



JIHĀD

Objectives >>>

Students should:

- Know the definition of Jihad
- Know the conditions of Jihad
- Discuss some of the misconceptions related to Jihad

Jihād

The Arabic word Jihād comes from the root 'Jahd' which means 'struggle'. Jurisprudentially, it means fighting those who have attacked Muslims and their territories. In Islamic terminology, this is termed Jihād al-Asghar (the minor struggle). In this lesson, we will be focusing on this form of Jihad, and when we use the term Jihad in this lesson, this is what we are referring to.

Jihād al – Kabīr (the great struggle) refers to struggle for knowledge and education, while Jihād al Akbar (the greatest struggle) is used to refer to the struggle against one's evil desire, and we have discussed this in many other places in this curriculum.

JURISPRUDENCE

LEVEL 5

The importance of Jihad in Islam cannot be overstated. 250 āyāt are revealed to the Prophet related to this issue. The narrations also tell us that Jihad is one of the doors of paradise which God opens to his special servants, it is the fourth of the practical pillars of Islam, and the best thing after the obligatory prayers. The narrations also tell us that above any goodness is a higher level of goodness, except for being killed for the sake of Allah: there is no goodness higher than this. In a nutshell, the best way to understand the concept of Jihad in Islam one must imagine 'Islam' as a country and 'Jihad' its defence ministry. Can you imagine a country without any ministry of defence?!

THE DEFINITION OF JIHAD

The jurisprudential definition of Jihad is physical and financial struggle for the sake of Islam. This may be:

- against non-Muslim enemies of Islam
- or against Muslim groups who are violating (bāghīn) the laws of Islam and fighting other Muslim groups or fighting against a just ruler

The defensive form of military struggle against the enemies of Islam is a substitutive (واجب كفائي) obligation, regardless of the presence of the ma'sūm Imam or not. This is because it is necessary for the preservation of Islam. So if a Muslim land is being attacked or invaded, there is an automatic obligation on all able Muslims to defend the Muslim land.

As for the pre-emptive form of Jihad, then this is not permissible except in the presence of the ma'sūm Imam

or a specific representative of his, according to the great majority of our scholars.

THE CONDITIONS OF JIHAD

Jihad a substitutive obligation (*wājib kifāi*), meaning that while it is initially obligatory on all, once the need is met by a sufficient number of people, the obligation falls from the rest of the people.

It is obligatory subject to the following criteria:

- Having reached the age of religious responsibility (*taklif*)
- Masculinity
- Ability

Therefore, it is not obligatory upon children, women or those who are unable due to physical disabilities.

However, if a Muslim land is being attacked (defensive struggle), then the obligation falls on absolutely everyone who is able to resist the enemy in any way possible.

If two Muslim groups fight, then the first step is to try to bring about agreement between them. If this does not work, then the party who is being unjust and violating (*bāghia*) the laws of Islam must be fought until it submits to the Command of Allah.

THE RULES OF JIHAD

- The foremost rule of Jihad in Islam is that it should be with the intention of ‘for the sake of Allah’, and hence it is often referred to as a ‘holy war’. This condition on the one hand dismisses any fights for worldly or personal gains, and sets many moral rules on the other.
- Initiating Jihad is not permissible in the four holy months (*ash-hurul ḥurum*), which are Rajab, Dhil, Qi’da, Dhil Hijja, Muḥarram
- Just as Jihad is obligatory in a substitutive sense (*wājib kifāi*) in relation to one’s self, it is also obligatory on one’s wealth. Thus if one has the ability to resist the enemy of Islam with both his physical self, as well as his wealth, then both types of struggle are obligatory. If he is only able

to do one of the two, then that one becomes obligatory.

- It is impermissible to flee from warfare, unless it is a strategic withdrawal.
- It is recommended to patrol the borders of Muslim lands. If those Muslim lands are being threatened by enemies, then this becomes an obligation.
- Related to the rules of Jihad is the following rule; if one fears that he is not able to practice the obligation of Islam in the land in which they live, then it is obligatory on them to migrate from that land, if they have the ability to do so

JIHAD IN THE QUR’AN

There are many misconceptions about Jihad that circulate in the media, especially in relation to the Qur’anic teachings on Jihad. This problem has been exacerbated by the false application and misuse of the idea of Jihad by a number of terrorist groups who claim to be Muslim but have very little to do with Islam, and who are driven by political or economic motivations.

We will briefly discuss some of the Qur’anic *āyāt* related to war and peace. The first point to note is that the Qur’an sometimes encourages Muslims to make peace, while at other times prohibits this. This may seem like a paradox. However, there is no contradiction here, because these are different commands for different situations. For example, there are times when Muslims would be making a genuine peace treaty which would be beneficial for Islam. An example of this is in the following passage:

“And prepare against them what force you can and horses tied at the frontier, to frighten thereby the enemy of Allah and your enemy...And if they incline to peace, then incline to it also and trust in Allah; surely He is the Hearing, the Knowing, and if they intend to deceive you– then surely Allah is sufficient for you...” (8:60-62)

However, in other situations, where an offer of a peace treaty is likely to be a deception or trick, then making peace is prohibited. An example is the following *āyah*:

"So be not weak and ask not for peace while you are having the upper hand." [47:35]

In general, the default option in Islam is peace. However, if Muslims' lands are being invaded or attacked, or significant harm is being posed to Islam or Muslims, then pacifism is forbidden and defence of Islam is obligatory.

If warfare is necessary, this is to take place with its rules and regulations. The Qur'anic āyāt quoted above (also see 4:89-91) indicate that peace treaties can be made in certain situations and should be upheld. Enemies who surrender are not to be killed. There should be periods of truce, and this is perhaps why it is forbidden to fight during the four holy months. 'Civilians' (e.g. women, children, and those who are not engaging in warfare) should not be harmed.

We also know from the teachings of the Ahlul Bayt (as) that even the land should be protected from unnecessary harm. Imam 'Ali (as) would make the following supplication before battle:

“O' God! Save our blood and their blood, produce reconciliation between us and them, and lead them out of their misguidance so that he who is ignorant of the truth may know it, and he who inclines towards rebellion and revolt may turn away from it.”ⁱ

From other narrations, we understand the following about the ethics of Jihad from the viewpoint of Imam 'Ali (as):

- Do not initiate: “Do not fight them unless they initiate the fighting”
- Do not take revenge: “Kill your anger, and forgive when you have power”
- Do not kill: “If, by the will of God, the enemy is defeated then do not finish the wounded and the captives of war, do not inflict pain on women, children and old men...”
- Practice chivalry: “There is no religion for one who has no chivalry.”
- No terrorism: “I heard from the prophet to have said: ‘Faith handcuffs terrorism’.” (this quote is from Muslim ibn 'Aqīl)

Many groups or individuals claim to be practising Jihad when in fact they are committing murder and grossly violating the laws of Allah (SWT). These include:

- groups who accuse other Muslim groups of being disbelievers, and carry out bombings, shootings and other attacks on these Muslims and their mosques
- those who carry out suicide bombings and other attacks on random individuals in Western and other countries

The groups described above generally do not have Islamic motivations. Instead they tend to have political or economic motivations, and often have the backing of governments who are enemies of true Islam. The individuals who are ignorantly inspired or influenced by these groups are going down a misguided and dangerous path.

FALSE APPLICATIONS OF JIHAD

ⁱ Nahjul Balagha, Sermon 206