criterion'

52. "So obey not the disbelievers but strive [make jihad] against them by means of it with a great striving."

Surah 29 'The Spider'

6. "And whoever strives [makes jihad], strives [makes jihad] only for himself.

Truly God is beyond need of the worlds."



69. "But as for those who strive [make jihad] for Us, We shall surely guide them in our ways. Truly God is with the virtuous."

Surah 47 'Muhammad'

3. "That is because those who disbelieve follow falsehood, and those who believe follow the truth from their Lord. Thus does God set forth for mankind their likenesses.

4. **When you meet those who disbelieve strike at their necks; then when you have overwhelmed them, tighten the bonds. Then free them graciously or hold them for ransom till war lays down its burden.** Thus [shall it be].

And if God willed, He would take vengeance upon them, but that He may test some of you by means of others.

And for those who are slain in the way of God he will not make their deeds go astray"



20. "Those who believe say:

'Would that a surah was sent down'.

Then **when a definitive surah wherein fighting is mentioned is sent down thou seest those in whose heart is a disease looking at thee as if death had overcome them. More fitting for them [20] would be obedience to God and honourable speech.** Then when the matter is resolved if they were true to God it would be better for them."



31. **"And We shall test you until We know those among you who strive [in jihad] and those who are patient and We and we shall test your proclamations.**

32. Truly those who disbelieve and turn from the way of God and oppose the Messenger of God after guidance has been made clear to them will not harm God in the least. And He will make their deeds come to naught.

33. O you who believe! Obey God and obey the Messenger and let not your deeds be in vain.

34. Truly those who disbelieve and turn from the way of God then die whilst they are disbelievers, God will not forgive them.

35. So do not falter and call for peace while you have the upper hand.

God is with you and will not deprive you of your deeds."

Surah 48 'Victory'

28. "He it is Who sent His Messenger with guidance and the Religion of Truth to make it prevail over all religion. And God suffices as a Witness

29. Muhammad is the Messenger of God. Those who are with him are harsh against the disbelievers, merciful to one another."

Surah 49 'The Private Apartments'

15. "Only they are believers who believe in God, and His Messenger, then do not doubt, and who strive [make jihad] with their wealth and their selves in the way of God. It is they who are truthful.

Surah 61 'The Ranks'

4: "Truly God loves those who fight in His way in ranks as if they were a solid structure".



10. "O you who believe! Shall I direct you to a commerce that will save you from a painful punishment: [11] that you believe in God and the Messenger and strive [make jihad] in Gods' way with your wealth and your souls? That is better for you, if you but knew.

Surah 66 'Forbiddance'

9. "O Prophet! Strive [make jihad] against the disbelievers and the hypocrites and be harsh with them. Their refuge is hell. What an evil journey's end."

Surah 73 ‘The Enwrapped One’

20. “Truly thy Lord knows that thou dost stand vigil well-nigh two thirds of the night, or half of it or a third of it. As do a group of those who are with thee; and God measures out the night and the day. He knows that you will not keep count of it and has relented unto you. So recite that which is easy for you of the Qur'an. He knows that some of you will be sick, whilst others travel upon the earth seeking God's Bounty **and others fight in the way of God.**

So recite that which is easy of it, perform the prayer, give the alms and lend unto God a goodly loan – whatever good you send forth for your souls, you will find it with God better and greater in reward.

And seek God's forgiveness.

Truly God is Forgiving, Merciful”

Islam After Mohammed

The century after Mohammed's reported traditional death in 632 saw Arab armies conquer large parts of the Byzantine Empire in the Middle East and North Africa, most of Spain, the whole of the Sassanian Empire (Persia), large tracts of central Asia and as far east as Sindh (in modern Pakistan). .

It is debatable how 'Islamic' these armies were. For sixty years until the building of the mysterious Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem they left no identifiably Islamic monuments and continued to mint coins with crosses on. Up to the Abbasid revolution in 750 there was no Islamic book written and the words Muslim, and Qur'an were not mentioned in the chronicles of the people they conquered: other than a contemptuous account of four books of the Qur'an by a Christian official, John of Damascus.

According to the traditional Islamic narrative this was a period of brutal and bloody power struggles amongst Mohamed's most followers that commenced even as Mohammed was being buried and included his closest companions. Later doctrinal differences would emerge between the parties that would become Sunni and Shia Muslims, but in the beginning there was no sign that the differences were driven by any issue of any doctrine beyond the issue of who possessed the authority to lead the community.

See ***Who Wrote the Qur'an?*** On the IRG website

The four great Sunni *Sharia* jurists

Following the establishment of the Abbasid Caliphate the earliest known attempts to arrange the Quran's instructions into a legal framework were made. Today the vast majority of Muslims follow one of the four schools of *Sharia* law (*fiqh*) that developed from the approaches of Abu Hanifa, Abu Malik ibn Anas, Mohammed ibn Idris al Shafii, and Ahmad ibn Hanbal

The four great Sunni Sharia jurists

Jaffar al-Sadiq (c.700-765)

Al Sadiq was a fifth-generation descendant of Mohammed and is revered by most Shia Muslims as the sixth imam.

He is generally regarded as Islam's first legal theorist, although his own ('Jaffari') jurisprudence, placing emphasis on the authority of the imams, is influential only with Shia Muslims.

Students of Jaffar al Sadiq

Abu Hanifa (c.699-767)

Rationalist

A collection of Abu Hanifa's rulings, *Kitab al-Athar Abu Hanifa*, written by his student Mohammed Shaybani, is claimed as the first book written in the Islamic community following the Quran.

The approach of the **Hanafi** school based upon these rulings stresses:

- ❖ the use of reason to interpret instructions in the Qur'an and hadith to achieve their supposed purpose;
- ❖ the judge's duty to consider equity and public interest as factors in applying the law

Abu Malik bin Annas (711-795)

Traditionalist

Malik compiled the earliest collection of hadith as a lawbook entitled the *Muwatta*

The Maliki approach to Sharia law emphasises imitating the practices of the first three generations of followers of Mohammed (the *salafa*), especially those living in Medina, as evidence of the authentic practice of Mohammed and his companions.

Student of Malik

Mohammed al-Shafii (767-820)

Conservative

Shafii rejected both judicial law-making and Medinan traditions as comprising man-made rather than divine law. His school recognised only the instructions in the Qur'an, example of Mohammed and analogies drawn from these.

Student of al-Shafii

Ahmad bin Hanbal (820-855)

Ultra-conservative

Hanbal's approach to interpreting Sharia reduces the scope for innovation to its minimum by limiting any extension of the literal words of the Qur'an and hadith by analogy to strict categories.

Instead it prefers to rely on hadiths including those that it acknowledges to have weak chains of transmission, where these are the only authority available.

The four great Sunni jurists and *jihad*

In *Kitab al-Athar Abu Hanifa*, Shaybani recorded the following judgment from Abu Hanifa setting out the Sharia rules of war.



"Muhammad [Shaybani] said:

'Abu Hanifa informed us from Alqammah ibn Marthad from Ibn Burayda from his father from the prophet. He [Burayda] said:

'When he sent out an army he would say:

'Go on the military expedition in the name of Allah and in the way of Allah.

Fight whoever disbelieves in Allah.

Do not steal from the booty, nor act treacherously.

Do not mutilate and do not kill a child.

Whenever you besiege a fortress or a city call them to Islam and if they accept Islam then inform them that they are Muslims. They are owed what they are owed, and they are responsible for what they are responsible for. Invite them to move to the Abode of Islam but if they refuse inform them that they are like desert Arab Muslims.

If they refuse Islam, then invite them to pay jizyah [tax on unbelievers] *if they do so then inform them that they have entered into a compact [dhimmah].*

If they refuse to pay jizyah then end the negotiations with them and then fight them.

If they want you to settle with them according to the ruling of Allah, do not settle with them according to that because you do not know what the ruling of Allah is about them but settle with you according to your judgment and then pass judgment regarding them. If they want you to give them the compact of Allah do not give it to them but give them your compacts and your parents' compacts because it is better that you violate your compacts than that you violate the compact of Allah , Mighty is He and Majestic."

Muhammad [Shaybani] said:

*'We adhere to this and this is the verdict of Abu Hanifa... '*¹⁷

The *Kitab al-Athar* also prescribes rules concerning the division of booty seized and the right of a fighter to claim an item as his personal property prior to the division.

The *Al-Muwatta*, contains the following judgment of Malik Bin Anas concerning the rules of jihad:



“Yahia narrated from Mallik from Ibn Shihab from ibn Ka'b Ibn Malik who said: Allah's Messenger prohibited those who killed the son of Abu Al Haqaiq from killing women and children. He added:

‘A man of them said:

‘When the woman of the son of Abu Haqaiq harmed us with screaming I raise the sword at her but when I remembered the prohibition of Allah's Messenger I stopped. But for this reason we would have been relieved of her.’”

“Yahia narrated from Malik from Nafi through Ibn Umar:

‘When Allah's Messenger saw a woman who was killed in one of his expeditions he disapproved of the killing of women and children.’”

“Yahia narrated from Malik from Yahia bin Said:

Abu Bakr as Siddiq dispatched some army units to the Levant. He went out walking with Yazid, bin Abu Sufyan who was a commander of one of these units. They claimed Yazid said:

*‘You will find a people who claim that they have devoted themselves totally for Allah's sake. So leave them with their claim. **Further you will find a people who shaved the middle of their heads. Therein strike with the sword what they shaved of the middle of their heads.** I entrust you: **you should not kill a woman, a child or an old person.** You should not cut down fruitful trees, neither should you devastate a flourishing area, slaughter a sheep or camel except for food, burn bees or scatter them, misappropriate war booty or be a coward.’”*

Yahia narrated from Malik: he was told that Umar bin Abdu-lAziz wrote to one of his governors:

‘We were informed that on dispatching a company of warriors the Prophet would say to them:

*‘**Invade in the name of Allah, fighting those who disbelieve in Allah.** You should neither misappropriate war booty, act treacherously, mutilate a body or murder a child. Let you convey this speech to your units if Allah wishes and peace be upon you.’”¹⁸*

¹⁸ 980-3

The pre-eminent Shafi'i legal text is *Umdat al Salik* (the *Reliance of the Traveller*) by Ahmad ibn Naqib al-Misri (completed 1368) contains the following:

"The caliph makes wars on Jews, Christians and Zoroastrians until they become Muslim or else pay the non-Muslim poll tax.

After the Final Coming [of Jesus to announce the Last Day] nothing but Islam will be accepted from them, for taking the poll tax is only effective until Jesus' descent which is the divinely revealed law of Mohammed.

The caliph fights with all other peoples until they become Muslim.

It is not permissible to kill women or children unless they are fighting against the Muslims. Nor is it permissible to kill animals, unless they are being ridden into battle against Muslims or if killing them will help defeat the enemy.

It is permissible to kill old men and monks.

Whoever enters Islam before being captured may not be killed or his property confiscated or his young children taken captive.

When a child or woman is taken captive they become slaves by the fact of their capture and the woman's previous marriage is immediately annulled.

When an adult male is taken captive the caliph considers the interests and decides between the prisoner's death, slavery release or ransom for money or a Muslim held by the enemy. If the prisoner becomes Muslim then he may not be killed, and one of the three alternatives is chosen.

*It is permissible in jihad to cut down the enemy's trees and destroy their dwellings.'*¹⁹

¹⁹ O 9.8-15

Related verses in the Qur'an

Killing

The Qur'an does not at any point prohibit the act of killing without the proviso that killing is permitted in some circumstances. For example in the following verses:



Related verses

Surah 5 'The Table Spread'

32. "For this reason We prescribed for the Children of Israel that **whoever slays a soul – unless it be for another soul or for working corruption upon the earth – it is as though he slew mankind altogether ...**
33. Verily, the recompense of those who wage war against God and His Messenger and endeavour to work corruption upon the earth is that they be killed or crucified ..." ²⁰

Surah 6 'The Cattle'

151. "Say: 'Come, I will recite that which your lord has forbidden you: that you ascribe nothing as partner unto Him, and that you be virtuous towards parents and that you slay not your children for fear of poverty – we will provide for them and for you – and approach not indecencies whether outward or inward and **slay not the soul that God has made inviolable save by right**. This He has enjoined upon you that haply you may understand.'"

Surah 17 'The Night Journey'

33. "And **slay not the soul that God has made inviolable save by right**. And whosoever is **slain unjustly**, We have appointed authority unto his heir. **Then let him not be excessive in slaying**. Verily he shall be helped."

²⁰ The full text of these verses has been reproduced above

Surah 25 'The Criterion'

68. "What an evil dwelling place and destination! [67] And who when they spend are neither prodigal nor miserly – and between them is a just mean [68] and who call not upon another god long with God and **slay not the soul that God has made inviolable** **save by right** and who fornicate not – for whosoever does that shall meet requital."

Translation notes

{6.151} 'Save by right'

The phrase '*save by right*' employed by *The Study Quran* is also used by Arberry, Qaribullah & Dawish, Sahih International, Wahihuddin Khan and Corpus, with Sahih International and Corpus adding the word 'legal' in brackets ('except by [legal] right').

Alternative renderings of this phrase reference justice alone:

Shakir: '*except for the requirements of justice*';
Pickthall and Talal Itani: '*save in the course of justice*'.
Ahmad Ali and Maududi: '*unless for some just cause*';
Ali Qarai: '*except with due cause*';
Dariyabadi: '*except for justification*';

or justice linked with the application of law.

Yusuf Ali and Sarwar: '*except by way of justice and law*';
Khan & Hilali: '*except for a just cause (according to Islamic law)*'.

In **{4.92-92}** the Qur'an prescribes punishments for killing either believers or non believers that 'belong to a people with whom [the killer has] a covenant'. There is no place in the Qur'an where the killing of unbelievers is specifically prohibited. It is a necessary implication that the Qur'an is intended to be read as prescribing no punishment for killing unbelievers other than where that killing breaches a specific treaty.

Surah 4 ‘Women’

92. “It is not for a believer to slay a non-believer unless it be in error.

Whosoever has slain a believer in error let him set free a believing slave and pay compensation to the victim’s family unless they remit it in charity.

If he belongs to a people at war with you but was a believer, then a believing slave is to be set free.

And **if he belonged to a people with whom you had a covenant** let him pay compensation to the victim’s family and let him set free a believing slave.

Whosoever finds not [the means] let him fast two consecutive months as a penance from God. God is Knowing, Wise.

93. Whosoever slays a believer wilfully, his recompense is Hell, abiding therein. God is wroth with him and curses him and prepares for him a mighty punishment”

Hostility to unbelievers

Possibly the most repeated theme throughout the Qur'an is the drawing of a clear distinction between Muslims and non-believers who are sometimes specified as either ‘pagans/idolaters’ or, in the case of Jews and Christians, ‘People of the Book’; at other points referred to generically as unbelievers (*kuffar*).

Throughout the Qur'an non-Muslims are repeatedly:

- referred to using derogatory terms;
- prophesied suffering punishment – on occasion described in graphic detail – after their deaths;
- the subject of instructions to Muslims to avoid taking as allies, protectors²¹

In the frequent reference in the Qur'an to a Muslim's proper approach to non-Muslims, there is no point at which non-Muslims are afforded any rights under sharia law, other than rights under treaties.

²¹ See *The Qur'an as Practised and Preached by Mohammed: Fact Files for Factphiles 1. Hostility to Unbelievers*

This hostility reaches its culmination in **surah 9** which was one of the final surahs of the Qur'an to be announced, in which pagans living under Mohammed's rule in Mecca were permitted four months to convert to Islam, failing which they were ordered to be put to death:

Surah 9 'The Repentance'

3. "... So if you repent it would be better for you. And if you turn away then know that you cannot thwart God.

And give the disbelievers glad tidings of a painful punishment [4] save for those idolaters with whom you have made a treaty and who thereafter commit no breach against you, nor support anyone against you.

So fulfil the treaty with them for its duration. Truly God loves the reverent.

5. Then when the sacred months have passed, slay the idolaters wherever you find them, capture them and besiege them and lie in wait for them at every place of ambush.

But if they should repent and perform the prayer and give the alms then let them go their way.

Truly, God is Forgiving, Merciful."



28. "O you who believe! The idolaters are surely unclean; so let them not come near the Sacred Mosque after this year of theirs. If you fear poverty God will enrich you from his Bounty if He will.

Truly God is Knowing, Wise.

29. Fight those who believe not in God and the Last Day and who do not forbid what God and his Messenger have forbidden, and who follow not the Religion of Truth, among those who were given the Book, till they pay *jizyah* [tax on unbelievers] with a willing hand, being humbled.

30. The Jews say Ezra is the Son of God and the Christians say the Messiah is the Son of God. Those are the words from

their mouths. They resemble the words of those who disbelieved before.

God curse them! How they are perverted! ...”



36. “And fight the idolaters all together just as they fight you all together.

And know that God is with the reverent.”

This hostility to unbelievers within territory controlled by Mohammed or shared between Muslims and non-Muslims will be the subject of the final paper in this series, but it is important textual and conceptual context to understanding the instructions in the Qur'an to use violent jihad for the establishment and expansion of an Islamic state.

Conclusion and Comment

Muslims believe that the Qur'an:

- contains the verbatim words of God,
- is intended to be prescriptive, to guide mankind as to the social order that God wishes; and
- may never be reviewed or amended.

Reasons for violent jihad offered in the Qur'an

There is no other religion where the foundational figure spent so much of his energy, and so much of the sacred scripture, is devoted to the act of waging war. Within the forty two passages reproduced in this paper as being the principal Qur'an verses instructing or approving violent jihad against communities of non-Muslims, the following eight reasons for violent jihad are given.

1. Retaliation: for the Muslim emigrants to Yathrib/Medina having been expelled from their homes in Mecca, or for breaking a treaty:

(‘Permission is granted to those who are fought because they have been wronged’, {22.39-41});

‘And if they break their oaths after their agreement and (openly) revile your religion, then fight the leaders of unbelief’, {9.12}).

2. To bring Islamic rule to Muslims living in Mecca.

(‘And what ails you that you fight not in the way of God and for the weak and oppressed. – men, women and children – who cry out: ‘Our Lord, bring us forth from this town whose people are oppressors ...’ {4.74-6} read in conjunction with Tafsir al Jalalayn)

3. Because their enemies resist Islamic (in practice Mohammed's) rule over them:

(‘And fight them until there is no more strife and all is for God’, {2.193}, {8.39})

‘Fitnah is worse than killing’, {2.217});

‘Truly I am with you so make firm those who believe. And so whosoever opposes God and His Messenger, truly God is severe in retribution’, {8.12-7};

'He will most certainly make [those who believe and do righteous deeds] ***them vice-regents upon the earth***, **{24.55}**.

4. In order to remove an obstacle or challenge to the practice of Islam:

'Fighting (in the sacred months) is grave but turning others from the way of God and disbelieving in him is graver in the sight of God', **{2.217}**;

'They wish you should disbelieve even as they disbelieve that you may be on a level with them', **{4.89}**;

(See **{9.12}** above);

'He it is Who sent His Messenger with guidance and the Religion of Truth to make it prevail over all religion', **{48.28}**;

'That is because they defied God and his Messenger. And whomsoever defies God and his Messenger truly God is severe in retribution', **{59.4}**

5. As a demonstration of the power of God/Islam:

'But God desires to verify the truth through His Words and to cut off the last remnant of the disbelievers | so that He may verify the truth and prove falsehood to be false', **{8.7-8}**;

'So if thou comest upon them in war, use them to scatter those who will come after them., that haply they might be reminded', **{8.57}**;

'It is not for a prophet 'to have captives until he overwhelms [his enemy] in the land', **{8.67}**;

'God has promised you spoils that you will capture - then he hastened this for you and restrained the people's hands for you. That it may be a sign for the believers', **{48.18-20}**.

6. As a test for believers' dedication:

'And if God willed, He would take vengeance upon them, but that He may test some of you by means of others', **{47.4}**.

7. To reward Muslim fighters for their obedience with the spoils of war:

('And God gave them the reward of this world', **{8.148}**);

'And He bequeathed unto you their land, their homes their property and a land you have not trodden', **{33.27}**;

'God was content with the believers [and has] ... rewarded them with a victory nigh and abundant spoils that they will capture', **{48.18-20}**.

8. In order to punish non-Muslims for their disbelief:

(See [{2.217}](#) above)

'So that God may assay those who believe and blight the disbelievers', [{3.141}](#);

'God has prepared a disgraceful chastisement for the unbelievers', [{4.102}](#);

'God will not grant the disbelievers a way to prevail against the believers', [{4.141}](#);

'Verily, the recompense of those who wage war against God and His Messenger', [{5.33}](#);

'I shall cast terror into the hearts of those who disbelieve ... That is because they are in schism with God and His Messenger' [{8.12-17}](#);

'And let not those who disbelieve think that they shall come in first', [{8.59}](#);

'[in the Battle of Hunayn, God] punished those who disbelieved', [{9.26}](#);

'Fight those of the unbelievers who are near to you and let them find in you hardness; and know that God is with the reverent', [{9.123}](#);

'God sufficed the believers in battle', [{33.25}](#);

'Strive [in Jihad] against the disbelievers and the hypocrites and be harsh with them. Their refuge is hell', [{66.9}](#).

It is submitted that none of the above reasons for violence is consistent with modern notions of peaceful co-existence and freedom of religion, save arguably for reason 2 which is too context specific to be a general principle.

Proposed non-violent interpretation of the Qur'an.

The weight of instructions to violence both general and specific in the Qur'an and the recorded history of Mohammed's military campaigns poses a challenge to those who endeavour to argue that Islam's core message is pacific.

Generally, people who seek to argue this seek to justify the violence in the life of Mohammed and the words of the Qur'an by reference to:

Self defence;

Restorative justice (ie the seizure of property from the Meccans as due compensation for property lost when they left Mecca);

Necessity;

Compliance with the contemporary mores of late antiquity Arabia.

However, none of these justifications are offered in the Qur'an as reasons for the political violence ordered by Mohammed.

1. Self-defence

The following verses of the Qur'an are sometimes cited to suggest that the Qur'an permits violence only in self-defence (with the supposedly pacific sections in bold):

{2.190}: "And fight in the way of God against those who fight against you **but do not transgress. Truly, God loves not the transgressors.** [191] And slay them wheresoever you come across them and expel them whence they have expelled you, for strife is worse than slaying. **But do not fight them near the Sacred Mosque until they fight with you there.** But if they fight you then slay them. Such is the recompense of the disbelievers. [192] But if they desist, then truly God is forgiving, merciful. [193] And fight them until there is no strife and all is for God. But if they desist then there is no enmity save against the wrongdoers."

{3.195}: 'I shall not let the work of any worker amongst you, male or female, be in vain; each of you is like the other. So those who emigrated **and were expelled from their homes and were hurt in My way and who fought and were slain, I shall absolve them of their evil.**

{4.89}: "They wish you should disbelieve even as they disbelieve that you may be on a level with them. So take them not as protectors until they migrate in the way of God. But if they turn their backs then seize them and slay them wherever you find them and take no protector or helper from amongst them [90] save those

who seek refuge with people with whom you have a covenant, or those who come to you with hearts reluctant to fight you or to fight their own people.

Had God willed He could have given them authority over you and then surely they would have fought you. So if they withdraw from you and do not fight you and offer peace, God allows you no way against them. [91] You will find others who desire to be secure from you and secure from their own people yet whenever they are tempted back into hostility they are plunged back into it. So if they withdraw not from you nor offer you peace, nor restrain their hands, then seize them and slay them wheresoever you come across them.”

{4.94}: “*O you who believe! When you go to war in the way of God, be discerning. And say not unto him who offers you peace: ‘you are not a believer’*

{8.38}: “*Say to the disbelievers that if they desist what is past will be forgiven them but if they relapse the wont of those of old has already passed. [39] And fight them until there is no strife and religion is wholly for God. But if they desist then truly God sees whatsoever they do.”*

{8.57}: “*So if thou comest upon them in war, use them to scatter those who will come after them., that haply they might be reminded. [58] And if thou fearest treachery from a people, withdraw from them in a just way. Truly God loves not the treacherous. [59] And let not those who disbelieve suppose that they have outstripped (anyone). Indeed they thwart nothing. [60] And prepare for them what you can of strength (of arms) and horses tethered (for battle) frightening thereby the enemy of God and your enemy and others besides them whom you know not. God knows them. Whatsoever you spend in the way of God shall be paid unto you in full. And you shall not be wronged. [61] And if they incline towards peace incline thou towards it and trust in God. Truly he is the Hearing the Knowing.”*

{22.39}: “*Permission is granted to those who are fought, because they have been wronged – and truly God is able to help them. [40:] Who were expelled from their homes without right only for saying ‘Our Lord is God’. Were it not for God’s repelling people, some by means of others, monasteries, churches, synagogues and mosques, wherein God’s name is mentioned much, would have been destroyed.”*

Of these verses:

{4.94} for the reasons outlined above²², read in its proper historical context and the context of the two preceding verses, cautions Muslims to be careful not to kill other Muslims, thereby implicitly condoning the killing of non-Muslims.

{3.195} and **{22.39}** on the unambiguous face of their text endorse violence in pursuit of retribution rather than for the purpose of self-defence.

{2.190}, {4.89-91} and **{8.38}** and **61**, each include portions of text suggesting that offers of peace from non-Muslims should be accepted. However:

- Even read in the wording of the verses themselves (and the context of, in the case of **{8.38}**, the following verse, and, re **{8.61}**, the immediately preceding verses) these verses produce an overall effect on the reader/listener that remains more threatening than pacific;
- If read as a general restriction that violence may only be used in self-defence they would contradict the eight other reasons for political violence offered in the Qur'an as identified above which all justify violence in contexts other than self-defence;
- All are contained in early Medinan surahs (according to Ibn Kathir **surahs 2, 4 and 8** were the first, fourth and sixth announced by Mohammed after the hijra) and may be regarded as having been abrogated by the generally more aggressive later verses, (just as the original instruction not to fight at all was abrogated by **{22.39-41}** and **{2.190-193}**);
- Are silent as to the terms of any peace that would be sufficient to allay fighting: given the other verses of the Qur'an, these would likely include at the very least a complete and unconditional acceptance of the practice of Islam – and probably the payment of a *jizrah* tax; and
- Are inconsistent with the example of Mohammed as seen in his military campaigns which were clearly not limited to self-defence. It will be clear from the extracts from sira and hadith produced above that Mohammed's expeditions went far beyond any reasonable interpretation of self-defence since:
 - Mohammed commenced hostilities with Mecca by ordering attacks on Meccan caravans despite having lived in Yathrib/Medina for six months with no indication that the Meccans intended him any harm, but knowing that his raids would inevitably force the Meccans to protect their trade routes;

²² See: **Verse that cannot be definitively linked to specific military actions** (above).

- he attacked other tribes that had done him no ill and posed him no threat; and
- even after the conquest of Mecca left Mohammed unchallenged in Western Arabia, he ordered expeditions south to Yemen (*inter alia* to destroy the pagan shrine of Dhul Khalassar) and north first to Tabouk, and later to Palestine to expand his rule.

2. *Restorative justice*

There is no evidence that Mohammed targeted his raids at individuals who were responsible for causing him financial loss before he left Mecca – indeed he took plunder from Bedouin tribes that had no connection at all to his earlier ‘persecution’ in Mecca.

Nor is there any evidence that Mohammed made any attempt to quantify his loss or to end the conflict with Mecca after a number of successful raids would have yielded sufficient booty to compensate him for his Meccan losses. Indeed, as referred to in the context of self-defence above, military actions continued after Mohammed was unchallenged ruler of Mecca itself.

3.-4. *Necessity and contemporary norms*

Necessity: there is little indication that the Muslim community in Mohammed’s time made any effort towards developing non-violent forms of wealth production such as farming, trade or manufacturing and the contemporary mores of late antiquity Arabia may well have regarded Mohammed’s campaigns as the normal business of a desert warlord. However, it is submitted that none of these provides an justification that would be recognised by modern standards of ethical behaviour.

Islamic exceptionalism

Attempts to rationalise the verses of the Qur'an that support the military campaigns ordered by Mohammed as enforcing some a general principle that may be accepted by non-Muslims as a fair and reasonable response to difficult circumstances disregard the single most prominent theme that runs throughout all the verses cited in this paper: Islamic exceptionalism.

The military expeditions of Mohammed are consistently presented throughout the Qur'an as being primarily or exclusively justified by the fact that they further the application of Islam as preached in the Qur'an and by Mohammed.

Violent jihad directed by Mohammed is invariably portrayed as '*striving in the way of God*': his enemies are invariably defined and condemned by their lack of belief and either implicitly or explicitly their defiance of God.

'Fitnah is worse than killing', {2.217};

'but turning others from the way of God and disbelieving in him is graver in the sight of God', {2.217};

'And fight them until there is no more strife and all is for God', {2.193}, {8.39};

'So that God may ... blight the disbelievers', {3.141};

'They wish you should disbelieve even as they disbelieve', {4.89};

'God has prepared a disgraceful chastisement for the unbelievers', {4.102};

'God will not grant the disbelievers a way to prevail against the believers', {4.141};

'the recompense of those who wage war against God and His Messenger', {5.33};

'But God desires to... cut off the last remnant of the disbelievers', {8.7-8};

'so whosoever opposes God and His Messenger, truly God is severe in retribution', {8.12-7};

'I shall cast terror into the hearts of those who disbelieve ... That is because they are in schism with God and His Messenger', {8.12-17};

'And let not those who disbelieve think that they shall come in first', {8.59};

'And if they break their oaths after their agreement and (openly) revile your religion, then fight the leaders of unbelief', {9.12};

'[God] punished those who disbelieved', {9.26};

'Fight those of the unbelievers who are near to you and let them find in you hardness', {9.123};

'God sufficed the believers in battle', {33.25};

'He it is Who sent His Messenger with guidance and the Religion of Truth to make it prevail over all religion', {48.28};

'That it may be a sign for the believers', {48.18-20};

'they defied God and his Messenger. And whomsoever defies God and his Messenger truly God is severe in retribution', {59.4};

'Strive [in Jihad] against the disbelievers and the hypocrites and be harsh with them. Their refuge is hell', {66.9}.

The Qur'an does not at any stage present a justification of violent jihad by any general rule of enforcement of rights that might, in different circumstances, work to the benefit of a non-Muslim.

Rather the Qur'an, given its plain and originally intended meaning and as practised and preached by Mohammed, instructs that violence is virtuous if it is committed in the cause of:

- establishing and expanding a regime operating under, or
- removing any obstacle or challenge to the promotion of

the practice of the Islamic faith or the regulation of society according to Sharia law.

As such it is inconsistent with the values of secular liberal democracy, the rule of law and a tolerant society.