

Who are right? Moderate Muslims who say that Islam is a peaceful religion and that it forbids terrorism or Islamists who say they're faithful to the Qur'an when they use all kinds of violence to defend Islam and spread it?

### 1. Searching for a balance

The authors of the book *Between Naivety and Hostility* have tried to find a balanced view of Islam as a religion and of the Muslims as her adherents. One of them writes, "I believe that Islam has seeds of violence within its history, traditions and texts, but that it is social and political and economic realities which provide the soil for these seeds to bear fruit."<sup>1</sup>

The person continues, "We Christians are often too quick to judge. Do we also go back to the Bible to account for the evil things that Christians do? How about secular people? I think that our human weakness is much more responsible for the things we do than the religious texts we read. Humans will latch onto any excuse to do evil things. I have met wonderful, gracious Muslims and horribly evil Christians, so how do we account for that? By blaming the religious texts that they read? I don't think so. Humans are not robots. We ourselves are responsible for our actions and we need to be held accountable for them. That means that we certainly need to condemn acts of Islamist violence when they occur, but we also need to recognize that not all Muslims behave in the same way."<sup>2</sup>

So we cannot put everything under the same umbrella. Both exist, that is, there are Muslims who commit violence based on the Qur'an and there are Muslims who seek peace based on the Qur'an. This seems contradictory, but we can see this tension not only in Islam but also in other realms.

"What we have to remember is that people are responsible for their own actions. There are violent texts in the Quran, of course, but Muslims would say exactly the same thing about the Bible. Or look at Hollywood films – how many of them are sexually explicit or violent? Yet not everyone who goes out to watch an American movie is going to act in the same way. It is simplistic to blame religious texts for what they do ... it stops people being held accountable for their actions."<sup>3</sup>

So, it is vital that we do not consider every Muslim a potential or real enemy. Many, both in the East as well as in the West, abhor every form of violence done in the name of religion. How then is it possible that large groups of Muslims are seeking peace and wouldn't harm anyone while there are other groups who, while shouting *Allahu akbar*,<sup>4</sup> murder fellow humans in the most gruesome ways,?

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<sup>1</sup> Bell, S. en Chapman C. ed. *Between Naivety and Hostility*. Milton Keynes, 2011. page 140.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. page 141

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. page 140

<sup>4</sup> Literally: God is greater. Muslims use this expression to indicate that God is the greatest of all gods.

## 2. Interpretation

The differences between Muslims can be explained by the way they interpret the Qur'an. One can discern differences in the following areas:

- a) Are the verses meant for then or now?

Muslims who believe that Islam is a religion of peace, often refer to Sura 5:32, which says,

"On that account: We ordained for the Children of Israel that if any one slew a person - unless it be for murder or for spreading mischief in the land - it would be as if he slew the whole people: and if any one saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of the whole people." <sup>5</sup>

This verse beautifully expresses the importance of life and that the shedding of innocent blood is completely forbidden. At the same time, the verse contains the command to kill those who spread mischief. This raises the question what actions are to be seen as mischief. The preceding verses give clarity.

"5:33 The punishment of those who wage war against Allah and His Messenger, and strive with might and main for mischief through the land is: execution, or crucifixion, or the cutting off of hands and feet from opposite sides, or exile from the land: that is their disgrace in this world, and a heavy punishment is theirs in the Hereafter;  
34 Except for those who repent before they fall into your power: in that case, know that Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.  
35 O ye who believe! Do your duty to Allah, seek the means of approach unto Him, and strive with might and main in his cause: that ye may prosper." <sup>6</sup>

Based on verse 33 one may conclude that spreading mischief means: waging war against God and Mohammad. In that situation, the following verses encourage the Muslims to stand up against the enemies of Islam and to overpower them, whereby various kinds of violence are permitted. In verse 35 the Muslims are even given a clear command to do so.

It is obvious that many Muslims consider caricatures of Mohammad and the military presence of Western nations as spreading mischief. Therefore several Islamic groups have taken up arms against the West and some individuals have even blown themselves up among crowds in order to make as many victims as possible.

The peace loving Muslims may state that these verses were meant specifically for the time of Mohammad and that they don't apply today anymore.

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.oneummah.net/quran/>

<sup>6</sup> Ibid

## Is Islam a religion of peace or not?

*God loves  
Ismael*

b) Are the verses from the Meccan or Medina period?

There are several differences between the revelations Mohammad claims to have received from God during his days in Mecca and during the period he lived in Medina.

The Islamic website *askaquestionto.us* informs us of the following:

- i. The verses from the Mecca period speak mostly about who God is, life in the hereafter and good deeds and sins. They're directed toward the polytheists and the people in general and often start with "O people!"
- ii. The verses of the Medina period mostly contain practical instructions concerning the lives of the believers and often begin with "O believers." They speak about subjects, such as murder, adultery, punishment for theft and slander, and contain laws concerning marriage, divorce and inheritances.
- iii. The verses that deal with jihad are all from the Medina period.<sup>7</sup>

Peace loving Muslims may hold on to Meccan verses that encourage them to accept the Jews and Christians, based on verses like Sura 10:94, which says, "If thou wert in doubt as to what We have revealed unto thee, then ask those who have been reading the Book from before thee: the Truth hath indeed come to thee from thy Lord: so be in no wise of those in doubt."<sup>8</sup>

Here the Islamic prophet was instructed to consult the Jews and Christians, in order to verify whether his messages were from God or not. Another Sura from this period and often quoted by Muslims is 29:46, which says, "Our Allah and your Allah is one."<sup>9</sup>

On the other hand, there is Sura 2:120 from the Medina period. "Never will the Jews or the Christians be satisfied with thee unless thou follow their form of religion. Say: "The Guidance of Allah,-that is the (only) Guidance." Wert thou to follow their desires after the knowledge which hath reached thee, then wouldst thou find neither Protector nor helper against Allah."<sup>10</sup>

So, based upon the Qur'an, Muslims may trust Jews and Christians and build relationships with them, or they may believe they should never trust Christians or Jews.

c) The teaching of abrogation

In order to explain the numerous contradictions in the Qur'an, the Islamic scholars have come up with the teaching of abrogation. This means that, in the case of a contradiction, the later revelation replaces the earlier one. This is based upon several Suras, such as Sura 2:16, which

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<sup>7</sup> <http://askaquestionto.us/question-answer/revealedbook/what-are-the-differences-between-verses-revealed-in-mecca-and-medina>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.oneummah.net/quran/>

<sup>9</sup> Ibid

<sup>10</sup> Ibid

says, "None of Our revelations<sup>11</sup> do We abrogate or cause to be forgotten, but We substitute something better or similar: Knowest thou not that Allah Hath power over all things?"<sup>12</sup>

According to the Qur'an, then, God did away with earlier revelations, in order to give a better one in its place. That's why Muslims generally believe that the Qur'an has replaced the Bible as the last revelation, but also that the later revelations in the Qur'an itself are the best. A well-known example concerns alcohol consumption, as can be seen in the following three verses.

"They ask thee concerning wine and gambling. Say: "In them is great sin, and some profit, for men; but the sin is greater than the profit."" Sura 2:219

"O ye who believe! Approach not prayers with a mind befogged, until ye can understand all that ye say, ..." Sura 4:43

"O ye who believe! Intoxicants and gambling, (dedication of) stones, and (divination by) arrows, are an abomination,- of Satan's handwork: eschew such (abomination), that ye may prosper." Sura 5:90

According to Sura 2:219 wine and gambling are permitted in Islam, though discouraged. Sura 4:43 contains a warning not to pray if you have drunk too much and Sura 5:93 gives a clear call to avoid all alcoholic beverages. In this case all Muslims consider the third verse to be the best revelation and therefore the valid rule.

The teaching of abrogation is difficult to understand for both Muslims and non-Muslims. How can one know which verses have been replaced and which ones haven't? The fact that the Qur'anic verses are not in chronological order but arranged according to the length of the Suras makes it even more difficult to interpret them correctly.

Muslims use the Hadith to determine the chronology of the Qur'an and then have to consider how trustworthy these oral traditions of the life of Mohammad are.

No wonder the Muslim scholars differ greatly in opinion about the amount of abrogations in the Qur'an. Some claim there are as few as only 5 while others believe there are up to 238.<sup>13</sup>

To make things even more complicated, they make a distinction between the ruling of the verse and of the verse itself. Abrogation may take place in the following ways:<sup>14</sup>

- i. Abrogation of both the ruling and the verses
- ii. Abrogation of the ruling but not the verses
- iii. Abrogation of the verses but not the ruling

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<sup>11</sup> In Arabic the word used here is *aya*, which means 'sign' or 'miracle.' Muslims use this word for Qur'anic verses because they believe that every revelation is a miracle.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid

<sup>13</sup> <http://seekershub.org/ans-blog/2010/11/06/jihad-abrogation-in-the-quran-the-verse-of-the-sword/>. For a list of abrogations, see [http://www.muhammadanism.org/Quran/abrogation\\_koran.pdf](http://www.muhammadanism.org/Quran/abrogation_koran.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> <http://islamqa.info/en/105746>

One of the most important and most controversial abrogations concerns Sura 9:5; also called 'the verse of the sword.' It says, "But when the forbidden months are past, then fight and slay the Pagans wherever ye find them, and seize them, beleaguer them, and lie in wait for them in every stratagem (of war); but if they repent, and establish regular prayers<sup>15</sup> and practise regular charity,<sup>16</sup> then open the way for them: for Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful."<sup>17</sup>

According to the Hadith, this verse replaces more than one hundred peaceful verses in the Qur'an,<sup>18</sup> including Sura 2:256: "There is no compulsion in religion."<sup>19</sup> Some scholars deny this and say that Sura 9:5 refers to a specific situation only.<sup>20</sup> Sometimes quite interesting arguments are given why this Sura cannot be meant literally for today. For instance, 'it would be ... disastrous for the security of both Muslim and non-Muslim citizens and nation-states."<sup>21</sup>

### d) Literally or figuratively?

When interpreting the Qur'an an important question is whether the text is meant to be taken literally or figuratively. This becomes crucial when looking at the verses about the jihad – the struggle against evil and for the good.

On many Islamic websites two kinds of struggle are distinguished. The greater jihad is the inner personal struggle, such as the fight against temptations. The smaller jihad is the material struggle, where one protects and spreads the islam by using material means.

For every verse where the jihad is mentioned, one has to determine whether it speaks about the inner or outer struggle. Again, this is an area where the opinions among Muslim scholars differ so widely that no clear conclusions can be drawn.

Remarkably, only for the last few decades has the teaching of two kinds of jihad been used by Muslim apologetics.<sup>22</sup> This isn't surprising, since it is based on only one Hadith,<sup>23</sup> and that Hadith has been considered unreliable by most Islamic scholars throughout the history of Islam.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> The obliged prayers five times a day with the face toward Mecca

<sup>16</sup> The obliged giving of alms, which consists of a percentage of one's income.

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.oneummah.net/quran/>

<sup>18</sup> [http://wikiislam.net/wiki/List\\_of\\_Abrogations\\_in\\_the\\_Qur%27an](http://wikiislam.net/wiki/List_of_Abrogations_in_the_Qur%27an)

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.oneummah.net/quran/>

<sup>20</sup> See for instance

<http://seekershub.org/ans-blog/2010/11/06/jihad-abrogation-in-the-quran-the-verse-of-the-sword/>

<sup>21</sup> it would be ... disastrous for the security of both Muslim and non-Muslim citizens and nation-states. Source:

<http://seekershub.org/ans-blog/2010/11/06/jihad-abrogation-in-the-quran-the-verse-of-the-sword/>

<sup>22</sup> Possibly the first person in the 20th century to use this term is the Iraqi Majid Khadduri (1909-2007). Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jihad#Distinction\\_of\\_.22greater.22\\_and\\_.22lesser.22\\_jihad](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jihad#Distinction_of_.22greater.22_and_.22lesser.22_jihad) accessed 15/1/15

<sup>23</sup> 'Jabir said, "We have returned from the lesser jihad (*al-jihad al-asghar*) to the greater jihad (*al-jihad al-akbar*)." When asked, "What is the greater jihad?," he replied, "It is the struggle against oneself."

*The History of Baghdad*, [Al-Khatib al-Baghdadi](#)

<sup>24</sup> 'The hadith does not appear in any of the authoritative collections, and according to the Muslim Jurist [Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani](#), the source of the quote is unreliable: "This saying is widespread and it is a saying by Ibrahim ibn Ablah according to Nisa'i in al-Kuna. Ghazali mentions it in the *Ihya'* and al-'Iraqi said that Bayhaqi related it on the authority of Jabir and said: There is weakness in its chain of transmission." Hajar al Asqalani, *Tasdid al-qaws*, see

Apart from a group of Sufi Muslims in the eighth century,<sup>25</sup> the Muslims have always interpreted the references to jihad as speaking about a material or physical struggle.<sup>26</sup> Today many scholars continue to interpret them in this way, especially those who seek to obey the precepts of the Qur'an as literal as possible.

Of course the question comes up again and again what is to be seen as evil, so that the Muslims must fight against it. Islamists often see military and political meddling of Western nations in the Middle East as an evil that justifies bombings of Western targets in defense of Islam. Others see the Western interference as a liberation from their dictatorial government or from extremist groups and welcome the Western armies.<sup>27</sup>

e) How well does one know the Qur'an?

It turns out that most Muslims know very little about the Qur'an. During childhood they often memorized large sections, but they never learned to consider the meaning of the verses.<sup>28</sup> In fact, any questioning about possible contradictions is strongly discouraged and at times even punished. The Qur'an itself teaches the believer to accept everything the way it is, as it claims to be the eternal word of God. Whoever asks probing questions, is quickly called perverse.<sup>29</sup>

Actually, during the days of Mohammad people already expressed doubts about verses. This is implied in Sura 4:82 and the answer is given as well. "Do they not consider the Qur'an (with care)? Had it been from other Than Allah, they would surely have found therein Much discrepancy."<sup>30</sup> So the verse says that there are discrepancies in the Qur'an. However, if you believe the Qur'an contains the words from Allah, you may not argue about them but must accept them without questioning.

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also Kashf al-Khafa' (no.1362)' and 'Contemporary Islamic scholar [Abdullah Yusuf Azzam](#) has argued the hadith is not just weak but "is in fact a false, fabricated hadith which has no basis. It is only a saying of Ibrahim Ibn Abi `Abalah, one of the Successors, and it contradicts textual evidence and reality."

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jihad#Distinction\\_of .22greater.22 and .22lesser.22 jihad](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jihad#Distinction_of_.22greater.22_and_.22lesser.22_jihad) accessed 15/1/15

It does not appear in the four major Sunni schools of in the Shi'a tradition and is seen by some Muslims as a way to make Islam more attractive to Westerners. Source: [http://wikiislam.net/wiki/Lesser vs Greater Jihad](http://wikiislam.net/wiki/Lesser_vs_Greater_Jihad) accessed 15/1/15

<sup>25</sup> 'From the late eighth century, a distinction was made in the case of Sufi frontier battles between the 'small effort' as armed struggle against external foes and the non-violent 'great effort' of self-control and the realization of higher values.' Bron: [http://www.know-britain.com/islam/greater\\_jihad\\_lesser\\_jihad.html](http://www.know-britain.com/islam/greater_jihad_lesser_jihad.html)

<sup>26</sup> It is remarkable that 'jihad' doesn't appear in the Mecca period when the Muslims were a minority and only know the inner struggle to follow God. Evidently that struggle was never described with 'jihad.' This underscores that jihad always refers to the physical struggle

<sup>27</sup> For instance the Kurds in North-Iraq when the allies overthrew the government of Saddam Hussein.

<sup>28</sup> This is particularly difficult for the many millions of Muslims whose mother tongue isn't Arabic and who had to memorize the Qur'an in Arabic.

<sup>29</sup> Sura 2:99 "We have sent down to thee Manifest Signs (ayat); and none reject them but those who are perverse."

<sup>30</sup> <http://www.oneummah.net/quran/>

Now there are Muslims who do study the Qur'an at depth. They are faced with the choice to hold on to the teaching that the Qur'an is the eternal and unchangeable word of God or to conclude that the Qur'an is not from God.

The first group ends up offering all kinds of creative interpretations to explain the contradictions. Many decide to trust and follow the Qur'an blindly. Thus they grow into fundamentalists, who eventually apply the verses about killing the unbelievers literally. Their choice is confirmed by the example of their prophet Mohammed, who did the same with many of his opponents.<sup>31</sup> The fact that many of Mohammad's successors were murdered by Muslims,<sup>32</sup> indicates that violence is very much part of the Islamic religion. In fact, even today members of the two main streams within Islam, the Sunni and Shi'a branches, consider the others as unbelievers or heretics and readily kill each other in places like Iraq.<sup>33</sup>

Those who conclude that the Qur'an cannot be from God,<sup>34</sup> are faced with another dilemma. Can they trust the previous books God gave or are they the work of humans as well?

Sadly, many who were raised as Muslims and who have heard all their life that the Bible has been changed by the Christians and Jews,<sup>35</sup> end up rejecting not only God's Word, but also denying the existence of God the Creator all together.

Others begin to read the Bible with an open mind and heart and are touched by God's love and the compassion of Jesus the Messiah for the people in general and for themselves in particular. They often have a supernatural encounter with Jesus, through which they experience God's love and forgiveness for them personally. They realize that Jesus died on the cross in their place, to bear the punishment of their sins; both in deed and in thought. As they receive peace with God, they are able to make peace with people and even to love their enemies, instead of hating them.

### 3. Conclusion

As we have seen, "The contradictions within the Islamic source texts have kept Muslim scholars busy for centuries, and there is immense scope for any individual – whether peaceable or belligerent – to find confirmation that Allah approves their chosen behaviour."<sup>36</sup>

On the one hand there are verses from the Meccan period which promote peace. On the other hand, there are many verses from the Medina period that call the believers to submit the whole world to Islam, permitting the use of all kinds of violence and even the killing of non-Muslims.

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<sup>31</sup> See for instance the list at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_expeditions\\_of\\_Muhammad](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_expeditions_of_Muhammad)

<sup>32</sup> Three of the four first Caliphs, all 11 Shi'a leaders and several Sunni leaders.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rashidun\\_Caliphate](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rashidun_Caliphate) [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Twelve\\_Imams](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Twelve_Imams) For an extensive overview of violence in Early Islam, see

<http://godlovesishmael.com/site/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Overview-Violence-in-Early-Islam.pdf>

<sup>33</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shia%E2%80%93Sunni\\_relations](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shia%E2%80%93Sunni_relations)

<sup>34</sup> For instance, because to them it is impossible that the Eternal, Almighty, all-Knowing and Unchanging God would give so many contradictory commands over a span of only 23 years.

<sup>35</sup> Based on Sura 5:13 and 41 and Hadith Sahih Bukhari Volume 9 Book 92 #460

<sup>36</sup> <https://barnabafund.org/Editorial-Murder-mischief-and-the-killing-of-Alan-Henning.html>

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Some verses even state that those Muslims, who are not willing to fight for the spread of Islam and kill non-Muslims, will go to hell.<sup>37</sup>

Based on the teaching of abrogation, one can conclude that the verses from the Medina period have the highest authority and that the Muslims are called to violence, wherever the world has not yet been subjected to Islam.

Whoever takes the Qur'an as literal as possible and also considers how the Islamic prophet Mohammad applied the verses, comes to the same conclusion as the Muslims who are now branded as extremists and fundamentalists. All that these believers seek to do is to be faithful to their religion and their prophet.

NB: Muslims love to point out that the word *Islam* is derived from the original word for peace, which is *salaam*. While it is true that both words share the root letters s-l-m, that doesn't mean the meaning of both words is similar. For example, in English the verbs 'to group' and 'to grope' both share the same three consonants. However, the vowels give these consonants unique and different meanings. Likewise<sup>38</sup> in Arabic the vowels of *islam* and *salaam* are different, so that it is impossible to claim that the shared root consonants means that Islam is peace. For more information, see <http://www.answering-islam.org/Hoaxes/salamislam.html>.

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<sup>37</sup> For example Sura 8:15-16 "O ye who believe! when ye meet the Unbelievers in hostile array, never turn your backs to them. If any do turn his back to them on such a day - unless it be in a stratagem of war, or to retreat to a troop (of his own)- he draws on himself the wrath of Allah, and his abode is Hell,- an evil refuge (indeed)!"

<sup>38</sup> Of course the comparison with English is weak, as the language structure is very different from Arabic. This only serves as an example to give a feel for non-Arab speakers for how the added letters determine the meaning.



### Afterword for non-Muslims

I wonder what made you read this article. Does the question whether Islam is a religion of peace or not, perhaps come from a deeper desire or need? Are your real questions maybe, "Can I trust Muslims? Could my neighbor suddenly turn into a terrorist? Is there a place for Islam in the West?"

As quoted from the book *Between Naivety and Hostility* at the beginning of the article and as we have seen in this article, there are clearly seeds of violence in Islam. Whether or not these seeds will germinate, depends upon various factors. We as non-Muslims can make a difference here. A lot depends on how we treat the Muslims around us.

Every person who says he's a Muslim is foremost a fellow human being, created in God's image.<sup>39</sup> God has given each person a conscience and many seek to live with a clear conscience. That was the case in Biblical times and that's still true today.<sup>40</sup>

So, let us be careful not to judge people for their ethnic background, style of dress, growth of beard or religious affinity and thus create a fruitful soil for the seeds of violence in the Qur'an. At the same time, let's not deny that seeds of violence are present.

If you read this as a Christian, you may be tempted to reject everything that has to do with Islam. I encourage you not to reject the followers of Islam; the Muslims you meet in daily life. They are valuable in God's eyes, just like you and me, and God wants to show them how much He loves them. Perhaps you are the one through whom He will do that.

Follow the example of Jesus, who rejected the teachings of the Pharisees, but who at the same time built relationships with them,<sup>41</sup> even though they were the ones who eventually condemned Him to death and made sure He was crucified. In fact, the Pharisees and many other religious leaders even thought they were honoring and obeying God by doing so.<sup>42</sup>

It is easy to keep a distance. However, God has said, "He that is in us is greater than he that is in the world."<sup>43</sup> Therefore, be available to so that the Muslims may come to know Jesus the Messiah as their Prince of Peace. Then true peace will come, even in the Middle East.<sup>44</sup>

### Afterword for Muslims

Do you sometimes wonder if the Islam is really the last and best religion, as you have always been told by the Islamic scholars?

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<sup>39</sup> Genesis 1:26-27

<sup>40</sup> See Romans 2:14-15 where the apostle Paul writes about non-Jews who naturally did what the Law prescribes

<sup>41</sup> For instance, He took time with Nicodemus who came to him with questions (John 3:1-21) and went to visit Simon who had invited him for a meal (Luke 7:36-50).

<sup>42</sup> In their opinion, Jesus blasphemed God by making known that He was the Son of God. See Matthew 26:63-66. The penalty for blasphemy was death. See Leviticus 24:10-16.

<sup>43</sup> 1 John 4:4 *The Holy Bible*, English Standard Version (ESV), Copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles

<sup>44</sup> For an explanation about the source of hatred toward the Jews and the violence in the Middle East, consider the relationship between the Edomites and the Israelites. See [http://godlovesishmael.com/site/background\\_info/nations/edom](http://godlovesishmael.com/site/background_info/nations/edom)

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I encourage you to take the Qur'anic verses for what they are and that you don't let yourself be blinded by all kinds of incredible explanations why something else should be meant than the plain meaning of the text. The Hadith contains more than enough information and war reports to be certain that Mohammad himself took the Qur'an verses literal.

Now it is possible to have outward peace by suppressing all opposition and destroying every enemy, as the Qur'an teaches. However, this peace is maintained by fear and should be seen as the absence of violence and conflict. It is not an inner peace in the hearts of the people. True inner peace comes only when fear disappears. God's unconditional love for us drives out fear.<sup>45</sup> And God has proven His love to us by the voluntary death of Jesus the Messiah,<sup>46</sup> even while we were still sinners. Those who accept that in faith, can say, "Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God."<sup>47</sup> Thus we can have true peace with God and true peace with each other and we don't have to fear the Day of Judgment anymore.

When you have been taught certain things all of your life and you have put your trust in them, it is difficult to let go of them. Know that God the Creator is waiting on you as Heavenly Father to accept you in love and that He is ready to forgive all that you have done. The first century apostle Paul experienced the same. The blood of innocent Christian martyrs was on his hands, but God gave him the assurance that all his sins and offenses were forgiven through the offer of Jesus. He changed completely and became one of the most well-known apostles, teaching us so much about the extent of God's grace and the greatness of the love of Christ. God "is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think."<sup>48</sup> Just as God has destined Ishmael to be free, He has destined you to live in freedom,<sup>49</sup> without the burden of religion, hatred or bitterness.

If you have doubts about who you can trust, ask God Himself to show you the way. He gives His Spirit to all who ask Him,<sup>50</sup> and His Spirit will teach you and make known the truth to you.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> 1 John 4:18 "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love." ESV See also verses 15-17.

<sup>46</sup> John 10:17-18 "For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father." ESV

<sup>47</sup> Romans 5:9 ESV. See also verse 8

<sup>48</sup> Ephesians 3:20 ESV

<sup>49</sup> See the study Wild Donkey at [www.godlovesishmael.com](http://www.godlovesishmael.com)

<sup>50</sup> Luke 11:13 "If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" ESV

<sup>51</sup> John 14:26, 16:13 "The Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you." and "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth." ESV