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# Meeting 7: War & Peace in Islam

**War & Peace in Islam** 1

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***"In the name of Allah Most Gracious, Most Merciful. Verily We have granted you a manifest Victory."*** (***48:1***)

We are here in this spiritual gathering today to commemorate two great occasions; the passing away of the most noble creature of God, the Holy Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.w.), and the martyrdom of the second infallible Imam, the first grandson of the Prophet; Imam Hasan (a.s.).

The topic I am going to deal with today is "Peace and War in Islam" a very controversial issue nowadays. The reason I have chosen this topic is that unfortunately there is a misunderstanding among some Shiites who don't have enough Islamic education. They assume that Imam Hasan was a man of peace whereas Imam Husayn was a man of war.

As a result, conservatives praise Imam Hasan and claim to be his followers, while the extremists blame Imam Hasan and accuse him of seeking a comfortable life. Imam Husayn, on the other hand, is an extremist for the first group and a role model for the second. According to the second group, armed struggle is the only duty upon every Muslim, he is Yazidian otherwise.

This argument in fact goes back to the question of whether Islam is the religion of peace or does it advocate for war? In other words, was Islam in its early days spread by sword or were there other factors involved? Is Islam the religion of violence or it is the religion of peaceful coexistence? Are Muslims allowed to sign any peace treaty with a non-Islamic state that they are in conflict with, or they are bound to fight, whatever the circumstances are?

These and many such questions have occupied the minds and the time of many contemporary intellectuals. It may not be an exaggerated claim that many people in the West hold that Islam is a terrorist religion and hence the term Islam sounds obnoxious to them. Such a false belief, to the best of my knowledge, is one of the main barriers between Westerners and real Islam. Should they become

familiar with the true image of Islam regarding war and peace, I can assert many of them who are already perplexed and seeking asylum would embrace Islam.

Such an illusion has not of course come to their mind out of the blue. Millions of dollars have, and are still being allocated by the enemies of Islam, especially in the last decades to inject this illusion into the minds of people, to introduce Islam, as a frightful evil which no one would be daring enough to get close to. To cut a long story short, we believe Islam in its nature is a peaceful religion advocating a wise coexistence. The following are some of the proofs that wars have never been the cause for the spread of Islam:

1. Indonesia is the most populated Islamic state with more than 100 million Muslims. Yet, there has never been any Islamic military attack to that country.

2. Millions of Muslims in China are worshipping Allah and yet, Islam has never entered China by military force.

3. Many African countries as well as India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, have all embraced Islam without being forced by any Islamic groups.

4. In the contemporary world, many people in the West, from black Americans, including their inmates, as well as Europeans including their migrants, to Australians, New Zealanders to Aborigines are coming towards and embracing Islam without any military force.

5. The Mongol leader Genghis Khan was one of the great conquerors in the history of the world, born C.1167. In his series of destructive, savagely and bloody invasions of much of the Asian mainland, he invaded Iran which was an Islamic state by then. Yet, after one or two generations instead of Iranian Muslims being converted to the Mongolian religion, they themselves embraced Islam.

6. Many Ayat as well as Ahadith in different ways and means condemn all types of corruption on earth. Needless to say, human wars and the shedding of blood are one of the best examples of corruption.

Q. With all respect to the previous proofs, still we do have some examples of Islam being spread by the sword. Iran is one of the vivid examples which was conquered by Muslim Arabs in early Islam. As a result, Iranians had to become Muslims and give up their previous religion, i.e. Zoroastrianism.

A. Hundreds of wars have taken place in the history of mankind, yet the conquerors have never been able to force their religion upon the conquered peoples, as the Mongolians failed to do so. Hence, Iranians did not embrace Islam because of the sword of Muslims. As a matter of fact, it is impossible to penetrate into the hearts of people by sword. The power of the sword is not more than for cutting the flesh. The sword is not capable of influencing the conscience and the belief of human beings. In short, the main reason for people like Iranians accepting Islam rests on other issues. Iranians were impressed by the justice found in Islam, after being sick of the vicious discrimination from the Sasanian dynasty.

## Types of War

Although Islam is the religion of peace, and unlike some of the Western thinkers, such as Freud and Nietsche, who did not acknowledge war as a natural phenomenon in human life, Islam prescribes war under a few circumstances. In general, there are two types of war.

1. War in the sense of blood shedding, murdering, massacres and plundering for the sake of power, as a struggle for survival.

2. War in the sense of protecting the life of the innocent by destroying the evil people who try to destroy human life and wisdom. Such a war is like a surgical operation for the sake of saving the rest of the body by amputating the decayed organ or limb. The sword of Islam is nothing more than a surgical knife in the hands of a wise surgeon. It is like a small shovel to uproot the weeds from the gardens of humanity.

To this end, war in Islam is not only a form of worship, but holy worshipping. The Islamic Jihad (holy war) has never been mentioned in the Quran without having the preliminary statement 'for the sake of God'. That, then, is what makes Islamic wars different from other types of human war which are fought for the sake of power, sovereignty and profit.

## Peace in Islam

Since the man of Islam has surrendered to Allah, he is a warrior when war is required, based on the above explanation, and he is the most peaceful person when it is time for peace. The Holy Quran states:

***"And if the enemy incline towards peace, you should also incline towards peace, and trust in Allah.."*** (***8:61***)

The history of Islam has presented many examples in which the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.), as well as his infallible successors have welcomed peace when it would be of benefit to the Ummah. Islamic victory does not necessarily mean fighting and conquering. If the victory can be gained in a peaceful way, then war is not prescribed in Islam. Therefore, to be a warrior or a peaceful man in Islam depends upon the circumstances in which a man of Islam finds himself.

## Two vivid examples of peace in Islam

### 1. The Peace of Hodaybiah

Hodaybiah is a small village near to Mecca in which the treaty between the Prophet and the infidels of Quraysh was concluded in the year 6 AH. In short, in the year 6 AH the Prophet along with his companions who it is estimated were around 1600 people, left Madina to pilgrimage to Hajj. As part of their good will, and to show that their only reason for the journey was the performance of Hajj, they did

not carry any weapons. However, the Qoraysh, who were informed of the Muslims journey, took an oath that they would not allow Muslims to enter Mecca.

The Holy Prophet sent an ambassador[2] to them with some gifts, explaining to them that the Muslims did not wish to confront the Qoraysh. In return, the Quraysh killed the camel of the ambassador, and death, too, was close for the ambassador himself. For the second time the Prophet appointed another ambassador to deliver the message. Omar Ibn Khattab was the appointed one, though he refused, his excuse being that many of the Quraysh hated him and his life may be danger. [3]

Finally, a treaty was made between the Quraysh and the Prophet, named the Treaty of Hodybiah. The scribe of the treaty was Imam Ali (a.s.). He initiated the treaty with the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful. The agent of the Quraysh objected to that, saying: if we believed in Allah we would not fight you. The name was omitted. Again, when the name of the Prophet was mentioned in the treaty as the messenger of Allah, the agent of Quraysh objected saying: 'If we believed you were the messenger of Allah we wouldn't fight you'.

In short, although most parts of that treaty seemed against Muslims, the Prophet did not reject it, for that situation required peace which could later bring greater victory that sometimes may not be gained by the sword. Ignoring this fact, Ibn Hisham, the famous historian has narrated that upon acceptance of the peace treaty, Omar Ibn Khattab objected to it, going to the Prophet and surprisingly, questioning him as to whether he was the messenger of God!

Yes, I am, replied the Prophet. Aren't we Muslims? Yes, said the Prophet. Aren't they infidels? Yes, added the prophet. Then why should we humiliate ourselves? The Holy Prophet said: "I am the servant of God and His messenger and will never disobey Him, as He will never leave me alone.[4]"[5]

Although the treaty seemed bitter to the taste of some of the Muslims who were not able to foresee the future, nor did they surrender to God, it paved the way for many great victories, to the extent that the Holy Quran has mentioned that treaty as a vivid victory: "Indeed, We have granted you a manifest victory". In fact, the treaty of Hodaybiah paved the way to conquer Mecca as well as Khaybar in two years' time. Muslims strengthened themselves and within two years easily interred Mecca; the capital of the infidels of Qoraysh. To this end, Imam Sadiq (a.s.) says: There was no event in the history of Islam, as blissful as the treaty of Hodaybiah.[6]

## 2. The Peace treaty of Imam Hasan (a.s.)

The peace treaty between Imam Hasan and Mu'awiyyah is one of the bitter events in the history of Islam. This treaty has even been used by some of the adversaries to blame and accuse Imam Hasan of being a man who was, God forbid, seeking his material comfort to the extent that some of them have shamelessly accused him of blasphemy. In fact, the state of Imam Hasan's oppression is more than that of his brother Imam Husayn. For, Imam Hasan was oppressed by both his companions and those

historians partial to Ahlul-Bait.

Safadi shamelessly says: "(Imam) Hasan Ibn Ali said to Mu'awiyyah that he had a debt. If Mu'awiyyah would pay his loan off, then he was willing to give up the Caliphate to him. Mu'awiyyah paid off his loan and Hasan Ibn Ali gave up the Caliphate to Mu'awiyyah."7

Dr. Philip Hatti following Safadi with utmost impudence says: "People of Iraq appointed Hasan Ibn Ali, who was the oldest son of Ali and Fatima the daughter of the Prophet to be their spiritual leader. However, Hasan, who was a pleasure seeking person(!), not a statesman, was not suitable for the position and hence resigned being satisfied with an annual ration he received from Mu'awiyyah".8 The followers of Mu'awiyyah have never provided any historical documents for their false claims.

## The Causes of Peace

Before shedding some light on the reasons why Imam Hasan was forced to agree to the Peace Treaty, we should ask ourselves: Did not the Prophet of Islam sign a peace treaty with the infidels? Of course, he did. So, can we say the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) was, God forbid, a man seeking pleasure and not a statesman? Was not Imam Ali, the courageous man of Islam, forced to accept the peace treaty which was imposed on him in the battle of Seffin? Moreover, no doubt, peace is accepted in Islam when the circumstances allow, as I have already explained.

Above all, it is a big mistake to assume that making peace with the enemy is equal to seeking pleasure but that constant fighting is courage and bravery. In contrast, the man of Islam is seeking God's satisfaction. His reason for fighting is the same as his reason for making peace. To him, both peace and war are to be used in their due place.

Therefore, different circumstances require different treatment and strategy. Do not forget that Imam Husayn who is known to us for his courageous devotion in Karbala, continued the peace strategy of his brother with Mu'awiyyah for ten years. In short, there is no single difference between our Imams.

Had either of them been in the other's situation, he would have done the same. It is the circumstances which make the difference. By the way, among many reasons which forced Imam Hasan to accept the Peace Treaty, the following were the main ones:

### 1. The rumor of peace

Cold War is one of the methods used in wars. Spreading rumors against the enemy and weakening the morale of the opposing soldiers has always been one of the methods of defeating the enemy.

Mu'awiyyah, utilizing this method, appointed some of his spies to spread rumors among the army of Imam Hasan to the effect that the Imam had corresponded with Mu'awiyyah accepting peace.9 The army of Imam Hasan was impressed so much by the rumors that some of them accused Imam Hasan of

blasphemy saying: “The man has become an infidel!”

### 2. Division, Impatience and tending to material pleasures

Imam Hasan, prior to accepting the peace, delivered a lecture to the public explaining to them the reasons behind their being defeated by Mu’awiyyah. One part of the lecture reads: “We were fighting people of Damascus by the power of coexistence, unity and patience, until you were divided and lost your patience. Before, you used to prefer your belief to your material comfort, and now your material comfort is what you care for. Mu’awiyyah has invited us to a peace treaty in which you will lose your dignity. Nevertheless, if you are willing to sacrifice, then we will fight him.” The crowd shouted: “Accept the peace. Accept the peace.”[10]

In fact, Mu’awiyyah had purchased the high officers of Imam Hasan. Obaidullah Ibn Abbas was the first commander of Imam Hasan and yet, Mu’awiyyah was able to buy him with one million Dirhams, half to be paid cash and the rest on credit. The companions of Imam Hasan were so unfaithful that they even made attempts upon his life.

If the tents of Imam Husayn were plundered by his enemies face-to-face, the tent of Imam Hasan was plundered by his own so-called soldiers. They pulled away the mat on which he was praying. If Imam Husayn was wounded by the arrows of the army of Yazid, Imam Hasan was wounded by his own officer Jarrah Ibn Senan.

It was under such circumstances that Imam Hasan accepted the peace. He then carried on another mission, i.e. to train faithful soldiers, if not for his time, they were trained for the time of his brother, Imam Husayn who was going to carry the same message. As a matter of fact, the peace treaty that Imam Hasan agreed upon, paved the way for the revolution made by Imam Husayn.

To this end, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) is quoted to have said: “Hasan and Husayn are both Imams, whether they rise up or sit down.”

## Slow Death

After accepting the peace, Imam Hasan left Kufa forever for Madina. After which, he opened another chapter in his life. At this stage, he was gradually being sacrificed. Unlike a soldier in the battle front who has a quick death, the dear Imam suffered a slow death throughout 10 years.

During the last 10 years of his life he carried yet another mission. The Ummah was not prepared to fight the devil. They needed to be educated and that was the mission of the Imam. Despite the rumors that Mu’awiyyah was spreading against the Imam, his personality was an influence on people.

Such great men as our infallible Imams reach a point where both their lives and deaths are a real threat to the oppressors. They attempt to destroy their personalities by spreading rumors against them. But

their transcendental personalities are too high to be reached by those devils.

Mu'awiyyah was encountering this puzzle which had made him confused, until a vicious plot was arranged. He bribed Jo'dah, the wife of the Imam who was suffering from the inferiority of infertility, to poison her husband. Half a century had passed since the migration of the Prophet, and the Imam was at the age of 47.

On a day whilst fasting, Jo'dah poisoned the cup of milk with which Imam Hasan was supposed to break his fasting. Immediately after drinking the milk, the poison corrupted his digestive system and the Imam faced death. He called upon his brother Imam Husayn. These were the last seconds of the life of Imam Hasan… two brothers cordially hugging each other. This was one time that Imam Husayn hugged one of his brothers. The second time was at Karbala when Abbas called upon Husayn while both his arms were brutally chopped off…

1. On the occasion of the martyrdom of Imam Hasan (a.s.) and the passing away of the Prophet (s.a.w.w.).
2. His name was Kherash Ibn Ummayah : Ibn Hesham 3:343
3. Ibid 3:329.
4. After 8 years having an imposed war with Iraqi regime, the late Imam Khomeini accepted the peace which was to him like the Cup of Hemlock, nevertheless he accepted it for it would contain the benefit of the Islamic Ummah.
5. Ibn Hisham 3:331. According to Tafseer Qomi, Omar has said that had he had 40 men supporting him he would have opposed to the Prophet. Qomi 2:312
6. Kolayni 8:327
7. Safadi : Sharh Laamia 2:27
8. F. Hatti, Al-arab. p. 78
9. Ibn Abil-Hadid 4:13-15
10. Ibn Athir, Al-Kaamil 3:406

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