



Muslims  
in  
Encounter  
**TEACHER'S BOOK**



Funded by  
the European Union



# **FACE2FACE**

# **MUSLIMS IN ENCOUNTER**

TEACHER'S BOOK



EDUC8

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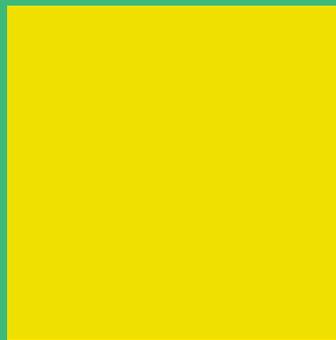
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DIVINE AND HUMAN LAWS: COMPATIBLE OR NOT?



# INTRODUCTION

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## INTRODUCTION

# EDUC8 TO BUILD RESILIENCE

Terrorism, war, authoritarianism, poverty, natural disasters, violence... The world does not seem to be doing well. Young people today are growing up in a diverse world in which religion is all too often misused to condone violence. Indeed, religion and violence are often linked together. How can we make young people look beyond such forms of polarization and radicalization?

EDUC8 is a religious education project created for secondary schools and extracurricular contexts. This project aims to **build resilience against polarization and radicalization** among young people, and to demonstrate how they can find resilience and resistance (to this) in their own religious tradition. **This initiative has been funded by the European Union's Internal Security Fund.**

EDUC8 focuses on six different worldviews, namely Judaism, Catholicism, Islam, Orthodoxy, Protestantism, and a non-confessional (ethical) perspective. Each worldview departs from its own tradition on different topics in order to build resistance to polarization and radicalization. Several didactic packages have been developed for 12- to 18-year-old students. This textbook starts from the perspective of the Islamic faith.



Figure 1  
Video Clip



Figure 2  
Diversity  
Source: © vector\_s/  
Adobe Stock

This textbook on Islam is divided into six chapters, also called deep modules. Specifically, it covers the following six topics:

1. Encounter with the other: dealing with diversity
2. Encounter with sacred texts: texts on violence
3. Encounter with the environment: social and ecological issues
4. When encounter becomes conflict: war and peace
5. Divine and human laws: Compatible or not?
6. Free speech: Profane or sacred?

The first module on the encounter with the other examines the way in which Muslims view, and interact with, the other, which includes other believers or non-believers. In what way do Muslims want to deal with the existing diversity in society and what are possible barriers and facilitators?

The second module focuses on the Quran, the sacred text of Islam. In what way do Muslims read the Quran? For example, how can we deal with difficult Quran passages where violence seems to be legitimized?

A third module shifts the focus to the relationship between ecology and Islam. How do Muslims interact with their environment (nature, animals), and care for fellow human beings? What social issues do Muslims struggle with regarding this topic?

The fourth module highlights how Muslims deal with conflicts in the world. What position do Muslims take on war and peace?

The fifth module deals with how human laws and Islamic laws relate to each other. And how the Muslims deal with contradictions between those two laws.

The sixth and final module approaches freedom of expression from an Islamic perspective. This module explores the relationship between freedom of expression and how Muslims can deal with it.

The six deep modules each consist of the following **three learning materials**:

1. Each deep module starts with a **video clip** in which a possible real-life situation is presented. The video clip also contains some quiz questions, which make the students think about different aspects of the story. Next, the students can work individually, or with guidance, on the student textbook. The choice is yours. Basically, the student textbook is set up so that they can go through all the exercises individually.

2. The **student's book** contains a short introduction to the video clip and continues with the basic learning material of each deep module, focusing on philosophical/religious knowledge, reflection, and communication. The basic material and the video clip together form a single unit for approaching a specific ideological topic concerning polarization and radicalization. The whole lesson normally takes one-hour.

3. The **teacher's book** discusses the basic subject matter of the student textbook and provides additional information for the teacher. The teacher textbook also contains supplementary in-depth material with corresponding impulses and didactic suggestions. In this way, the facilitator can select the most appropriate impulses and didactic suggestions for their own learning group to further complement the basic material.

We hope that these teaching materials may inspire and motivate you to work with your students from within their own philosophical and religious tradition to create resilience against polarization and violent abuse of religion.

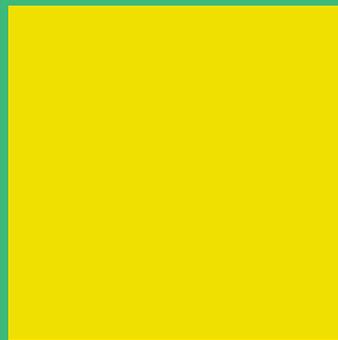
“CORRUPTIO OPTIMI PESSIMA”

OR

“THE VERY BEST BECOMES THE WORST WHEN IT TURNS  
INTO ITS OPPOSITE”

1

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ENCOUNTER WITH THE OTHER:  
DEALING WITH DIVERSITY

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## MODULE ONE

# ENCOUNTER WITH THE OTHER: DEALING WITH DIVERSITY

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1.1 STRUCTURE OF THE MODULE

This manual for the teachers is a didactic package in which the following theme is handled: 'Encounter with the other: dealing with diversity'. This package has been developed for the age group of 12 to 18 years old and offers the teacher or supervisor of a learning group the opportunity to develop this theme at the level of their own class group.

In this manual, the teacher can work on various topics that are consistent with the overarching theme 'Encounter with the other : dealing with diversity'. Based on impulses and didactic suggestions, it is possible to approach this theme from different perspectives. Impulses are elements that the teacher can bring into the classroom to start the conversation. This manual contains a variety of impulses with different levels of difficulty. These impulses aim to contribute to the learning process and exist in various forms. It is not the intention to use all impulses. The teacher can select the most appropriate impulses based on (the initial situation in) his learning group. The didactic suggestions are concrete proposals to work with the impulses and are aimed at philosophical reflection and communication. This ensures that the teacher can approach in a varied way the different impulses that match the own learning group.

This manual makes a distinction between 'basic material' and 'deepening'. The basic subject matter is standard in the manual for the students and takes two hours to complete. In addition, the teacher has the choice to deepen the students' knowledge by means of the extra chapters with accompanying impulses and didactic suggestions, which are provided in this manual.

- First, there is a general historical outline of the Quran. The context in which the Quran has been established is an important base for the learning group to consider verse 51 in Sura Al-Mā'idah, ("Enmity between Muslims and other believers") to better understand and interpret. This chapter except 3.4. The society of the Arabian Peninsula and 3.5. The religious life in the Arabian Peninsula is part of the basic learning material for the students.
- Secondly, the rules of interpretation of the Quran are being discussed. How can we interpret the Quran? Which interpretation principles are important to understand the Quran properly? This chapter is part of the basic learning material for the students.
- The third chapter of this manual takes a closer look at roles of Prophet Mohammed. In this chapter, students will learn more about the importance of distinguishing between the various roles of the prophet. This chapter is part of the basic learning material for the students.
- The last chapter addresses the question of polarization and depolarization. This section (based on the polarization model of the philosopher Brandsma) examines the meaning of the term polarization (in our society) and the dynamic of polarization. Then the model applies to the discourse of Muslim extremists as to that of right-wing extremists. This is an in-depth chapter.

In conclusion, this manual contains a glossary in which all difficult concepts are succinctly explained at the level of the student, Followed by a bibliography.

### 1.1.2 CONTENT OF THE MANUAL

This didactic package deals with the theme: "Encounter with the other: dealing with diversity". The chosen starting point for this manual is verse 51 Sura Al-Mā'idah: "O you who believe! Do not take the Jews and the Christians as allies, they are allies of each other. And if one of you takes them as an "ally, then he certainly belongs to them. Surely Allah does not lead the unrighteous people."

The starting point of this manual is an video clip in which a possible real situation sketch from the daily life of the students is presented. This fragment is a general introduction of the theme 'diversity' for the learning group, from which the teacher can start to further develop this theme with one or more impulses and didactic suggestions from this manual.

After viewing this image fragment, the teacher can get started with one or more impulses of this didactic package that match the level of the own learning group.

## 1.2 HISTORICAL CONTEXT: QURAN IN HISTORY

The Quran has a very important place within the Islamic intellectual and religious tradition.

More than a billion Muslims consider the Quran as the word of God, revealed to the Prophet Muḥammad. It is important to understand the context of the tribal Arab or *ma'ud al'rab*<sup>1</sup> and the period in which the Quran was revealed to understand the Quran properly<sup>2</sup>.

### 1.2.1 INTRODUCTION

#### The international situation

Mecca was located in the Arabian Peninsula. At that time, the Arabian Peninsula was surrounded by two major empires that both wanted to rule the entire Near East. On one hand you had the Christian Byzantine Empire. On the other hand, there was the Sassanid empire in Persia. There was tension between the two empires because both wanted to expand their powers of domination. This was the context in which the Prophet received the Quran.

It is important to keep the tribal society of Arabs in an international context in mind. In order to discover the wisdom of the Quran, it is essential to understand the Arab civilization of that specific time period. This means you have to understand their customs, culture, philosophy and language affinity, poetry etc. 'Abdallāh Ibn 'Abbās made a statement to a companion of the Prophet: *"Poetry is the tradition of the Arabs, so if there is a word for us in the Quran that Allah has revealed in the language of the Arabs that is not clear, then we return to their poetry."*<sup>3</sup> The International context and the Arab civilization / period or *ma'ud al'rab* as the theologian Abū Ishāq al-Shāṭibī puts it, are very important to understand the verses and stories in the Quran.



Figure 1.1  
Source: © kstudija /  
Adobe Stock

<sup>1</sup> This is a term used by the great theologian Abū Ishāq al-Shāṭibī to emphasize the spirit of the Arabs during the time of revelation. With this he means that the knowledge of the habits and the way of life of the Arabs is an important fact to understand the Quran. The Muslim theologian Asshāfi'ī has the same opinion.

M. IBN IDRIS ASSHAFI'Ī, Arrisala, Beiroet, Dar Al-Marefah, 2004, volume 1, p. 376.

<sup>2</sup> I. IBN IBRAHIM ASSHATIBI, Almuwafaqat Fi Usul Ashari'a, Beiroet, Dar Al-Koutboub Al'Imiya, 2005, p. 59.

<sup>3</sup> J. ABD ARRAHMANE ASSOUYOUTI, Alitqaan fi 'Ium Alquraan, Medina, Majma' Malik Fahd, 2002, p. 449.

## 1.2.2 THE ENVIRONMENT OF MUHAMMAD: WHERE DID HE LIVE?

Figure 1.2  
Arab bedouin  
Source: © aarstudio /  
Adobe Stock



Muḥammad was born in the year of the Elephant which corresponds to the year 570 of the Gregorian calendar. He was born to a noble family in Mecca, the tribe of Banū Hāshim. This tribe was highly regarded by other tribes in Mecca and the surrounding areas. Mohammad had lost his father before he was born. He had a dual status for the inhabitants of Mecca. He belonged to an important clan but he was also vulnerable because he was fatherless. The name “Muḥammad” was completely unknown at that time in

the Arabian Peninsula. His mother received the name “Muḥammad” through a vision during her pregnancy. It also announced the birth of the “lord of this people.” During the birth of Muḥammad she mentions: *“I place him under the protection of the only One, from the wickedness of every envious person.”* The Quraish had a special relationship with the nomadic lifestyle of the Arab Bedouin. They entrusted the care of their boys to the Bedouin foster families. The belief was that in the desert, the children would learn more self-discipline, nobility, and freedom. It requires a high level of solidarity and a high level of respect for the appreciation of human value in order to have a successful life in the desert.



Figure 1.3  
Source: © frenta /  
Adobe Stock

Ḥalīmah and her husband Ḥārith from the Hawāzin tribe came to Mecca in search of an infant to take to the desert. They were the poorest of their clan and could not convince any family belonging to Quraish to entrust them with the care of their child. Āminah, the mother of Muḥammad, was also in a desperate situation. She could not find a Bedouin foster home to care for Muḥammad. The ones who were looking for foster children rejected Muḥammad because he was an orphan. Ḥalīmah realized that a young widow like Āminah couldn’t afford her services. However, she agreed to take Muḥammad with her because she did not want to return to her people empty-handed. Even if it did not bring her material gains, Ḥalīmah thought that their generosity might bring them other blessings.

### 1.2.3 SOCIETY OF THE ARABIAN PENINSULA

Pre-Islamic society was made up of tribes. In the pre-Islamic society every person belonged to a certain tribe. The major civilizations in the south of the Arabian Peninsula (now Yemen). During this period the country had many riches. Due to natural disasters and political conflicts the situation in the region started to weaken. Many Arab tribes moved to the North of the Arabian Peninsula. Continuous wars and conflicts took place between the Arab tribes, mainly for economic and social reasons. They had conflicts over fertile land, water resources, honor, etc. The smaller tribes always lost from the larger powerful tribes. The only thing the smaller and weaker tribes could do was to team up with their enemies against a common larger enemy.

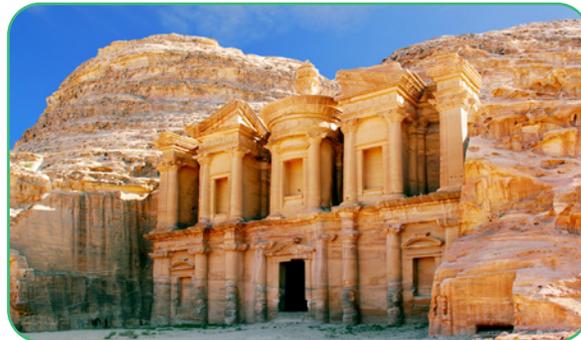


Figure 1.4  
Petra, Jordan  
Source: © dzain /  
Adobe Stock

Arabs can be classified into three different categories:

1. The Destructive Arabs
2. The Pure Arabs
3. The Arabized Arabs

**The Destructive Arabs** are considered to be the descendants of prophet Nūḥ. This group includes the ancient tribes of 'Ād and Thamūd. The Quran refers to them several times (al A'rāf 7: 73-79 and Hūd 11: 50-68 and al-Aḥqāf 46: 21-25). Surah Fuṣṣilat (41: 15-18) describes how both tribes perished because they did not listen to the message of God.

**The Pure Arabs** are also known as the Qahtanian Arabs and lived in Yemen. They founded the empire of Sheba (Saba') in 2500 BC. The queen who ruled the empire is mentioned in Surah An-Naml when Prophet Sulaymān's messenger returned to his settlement to describe the Arabs of Yemen.



Figure 1.5  
Sanā (current Yemen), in  
the south of the Arabic  
Peninsula  
Source: © munett /  
Adobe Stock

**The Arabized Arabs** are considered to be direct descendants of 'Ismā'īl and Prophet Muḥammad. These Arabs are also called the Adnanians. Their story begins with Ibrāhīm, the father of 'Ismā'īl, and the founder of Mecca. In this tribal patriarchal society, the law of the strongest prevailed. That is the main reason why this period had so many wars. It was the only way to survive.

This was the context in which the Prophet Muḥammad was exalted and in which he received the Quran. These aspects are essential to keep in mind when reading the Quran.

#### 1.2.4 RELIGIOUS LIFE IN THE ARABIAN PENINSULA

The Arabian Peninsula had different religions. For example, you had Arabs who followed the religion of Ibrahim. They believed in one God. In addition, there were also Jews and Christians. Most Arabs worshiped different idols. Each tribe had one or more idols which they considered to be their gods. Since Mecca was a large religious center, most of the idols were located there. The Ka'ba was also located in Mecca. This religious center attracted many believers, while promoting trade. Abu Sufyan, one of the greatest idol worshipers said, "Our Gods are both religion and trade."

This was economically in the disadvantage of the southern part of the Arabian Peninsula because they attracted less visitors. Many southern Arabs moved to the north of the Arabian peninsula. A second Ka'ba was built in the south to prevent the southern Arabs from moving to the north.

The Southern Ka'ba continued to exist until the 18th century. At the beginning of the revelation, according to Islamic tradition, more than 360 idols, images or statues were present in the Ka'ba. The worshipers were considered to be heathens.

## 1.2.5 EXERCISES

### EXERCISE 1: FILL IN THE BLANK (CONTEXT)

Assignment: The students have to answer the following questions below

1. What is the difference between monotheism and polytheism?

**Monotheism = Belief in one god.**

**Polytheism = Belief in multiple gods.**

2. Right or wrong: The Meccans were economically dependent on their gods?

**Right.**

3. Why did the Quraish entrust their children to the Bedouin foster families?

**Because they had a healthier lifestyle.**

4. Name the empires that surrounded the Arabian Peninsula?

**The Byzantine Empire, which was Christian and the Sassanid empire in Persia.**

5. What were the major religions present in the Arabian Peninsula?

**Judaism, Christianity, Polytheism, Abrahamites.**

6. How did they attempt to prevent people from moving to the North in the South of the Arabian Peninsula?

**By building a second Ka'ba.**

7. Give two reasons that were the causes of the tribal wars?

**Economic and social reasons.**

## EXERCISE 2: THE LIFE OF THE PROPHET

Assignment: Put the right letter with the associated number

1. The clan or family of the Prophet Muḥammad	A. Christian
2. The tribal Arab or the <i>ma'ud al'rab</i>	B. Mecca
3. Year of birth of the Prophet Muḥammad	C. Term used for the Arab civilization / period when the Quran was revealed
4. Religion of the Byzantine Empire	D. Poetry
5. A cultural tradition of the Arabs	E. Year of the Elephant
6. City of birth of Prophet Muḥammad	F. Banū Hāshim

1	2	3	4	5	6
F	C	E	A	D	B

# 1.3 INTERPRETATION OF THE QURAN

## 1.3.1 INTRODUCTION



*"O you who believe! Do not take the Jews and the Christians for friends; they are friends of each other; and whoever amongst you takes them for a friend, then surely he is one of them; surely Allah does not guide the unjust people."* (Al-Mā'idah verse 51)

Figure 1.6  
Source: © BillionPhotos.com / Adobe Stock

It is important to understand the verses in the Quran in their context of existence. The society in which the Quran originated is a survival society. When reading the Quran it is essential to keep the structure of the Quran and the reason of revelation in mind.

## 1.3.2 PRINCIPLES OF THE INTERPRETATIONS

### 1. Society

Studying both the political and the social context in which the Quran is revealed is a prerequisite for understanding the Quran<sup>4</sup>. The Arab society at that period was a tribal society in which various tribes were constantly in war and conflicts.



Figure 1.7  
Source: © supanut / Adobe Stock

### 2. Structure of the Quran

Exegetes divide the Quran into two parts: Meccan verses and Median verses.

**a. Meccan verses** are verses revealed before the immigration of the Prophet PBUH from Mecca to Medina. The Meccan period was known for laying the foundations of Islam including attawhied (monotheism). Emphasis are placed on the universal values and norms such as justice, fairness, equality etc. Therefore, you cannot find detailed explanation in those verses.



Figure 1.8  
Source: © arapix / Adobe Stock

**b. Medinan verses** are more detailed because Medina has a different context than Mecca.

<sup>4</sup> M. ATTAHAR IBN ASSHOUR, Maqasid Assharia Al-Islamiya, Amman, Dar Annafa-is, 2002, p. 153.

*Important condition: Medinan verses must be understood in light of the Meccan verses!*

### 3. The reason of revelation of *sabāb an-nuzūl*

*Asbāb an-nuzūl* (pl.) means the reasons why a verse was revealed. This is related to events that occurred during the time of the prophet upon which the Quran responded with an answer.



Figure 1.9  
Source: © oraziopuccio /  
Adobe Stock

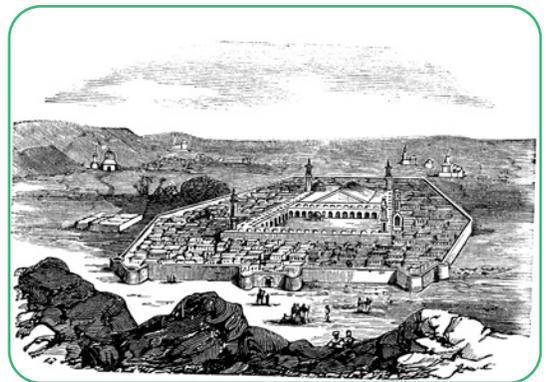
### 1.3.3 APPLICATION OF THE PRINCIPLES

Now let's apply those three aspects to the following verse:

*"O you who believe! do not take the Jews and the Christians for friends; they are friends of each other; and whoever amongst you takes them for a friend, then surely he is one of them; surely Allah does not guide the unjust people."*  
(Al-Mā'idah verse 51)

#### 1. The Arab society

This verse was revealed in Medina. The societies of Mecca and Medina differ from each other. Mecca was a city of trading and Medina was a rural society. Medina consisted of a series of hamlets inhabited by different ethnic groups. Medina was surrounded by volcanic rocks that were not fertile. Most residents were farmers who got their living



from dates, palm groves and arable farming. So they were not fully dependent on trade like the people of Mecca. They were more hostile towards other ethnic groups. They also felt inferior towards the Jewish tribes in the oasis. The Jewish tribes were pioneers in agricultural development.

Figure 1.0  
Medina  
Source: © Morphart /  
Adobe Stock

The Aws and Khazraj are two tribes that played an important role in the arrival of the prophet Muḥammad in Medina. They were able to settle in Medina, especially in places that were not yet fertile. They were under the protection of the Jewish tribes. So they had a subordinate position.

The three largest Jewish tribes in Medina were the Qaynuqa', de Qurayzah en de an-Naḍīr. The Jewish tribes formed separate alliances with the Arab groups and were often at war with one another. In addition, the constant battle between the Aws and Khazraj created tension in the city.

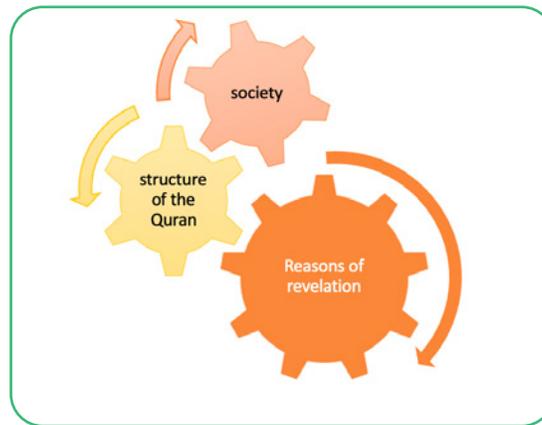
## **2. Structure of the Quran**

Considering what we explained earlier in part 1 (Arab society), verse 51 in Surat Mā'idah is a Medinian verse. Medinian verses, as previously explained, are more detailed. In other words, this verse should not be understood out of context and should be placed in the light of Meccan verses, which emphasize justice.

## 1.3.4 EXERCISES

### Exercise 1: Schedule

Assignment: Fill in as a class the schedule about the principles of the interpretation of the Quran.



### Principles of the interpretation of the Quran

#### 3. The reason of revelation of sabāb an-nuzūl

At-Ṭabarī, a high-ranking Quran exegete, believed that this verse provides an answer to a war situation in which some Muslims, Jews and Christians took allies. At-Ṭabarī mentions the following: “The correct view is that Allah forbids Muslims to take Jews and Christians as allies against the people of faith in Allah and His Messenger”.

Jewish tribes in Medina had broken their pact with the Prophet PBUH. The pact includes the defense of the city of Medina from Meccan attacks. This caused Jewish tribes to be at odds with the Muslims of Medina. There were some Muslims who sought their refuge in Jewish tribes. They feared that they would suffer a defeat. This is forbidden by the Quran because it weakened the Islamic community that was in its infancy. Knowing that at the time a weak community in the Arabian Peninsula - as mentioned earlier - did not have much chance of survival.

Arab society, which is a tribal society, had no mercy for the weak, so making an alliance with war enemies could spell doom for the young Muslim community. This verse is a Medinan verse and all Medinan verses are context bound and cannot conflict with Meccan verses. In other words, Medinan verses have no universal character. Every verse has a reason for revelation (sabāb an-nuzūl). The reason for revelation of Al-Mā'idah verse 51 is that some Muslims took refuge in Jewish tribes who were at odds with the Muslim community after breaking a pact. Finally, it is important to place other passages in the Quran alongside this verse. This way the reader has a general view.

### 1.3.5 EXERCISES

#### Exercise 2: Class Discussion

Assignment: Have a class discussion with the students and ask the following questions. The students will think about their understanding of the Quran.

Guiding questions:

- Who do you ask for explanation if you do not understand something from the Quran?
- Is it possible to understand Quran in several ways?
- Do you think it is possible to search for your own answers to your questions about the Quran?

#### Exercise 3: Brain Storming

The following questions are asked to the students. Have students brainstorm on the board. Afterwards, review as a class.

Guiding questions:

- Why is it important to know the principles of interpretation?
- What is the danger of not viewing the Quran as one big whole?
- What would one mean by interpreting literally and figuratively?
- Can we just understand the language of the Quran?

# 1.4 PROPHET MUHAMMED'S FUNCTIONS

## 1.4.1 INTRODUCTION

Muḥammed is an important person and an example for all Muslims. He is the source of morality alongside the Quran. However, it is very important to distinguish between the different functions of Muḥammed. In other words, Prophet Muḥammed acts in various functions. Sometimes he acts as a messenger / prophet or as a leader or as a mufti or as a judge.<sup>5</sup>

## 1.4.2 THE QUALITY OF A MESSENGER

These different functions of the prophet each have a separate influence on the morality of Islam. Some functions apply to the morality of Islam if they meet certain conditions.

The most common function is the prophet's capacity as a messenger. This means that the message of this function is universal. For example, Muḥammed who proclaims monotheism (*tawḥīd*). This announcement is universal and applies to all Muslims.



Figure 1.11  
Diversity  
Source: © Fatemah  
Khaled | Pexels

## 1.4.3 THE QUALITY OF A LEADER

The quality of the Prophet as a leader has an important condition. In particular that the act he performs only relates to leaders or governments. This position is a political function. It only applies to political leaders and is not intended for everyone.



Figure 1.12  
The prophet Muḥammad  
as a military leader  
during a war  
Source: © Dezay /  
Adobe Stock

<sup>5</sup> M. ATTAHAR IBN ASSHOUR, Maqasid Assharia Al-Islamiya, Amman, Dar Annafa-is, 2002, p. 207-210.

#### 1.4.4 THE QUALITY OF A MUFTI

A mufti is a spiritual religious leader who has the authority to give religious advice regarding certain phenomena. The religious advice of a mufti is called “fatwa” in Arabic. A Fatwa is always context-bound and should in no way be applied in other contexts without taking the customs and tradition into account.



Figure 1.13  
Source: © shock /  
Adobe Stock

The prophet also issued fatwas, which should also be understood in context.

The capacity of the prophet as a judge also has an important condition. In particular that the act he performs as a judge only concerns judges. This function is therefore a judicial function and only applies to judges and is also not intended for everyone. The Prophet also served as a judge, and his judgments should be understood in context of his specific period.

#### 1.4.5 THE QUALITY OF A JUDGE

In summary: It is very important when one studies Islam to distinguish between those different qualities. Unfortunately, especially among young people, we notice that they mix up the different functions of prophet Muḥammed with often drastic consequences.



Figure 1.14  
Source: © New Africa /  
Adobe Stock

If we return to verse 51 of surah Al-Mā'idah<sup>6</sup>, then we can distract that what we have seen earlier in the principles of interpretation, the prophet acted as a judge. This matter is a competence of leaders / theologians and not the task of a layperson.

#### 1.4.6 APPLICATION OF THE QUALITIES TO VERSE 51 SURAH AL-MĀ'IDAH

The Muslims who, as previously quoted lived at odds with Jewish tribes due to a breach of contract and not based on faith. The Quran and the Prophet forbade taking Jews as allies for that specific reason.

<sup>6</sup> “O you who believe! do not take the Jews and the Christians for friends; they are friends of each other; and whoever amongst you takes them for a friend, then surely he is one of them; surely Allah does not guide the unjust people.” (Al-Mā'idah verse 51)

## Exercise 1

Let the students fill in the type of leadership that applies to the Hadith:

Military leader - religious leader - mufti – judge

HADĪTH	Type of leadership
Khabab Ibn Mundhir was on the day of Badr critical of the Prophet's military strategy. When he understood that the strategy was an opinion of the prophet and was not divinely inspired, he proposed a different approach to the prophet. The Prophet chose Khabab's proposal because he believed it was better. That was the Prophet's philosophy, he consulted the Companions and considered their opinions to be very important. The companions, in turn, were able to distinguish between the human contribution (profane) and the Divine.	Military Leader
Treaty of Ḥudaybiyah "In your name, O God! This is the peace treaty between Muḥammad ibn Abdallāh and Suhayl ibn Amr. They have agreed to rest their arms for ten years. During this time, each party will be safe, and neither will the other be injured; no secret damage will be done, but honesty and honor prevail between them. Whoever wants to enter into a treaty or covenant with Muḥammad in Arabia can do this, and whoever wants to enter into a treaty or covenant with the Quraish can do this. And if a Quraishite comes without the permission of his guardian to Muḥammad, he will be delivered to the Quraish; but if, on the other hand, one of Muḥammad's people comes to the Quraish, he is not delivered to Muḥammad. This year, Muḥammad, with his companions, must withdraw from Mecca, but next year, he can come to Mecca and stay for three days, but without their weapons except those of a traveler and the swords still in their sheaths . "	Political leader
Ḥadīth of the five pillars: You will encounter people of the book, teach them the taḥwīd first. If they understand / accept this concept then tell them that Allah has put out five prayers a day. If they have understood / accepted this concept tell them that Allah has prescribed zakat and this means in concrete terms that part of their wealth is given to the poor ....	Religious leader
"A person from the Ansar (native of Medina) asked the Prophet Muḥammad for advice regarding a disagreement with Zubayr (a migrant from Mecca) about the fertilization of soil. The Prophet asked Zubayr to fertilize half of his soil - although he is entitled to more - and then let the water flow to the Ansari's soil. The Ansari got angry and said to the prophet, "It is because he is a relative of yours." The prophet also got angry and said to Zubayr, "Fertilize your soil completely and then let the water flow."	Judge
Ḥadīth from Hind bint "Utba and her husband Abū Sufyān:" Hind said to the prophet: Abū Sufyān is a miserly person. He does not give me and my children enough maintenance money, except what I take without his knowledge. The prophet replied, "Take from his money what is enough to cover your costs and those of your children.	Mufti
Mugīth was madly in love with his wife Barirah. But Barirah did not like him and wanted to divorce him. The Prophet tried to intercede, "The Prophet said to Barirah," Will you come back to Muḡīth, he is the father of your children! " Barirah (with all respect she had for the prophet) said honestly, "O messenger of God, is this an order you ask me to carry out?". The prophet replied: No, I am only a mediator. She replies without any embarrassment: "No messenger from God, I don't want it"	Mediator

# 1.5 POLARIZATION

## 1.5.1 DOES THE QURAN (DE) POLARIZE?

“The we-they differences are presented as factual truths. Facts have only a limited effect on polarization. This is because it is pre-eminently an emotional dynamic. Polarization is not a rational, but an emotional process that responds to feelings.

Polarization is a universal dynamic. Everyone-including you- subdivides people in groups. There is nothing wrong with that. Binary thinking is even as old as humans. It was a way of estimating whether an environment was safe or not. This way of thinking has made us who we are today. By thinking in ‘we-terms’ we confirm our identity. And identity offers security and guidance.



Figure 1.15  
Source: © Jürgen Fälchle  
Adobe Stock

It becomes problematic when the we-group opposes the (supposed) identity of the side group. This ensures an increasing mutual tension. People move further apart. More and more people feel the pressure to choose one of the two parties. In this way, a reinforcing process of alienation ensues that can eventually lead to aggression or even war”.<sup>7</sup>

Verse 51 of surat Al- Mā'idah may give the reader the impression that the Quran is polarizing, for the verse divides the Arabian Peninsula into religious groups, namely Jews and Christians on the one side and Muslims on the other. The Quran prohibits Muslims from taking Jews and Christians as allies.

## 1.5.2 WE-THEY AND CONNECT



Figure 1.16  
Diversity  
Source: © vector\_s/  
Adobe Stock

At the time, Muslims and Jews were at odds with breach of contract and the Quran gave legitimacy to the Prophet as a leader to apply it. The capacity of the prophet as a leader should not simply be applied by everyone (see Chapter 3).

Unfortunately, Muslim extremists use this verse - by taking it out of context to polarize. This is called “the pushers” by the philosopher Brandsma. Those “pushers” use the verse and make extreme statements using absolute terms: All Jews are enemies, all Christians are enemies. While the Jews in

<sup>7</sup> Polarisation, Polarisation uitgelegd; <https://wij-zij.be/polarisation-uitgelegd/> (access 03.04.2020).

the verse were the Jews of the Arabian Peninsula who violated the pact with the Prophet PBUH. Therefore, those absolute terms are totally out of place.

But according to the polarization model of philosopher Brandsma, there are always two pushers who compete in the public arena: a “pusher” in one camp will always find a counterpart in the other camp. The opposite in our story is the Islamophobic who use exactly the same verse as the Muslim extremists to polarize. They also use general terms: All Muslims are anti-Semites.

Then you have the joiners who support the pushers, those who have chosen camp under pressure from the pusher. They usually follow the pushers out of ignorance.

Last but not least you have the silent group. A large, heterogeneous group that does not choose a camp. Because some are indifferent, and others because they want to be very involved and nuanced, and then you have others because their profession requires them not to choose sides. Typical of this “silent” middle group is that they are invisible in the public debate. That is why today we usually hear statements such as: “Where are the moderate Muslims?” “Why don’t moderate Muslims make their voices heard?” The question we may have to ask is: “Do Muslims get a podium?”

The bridge builder should focus more on the silent group and try to convince them. Then he may not put any energy into the pushers. However, they do not realize that they are fueling in this way: they adopt the terms of the pushers and actually offer the pushers a forum to contrast their monologue. In this way, their way of working is often counterproductive. It’s not up to the middle. Therefore, they must give the silent group the context of the verse in the Quran with all the nuances. The pushers recruit their joiners into the silent group, as is the case with many young people who have left for Syria.

### 1.5.3 EXERCISES

STATEMENT	YES	NO
The following verse from the Quran is central to the message of Imam Benhaddou. <i>"And of His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth and the diversity of your languages and your colors. Indeed in that are signs for those of knowledge."</i> (Quran 30:22)	<b>x</b>	
Diversity is something natural	<b>x</b>	
Despite the good intention to connect, there are bottlenecks	<b>x</b>	
Connecting should not be constructive		<b>x</b>
Sharing experiences is not important to prevent polarization.		<b>x</b>
Education can make a preventive effort by combating segregation	<b>x</b>	
There is little segregation in our education		<b>x</b>
The media give a positive picture about Islam		<b>x</b>

## Exercise 1: Reading Text Imam Khalid Benhaddou And Song Sami Yusuf

Assignment:

This fragment is in line with the following quote from Imam Benhaddou  
Students read the text as a class or individually.

Afterwards they watch and listen to the song of the singer Sami Yusuf “Forgotten Promises” on YouTube. The students then have to solve the questions associated with the song. Afterwards, the link between the reading text of Khalid Benhaddou and the message of the song is discussed.

See Appendix for the lyrics of the song

### Quote imam Khalid Benhaddou

“Islam and other religions invite engagements beyond their own philosophical boundaries.

I am thinking of commitments that benefit society in the public interest. Then I think: **Poverty that we as a society can fight together**, standing up for the weak and etc. These are all commitments that can connect us as a society. And where we can partly **depolarize** because it puts a common goal first and not focus on what your roots is..”

Sami Yusuf is a Muslim and British singer with Azerbaijani-Iranian roots. Sami Yusuf’s music is spiritual and religious. They contain an Islamic message about connecting people, God, the prophet Moḥammed, diversity, values and norms ...Those who listen carefully will find a universal message.

He uses his fame to perform humanitarian work. He is an ambassador to the United Nations. (Global Ambassador Against Hunger and Elite Ambassador “for the UN World Interfaith Harmony Week).

#### **1. Clapping with hands and flashing with fingers is a symbol in the video. What do you think the singer would mean with this symbol?**

To wake up humanity.

#### **2. What does he mean with “the promise we have made as humanity”?**

That we have a duty to take care of each other as humans. That we are all one.

#### **3. What does he mean “sisters side by side”, “brothers side by side”.**

He is referring to brotherhood and that all people must stand side by side.

# APPENDIX: SONG LYRICS

## SAMI YUSUF - FORGOTTEN PROMISES

### Song lyrics in English

*Tonight the world will sleep  
But hunger will not wait  
For promises we made  
We share one soul  
We share one land  
We have one time to understand  
We are one humankind  
Brothers side by side  
We'll have no regret  
We will not forget  
We are one humankind  
Sisters side by side  
We'll have no regret  
We will not forget  
Samiḥna ya allāh  
Wa irrḥamna ya Rabbah  
Wa imnaḥ rizqaka lil-'afwah  
Wa abi'd anha kul al-aah  
Our words must count  
Hunger will not wait  
For promises we made  
We share one soul  
We share one land  
We have one time to understand  
We are one humankind  
Brothers side by side  
We'll have no regret...  
Samiḥna ya allāh  
Wa irrḥamna ya Rabbah  
Wa imnaḥ rizqaka lil-'afwah  
Wa abi'd anha kul al-aah  
Our words must count  
Hunger will not wait  
For promises we made*

# 1.5 GLOSSARY

## **Ma'ud al'rab**

This is a term used by the great theologian Abū Ishāq al-Shāṭibī to emphasize the spirit of the Arabs during the time of revelation. With this he means that the knowledge of the habits and the way of life of the Arabs is an important fact to understand the Quran.

## **The Destructive Arabs**

Are considered to be the descendants of the prophet Nūḥ.

## **The Pure Arabs**

Also known as the Qahtanian Arabs, they resided in Yemen.

## **The Arabized Arabs**

Are considered to be direct descendants of 'Ismā'īl and Prophet Muḥammed.

## **Meccan verses**

Are verses revealed before the immigration of the Prophet from Mecca to Medina.

## **The reason of revelation or sabāb an-nuzūl:**

Asbāb an-nuzūl (pl.) .) means the reasons why a verse was revealed. This is related to events that occurred during the time of the prophet upon which the Quran responded with an answer.

## **Pushers**

Groups that make extreme statements about the (identity of the) other, loud and visible. Pusher are 100% convinced they are right. They express themselves in absolute terms: all, nobody, always, never, everyone... There are always two pushers who compete in the public arena: a pusher in one camp will always find a counterpart in the other.

## **Joiners**

The joiners are the supporters of the pushers, those who have chosen camp under pressure from the pusher. The joiner is less extreme than the pusher but openly chooses color.

## **Silentgroup**

A large, heterogeneous group that does not choose a camp. Some because they are indifferent, others because they just want to be very involved and nuanced, and still others because their profession requires them not to choose sides. These are the professional neutrals: teachers, police officers, judges, etc. Typical of this 'silent' middle group is that they are invisible in the public debate.

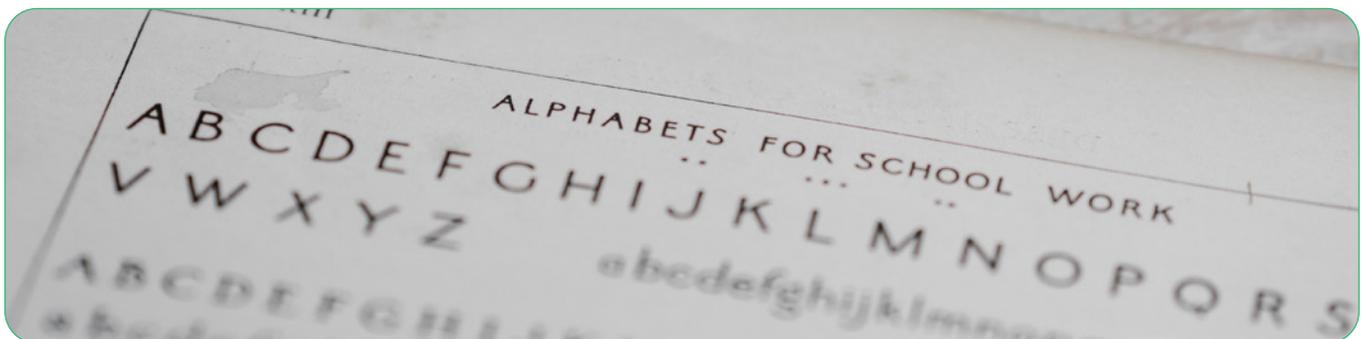


Photo: © Annie Spratt | Unsplash

## 1.6 TRANSCRIPT OF THE VIDEO

We see kids playing, talking amongst each other like any normal day at school. Then we see a group of 3 kids pushing around 2 smaller kids, Ahmed and Pieter-Jan, who are being bullied.

*Bully 1: Here they are again the goodie-good shoes...*

*The bully pushes Ahmed on the floor and we see him getting angry.*

*Bully 1: Oh no watch out!! he might use his math-head to do some calculations... hahaha*

*Pieter-Jan: Just leave us alone!*

*Bully 1: Oh noo...what are you going to do?*

*The bully is going towards Pieter-Jan, intimidating him*

*Pieter-Jan: euh... my friend here has a black belt in karate!*

*Bully 1: Ah seriously? (turns towards Ahmed again) hahaha why don't you show it then... come on!*

Ahmed stands up and the bully pushes him back down...

*Bully 1: wow... a black belt? hahaha*

We hear the school bell ringing!

*Bully 1: aah saved by the bell it seems!*

The bully backs down.

He puts his fingers to his eyes and then pointing to Ahmed. Then he turns around and walks away...

Pieter-Jan turns to his friend.

*Pieter-Jan: I know how hard you would have liked to show your black belt in karate to those guys... So why didn't you?*

*Ahmed: Yeah I know... but the principal would kick me out of school if that would have happened...*

We see cars being assembled in a factory. Haroon a 40-year-old Muslim is working at the assembly line with 2 white colleagues. Then the director (who is a beautiful woman) walks passed. Both white colleagues turn their head when she passes and when she is gone, they turn to one another.

*Colleague 1: Sigh... What a woman! I want to ask her out so badly!*

*Colleague 2: Euhm, last I checked you were still married?*

*Colleague 1: Ah yeah... But I could convert to Islam and take a second one, no... hahaha*

(turns to Haroon): Hey Haroon, how many wives do you guys get?

Haroon looks to his colleagues and is a bit perplexed.

*Haroon: guys, there are conditions to take a second wife in our belief. I only have one for instance.*

The Colleagues don't even listen to his answer and walk away. Colleague 1 (not listening to what Haroon says): I would at least take 3: one for cleaning the house, one for cooking and one for...

*Colleague 2: hahaha, you dog...*

We see Haroon getting frustrated by the situation and things the colleagues are saying but he refrains from saying anything.

We see Haroon arriving at his house.

We see Ahmed and his family (his father, Haroon, his mother, Fatima and his sister, Zeynep) at the dinner table together. It is quite silent as Haroon and Ahmed both had a very bad day. The mom of the family tries to open a conversation.

*Fatima: So how was everybody's day?*

Nobody answers.

*Zeynep: Ahmed got picked on again in school today!*

*Haroon's eyes open up widely and we see he is getting furious.*

*Fatima: Ahmed, is this true?*

*Ahmed: Sighs... yes mother... but I didn't get into a fight!*

*Fatima: Thank Allah!*

*Haroon (screams): I can't take this any longer!!! These people think they are so much better than us! (swears in Arabic:)*

Haroon leaves the room and everyone left behind is in shock

*Fatima: Let him cool down a bit, I'll go talk to him.*

Fatima gets up and leaves as well.

Haroon is sitting behind his computer in his room. He is clicking angrily on his pc. The door opens and Fatima enters.

*Fatima: Haroon, are you ok? You have been acting so strangely the last couple of months! You changed your clothes, you don't want to see Karim anymore, (stresses) your best friend! And you keep up late every night surfing on the internet and...*

*Haroon: I need time to think!*

*Fatima: Dear, please let's talk! And why don't you call me by my name anymore, we have been married for 16 years now!*

*Haroon: Fatima leaves disappointed. We see Haroon locking the door.*

He puts himself back into his chair and puts on his headphones. We then hear the pc:

*Computer: And never will the Jews or the Christians approve of you until you follow their religion.*

*Haroon repeats: Indeed, the guidance of Allah is the only guidance.*

*Computer: "You who believe! Take not the Jews and the Christians for friends. They are friends one to another and who takes them as friends is indeed one of them. Verily, Allah guides not the unjust people. If you were to follow their desires after this knowledge has come to you, you would be against Allah and have no protector nor helper."*

The scene ends on Haroon's eyes who are completely mesmerized. Then there is a transition on Haroon waking up and walking towards the kitchen for breakfast.

The family is eating together. Haroon arrives last, looking very tired. He sits down silently.

*Fatima: Do you feel better dear?*

*Haroon: Not at all...I hate my work; I hate living here. I don't speak the language, I'm the only person at the workplace who isn't Christian. And they make fun of us and our religion. The only thing we can do is protect ourselves.*

*Ahmed: Father, what are you saying?*

*Haroon: Son, we are Muslims and our religion does not allow us to mingle with unbelievers like Christian, or any non-Muslims people.*

*Everyone: what?!*

*Haroon: We can't be friends with them. The Koran forbids it. Do you understand?? We are different and they want to make us like them.*

*Ahmed: Uhm... and what about my classmates and my best friend Pieter-Jan?*

Haroon stands up will putting his fist on the table!

*Haroon: Show some respect to your parents or you will find yourself without a home! Our religion is never wrong! You can't be friends with Pieter-Jan anymore!! Do you understand?!"*

Ahmed looks down and is silent while closing his eyes...

Classroom

The clock ticks towards 4PM. We see the end of the day at school. All kids jump up when hearing the school bell.

*Kids: yeeey!!*

*Teacher: So don't forget to read page 42 up until 55 for tomorrow!*

We see the kids walking out. Pieter-Jan approaches Ahmed.

*Pieter-Jan: Hey Ahmed, my mom said it's ok for Friday! You know... our sleepover! We can finally take a shot at our high score!*

*Ahmed: euhm... sorry... Pieter-Jan I can't... I have other things to do...*

*Pieter-Jan: but you promised?*

*Ahmed:.. I'm sorry... It's my dad, he went completely nuts saying he doesn't want us to be friends anymore because you are not a Muslim... I'll have to listen to him until this blows over...*

*Pieter-Jan: But that is ridiculous!*

*Ahmed: I know but I have to show respect to my father... I have no choice!*

Ahmed silently walks away leaving Pieter-Jan shocked. He walks to a car.

Ahmed's father is waiting in the car to pick up his son. Ahmed steps into the backseat and his father drives off...

*Haroon: Who was that you were talking to?*

*Ahmed: sighs...That was Pieter-Jan...*

Haroon (gets angry): *This is unacceptable! Wasn't I clear when I forbade you to have contact with him! Stay away from Christians and Jews and all other infidels!*

Ahmed: *But Father,...*

Haroon: *There are no buts... This is your last warning!! Or you are no longer a son of mine...*

Ahmed looks down and is clearly very sad

Ahmed: *okay father...*

We see Fatima gets a message:

Karim: *Fatima, I'm at the door, I came as soon as I could*

We see Fatima going to the door while watching through the window. She opens the door and Karim is standing there.

Fatima: *Thank you so much for coming Karim.*

Karim: *No worries, Fatima, he is my best friend. Where is he?*

Fatima: *He is upstairs again. Please go talk to him.*

We see Karim going up.

Samir is visiting Harun

We see Haroon behind his computer watching the same video as before.

Then someone knocks on the door.

Haroon: *I'm busy now.*

The door opens and Haroon looks to the door and is surprised.

Harun: *"Salaam Karim."*

Karim: *"Aleykoum Salam. It's been a long time since we've seen each other."*

Harun: *"Indeed my friend, come in."*

Karim: *"Harun, you have been acting very distant. Are you trying to avoid me?"*

Harun: *"It has nothing to do with you. I don't feel well. I'm very frustrated. I don't like this country anymore. I don't feel comfortable living here as a Muslim." My friend you have a lot of knowledge about islam. I reflected a lot about surah Al-Maidah, verse 51:*

O you who have believed, do not take the Jews and the

Christians as allies. They are [in fact] allies of one another. And whoever is an ally to them among you - then indeed, he is [one] of them. Indeed, Allah guides not the wrongdoing people.

Karim: *"Harun my dear brother, if you want to understand the Quran and the meaning of religious verses you have to understand the context, because these texts usually emerged as answers to problems that occurred within the social contexts of that time. Taking a single verse out of its context can result in a misinterpretation of the purpose and essence of those verses."*

Harun: *"What do you mean?"*

Karim: *"At that time, the newly emerged Muslim community was persecuted by Arab, Jewish and Christian tribes. They broke a charter and tried to outnumber the weak Muslim community. This war was a very specific situation with specific tribes. Before and after the war, the Prophet Muhammad established love, tolerance and coexistence between different communities and tribes, regardless their religion. The constitution of Medina is an example."*

Harun: *"Really... interesting..."*

Samir: *"Yes my friend, we have to avoid the misguided use of sacred texts, we have to understand the context in which the texts appeared the first time."*

Harun: *"I really missed our dialogues my friend."*

Harun: *"Ahmed, listen to the wise words of your uncle Samir. You will learn a lot."*

Pieter-Jan

We see the 2 kids playing on a videogame.

Pieter-Jan: *I'm so glad your dad changed his mind!*

Ahmed: *Oh believe me... me too!*

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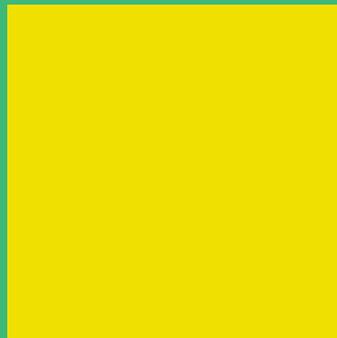
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# 2

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ENCOUNTER WITH SACRED TEXTS:  
TEXTS OF VIOLENCE

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## MODULE TWO

# ENCOUNTER WITH SACRED TEXTS: TEXTS OF VIOLENCE

## 2.1 GENERAL INTRODUCTION

### 2.1.1 STRUCTURE OF THE MANUAL

This manual for the teachers is a didactic package in which the following theme is handled: “Encounter with sacred texts: texts of violence.”. This package has been developed for the age group of 12 to 18-year-old and offers the teacher or supervisor of a learning group the opportunity to develop this theme at the level of their own class group.

In this manual, the teacher can work on various topics that are consistent with the overarching theme “Encounter with sacred texts: texts of violence.”. Based on impulses and didactic suggestions, it is possible to approach this theme from different perspectives. Impulses are elements that the teacher can bring into the classroom to start the conversation. This manual contains a variety of impulses with different levels of difficulty. These impulses aim to contribute to the learning process and exist in various forms. It is not the intention to use all impulses. The teacher can select the most appropriate impulses based on (the initial situation in) his learning group. The didactic suggestions are concrete proposals to work with the impulses and are aimed at philosophical reflection and communication. This ensures that the teacher can approach in a varied way the different impulses that match the own learning group.

This manual makes a distinction between ‘basic material’ and ‘deepening’. The basic subject matter is standard in the manual for the students and takes two hours to complete. In addition, the teacher has the choice to deepen the students’ knowledge by means of the extra chapters with accompanying impulses and didactic suggestions, which are provided in this manual.

- First, there will be a general outline of the interpretation rules of the Quran. This teaches students to understand what is in the Quran. In this way, the student learns to handle the Quran correctly and not selectively. Finally, he/she learns to place verses in the right context. This chapter is part of the basic learning material for the students.

- Secondly, the term 'Jihad' needs to be explained by looking at the original meaning of the word. Then the students learn to put 'the verses of the sword' in context. This chapter is part of the basic learning material for the students.
- The last chapter addresses the question of understanding the term '*sharia*'. The student learns the original meaning of the term '*sharia*' in order to avoid a misinterpretation of this term.

In conclusion, this manual contains a glossary in which all difficult concepts are succinctly explained at the level of the student, Followed by a bibliography.

## 2.1.2 CONTENT OF THE MANUAL

This didactic package deals with the theme "Encounter with sacred texts: texts of violence." For the starting point of this manual, we chose to work with verse 191 Surat Al-Baqara: "And kill them wherever you find them and drive them out where they drove you."<sup>1</sup>

The starting point of this manual is a video clip in which we show a possibly real situation of the daily life of some students. The video clip is a general introduction of the theme 'Encounter with sacred texts: texts of violence' for the learning group that the teacher can choose as a starting point to deeply discuss this theme with one or more impulses and didactic suggestions from this manual.

The clip tells the story of young students that are struggling at school and are faced with deep frustrations. A discussion arises in class about the interpretation of the above-mentioned Quranic verse. When the students cannot get out of the discussion, the teacher intervenes. She also has a hard time formulating a correct answer, without hurting one of the students. A solution is presented in the fragment. More specifically, an Islam expert is invited to provide nuances about contextualization and rational interpretation of the Quran.

<sup>1</sup> <https://quran.com/2/191?translations=17,18,19,20,21,84,85,22,95,101> (access 18/08/2020).

## 2.2 VIOLENT TEXTS

### 2.2.1 IS THE QURAN A VIOLENT TEXT?

When reading the Quran, it is important to ask yourself for what purpose you are doing it. The position you take after the reading also differs from person to person.

We limit ourselves to the following 3 purposes:

1. Understand what is in the Quran.
2. The reader only wants to read and memorize the text.
3. The reader only wants to commemorate Allah or do *Dhikr*.



Figure 2.1  
Source: © BillionPhotos.com / Adobe Stock

### 2.2.2 UNDERSTAND WHAT IS IN THE QURAN

For this purpose, it is important to apply the theological rules of interpretation. When speaking of interpretation, we must take into account three factors:

1. Reader
2. Author
3. Place

**The Reader:** The reader is of course a person with feelings, a certain background and life experience. These feelings, background and life experience will play an important role while reading. To understand a text, you always must consider who the author of the text is, the place and context.

**Read the example below to understand the meaning of this background influences:**

As part of an exchange project, a teacher from Belgium went to teach in a poor village in Burundi for 2 months. The first lesson was about the family and society. The teacher projected an image in class. In the picture, there was a large villa with a beautiful garden and a small cage with chickens.

The teacher asked, "What do you see?"

Most students gave the following answer: "We see chickens."

The teacher did not expect this answer. After the lesson, the teacher asked for an explanation for the answer that was given. The student replied: "most students in the class are poor and hungry so the chicken is the first thing they saw."



Figure 2.2  
Source: © GraphicsRF /  
Adobe Stock

This example teaches us that the feelings and background of the students influenced how they experienced the image. The students were hungry (feelings) and they lived in a poor village (the background). They were not familiar with the style of the house represented in the

picture. Everyone notices what is important to him or her. The students think food is important because they are hungry, so they chose the chicken. A chicken means food to them.

The teacher chose that image from his own perspective. He considers what is in the picture very normal. He comes from a prosperous country, where houses are quite large and usually have a garden.



Figure 2.3  
Source: © Brett /  
Adobe Stock

This is also the case with the Quran. The Quran was created in a specific context and time spirit. Every part of the Quran has its reason for revelation. Every person who reads the Quran also has his own background. A jihadist who searches for violence in the Quran will find it in it. A person who has a passion for animals will mainly remember the passages that dealing with animals. Each person will find a snippet of text and keep in mind things that interest them. When reading the Quran, the rules of interpretation are of great importance. This means that you cannot just interpret everything in your own way. You must bring all the Quranic verses together. It is a whole in which you must try to discover a chronological line. In addition, we must also take into account two periods in which the Quranic verses are revealed: The Medina period and the Meccan period.

### 2.2.3 SELECTIVE READING

The problem of misinterpretation also occurs when selectively reading Quranic verses about violence. You should not selectively extract violent verses to interpret them literally. It is important to situate violent passages in the social context in which they originated. Violent Quranic verses refer to situations that happened at that time, in a society that functioned completely differently. That society was a tribal society that is not comparable to our current context.

A lot of conflicts took place in the seventh century in the Arabian Peninsula. They tell us about what happened then and in that specific place, about conflicts with specific tribes and persons. They also tell us more about the political actions that the Prophet Mohammed has undertaken. Every era and every society had to deal with its violent conflicts. The challenges they faced are not the challenges we face today. The Quran on its own is not violent, although there are passages that deal with violence, death and destruction. In the next section, we will discuss in detail how to understand violence in its context.

#### 2.2.4 CONTEXTUAL APPROACH

“And kill them wherever you find them, and drive them out where they drove you.”<sup>2</sup>

Jihadists use this verse from the Quran to justify their violent acts. At first sight, this verse appears very violent. It orders Muslims to kill unbelievers.

A jihadist focuses only on this kind of verses. This tells us more about how he or she reads the Quran. As we discussed in the previous chapter, the reader reads being affected by his feelings, background and life experiences. A jihadist selects Quranic verses that are violent to legitimize his own violent beliefs and even acts.

This way of reading wrongs the Quran. The place, the context and intention of the author or *Maqsad Ashari* is essential to understand the meaning behind it.

The verse: “And kill them wherever you find them, and drive them out where they drove you out”<sup>3</sup>. is revealed in Medina. The verses of Medina are contextually bound. It is important to study the specific context of Medina.

The Muslims from Medina had fled from Mecca. Their enemies could attack at any time. To survive, they had to be very careful. This verse seems to allow Muslims to kill their enemies if their enemies attack them first. Several Muslim theologians such as Taher Ibn Ashour and Ibn Khatir share this interpretation of self-defense.

Ibn Khatir states the following about the meaning of the verse: “Focus on their struggles and drive them out of the land from which they drove you out, just as they focus on your expulsion”<sup>4</sup>. The verse clearly takes place in the situation of a war and from a defensive position.

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> IBN KATHIR, *Tafsir fi 'lum Alquraan*, Beiroet, Dar Al-Koutboub Al'Imiya, 2010, volume 1, p. 523-524.

Taher Ibn Ashour explains the verse: “And kill them if they fight you wherever you find them”<sup>5</sup> as follows. Here, too, it is clear that it is a situation of war and that it describes a position of self-defensive. In the verse before, it talks about the defensive position and that hitting back is enough to stop violence: “And fight in the path of Allah against those who fight against you. But don’t push the boundaries”<sup>6</sup>.

The entire context in which the verse arose is important. At that time, the young Muslim community was still in its infancy and weak. Also keep in mind that at that time you had little chance of survival on the Arabian Peninsula as a weak community.

The Prophet Mohammed undertook military and political actions as a leader to protect his community. The qualification of the Prophet as a leader has an important condition: the actions he carried out relate only to leaders or governments. The Prophet has taken these actions from his position as a political leader, so the text only applies to political leaders.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://quran.com/2/191?translations=17,18,19,20,21,84,85,22,95,101> (access 18/08/2020).

<sup>6</sup> <https://quran.com/2/190?translations=85,84,22,21,20,19,17,95,18,101> (access 18/08/2020).

## 2.2.5 EXERCISES

### EXERCISE 1: FILL IN THE BLANK

Fill in the missing words.

Muslim theologians – Focuses - Feelings - Violent acts - Medina – Belief

“And kill them wherever you find them, and drive them out where they expelled you?”

Jihadists use this verse from the Quran to justify their **violent acts**. At first sight, this verse appears to be very violent. It orders Muslims to kill unbelievers.

A jihadist **focuses** only on these kinds of verses. This tells us more about how he reads the Quran. As we discussed in the previous chapter, the reader reads a text along with his **feelings**, background and life experiences.

A jihadist selects Quranic verses that are violent to legitimize his own violent **belief**.

This way of reading wrongs the Quran. The place, context and intention of the author or “*Maqsad Ashari*” is essential to understand the Quran.

The verses of **Medina** are contextually bound. It is important to study the specific context of Medina.

The Muslims in Medina had fled from Mecca at the time. Their enemies could attack them at any time. To survive, they had to be extremely wary. This verse allows Muslims to kill their enemies if their enemies attack them first. Several **Muslim theologians** such as Taher Ibn Ashour and Ibn Khatir share this interpretation.

### EXERCISE 2: SCHEDULE ASPECTS

There are three aspects to consider when reading a text.  
Complete the schedule below:



## 2.3 THE JIHAD

### 2.3.1 THE ORIGINAL MEANING OF JIHAD

'Jihad' is a term often misinterpreted by both jihadists and Islam critics. Both sides interpret the term violently. The noun jihad comes from the word jahada. It means effort (jhud). Originally it was about the effort that must be made to achieve a goal. One can clearly deduce this from a verse from the Quran: "But if they (the parents) insist (jahada) to worship other Gods with me of which you have no knowledge, do not obey them...."<sup>7</sup>.

The concept of a "holy war" does not exist in the Islam. For the term war, the term *qitaal* (battle) is used. Translating or explaining the term *jihad* as a holy war is therefore wrong.

### 2.3.2 HOW TO INTERPRET THE VERSES IN THE CORAN

Verse 191 of surat al-Baqara is often abused by jihadists and critics of Islam. One group wants to justify violence, the other group wants to portray Islam as a violent religion.

At first glance, the first verse says that Muslims are allowed to kill polytheistic worshippers or non-Muslims. Let's study the verse through the following aspects:

- a. Context of the verse
- b. Kind of verse
- c. Reason of Revelation



Figure 2.4  
Source: © zef art /  
Adobe Stock

<sup>7</sup> <https://quran.com/29> (access 18/08/2020).

### **a. Context of revelation**

This verse was revealed during a war between Muslims and non-Muslims from Mecca. As mentioned earlier, the entire context in which the verse was created is essential. The young Muslim community was weak. They had little chance of survival. The Prophet made political and military decisions from his position as leader to protect his community.

### **b. Kind of verse**

“And kill them wherever you find them, and drive them out where they expelled you?”

The Quran can be divided into two categories: Meccan verses and Medina verses.

#### **Meccan verses**

Verses Revealed in Mecca. The Meccan period focuses on the foundations and basic principles of Islam or “attawhid” (monotheism).

The emphasis goes to the universal values and norms such as justice, fairness, equality, etc. These verses are very clear and self-explanatory. For that reason, no detailed explanation can be found regarding Islamic regulations regarding these verses.

These verses were revealed before the Prophet Muhammad immigrated.

#### **Medinan verses**

These verses are more detailed in nature and take place after the immigration from Mecca to Medina. They are about a specific context and about a specific society.

They are contextual just like ‘the verses of the sword’. Therefore, they cannot simply be used outside that place and that time.

Therefore, verse 191 of surat al-Baqara is a Medinan verse. Medinan verses, as explained earlier, are more detailed in nature and context. In other words, this verse should not be taken out of context and placed in the light of Meccan verses, which emphasize righteousness.

### c. Reason of Revelation

Reason of revelation or *Asbāb an-nuzūl* (pl.) means the causes or reasons why a verse was revealed. This refers to events that occurred in the time of the Prophet to which the Quran responded with an answer.

The reason for revelation of verse 191 of surat al-Baqara is that the Muslims of Medina agreed on a treaty with the Meccans. There was tension between the different parties. When the Meccans violated the treaty, the Quran gave permission to the Muslims to make war with the Meccans. This allowed the Muslims to defend themselves and protect themselves from destruction.



Figure 2.5  
Source: © BillionPhotos.  
com / Adobe Stock

### 2.3.3 EXERCISES

#### EXERCISE 1

Fill in the basics principles of Islam revealed in Mecca.

Honesty - Monotheism - Peace - Solidarity – Harmony



## EXERCISE 2: The Jihad of love.

Show the students the video “The Jihad of Love”  
(Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=clkzGkyqzoo>)  
Then let them answer the questions below.

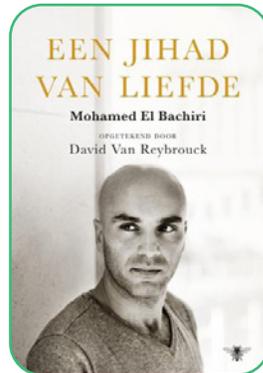


Figure 2.6  
Source: © [Goodreads](#)

Mohamed El Bachiri is a Moroccan Belgian, Muslim and lives in Molenbeek. He lost his wife Loubna Lafquiri during the attacks on March 22, 2016 in Brussels. Mohamed was left as a widow with three young children. His plea for a jihad of love in the TV program ‘De Afspraak’ became one of the most watched videos on Flemish television.

### 1. What made Mohamed El Bachiri call for jihad during an evening in a Molenbeek church?

Love and fraternity

### 2. What does Mohamed mean by: “I call young people to jihad”?

He is talking about a jihad that knows no hate.

### 3. In the Quran it says: “*La ikraha fi dine.*” What does this mean?

There is no compulsion in faith.

### 4. Mohamed is talking about “The search for truth”. Which path did he choose?

The path of Islam.

### 5. How does a humanist Muslim view the Quran?

He knows how to place the texts of the Quran in context, especially the battle verses and to treat them as stories from the 7th century.

### 6. What does Mohamed end his plea with?

Allah ou akbar, a tribute to God.

### EXERCISE 3: A lettre to Al-Baghdadi.

120 islamic scholars have written an open letter that was addressed to Al Baghdadi (the leader of IS). They explain to him in detail why the ideology of IS goes against the basic principles of islam.

The students read the letter and then they answer the questions below.

#### Summary of the letter to Al-Baghdadi

##### 1. A fatwa

It is forbidden in Islam to issue a *fatwa* [religious decree] without having the required training. Even then, a fatwa must follow Islamic theology as laid down in the classical texts.

Furthermore, it is forbidden to quote [hereby] only some or only part of a verse from the Qur'an without including the Qur'an as a whole and the *ahadit* [the tradition of the deeds and words of the Prophet] as a whole. on the subject in question.

There are strict rules for a fatwa; one may not use verses as an argument at will without observing the entirety of the Qur'an and the ahadith.

##### 2. The language

It is forbidden in Islam to impose obligations without a thorough knowledge of Arabic.

##### 3. Simplism

It is forbidden in Islam to simplify *Shari'ah* [Islamic law] and to ignore established Islamic science.

##### 4. Differences

[For scholars] it is permissible in Islam to disagree except on the foundation of religion that all Muslims should know.

##### 5. The reality

In Islam it is forbidden to ignore contemporary reality when issuing decrees.

##### 6. You will not kill

It is forbidden in Islam to kill someone.

##### 7. Nor shall you kill ...

It is illegal in Islam to kill envoys, ambassadors and diplomats therefore, also to kill journalists and aid workers.

## **8. The jihad**

*Jihad* [holy war] may only be used in defense. This is also prohibited without a legitimate reason, without a legitimate purpose and without observing the rules of conduct.

## **9. Infidels**

It is forbidden in Islam to declare someone an unbeliever (non-Muslim) unless he or she publicly declares this disbelief.

## **10. You shall not ...**

It is forbidden in Islam to harm or mistreat Christians or other people with a [Holy] Book in any way.

## **11. The Yazidis**

[Pronounce: "Yezidis"; write 'Yazidi's']

It is mandatory to see the Yazidis as people with a Holy Book.

## **12. Slavery**

Islam is prohibited from re-introducing slavery. There is a worldwide consensus on this.

## **13. Repent**

It is forbidden in Islam to force people to repent.

## **14. Women**

It is forbidden in Islam to deny women their rights.

## **15. Children**

It is forbidden in Islam to deprive children of their rights.

## **16. Penalties**

It is forbidden in Islam to carry out judicial punishments without observing proper procedures of justice and mercy.

## **17. Torture**

It is illegal to torture people in Islam.

## **18. The deceased**

It is forbidden in Islam to deform a mortal remains.

## **19. God**

It is forbidden in Islam to attribute any evil to God.

## **20. The graves**

It is forbidden in Islam to destroy the tombs and tombs of prophets and their companions.

## 21. Rebellion

It is forbidden in Islam to rebel for any reason, except for explicit disbelief from the legislator and the prohibition to pray.

## 22. The caliphate

It is forbidden in Islam to create a caliphate without the consent of all Muslims.

## 23. The state

Islam permits a Muslim to be loyal to a person's nation or state.

## 24. Emigrate

Since the Prophet's death, Islam has not obliged anyone to emigrate anywhere

### Question:

#### 1. Which verses are about violence?

6, 7, 8, 10, 12, 17

#### 2. Which verses are about rights?

14, 15, 24,

#### 3. Which verses are about freedom

13, 4, 24

### 2.3.4 MORE EXPLANATION ABOUT THE TERM JIHAD

Muslims who use violence claim that jihad is one of the pillars of Islam, but the authentic sources, especially the Quran, but also the *hadiths* of the prophet Mohamed PBUH, all speak about the five pillars of Islam: the creed, the prayer, giving of alms, fasting during Ramadan, and going on a pilgrimage to Mecca once in a lifetime. The jihadists have added *jihad* themselves, for the sake of their ideological project. That is an important nuance.

This nuance does not mean that *jihad* is not a part of Islam and especially of the Islamic state structure. The word *jihad* comes from the Arabic word "*juhd*" which literally means "to make an effort", and not "holy war", an association often made. It is true that in most cases the term *jihad* in the Quran refers to 'the armed struggle', although there are also passages in which this term can be translated as a 'nonviolent and intellectual contestation' where the argumentation as a substitute for the weapon occurs.

*Jihad* is actually a term that covers many areas. In the Prophet's tradition, the word *jihad* is also often used to indicate an inner struggle. It used to be normal for a student to have to travel a long way to study. That too was considered a form of *jihad*. It can go even further: Once a man came to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and asked him his permission to go out for

*Jihad*, The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) asked him, "Are your parents alive?" He replied, 'Yes.' The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) then said to him, "Then your Jihad would be with them (i.e. in looking after them and being at their service)."

As is often the case, it is very important to understand *jihad* in the historical context in which this term was used. That context is comparable to a state structure today, as we can find it in any sovereign country. Let's illustrate this with an example. The state nowadays and in particular the Ministry of Defense, is responsible for the protection of state interests in the event of a potential threat. Furthermore, after the two world wars, the international community set up organizations that deal with international conflicts or conflicts with an international impact. It is therefore these institutions that consider whether or not to engage in warfare.

In the historical context of the concept of jihad, these structures were absent. The fault lines that determined the balance of power and, if necessary, resulted in wars and conflicts were of a completely different order. For example, the Roman Empire in the West or the Mongol Empire in the East used the mechanisms that existed at the time to protect their empire. The emerging Islamic empire and the jihad that helped protect this empire cannot be separated from that current mindset either.

Many Islamists oppose the idea of enrolling in these international structures, with the main argument that it is precisely these institutions that were created at a time when the Islamic countries were under Western protectorate. According to the Islamists, their main purpose is to protect the strong (the West) against a possible threat from the weak. But even following this line of reasoning, it cannot be denied that the only possible option for fundamental change lies within these institutions and not outside them.

In any case, it must be understood that the new balance of power that is emerging today requires international agreements and compromises to safeguard its own interests.

In the historical context in which the concept of jihad came about, very strict rules and conditions were formulated that the state had to meet effectively in order to engage in this armed struggle. For example, the interests of the Islamic state had to be seriously threatened. The countries under threat today in international relations and global politics can also call on the international community to defend their interests and go to war against outside threats. The conditions of that time hardly differ from the conditions (rules of engagement) that apply today for countries that would like to go to war".

## EXERCISE 4: Questions

Answer the following questions

### 1. Why is jihad added to the five pillars of Islam by the jihadists?

Because of their ideological project.

### 2. Why should we understand the term jihad in its historical context?

Because today's context is fundamentally different from the context where the term jihad originated.

### 3. What are the conditions that must be met in order to revert to armed struggle?

The interests of the Islamic state must be seriously threatened. The countries under threat today in international relations and global politics can also call on the international community to defend their interests and go to war against outside threats.

## 2.4 SHARIA

### 2.4.1 INTRODUCTION OF SHARIA

Many people associate the term “*sharia*” with injustice, harsh legislation and brutal punishments such as women’s oppression, corporal punishment, etc. This is because the media, certain politicians and jihadists use the term inappropriately. **But do they use the term correctly?**

The meaning of the term “*sharia*” means more than just Islamic law. It not only contains legislation, but also rituals, doctrine and philosophy. It is wrong to limit the translation of “*sharia*” only to “Islamic law”.

*Sharia* is not a law that contains strict rules. There is no book on “*sharia*” that contains Islamic laws as is the case with the Belgian code. All books on Islamic fiqh are individual interpretations of the Quran and Sunnah.

Allah’s words are eternal, but every person who interprets Allah’s words is a product of his time. There are thousands of tafsirs and books about the fiqh, everyone has a different interpretation and opinion. All those books are human works and can therefore contain errors contrary to the words of Allah.



Figure 2.7  
Source: © David Carillet /  
Adobe Stock

### 2.4.2 ORIGINAL MEANING OF THE TERM SHARIA

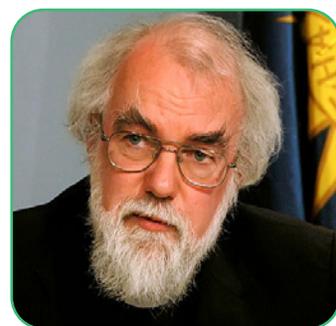
#### But what does “*sharia*” actually mean?

The Arabic term “*sharia*” originally means the path that leads to the water. This is not about a water well from which you get the water, but the path you have to follow to find a fertile place or a place where water flows.

Water stands for life, which means that “*sharia*” is the right path to follow to protect human nature. The natural disposition of man must be protected, and this will automatically lead to a more just and peaceful society. Unfortunately, this term is often misinterpreted, which gives a negative connotation of Islam.



Figure 2.8  
Source: © pierluigipalazzi  
Adobe Stock



The 104th Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams said, “If we are to think intelligently about the relations between Islam and British law, we need a fair amount of ‘deconstruction’ of crude oppositions and mythologies, whether of the nature of *sharia* or the nature of the Enlightenment”. This quote shows that he gave *Sharia* an extended meaning with depth. “

Figure 2.9  
Rowan Williams, 104  
de Aartsbisschop  
Canterbury, [https://  
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/  
Rowan\\_Williams](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rowan_Williams)

## 2.4.3 EXECRCISES

### Exercise 1: *Sharia*

The students answer the questions below.

#### 1. What does *sharia* mean?

The path that leads to the water.

#### 2. What is *sharia* often associated with?

With injustice, harsh legislation and brutal punishments such as women's oppression, corporal punishment,...

#### 3. What happens to society when man protects his human nature?

It will lead to a more peaceful society.

### Exercise 2: '*Sharia* above the law'.

Read part of the article by theologian Jonas Slaats and put a cross in the appropriate column.

#### **Sharia above the law:**

Sharia is not a series of laws that are neatly written in the Quran or in any other book. In other words, you cannot enter a library to get *sharia* from the rack of 'religious rules'.

As a concept, the word "*sharia*" merely refers to the idea that there are divine principles that support life and that an ethical guideline follows from those principles. In other words, if there is a God, it is likely that God will expect people to behave in a certain moral way. Evident examples: do not murder, do not steal, be as compassionate as possible, maintain certain rituals, etc.

Throughout history, the precise interpretation of this *sharia* remained infinitely subject to debate and was never written down in its entirety. All kinds of scholars kept discussing the exact way God wants people to live.

#### **Chop hands and the guillotine**

So no, it is not the case that "chopping off hands of those who have stolen" is an eternal rule of a firmly chiseled *sharia* that every Muslim adheres to. When such a rule is pronounced, it concerns only some scholars who in certain contexts concluded that this was a correct rule based on their beliefs about (God-wanted) justice in society. This is little different from, for example, the fact that the legal system in France approved the death penalty through the Guillotine up to the 1970s.



Figure 2.10  
Source: © Emilio Ereza /  
Adobe Stock

It was a rule that arose from old beliefs about justice (wanted by laicity) in society.

But just as guillotine's death penalty could be ended because of changing ideas in the society, the interpretation of Islamic scholars can be contradicted and changed. What one found correct is not justified by the other, and some rules that may have been accepted in theory were not always followed in practice.

Place a cross in the appropriate column

	YES	NO
Is <i>sharia</i> a set of laws that we can find in the Quran?		<b>X</b>
Does <i>sharia</i> refer to divine principles that support life?	<b>X</b>	
Is chopping hands off someone who stole an eternal rule?		<b>X</b>
Can someone discuss and contradict the interpretation of Islamic scholars?	<b>X</b>	
Did people continue to discuss throughout history about the precise interpretation of <i>sharia</i> ?	<b>X</b>	

## 2.5 GLOSSARY

### **At-tawheed**

Synonym for monotheism or belief in one god.

### **Ayat As Sayf**

The verses of the sword. These are verses that are violent in nature and should be understood in context.

### **Dhikr**

Commemorating God.

### **Fiqh**

Written rules about Islamic rituals and Islamic law. There are different opinions on certain matters. Basically, fiqh means in simple terms that every Muslim or Muslima through the study of Islam, gains knowledge and insight about the understanding and application of Islamic rules and the assessment of the consequences.

### **Hadith**

What is attributed to the Prophet Muhammad of both words, deeds, approvals, outward features and inward features.

### **Jihad**

It comes from the word "jahada" which means effort. Originally, it was about the effort that one must do to achieve a goal.

### **Maqsad Ashari**

Purposes of Islam.

### **Sharia**

The rights path to follow in order to achieve a peaceful society.

### **Tafsir**

Interpretations by Islamic Scholars

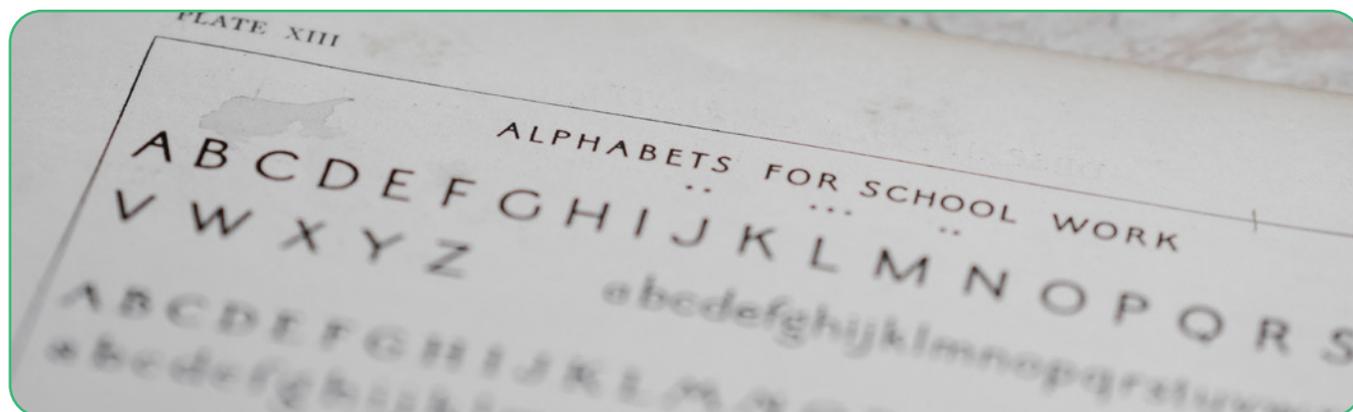


Photo: © Annie Spratt | Unsplash

## 2.6 TRANSCRIPT OF THE VIDEO

We see Mr. Roberts standing in front of his class like any other day.

*Mr Roberts: This afternoon I want to focus on ways for decent communication. We will learn why it is important to have good language skills so that you'll learn how to argue respectfully. This will save you from awkward situations and sometimes even violence!*

*Sarah: Whispers: Like these guys in Molenbeek.*

*Ahmed: What did you say?*

*Sarah: I didn't say anything. But now that the teacher is talking about violence, I want to express my opinion. I have read on the internet that Quran justifies violence against non-Muslims, is that correct? If that's the case, I find it very scary to be sitting next to a Muslim.*

*Ahmed: Euh... oh come on...why are you always picking on me? what do you want?*

*Mr. Roberts: Okay enough, this was clearly not the intention of this lesson at all. You should respect each other.*

*Sarah: Can you give us more clarification, Mister Roberts? This was a genuine question.*

*Mr. Roberts (hesitates clearly): Euh... I don't know, Sarah, Let me think about it and I'll come back to you. But in the meanwhile you have to stop bullying Ahmed and bothering the class or you'll get detention!*

### 2. EXT PARK DAY

We see Ahmed and Pieter-Jan crossing the park while walking home.

*Ahmed: Sarah was being a complete nightmare again...*

*Pieter-Jan: Yeah I know. She should know when to stop...*

A group of adults are hanging around a bench. Pieter-Jan and Ahmed walk by and we hear them speak to each other:

*Shadid: No but seriously, we all know why the offices don't call you back. Change your name into Tim and case closed, I guarantee you, the next week you'll have your student job. It's the Arabic name and the fact we live in a place like Molenbeek... They just can't stand us...*

*Anwar: I don't know... My dad is an example of how it can all work out, no? And he said that focusing on 'us versus them' won't help us further in life. And look where he is now, a lawyer in a respectable firm...*

*Ahmed: Anwar, is that you?*

Anwar looks up to Ahmed.

*Anwar: Ah Salam Ahmed! Wow you have grown! It must have been 2 years or something that I didn't see you. Shadid, this is Ahmed, the son of my dad's friend Haroon.*

*Shadid: Salam!*

*Ahmed: Salam!*

*Pieter-Jan (hesitant): hey guys.*

Shadid turns a bit away when he sees Pieter-Jan also joining the group.

*Ahmed: I heard you guys talking about Karim, right?*

*Anwar: yeah, my dad. I just don't know how I will be able to get where he is, I'd like to follow in his footsteps and become a respected lawyer and have a good life. But I can't get a loan to get into university, can't get student apartment and let alone find a stupid student job.*

*Shadid: Look Anwar, I'm not inventing this 'us versus them'. It's also in the Quran. "And kill them wherever you find them and expel them from wherever they have expelled you..." reads Koran. As far as I remember it is in Surat Baqarah.*

*Ahmed: Wow that seems a bit violent.*

*Pieter-Jan: Yeah, I feel the same. Isn't every religion supposed to be about bringing peace?*

*Shadid: I used to think the same. But this is something I just recently came across while on internet.*

*Anwar: Calm down Shadid. I think both you and Pieter Jan are right about religion. I think we have a problem about correctly interpreting the religious texts. I have an idea. There is a new application that -I think- might help us understand the Quran better. It's becoming number one research application. It also has a safety screener based on the Odin software to avoid interpretation hazards of any kind. The brightest minds of the world have worked on this AI solution, so it should be able to help us out!*

### 3. INT APPLICATION DAY

Anwar takes his phone out and everybody looks on his screen. He opens 'the vault of knowledge' application and a small intro screen is shown.

Then a screen appears 'for the interactive experience an update is needed'.

*Anwar: Oh wait it needs an update.*

*Ahmed (laughs a bit): Isn't it a bit weird that an application on ancient texts, needs an update?*

*Anwar: It's not only on ancient texts! It's everything and more! Ah it's here already! Let's take a look.*

On the screen we see an image of a vault and a text that is being said as well:

*Vault: 'for all who need enlightenment and guidance towards knowledge, please place your finger on the screen for an interactive experience'*

The four guys place their finger on the phone and a bright light starts so shine from the phone. They are engulfed in light and appear in a very bright room with a vault in it.

*Anwar: woooooow... This new update is insane!*

*Shadid: Indeed, I can't believe my eyes, where are we?*

*Ahmed: This is incredible...*

*Pieter-Jan: Wow that light.*

*Vault: Please type in your question... Please type in your question... Please type in your question...*

*Ahmed: I think we that thing there wants us to ask it a question.*

*Anwar: well let's do it then!*

*Shadid: alright I'll prove it's in the Quran! Please show us the verse which basically says "And kill them wherever you find them and expel them from wherever they have expelled you..."*

*Vault: The text you cited is part of 191th verse in Chapter Baqarah.*

*Shadid: You see! We are actually very tolerant compared to what the Quran tells us to do.*

*Vault: DANGER....DANGER....DANGER....DANGER....*

The vault starts shaking and an alarm starts sounding. There is an earthquake and then suddenly everything is still. A big red Scissor sign appeared on the vault.

*Ahmed: What just happened?*

*Anwar: Let me check the tutorial.*

*Anwar takes his phone.*

*Anwar: (while searching) How to put in your question,...., a red eternal sign, no, .... Aaah here is it: 'When a big red scissor appears on the vault it means this phrase is cut out of its context and the red means it can even be dangerous!'*

*Shadid: Really? So what is the context then?*

*Pieter-Jan: You have to push in the red scissor.*

*Ahmed: alright let's see.*

*Ahmed pushes on the red scissor and a computer voice starts explaining:*

*VAULT: Dangerous 'cut and choose' approach towards this passage can lead to violence. The part you cite is only a part of the whole verse 2:191 which reads:*

*(2:191) Kill them whenever you confront them and drive them out from where they drove you out.*

For though killing is sinful, wrongful persecution is even worse than killing. Do not fight against them near the Holy Mosque unless they fight against you; but if they fight against you kill them, for that is the reward of such unbelievers.

This verse cannot be truly understood if various parts are cherry-picked. For a better understanding please read in context, from 2:190 to 2:195. Allah only makes it evident to fight those only who fights them first.

*Shadid: Aah, I see now, it's like a sort of fighting in self-defense?*

*VAULT: exactly. Thanks for using the Vault of knowledge, please let yourself be enlightened again soon.*

The red scissor becomes green and then disappears.

*Anwar: We should have known because "Whoever kills an innocent life, it is as if he has killed all of humanity", also a verse in the Quran, in Al-Ma'idah 5:32.*

*Anwar types in Al-Ma'idah 5:32 into the vault's input!*

*VAULT: Makes a happy sound. No misleading hazard. Thanks for using the Vault of Knowledge please let yourself be enlightened again soon.*

*Shadid: And that's the complete opposite of the other verse.... I guess a literal interpretation can be misleading.*

*Anwar: Yeah my dad told me the other day I should think about the time when it was written and the context as well.*

*Pieter-Jan: guys? Where do we get out?*

Just when Pieter-Jan asks about leaving a sign appears.

*Ahmed: look there is an exit sign!*

#### **4 EXT PARK DAY**

We see everyone back at the park a bit amazed of what just happened.

*Everyone: wow! Amazing..*

*Ahmed: Now ask the vault where we can find the best pizza's?*

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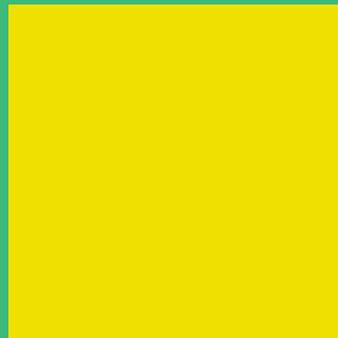
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# 3

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ENCOUNTER WITH THE  
ENVIRONMENT: SOCIAL AND  
ECOLOGICAL ISSUES

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## MODULE THREE

# ENCOUNTER WITH THE ENVIRONMENT: SOCIAL AND ECOLOGICAL ISSUES

## 3.1 GENERAL INTRODUCTION

### 3.1.1 STRUCTURE OF THE MANUAL

This manual for the teacher is a didactic package in which the following theme is developed: “Encounter with the environment: social and ecological issues”. This package has been developed for the age group of 12 to 18 year olds and offers the teacher or supervisor of a learning group the opportunity to develop this theme at the level of their own class group.

In this manual, the teacher can work on different topics related to the overarching theme “Encounter with the environment: social and ecological issues”. Based on impulses and didactic suggestions it is possible to approach this theme from different perspectives. Impulses are elements that the teacher can bring into the classroom to start the conversation.

This manual contains a variety of impulses with different difficulty-levels. These impulses exist in various forms and are meant to contribute to the learning process. It is not obligatory to use all impulses as the teacher may select the most appropriate impulses based on the needs and interests of his/her learning group. The didactic suggestions are concrete proposals to get started with the impulses and deal with ideological reflection and communication. This ensures that the teacher can approach the different impulses corresponding to their own learning group.

The manual contains of the following chapters:

- The first chapter of this manual gives a general introduction of the Islamic views on the environment. Then the concept of Khalifa is explained, in particular that every human being has been given a divine task to take care of our nature. This chapter is part of the basic learning material for the students.

- Secondly, the manual emphasizes the importance of an Islamic environmental ethic. The second chapter therefore outlines the importance of preserving a balance in the universe. This chapter is part of the basic learning material for the students.
- The third chapter of this manual takes a closer look at social injustice as a result of bad policy of nature. In this chapter, we want to make the students aware of the bad consequences of overconsumption. This chapter (except part 5.3. Social Justice: An idea) is part of the basic learning material for the students.
- The fourth and final chapter deals with the different causes of climate change. Moreover, this chapter focuses on the human causes of climate change. In that way the teacher can discuss several human actions and their effects on nature. This is an depth chapter.
- In conclusion, this manual contains a glossary in which all difficult concepts are briefly and concisely explained at the level of the student. This is followed by a bibliography of this didactic collection.

### 3.1.2 CONTENT OF THE MANUAL

This manual deals with the theme: “Encounter with the environment: social and ecological issues”.

The starting point of this manual is a video in which youngsters are protesting against climate pollution. Young people across the country are encouraging each other on social media to periodically demonstrate for a new climate policy and social justice. The demonstrations take place every Monday from 10:00 am. While most of the protesters should actually be in school at that time, they argue that their actions serve a higher interest of society. While many schools implicitly agreed to the protesters’ absence for the demonstrations, they do not agree with the way some protests occur.

The problem is that many young people are experiencing an enormous frustration towards what we call “the rich polluting business people”. A small group of young people demonstrate in the driveways of wealthy people.

## 3.2 THE CREATURE

### 3.2.1 INTRODUCTION

The Quran refers to the creature as khalq. The term khalq is related to nature and the universe and can be found in 261 Quranic verses. As for example in Surat Al-Baqara verse 29: ***“It is He who created for you all of that which is on the earth. Then He directed Himself to the heaven, [His being above all creation], and made them seven heavens, and He is Knowing of all things.”***<sup>1</sup> (Al-Baqara:29)

Islam addresses all parts of creation, including ecology. Out of the totality of Quranic verses, 1/8 of it deals with ecology, environment and nature. After all, all human beings has been given the task of maintaining the balance of Allah’s creation. In Sura Arrahman it says: ***“And the heaven He raised and imposed the balance. That you not transgress within the balance. And establish weight in justice and do not make deficient the balance.”***<sup>2</sup> (Ar-rahmane: 7,8 en 9)

Islam’s view on the relationship between mankind and ecology is talked about in both the Qur’an and the Hadiths.<sup>3</sup> Everyone is repeatedly encouraged to treat nature and the earth in a sustainable way. Moreover because the entire universe was created by Allah as a unity. It is therefore up to mankind to preserve and respect that unity of nature and man.

There is a correlation between all the elements of the creature. Allah also added structure in here. That is why we speak of a well balanced creature or mizan as explained in the Quran: ***“The sun and the moon follow a fixed path. The stars and the trees worship their Lord. He has lifted up the heavens and brought balance. Don’t disturb it (this balance), keep the right size and don’t lose it.”***<sup>4</sup> (Ar-rahmane: 5,6,7,8 en 9)



Figure 3.1  
Source: © PRASERT /  
Adobe Stock

Therefore, Muslim scholars speak of three sorts of books, namely, kitab almastoer (written book), kitab almandur (given book), kitab almaqdoer (determined book).

<sup>1</sup> <https://quran.com/2/29?translations=101,21,20,19,18,17,84,85,22,95> (acces 7.10.2020)

<sup>2</sup> <https://quran.com/21/47?translations=43,18,101,84,85,22,20> (acces 7.10.2020)

<sup>3</sup> I. M. HOPE, J. YOUNG, islam and ecology, , 2014, p.1.

<sup>4</sup> <https://quran.com/22/18?translations=17,18,84,20,95,101,85,22,21,19> (acces 7.10.2020).

The first book refers to the Quran, the second book to reality or nature and the third book refers to mankind. Thus, man must harmonize the written book and the given book through his intellect without losing the essence of both.

This does not mean that religion has to be determined by reality and vice versa, but that reality helps people to understand their religion. It is a constant interaction between kitab almaqdoer (revelation) and kitab almaqdoer (universe) as a result of which the muslim gradually gets more insight into the two books. So when tensions arise between both domains, it is man who has to question himself.

### 3.2.2 MAN AS KHALIFA ON EARTH

Besides ecology in general, the Quran also draws attention to the environment. Here too, the central message is that it is the task of man to maintain and respect the balance in nature. We speak of 'laws of nature' to indicate that Allah created the unity of nature in all perfection with the correct calculations. Thus it says in Sura Al Mulk: **"You see no imbalance in the creation of the Most Merciful."**<sup>5</sup> (Al-Mulk:3).

The interpretation of the Quran makes us realize that man should not be a controller, but rather a guardian of nature. That is why man is considered a steward or khalifa: **"And (remember) when your Lord said to the angels, I will appoint a khalifa upon the earth."**<sup>6</sup> (Al-Baqara:30) The original meaning of a khalifa is the one responsible for protecting the earth and its capabilities.

The nature gives us signals or ayats when things are not going well in nature. It is then up to us, human beings, to give the right reaction and to protect nature more and in a better way. As already explained, man is part of the entire universe along with all other creations. Yet man differs from all other creations because he has the ratio and free will. People have the capacity to think about their actions and choose whether to protect something or not. So unlike animals who just follow their instincts, humans have the intelligence to understand and carry out the imposed task of protecting nature<sup>7</sup>.



Figure 3.2  
Source: © sarayut\_sy /  
Adobe Stock

<sup>5</sup> <https://quran.com/55?translations=18,85,22,20> (access 7.10.2020).

<sup>6</sup> <https://quran.com/2/30?translations=17,101,22,21,19,20,18,95> (access 7.10.2020).

<sup>7</sup> I. M. HOPE, J. YOUNG, islam and ecology, , 2014, p.1.

In concrete terms, khalifa or being responsible means that you as a person take on the following responsibilities:

1. Protect yourself (spiritually, biological, ...)
2. Protecting society (society in general, relationships, your own community and that of others, ...)
3. Protect the earth and its resources (nature, animals, energy sources, ...)

Steward or khalifa, as Linda Bogaert puts it nicely, does not mean that people are being central: *“Vice regency does not give people superiority over the creation and its parts - after all, according to the Islam, the earth does not belong to man, but is God’s. Man is only a small part of the creature and lives side by side with the other creations. The following verse emphasizes the absurdity of anthropocentrism:*

*“The creation of heaven and of the earth is greater than the creation of man, but most people do not know it.” (Quran 40:57)*

*All the resources of the earth (the land, water, air, forests, ...) are being used by all human beings, but we must not forget that they are not human’s property. God created these resources for man, they are gifts for man but also subject to ethical restrictions. Man can use them to meet their needs, but only in a way that does not upset the ecological balance and does not compromise the ability of future generations to meet their needs. Pollution and waste of natural resources are by all means prohibited. Moreover, the natural resources are not only there for humans. All creatures have a right to the natural resources.*



Figure 3.3  
Source: © onephoto /  
Adobe Stock

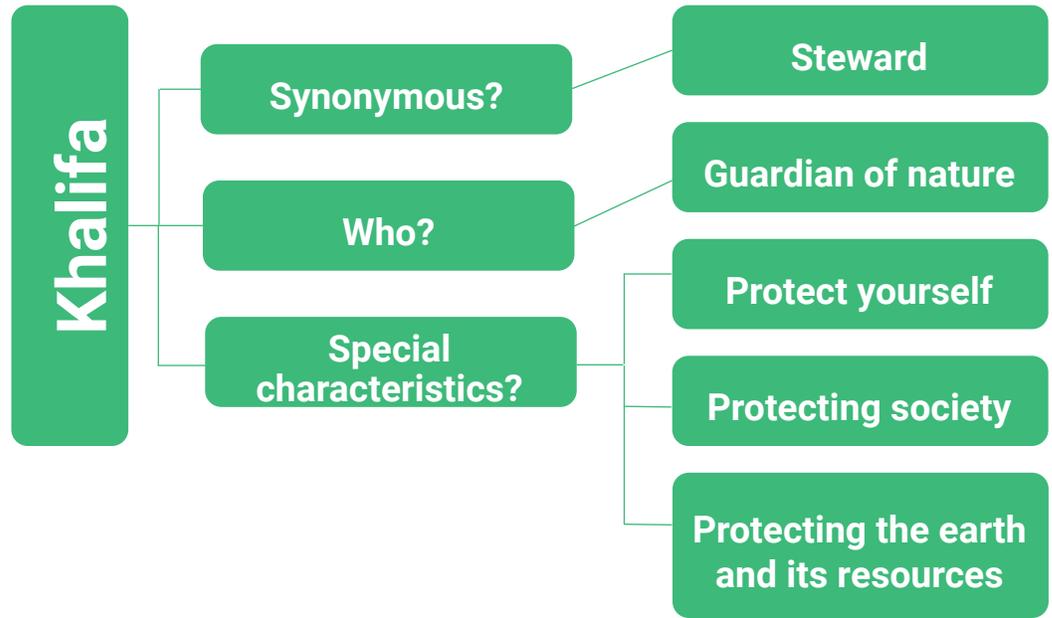
*“And He it is Who sends the winds as publishers of good news for His mercy. And We send down pure water from heaven, to those we have created, man and animals, to drink.” (Quran 25: 48-49)<sup>8</sup>*

<sup>8</sup> <https://users.ugent.be/~hdeley/bogaert/bogaert1.htm> (access 07.10.2020).

### 3.2.3 EXERCISES

#### Exercise 1: Fill out Exercise

Complete the scheme with the correct answer.



## Exercise 2

Read the statements below and put a mark in the right column.

Statement	True	False
1. 1/8 of the Quran is about ecology, environment and nature.	<b>X</b>	
2. Animals have a free will and a ration. That's the reason why they have the task of taking care of nature.		<b>X</b>
3. A khalifa is responsible for protecting himsel/herself, the society and the earth.	<b>X</b>	
4. The creation of Allah is unbalanced or not a mizan.		<b>X</b>

## 3.3 ISLAMIC ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

### 3.3.1 HUMAN AND ENVIRONMENTALLY RESPONSIBLE BEHAVIOR

In the section on human beings as khalifa's we have already discussed the fact that the Quran draws a lot of attention to the environment in general. It is not enough to just follow the rules stipulated in the Five Pillars of Islam to be a good Muslim. There are other (un)written ethical principles such as respecting and protecting the environment. As humans, we should be careful and frugal with the resources, we should pollute nature as little as possible and carry out a sustainable and ecological behavior. These principles of responsible behavior are not less important than the well-known Five Pillars of the Islam.

The hadith tells us more about the lifestyle of the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him. It also confirms that the Prophet considered environmentally responsible behavior as part of the authentic Islamic way of life. Fun fact is that most of the prophets were shepherds, which meant they were constantly in touch with nature and animals. The Prophet also asked Muslims to be careful with nature in every situation, even during difficult times like war.



This is emphasized by Abu Bakr As-Siddiq, a close companion and successor of the Prophet Muhammad. He said to one of his military commanders: ***"I advise you the following ten things (regarding the rules of warfare). Do not kill women or children, the elderly or***

***the sick. Do not cut down or burn trees, especially if they are fruit-bearing trees. Do not destroy uninhabited places. Do not kill animals except for providing food. Do not burn or separate bees. Do not steal any of the items that were confiscated during the battle. And don't act cowardly.***<sup>9</sup> (Al-Muwatta, Volume 21, Hadith 10)

The Quran constantly reminds us of the beauty of nature. Surah Al Ghashiyah in verses 16-18 explicitly invites to be aware of the beauty of nature by regularly observing and enjoying it: ***"Don't they look at how the camels were created? And how the mountains stand firmly? Don't they look at how spread out the earth is?"***<sup>10</sup> (Al-Ghashiyah: 17,18,19,20) If we take the time to look at nature in a more conscious way, we will be able to realize the greatness and the beauty it has in it.

<sup>9</sup> I. MALIK, al-Muwatta, Beiroet, Dar Iyha Attourat Alarabiya, 1985, p. 212.

<sup>10</sup> <https://quran.com/15/19?translations=22,85,101,84,20,21,19,18,17,95> (acces 07.10.2020).

Figure 3.4  
Source: © Jon Anders  
Wiken / Adobe Stock

### 3.3.2 EXERCISES

#### Exercise 1

Fill out the missing words.

**the environment – resources – respecting and protecting – *khalifa* – ecological behavior - Five Pillars of Islam**

In the section on human beings as **khalifa** we've already discussed the fact that the Quran draws a lot of attention **the environment** to in general. It's not enough to just follow the rules stipulated in the **Five Pillars of Islam** to be a good Muslim. There are other (un)written ethical principles such as **respecting and protecting** the environment. As humans, we should be careful and frugal with the **resources** we should pollute nature as little as possible and carry out a sustainable and **ecological behavior**. These principles of responsible behavior are not less important than the well-known Five Pillars of the Islam.

## 3.4 ENVIRONMENT AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

### 3.4.1 RESPONSIBLE USE OF NATURAL RESOURCES

In a society with social justice, every person has the same right and access to the basic needs. Ecology and nature can be linked to this topic of social justice. A good example is a society in which everyone is entitled to water as a basic need.

The Quran emphasizes the crucial role of water. Water is considered a source of life and one of the most precious resources.<sup>11</sup> The word water or ma'a occurs more than seventy times in the Quran<sup>12</sup>. Some examples are:

***“And Allah has sent water from heaven, and He revives the earth with it after its death. Verily in this is a sign for those who listen.”***<sup>13</sup>  
(An-Nahl:65)

***“And have you seen the water that you drink? Is it you who brought it down from the clouds, or is it We who bring it down? If We willed, We could make it bitter, so why are you not grateful?!”***<sup>14</sup> (Al-Waqi'ah: 68,69,70)

Water is an essential source for the creation and development of life. For example, it is necessary for the livelihood of humans, of animals and it is necessary for plant growth. Humans and animals need drinking water. Finally, we can barely imagine a life without the possibility to take a shower or a bath; water provides us good hygiene.



Figure 3.5  
Source: © willyam /  
Adobe Stock

It is clear that water will always play a vital role in the universe. But it is also becoming clear that we are dealing with the problems of water scarcity, dryness,.... Water is not inexhaustible and might, at some point, run out. It is therefore our responsibility to prevent water shortages by creating sustainable solutions.

As a khalifa, we must be aware of the scarceness of energy sources and carry out a sustainable and ecological behavior.

<sup>11</sup> S. CATOVIC, J. YOUNG, Islamic sacred texts related to water, New Jersey , p.1-5.

<sup>12</sup> More examples can be found on: [https://www.faithinwater.org/uploads/4/4/3/0/44307383/islamic\\_sacred\\_texts-water-greenfaith.pdf](https://www.faithinwater.org/uploads/4/4/3/0/44307383/islamic_sacred_texts-water-greenfaith.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> <https://quran.com/16/65?translations=101,22,17,21,19,18,20,84,95> (access 29.07.2020).

<sup>14</sup> <https://quran.com/56/68-78> (access 07.10/.2020).

### 3.4.2 USING NATURAL RESOURCES FAIRLY

Figure 3.6  
Source: © VectorMine /  
Adobe Stock

It is a common knowledge that humans consume a lot. We often consume much more than what we actually need to survive. Think of the food scraps after every meal that end up in the garbage. It is important to find a balance in that consumption. Even if there would be an abundance of certain natural resources, it wouldn't have been just to unnecessarily exhaust these resources. Ending overconsumption by consuming in a balanced way, would help to achieve the goal of unity and conservation of nature.<sup>15</sup> A real khalifa always keeps these goals in mind.



The Quran explicitly states not to waste nor to overconsume. Surah Al A'raf points out that consuming is obviously not forbidden, but that it must be done in a balanced way: **“O children of Adam, take your adornment at every masjid, and eat and drink, but be not excessive. Indeed, He likes not those who commit excess.”**<sup>16</sup> (Al-A'raf: 31)

Balanced consumption makes it easier to equally distribute natural resources in order to achieve a society with social justice. Yet we see that this has become more and more difficult over the years. If everyone only thinks about himself when consuming, he will not be able to remind himself that the supply of natural resources must also provide other people, animals and plants for a living. This creates an unequal and unjust distribution of natural resources. This is the negative effect the Quran tries to warn for.

<sup>15</sup> S. OZKAYA, Islam en Ecologie: De ecologische ethiek van de islam gezien vanuit de visie op de relatie tussen mens en natuur, Leiden, 2013, p. 14.

<sup>16</sup> <https://quran.com/7/31-41> (access 07.10.2020).

### 3.4.3 SOCIAL JUSTICE: AN IDEAL

Social justice is an ideal. It is what we want to achieve. It is an ongoing battle that has no end. Social justice is not easy to obtain. For example, when we fight against poverty, we must be aware that poverty cannot be solved completely. There is a wisdom in this, in the sense that people learn to take care of each other, which creates a strong bond within the community or "Umma". But the fact that poverty will never be solved doesn't mean we shouldn't pursue it. It remains an ideal. This is not about achieving the goal, but rather the pursuit of the goal. In other words, it is not the result that is central, but the effort to achieve the end goal. Because absolute justice is a divine attribute according to Islam. Allah alone is the one who is righteous in the full sense of the word and this means that the human being, despite his great effort to achieve righteousness within a society, he will always fall short.

From this we can infer that we must be ambitious and use all peaceful means to achieve social justice. But at the same time, we should also be humble and know that cannot perfection is unattainable . This is the true meaning of "tawwakul" (trust in Allah).

It is also important to know that social justice is a means of achieving peace. Peace in ourselves as well as in society. So, justice is a prerequisite for both inner peace and social peace. In a peaceful society, everyone is equal. It is no coincidence that the Prophet Mohammed was the first to draft the Treaty of Medina when he arrived in Medina. In it, the Prophet Muhammad considered in 57 articles all citizens of Medina as equal citizens:

1. This is a prescript of Muḥammad, the Prophet and Messenger of God (to operate) between the faithful and the followers of Islam from among the Quraish and the people of Madina and those who may be under them, may join them and take part in wars in their company.

2. They shall constitute a separate political unit (Ummah) as distinguished from all the people (of the world).

3. The emigrants from the Quraish shall be (responsible) for their own ward; and shall pay their blood-money in mutual collaboration and shall secure the release of their own prisoners by paying their ransom from themselves, so that the mutual dealings between the believers be in accordance with the principles of goodness and justice.

4. And Banū 'Awf shall be responsible for their own ward and shall pay their blood-money in mutual collaboration, and every group shall secure the release of its own prisoners by paying their ransom from themselves so that the dealings between the believers be in accordance with the principles of goodness and justice.

5. And Banū Ḥārith ibn-Khazraj shall be responsible for their own ward and shall pay their blood-money in

mutual collaboration and every group shall secure the release of its own prisoners by paying their ransom from themselves, so that the dealings between the believers be in accordance with the principles of goodness and justice.

6. And Banu Sa'ida shall be responsible for their own ward, and shall pay their blood-money in mutual collaboration and every group shall secure the release of its own prisoners by paying their ransom from themselves, so that the dealings between the believers be in accordance with the principles of goodness and justice.

7. And Banū Jusham shall be responsible for their own ward and shall pay their blood-money in mutual collaboration and every group shall secure the release of its own prisoners by paying their ransom so that the dealings between the believers be in accordance with the principles of goodness and justice.

8. And Banū an-Nadjār shall be responsible for their own ward and shall pay their blood-money in mutual collaboration and every group shall secure the release of its own prisoners by paying their ransom so that the dealings between the believers be in accordance with the principles of goodness and justice.

9. And Banū 'Amr-ibn-'Awf shall be responsible for their own ward and shall pay their blood-money in mutual collaboration and every group shall secure the release of its own prisoners by paying their ransom, so that the dealings between the believers be in accordance with the principles of goodness and justice.

10. And Banū Nabīṭ shall be responsible for their own ward and shall pay their blood-money in mutual collaboration and every group shall secure the release of its own prisoners by paying their ransom so that the dealings between the believers be in accordance with the principles of goodness and justice.

11. And Banū Aws shall be responsible for their own ward and shall pay their blood-money in mutual collaboration and every group shall secure the release of its own prisoners by paying their ransom, so that the dealings between the believers be in accordance with the principles of goodness and justice.

12. (a) And the believers shall not leave any one, hard-pressed with debts, without affording him some relief, in order that the dealings between the believers be in accordance with the principles of goodness and justice.

(b) Also no believer shall enter into a contract of clientage with one who is

already in such a contract with another believer.

13. And the hands of pious believers shall be raised against every such person as rises in rebellion or attempts to acquire anything by force or is guilty of any sin or excess or attempts to spread mischief among the believers ; their hands shall be raised all together against such a person, even if he be a son to any one of them.

14. And no believer shall kill another believer in retaliation for an unbeliever, nor shall he help an unbeliever against a believer.

15. And the protection of God is one. The humblest of them (believers) can, by extending his protection to any one, put the obligation on all; and the believers are brothers to one another as against all the people (of the world).

16. And that those who will obey us among the Jews, will have help and equality. Neither shall they be oppressed nor will any help be given against them.

17. And the peace of the believers shall be one. If there be any war in the way of God, no believer shall be under any peace (with the enemy) apart from other believers, unless it (this peace) be the same and equally binding on all.

18. And all those detachments that will fight on our side will be relieved by

turns.

19. And the believers as a body shall take blood vengeance in the way of God.

20. (a) And undoubtedly pious believers are the best and in the rightest course. (b) And that a non-associate (non-Muslim subject) shall give any protection to the life and property of a Quraishite, nor shall he come in the way of any believer in this matter.

21. And if any one intentionally murders a believer, and it is proved, he shall be killed in retaliation, unless the heir of the murdered person be satisfied with blood-money. And all believers shall actually stand for this ordinance and nothing else shall be proper for them to do.

22. And it shall not be lawful for any one, who has agreed to carry out the provisions laid down in this code and has affixed his faith in God and the Day of Judgment, to give help or protection to any murderer, and if he gives any help or protection to such a person, God's curse and wrath shall be on him on the Day of Resurrection, and no money or compensation shall be accepted from such a person.

23. And that whenever you differ about anything, refer it to God and to Muḥammad.

24. And the Jews shall share with the

believers the expenses of war as long as they fight in conjunction.

25. And the Jews of Banū 'Awf shall be considered as one political community (Ummah) along with the believers—for the Jews their religion, and for the Muslims theirs, be one client or patron. He, however, who is guilty of oppression or breach of treaty, shall suffer the resultant trouble as also his family, but no one besides.

26. And the Jews of Banū an-Nadjār shall have the same rights as the Jews of Banū 'Awf.

27. And the Jews of Banū Ḥārith shall have the same rights as the Jews of Banū 'Awf.

28. And the Jews of Banū Sa'ida shall have the same rights as the Jews of Banu 'Awf

29. And the Jews of Banū Jusham shall have the same rights as the Jews of Banū 'Awf.

30. And the Jews of Banū Aws shall have the same rights as the Jews of Banū 'Awf.

31. And the Jews of Banū Tha'laba shall have the same rights as the Jews of Banu 'Awf. Of course, whoever is found guilty of oppression or violation of treaty, shall himself suffer the consequent trouble as also his family, but no one besides.

32. And Jafna, who are a branch of the Tha'laba tribe, shall have the same rights as the mother tribes.

33. And Banū ash-Shutaiba shall have the same rights as the Jews of Banū 'Awf; and they shall be faithful to, and not violators of, treaty.

34. And the mawlas (clients) of Tha'laba shall have the same rights as those of the original members of it.

35. And the sub-branches of the Jewish tribes shall have the same rights as the mother tribes.

36. (a) And that none of them shall go out to fight as a soldier of the Muslim army, without the permission of Muḥammad (b) And no obstruction shall be placed in the way of any one's retaliation for beating or injuries; and whoever sheds blood shall be personally responsible for it as well as his family; or else (i.e., any step beyond this) will be of oppression; and God will be with him who will most faithfully follow this code (saḥifdh) in action.

37. (a) And the Jews shall bear the

burden of their expenses and the Muslims theirs. (b) And if any one fights against the people of this code, their (i.e., of the Jews and Muslims) mutual help shall come into operation, and there shall be friendly counsel and sincere behavior between them; and faithfulness and no breach of covenant.

38. And the Jews shall be bearing their own expenses so long as they shall be fighting in conjunction with the believers.

39. And the Valley of Yathrib (Madina) shall be a Haram (sacred place) for the people of this code.

40. The clients (mawla) shall have the same treatment as the original persons (i.e., persons accepting clientage). He shall neither be harmed nor shall he himself break the covenant.

41. And no refugee shall be given to anyone without the permission of the people of the place (i.e., the refugee shall have no right of giving refuge to others).

42. And that if any murder or quarrel takes place among the people of this code, from which any trouble may be feared, it shall be referred to God and God's Messenger, Muhammad and God will be with him who will be most particular about what is written in this code and act on it most faithfully.

43. The Quraish shall be given no protection nor shall they who help them.

44. And they (i.e., Jews and Muslims) shall have each other's help in the event of any one invading Yathrib.

(45) (a) And if they (i.e., the Jews) are invited to any peace, they also shall offer peace and shall be a party to it; and if they invite the believers to some such affairs, it shall be their (Muslims) duty as well to reciprocate the dealings, excepting that any one makes a religious war. (b) On every group shall rest the responsibility of (repulsing) the enemy from the place which faces its part of the city.

46. And the Jews of the tribe of Aws, clients as well as original members, shall have the same rights as the people of this code: and shall behave sincerely and faithfully towards the latter, not perpetrating any breach of covenant. As one shall sow so shall

he reap. And God is with him who will most sincerely and faithfully carry out the provisions of this code.

47. And this prescript shall not be of any avail to any oppressor or breaker of covenant. And one shall have security whether one goes out to a campaign or remains in Madina, or else it will be an oppression and breach of covenant. And God is the Protector of him who performs the obligations with faithfulness and care, as also His Messenger Muḥammad.

### 3.4.4 EXERCISES

#### Exercise 1

Answer the following questions.

**a) What characterizes a society with social justice? Give an example:**

In a society with social justice, every person has the right and access to basic needs. Example: everyone has the right to water, everyone has the right to electricity, ...

**b) How many times does the term ma'a or water occur in the Quran?**

More than seventy times.

**c) How can we achieve the goal of unity and conservation of nature?**

By consuming in a balanced way. By not overconsuming, but always thinking about the other and thus enabling an equal distribution of natural resources.

#### Exercise 2

The students read the text and fill in the missing words.

**Ideal - a strong bond - absolute justice– ambitious - humble**

Social justice is an **ideal**. It is what we want to achieve. It is an ongoing battle that has no end. Social justice is not easy to obtain. For example, when we fight against poverty, we must be aware that poverty cannot be solved completely. There is a wisdom in this, in the sense that people learn to take care of each other, which creates **a strong bond** within the community or "Umma". But the fact that poverty will never be solved doesn't mean we shouldn't pursue it. It remains an ideal. This is not about achieving the goal, but rather the pursuit of the goal. In other words, it is not the result that is central, but the effort to achieve the end goal. Because **absolute justice** is a divine attribute according to Islam. Allah alone is the one who is righteous in the full sense of the word and this means that the human being, despite his great effort to achieve righteousness within a society, he will always fall short.

From this we can infer that we must be **ambitious** and use all peaceful means to achieve social justice. But at the same time, we should also be **humble** and know that cannot perfection is unattainable . This is the true meaning of "tawwakul" (trust in Allah).

## Exercise 2

Assignment:

Let the students read the constitution of Medina in groups of 2 or 3. Together they search for the requested articles. As a result, the students will know what is written in the “constitution of Medina”. They will create an image about the context of Medina on the basis of the legislation.

The answers may differ!

1) Give 3 articles that emphasize equality.

**1) Article 6**

**2) Article 11**

**3) Article 17**

2) Give 3 articles about peace.

**1) Article 19**

**2) Article 50**

**3) Article 51**

3) Give 3 articles about the weaker members of society (women, slaves, poor, refugees ...)

**1) Article 3**

**2) Article 45**

**3) Article 52**

## 3.5 CLIMATE CHANGE

### 3.5.1 HUMAN BEINGS AS A KHALIFA AND CLIMATE CHANGE

While climate change is a timeless phenomenon, in recent years it has become, a more alarming global problem than it has ever been. The climate can change caused by natural factors, but also because of our human behavior. Humans have a major impact on global warming and global warming also has a major impact on humans. We are daily confronted with visible consequences of climate change. Think of heat waves, the high sea level, dryness, heavy forest fires, extreme rainfall, tropical storms,...

As already mentioned, nature gives signals or ayats through these natural phenomena to show that its balance has been disturbed. In the context of climate change too, it is up to us to give the correct reaction to the ayats by being a khalifa in order to restore that balance by creating a sustainable and environmentally responsible behavior.



Figure 3.7  
Source: © jozsitoeroe /  
Adobe Stock

### 3.5.2 EXERCISES

#### Exercise 1: CHANGE

Answer the following questions.

Environment	Example
Me	<b>Example: Try to eat less meat.</b>
At school	
At home	
With friends	
At the mosque	

**Exercise 1: Crossword Puzzle**  
Find the correct word in the crossword puzzle.

1. Raw materials
2. Dryness
3. Pollution
4. Warming up
5. Water

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U
1	G	A	H	A	G	J	N	Y	K	H	H	B	V	E	F	V	U	I	L	I
2	O	Q	H	I	I	P	K	H	W	W	A	T	E	R	M	F	K	P	U	K
3	P	F	G	R	A	P	I	Q	D	R	Y	N	E	S	S	N	G	O	I	S
4	K	G	W	O	L	A	J	I	M	L	D	D	D	M	Y	O	G	L	G	H
5	R	A	W	M	A	T	E	R	I	A	L	S	O	E	N	A	M	O	J	O
6	I	S	A	R	A	J	K	I	H	G	Y	T	G	J	K	M	J	U	J	P
4	T	H	I	O	N	P	O	L	L	U	T	I	O	N	G	Z	J	T	K	G
8	I	H	I	H	J	L	L	O	P	Q	R	S	N	B	J	O	M	O	P	H
9	F	F	O	W	A	R	M	I	N	G	U	P	G	V	G	H	T	J	K	L

## 3.6 GLOSSARY

### **Hadith**

All that is attributed to the Prophet Muhammad of words, deeds, implicit approvals, appearance and personality.

### **Khalifa**

An trustee on Earth or protector of nature.

### **Ratio**

Reason, the human mind able of thinking and understanding.

### **Ayats**

Verses from the Quran.

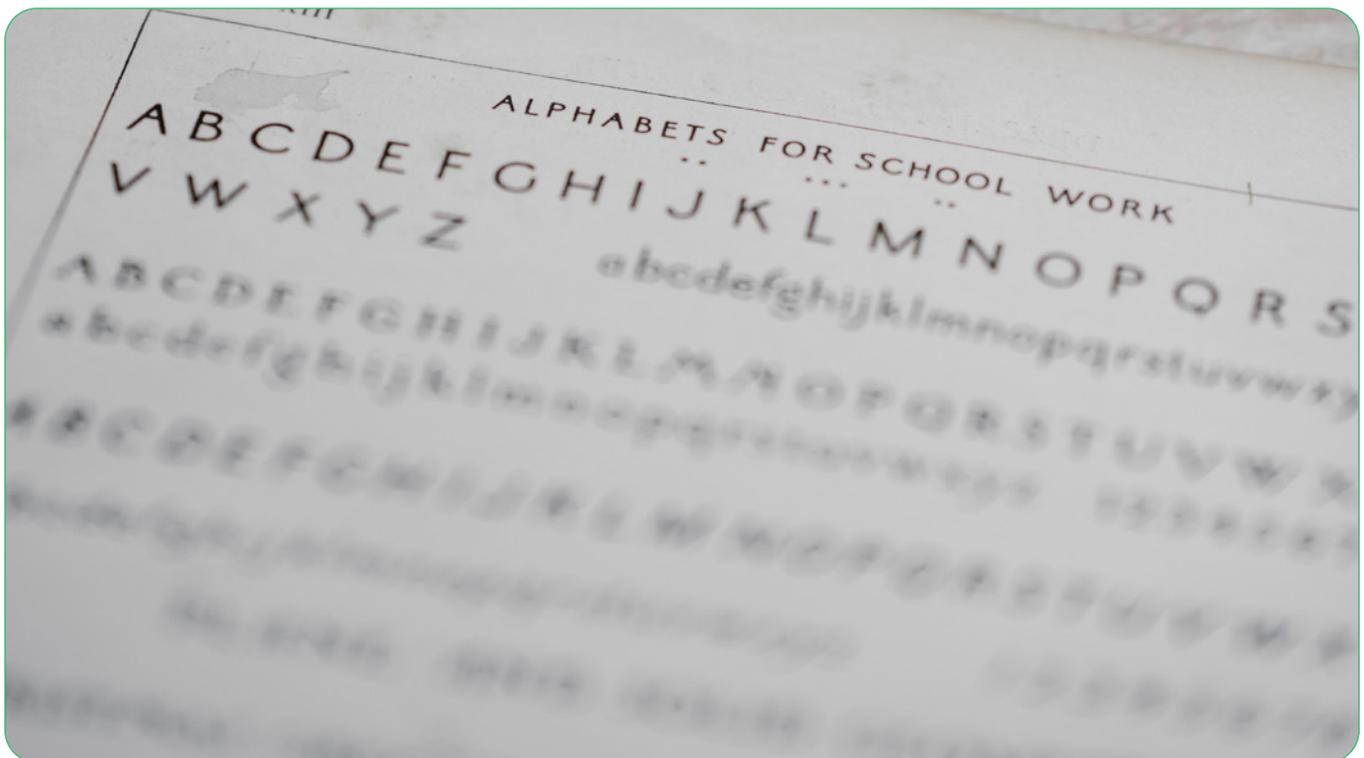


Photo: © Annie Spratt | Unsplash

## 3.7 TRANSCRIPT OF THE VIDEO

Ahmed and Pieter-Jan are watching the news.

Television:

*After the climate march, the students finished their protest in front of the house of the well known businessman Tarik Hadid. The students also destroyed the garden of mister Hadid. According to them, Tarik Hadid is also responsible for the problem of environmental pollution.*

*The climate march is an initiative of students in order to make the government and polluting companies to take their responsibility.*

Ahmed:

*"Oh no, I know these people. Tarik Hadid is weekly present at our local mosque to pray. But I also know the students! I've heard that Tarik is very upset because they destroyed his garden and I actually understand that.*

Pieter-Jan:

*"Really?"*

Ahmed:

*"These students have gone too far, don't you think?"*

Pieter-Jan:

*"I understand their concerns but this is not the right way to create awareness."*

Ahmed:

*"Indeed, I understand them too. They should enter into a dialogue with each other. "*

Pieter-Jan:

*"Why don't you bring them together then? Maybe you can bring them around the table and even mediate?"*

Ahmed:

*"What a good idea! You know what? During Islam class we learned about the importance of taking care of our planet. Now I have to set up an ecological project. The aim of the project is to create awareness and small changes in your own environment. I can start my project with this situation! We must be encouraged to take responsibility for the environment. I can bring the students and mister Hadid together in our mosque."*

Pieter-Jan:

*"Wow, that's a good idea. It's a win-win."*

*Meeting in the local mosque:*

*Ahmed has invited everyone to enter into a dialogue about climate change.*

*Mr. Hadid is a major investor of the mosque. He is a progressive thinker and always open to new ideas.*

*Ahmed: "Mr Hadid, we are so thankful that you wanted to speak to the students."*

*Mr Hadid: "You are welcome Ahmed, I am curious why exactly you invited us to meet in the mosque."*

*One of the students:*

*"In the Quran it is said that Allah has made us, humankind, as protectors of the universe." (35:39) "He is the one who has appointed you as a proxy on earth."*

*We want to apply this Islamic environmental ethics in our mosque. The mosque is the most important place of worship. Allah has given us the responsibility to take care of our earth. Taking care of nature is one of our tasks as human beings.*

*Our Prophet Mohamed lived in the nature which made him aware of the importance of animal welfare,... All our prophets were also shepherds and took care of animals and nature. That's quite a difference from how most of us live now. We are no longer in touch with nature."*

*Mr Hadid:*

*"Okay, I know what you mean. But what is your concrete proposal? How can the mosque become more ecological in your opinion?"*

*One of the students:*

*"We want to make people aware of environmental pollution and global warming. We strongly believe, Mr Hadid, that people like you can make a difference."*

*Mr Hadid:*

*"Okay guys, you have a lot of interesting things to say. I want to hear more about your ideas.*

*Ahmed:*

*"We have developed a plan with multiple suggestions.*

*For example, we can start a community-garden project. This project provides resourceful green spaces on which we can grow sustainable food while also creating community cohesion. In this way, Muslims come into closer contact with each other and with nature.*

*We can also set up a water project by for example putting up signs to make people aware to limit their use of water. There are also several hadiths about the use of water we can refer to.*

*We also need to reduce the use of plastic.*

*(While the plans are being explained, they appear on the screen in clouds of thoughts)*

## 3.8 REFERENCES

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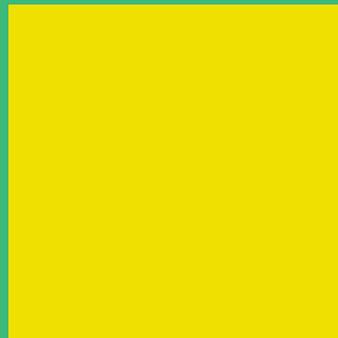
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# 4

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WHEN ENCOUNTERS BECOMES  
CONFLICT: JUST WAR AND  
JUST PEACE

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## MODULE FOUR

# WHEN ENCOUNTERS BECOMES CONFLICT: JUST WAR AND JUST PEACE

## 4.1 GENERAL INTRODUCTION

This manual for the teacher is a didactic package in which the following theme is elaborated: “When encounters becomes conflict: war and peace.” This manual is developed for the age group of 12 to 18 years old and offers the teacher of a learning group the opportunity to work out the theme at the level of the own class group.

In this manual, the teacher can address various topics related to the overarching theme “ When encounters becomes conflict: war and peace.” Based on impulses and didactic suggestions, it is possible to approach the theme from different perspectives. Impulses are elements that the teacher can bring into the classroom to start the conversation.

This manual makes a distinction between ‘basic material’ and ‘in-depth knowledge’. The basic material takes two lessons. The teacher also has the choice to deepen the knowledge of the students and use the extra chapters with accompanying impulses and didactic suggestions, provided in this manual.

### 4.1.1 STRUCTURE OF THE MANUAL

The manual consists of four chapters:

- 1) This manual starts with a general introduction. This introduction outlines the Islamic view on violence. Some important concepts from Islamic theology will be explained. Finally, the first part focuses on some violent groups that use and promote violence as a social solution. We refute their view. This chapter is part of the basic learning material for the students.
- 2) In the second part, we emphasize the importance of spiritual jihad and briefly explain the philosophy of Islam regarding the soul. This chapter is part of the basic learning material for the students.

3) In the third part we will discuss different creatures. We try to make a distinction based on their kind of soul and the capacity to keep his/her desires under control (spiritual jihad). This is an in-depth chapter.

4) In the third part, we take a closer look at the different forms of jihad. We try to explain the true meaning of jihad. This demonstrates that the term jihad cannot immediately be associated with violence. This is an in-depth chapter.

The manual ends with a short glossary. It contains a list of terms that may require additional explanation. Some concepts are therefore clearly explained for the student.

#### **4.1.2 CONTENT OF THE MANUAL**

This didactic package deals with the theme: "When meeting becomes conflict: war and peace."

The starting point of this manual is a scenario showing a realistic situation in the daily life of some students. The video makes out the general introduction to the theme "When meeting becomes conflict: war and peace" for the learning group. It is the starting point for the teacher and from thereon, further impulses and didactic suggestions from this manual can be used.

## 4.2 ISLAM AND VIOLENCE

### 4.2.1 INTRODUCTION

Islam and violence are often associated to each other. Several incidents ‘in name of the Islam’ created an incorrect perception of what is prescribed in Islam. Examples hereof are the attack on the World Trade Center on September 11 2001, but also the growth of extremist organizations such as ISIS in 2014, the terror attacks in several European cities. As a result, Islam has often been discussed in the media in a negative way.

Although these attacks were initiatives of Islamic groups, their actions are in contrast to the principles of Islam. These extremist groups justify their actions by calling it ‘jihad’ thereby misusing the term to justify violence.

Although radicalism and extremism have often been associated with Islam over the last two decades, violence is not at all inherent in Islam. Islam forbids the use of violence against anyone, without difference between believers and non-believers. It is true that the Qur’an contains certain verses about violence, but one must read these verses in their intended context. It is not the intention that we interpret and apply Koran verses literally in our current society. This would be inconsistent with the intent of the text.

Radicalism and extremism have taken different forms over the years. In the last century, for example, we were faced with a number of right-wing extremist organizations and groups. Communist extremism also had a negative impact on Western society. In recent years, we have also been contending with advancing Islamic radicalism. What becomes clear here is that violence is not necessarily inherent in a particular belief, philosophy or ideology, but that many different factors lead to extreme thinking. This stems from different beliefs, philosophies and ideologies and Islam has no patent on that. This is also confirmed by the Israeli writer and intellectual Amos Oz: “Fanaticism is not only the heritage of Al Qaeda or IS, Jabhat Al-Nusra, Hamas and Hezbollah, of neo-Nazis, anti-Semites, white supremacist thinkers, Islamophobes, the Ku Klux Klan, the hilltop hooligans and other blood shedders in the name of their beliefs. All those fanatics and what looks like them - we all know them. They look at us day after day from the television screen, passionately waving in front of camera lenses preaching all kinds of slogans into the microphone....”.<sup>1</sup>

Violence is not inherent to faith, but man people and groups use faith for their own interests. Everything that ends up in the hands of people can go wrong. The most sublime object in the hands of people can end in evil. In Latin it is expressed as follows “Corruptio optimi pessima” or “The very best becomes the worst when it turns into its opposite”.

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<sup>1</sup> O. AMOS, *Beste Fanatici*, Drie essays, Amsterdam, De Bezige Bij, 2017, p.23.

## 4.2.2 CONCEPTS OF VIOLENCE

Before we zoom in on the content, we will define some concepts about violence from the Quran, hadith and Islamic theology:



Figure 4.1  
Source: © kalpis /  
Adobe Stock

**1. Jihad:** Linguistically, jihad means ‘to make an effort’. The term is usually used in the context of acts of war; endeavor in war. But in the overarching sense of Jihad as assumed in this manual, war is only a small part. Various Islamic scholars attribute thirteen meanings to the term Jihad. The main meaning is therefore to make an effort, but not necessarily in the context of war. For example, you can make efforts for justice, for a well-functioning society.

**2. Al-Qital:** Linguistically means fighting. This term is also usually used in a war context, but, like jihad, has a broader meaning.

**3. Al-Harb:** Literally it means war, like for example two countries attacking each other. Al-Harb differs fundamentally from jihad. War mainly revolves around the domination and victory of the other. Jihad refers to the efforts made to guarantee general security.

**4. Al-Unf:** Literally means violence. Although Al-Unf is often associated with Islam, the term is not mentioned anywhere in the Quran.

**5. Al-Irhab:** Al-Irhab stands for terrorism. ‘Terrorizing’ is stated in the Quran, in Surat Al-Anfal verse 60. It says: **“And use whatever means of power you have, including war horses, to terrify the enemy of Allah, your enemy and the others.”**<sup>2</sup> (Al-Anfal: 60) It is important to correctly interpret the term ‘terrorization’. Terrorizing here does not mean carrying out the acts of violence as in the recent terrorist attacks, but rather means impressing the opposing party to gain respect.

<sup>2</sup> <https://koran.nl/soera-8-al-anfal-de-buit/>

### 4.2.3 USING FORCE FOR CHANGE

There are Islamic groups who are convinced that they can reach social change only through violence. For them, the purpose justifies using all necessary means, such as terror attacks on the innocent. However, such acts are absolutely prohibited and in no way prescribed in the Quran. Yet the supporters of those groups pretend that various Islamic regulations justify this violent behavior. They use the following strategy<sup>3</sup> :

First, they try to undermine the legitimacy of a head of state. If the head of state is a Muslim, they label him as a non-Muslim. Then they claim that the head of state is not applying Islamic laws. The strategy is even easier if the head of state is not a Muslim. In that case they declare with even more conviction that Islamic laws are not being applied: such as the fact that they are allies of Western countries. This, they say, is enough to deny the authority of a head of state and to even demonstrate against it. The main aim then is to depose the head of state in any way, even by use of force.



Figure 4.2  
Source: © pict rider /  
Adobe Stock

In Islamic theology this subject is called “Takfir”. It is a very sensitive issue where a Muslim gets labelled as non-Muslim. It is not the job of any Muslim or just any person to judge someone else’s religious experience. There are situations in which people openly admit that they no longer (want to) be a Muslim. In that case, it is clear that a person himself no longer wishes to be considered a Muslim, but it must be emphasized that there are no consequences. Again, it is not a Muslim’s job to judge or sanction another’s religious experience. Moreover, the Quran provides for the freedom of religious choice, it says: **“There is no compulsion in our religion.”** (Al-Baqara: 256)

<sup>3</sup> Y. ALQARDAWI, Fiqh Aljihad, Dirasat Muqaranatu Li-Ahkamihi wa Falsafatihi di daw al-Quran wa As-Sounna, Cairo, Dar Al-Koutboub Al’Imiya, 2009, p. 16-18.

Secondly, they incite the broad population to depose the head of state. Again, they justify violence to achieve the goal of deposition. The process of deposition causes chaos and a camp of supporters and non-supporters within society arise. The head of state is labeled as “apostate” who may be murdered because of the non-application of Islamic law. This is a very vehement view in contrast with the Quranic referred above emphasizing that there is no compulsion in religion. Therefore, there is no deposition or killing allowed. Also in a Quran verse is stated: **“The Truth is from your Lord. Anyone who wants to believe, let him believe. Anyone who doesn’t want to believe, let him not believe.”**<sup>4</sup> (Al-Kahf: 29). We must respect everyone’s freedom to believe or not believe what he/she wants.

Use of violence is therefore by no means a justified manner of bringing change in society. Violence must always be condemned. However, there are specific situations where violence is allowed like war for protection. When a Muslim country is threatened and all alternatives to stop violence have been exhausted, one may resist with violence, if the strict rules of war within Islam are still respected. The rules are:

- 1) No violence until all alternatives to stop violence are exhausted.
- 2) No violence unless a country is wronged.
- 3) No violence unless people are driven from their homes.
- 4) Do not kill women, children, the elderly or sick people (only use of force against soldiers in a war).
- 5) Always respect nature and animals.
- 6) Always respect people’s homes.
- 7) Looting is never allowed.

As we see, the rule that allows violence refer purely to protection. These rules are included in the following verse and the sunnah of the prophet:

**“Go both (Moses and his brother) to Pharaoh, for he has transgressed. Speak both to him softly. Maybe he will take it to his heart.”** (Ta-Ha: 43.44). The scholars conclude from this verse that one must first choose the diplomatic path to stop violence. For Pharaoh is known as a great tyrant and yet Allah commands Moses and his brother Haroon to speak softly to him.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://koran.nl/soera-18-al-kahf-de-grot/>

The other rules are to be found in the following verse:

**“To those who are fought [the fight] is permitted because they have been wronged; God has the power to help those who have been unjustly expelled from their homes just because they say, “Our Lord is God” - and if God had not let men restrain one another, then there were hermits, churches, synagogues and mosques in which God’s name often mentioned is certainly destroyed. But God will certainly help those who help Him; God is powerful and mighty.”**<sup>5</sup> (Al-Hajj / 39: 40)

This is also emphasized by Abu Bakr As-Siddiq, a close companion and successor of the Prophet Muhammad - pbuh -. He said to one of his military commanders: **“I advise you the following ten things (regarding the rules of warfare). Do not kill women or children, the elderly or the sick. Do not cut down or burn trees, especially if they are fruit-bearing trees. Do not destroy uninhabited places. Do not kill animals except for food. Do not burn or disperse bees. Do not steal any of the items seized during battle. And do not act cowardly.”**<sup>6</sup> (Al-Muwatta, Volume 21, Hadith 10)

In another hadith, Abu Bakr added not to attack priests and monks and not to destroy their places of worship. Buildings must also remain intact. Even consuming the animals’ milk is strictly prohibited, except with the permission of the owners.

Thus, waging war is subject to strict regulations based on the Quran and the Sunnah of Prophet Mohamed.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://koran.nl/soera-22-al-hajj-de-bedevaart/>.

<sup>6</sup> Ima. MALIK, al-Muwatta, Beiroet, Dar Iyha Attourat Alarabiya, 1985, p. 212.

## 4.2.4 EXERCISES

### Exercise 1

Underline the correct meaning of the term

#### 1. Linguistically, jihad means:

**War - Make an Effort - Violence**

#### 2. Al-Qital means:

**War - Fighting - Terrorist**

#### 3. Al Harb means:

**War - Extreme – Islam**

### Exercise 2

Answer the following questions.

#### 1. How can you apply the linguistic meaning of jihad in your daily life?

For example, you can make efforts for justice, for a well-functioning society.

#### 2. Can any person apply Al-Qital and Al Harb. Explain why or why not.

No. This is only reserved for heads of state and there are many rules attached to it. The rules are:

- 1) No violence until all alternatives to stop violence are exhausted.
- 2) No violence unless a country is wronged.
- 3) No violence unless people are driven from their homes.
- 4) Do not kill women, children, the elderly or sick people (only use of force against soldiers in a war).
- 5) Always respect nature and animals.
- 6) Always respect people's homes.
- 7) Looting is never allowed.

## 4.3 SPIRITUAL JIHAD

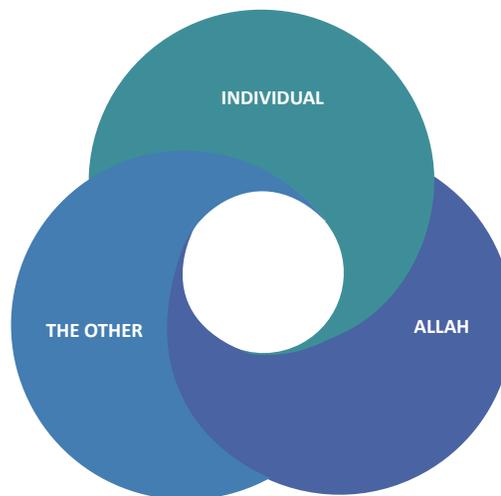
### 4.3.1 INTRODUCTION

Spiritual jihad is the highest rank of jihad and means that the Muslim must do his utmost to be a good person. He does this by fulfilling his religious obligations such as the obligations towards Allah, towards himself and towards others.

### 4.3.2 TRIANGLE RELATIONSHIP

In Islam there is always an important triangular relationship between:

1. An individual
2. The fellow man or the other
3. Allah



It is up to every Muslim to maintain balance between these different relationships. This is part of spiritual jihad, which is to fulfill its religious obligations in order to achieve and maintain harmony within the triangular relationship. Compliance with this obligation is not so easy. That is why jihad means making a great effort. According to Islamic rules, a person should cleanse the soul because the soul is the core of man. By cleansing his core, a person will be able to maintain a harmonious relationship with himself, with others and with Allah. In the Quran it is quoted as follows: **“Surely he who cleanses it (the soul) (from sins) will succeed. And surely the one who spoils it, will lose.”**<sup>7</sup> (Ash-Shams: 9 and 10).

Clearing the soul of desires and always maintaining harmony within the triangular relationship requires a lot of effort. It is therefore part of the spiritual jihad.

<sup>7</sup> <https://koran.nl/soera-91-ash-shams-de-zon/>.

### EXERCISE 1: Triangle Relationship

In the Islam there is always an important triangular relationship between the individual (me), the fellow man (the other) and Allah. In the relationship with which of these three actors does one try to achieve harmony in the examples below?

Fill in the column and choose between: Me – The other - Allah

Description	Who?
Jareer Ibn Abdullah, may Allah be pleased with him, narrated: "The Prophet Sallallahu 'alaihi wasalam said: Whoever has no mercy towards men will not have a merciful... "	The Other
Spiritual worship	Allah
Healthy living "	Me
"The best way to remember Allah is to recite the Shahada. This is Laa illaaha illa Allah and means there is no god but Allah." <sup>8</sup>	Allah
To donate food	The Other
For those who follow a path of knowledge, Allah will facilitate the path to Paradise."	Me

## 4.4 THREE TYPES OF CREATURES

### 4.4.1 ANGELS, ANIMALS, AND PEOPLE

Allah has created three types of creatures that can be distinguish based on their soul and the capacity not to blindly follow desires:<sup>8</sup>

1) The first category of creatures are the **angels**. They have a purely rational soul. Moreover, they have no desires or needs whatsoever which makes them obey Allah in every action. For example, in the Qur'an it is written about the angels: "**Over whom are appointed stern and hard-working angels, who do not disobey Allah in what He commands them and do what they are commanded to do.**"<sup>9</sup> (66: 6).



Figure 4.3  
Source: © pict rider /  
Adobe Stock



Figure 4.4  
Source: © adogslifephoto  
Adobe Stock

2) The second category of creatures is the **animals**. They have a sensitive soul and many desires. In addition, there is no reason and ratio which make animals follow their needs and desires.



Figure 4.5  
Source: © Dmytro /  
Adobe Stock

3) The third category of creatures is **humans**. Islam describes man as having a reason, but at the same time also having a sensitive soul. We therefore speak of both a rational and sensitive soul.

<sup>8</sup> Y. ALQARDAWI, Fiqh Aljihad, Dirasat Muqaranatu Li-Ahkamihi wa Falsafatihi di daw al-Quran wa As-Sounna, Cairo, Dar Al-Koutboub Al'Imiya, 2009, p. 159, 160.

<sup>9</sup> <https://koran.nl/soera-66-at-tahrim-verbod/>.

Spiritual jihad for humans means not to always blindly follow their needs, but also to act with reason. More concretely, it means that man maintains his soul and tries to raise it to the ranks of the angels instead of using it like animals. If you, as a human being, succeed in balancing your desires and reasonableness, you are fulfilling spiritual jihad.

#### 4.4.2 THE DIFFICULTY OF SPIRITUAL JIHAD

The soul of man, according to Islam, naturally tends to desires, needs and passions. If a Muslim does not make effort (no spiritual jihad) to keep those passions balanced, he will never attain ultimate wisdom or hikma. However, a wise person knows how to handle his passions reasonably well. Reasonably dealing with its passions and desires does not mean that the soul should not enjoy the passions, but that the soul cannot completely depend on them.

#### 4.4.3 THREE TYPES OF HUMAN SOUL

In the Quran, a distinction is made between three types of human souls<sup>10</sup>:

**1) The sensitive soul** or An-Nafs Al-Ammara: This is the soul that completely surrenders to desires and passions. About the desirable soul, the Prophet Yusuf said the following in the Quran: **“And I do not declare myself free. Verily, the soul tends towards evil.”**<sup>11</sup> (Yusuf: 53)

**2) The warning soul** or An-Nafs Al-Lawama: This is the soul that constantly reminds man of Allah and the Islamic principles. It takes great effort or spiritual jihad to keep reminding oneself of Islamic principles instead of blindly following desires. The Quran refers to this type of soul as follows: **“And I swear by the admonishing soul ...”**<sup>12</sup> (Al-Qiyama: 2,3)

**3) The stable / calm soul** or An-Nafs Al-Mutma-iena. This is the soul that has overcome a long struggle with passions and has finally come to rest. The stability of this soul ensures that people no longer experience inner tensions. It is very difficult and it takes a lot of effort from man to reach this quality of the soul. Due to the effort required and the difficulty to achieve stability and reasonableness, reaching a stable this soul is considered the highest rank in spiritual jihad. The Quran refers to this soul as follows: **“O calmed soul! Join My (righteous) servants.”**<sup>13</sup> (Al-Fajr: 27,28)

<sup>10</sup>. Y. ALQARDAWI, Fiqh Aljihad, Dirasat Muqaranatu Li-Ahkamihi wa Falsafatihi di daw al-Quran wa As-Sounna, Cairo, Dar Al-Koutboub Al’Imiya, 2009, p. 159, 160.

<sup>11</sup>. <https://koran.nl/soera-12-yusuf-jozef-zoon-van-jakob/>.

<sup>12</sup>. <https://koran.nl/soera-75-al-qiyamah-de-wederopstanding/>.

<sup>13</sup>. <https://koran.nl/soera-89-al-fajr-de-dageraad/>.

#### 4.4.4 EXERCISES

### Exercise 1: The characteristics of types of creatures

Allah has created three types of creatures. Fill in the characteristics below under the matching creature.

**Purely reasonable soul - Sensitive soul - Never disobey Allah - No desires - Always following basic needs - Ratio - No ratio - Sensitive and rational soul - Soul maintained by spiritual jihad**

**Angels**

- \* Purely reasonable soul
- \* Never disobey Allah
- \* No desires

**Animals**

- \* Sensitive soul
- \* Always following basic needs
- \* No ratio

**Humans**

- \* Ratio
- \* Sensitive and rational soul
- \* Soul maintained by spiritual jihad

### Exercise 2

Explain in your own words

#### 1) Spiritual jihad

Spiritual jihad is the highest rank of jihad and means that the Muslim must do his utmost to be a good person.

#### 2) The stable/calm soul or An-Nafs Al-Mutma-iena

This is the soul that has overcome a long struggle with passions and has finally reached inner peace and stability.

### Exercise 3: Do spiritual jihad by yourself!

Self-reflection is part of jihad. By reflecting for a moment on your own personality, feelings, strengths, weaknesses, behavior, ... you are doing spiritual jihad.

*Think of 5 questions on self-reflection. Some examples are: "What are my points for improvement?" "What am I grateful for?" "Am I making mistakes?"*

*You may then answer your questions.*

## EXERCISE 4

How can you practice spiritual jihad in the situations below in order to improve your behavior?

Case	Spiritual Jihad
<p><b>Your mother is a hardworking woman. After she gets home from work, she starts making dinner. You lie on the couch and do not want to help.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Thinking about ways to help my mom by setting the table for example.</li> <li>-Ask my mom if she needs help.</li> <li>-Putting myself in the place of my mother: How would I experience never getting some help?</li> <li>...</li> </ul>
<p><b>You always start your schoolwork when it is too late. This means you have to work extra hard in a short period of time.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Thinking of ways to spread out and plan my school assignments</li> <li>- Schedule when to do schoolwork and when to do whatever I like</li> <li>- Reward myself when I stick to the schedule.</li> <li>- Dare to ask for help when I feel the need to get some help in learning how to make a planning, in doing my schoolwork, ...</li> </ul>
<p><b>Your best friend gets better grades than you. You're secretly jealous.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Ask myself why I am jealous of my friend and wonder if this feeling is helping me.</li> <li>-Setting goals for myself: working hard for my school assignments to get good grades too.</li> </ul>

## 4.5 DIFFERENT DOMAINS OF JIHAD

As already discussed, the basic meaning of jihad is that one makes efforts to achieve a certain goal. The goal to be achieved can be different. Jihad, for example, occurs in various domains, such as the jihad against injustice, the jihad on conflict of ideas, social jihad, economic jihad and jihad for the environment .

### 4.5.1 THE JIHAD AGAINST INJUSTICE

Justice is one of the basic Islamic principles that requires action against any form of injustice. In a hadith the Prophet says, **“Help your brother who commits the bad as well as the victims of bad.”** A companion of the Prophet also asked the question: **“O Messenger of Allah. We can help the victim of injustice, but how should we help the person doing wrong?”** The prophet replied: **“By keeping him from his wrongdoing.”**



Figure 4.6  
Source: © zendograph /  
Adobe Stock

### 4.5.2 THE BATTLE OF IDEAS OR JIHAD OF IDEAS

The jihad of ideas involves making efforts to refute incorrect, violent or wrong ideas. Consider the ideology of certain extremist groups that openly incite violence against people of different faith and proclaim that changes can only be reached by use of violence.



Figure 4.7  
Source: © vegefox.com /  
Adobe Stock

### 4.5.3 THE SOCIAL JIHAD

Social jihad means making efforts to take care of yourself and others in society. This starts from the simple things such as maintaining your relationship with family and friends, respecting the elderly, relatives, neighbors, colleagues, teachers, ...

Social jihad thus does not include demanding acts and is clarified in the following story from the hadith: A man visited Prophet Muhammad and asked his permission/approval to go to war. The Prophet asked: **“Are your parents still alive?”** To this the man replied: **“Yes, my parents are still alive.”** The prophet then answered: **“Your jihad is then to maintain and care for your parents.”**



Figure 4.8  
Source: © Good Studio /  
Adobe Stock

From this, scholars deduce that the relationship with blood relatives is essential in Islam and makes part of social jihad. Not only blood relatives or Muslims among themselves, but all people regardless of background, philosophy, gender, ideology... must wage a social jihad against each other by respecting each other.

#### 4.5.4 THE ECONOMIC JIHAD

Economic jihad means the financial support and support of the family, relatives, loved ones and all for whom one is financially responsible. Moreover, Islam incites people to work so that everyone can do economic jihad. Working and contributing to society, to yourself and to those close to you is itself a form of economic jihad.



Figure 4.9  
Source: © suriyapong /  
Adobe Stock

In Islam it is also strongly recommended to contribute to a strong economy of a country. It is also encouraged not to be economically dependent on others. Prophet Muhammad said about this: “The upper hand is better than the lower hand. The upper hand is the person who gives, and the lower hand is the person who receives.”

#### 4.5.5 JIHAD FOR ENVIRONMENT

In the Quran, every Muslim is seen as a khalifa or responsible for environmental harmony. Doing jihad for the environment means making all necessary efforts to protect the environment in a broad sense.



Figure 4.10  
Source: © beeboys /  
Adobe Stock

## EXERCISE 1

Under what type of jihad do the following actions fall?

**Jihad against injustice – Jihad of ideas - Social jihad - Economic jihad -  
Jihad for the environment**

Type of Jihad	Act
Jihad against injustice	To help a victim of an act of injustice.
Economic jihad	Seek for a job in order to maintain myself and my loved ones.
Social jihad	Regularly visiting my grandparents.
Jihad of ideas	Entering into dialogue with someone who spreads violent ideas.
Jihad for the environment	Try to reduce my ecological footprint.

## 4.5 GLOSSARY

### **Jihad**

Linguistically, jihad means making an effort.

### **Al-Qital**

Linguistically means fighting.

### **Al-Harb**

Literally means war.

### **Al-Unf**

Literally means violence.

### **Al-Irhab**

Al-Irhab stands for terrorism.

### **Takfir:**

Declaring someone as a non-Muslim.

### **Spiritual Jihad**

A Muslim must do his utmost to be a good person.

### **Hikma**

Ultimate wisdom.

### **An-Nafs Al-Ammara**

The desirable soul.

### **An-Nafs Al-Lawama**

The warning soul.

### **An-Nafs Al-Moetma-iena**

The stable/calm soul.

### **Jihad of ideas**

A figurative battle of different ideologies.

### **Social jihad**

Making efforts to take care of yourself and others in society.

### **Economic jihad**

The financial maintenance and support of one's family, relatives, loved ones and everyone for whom one has financial responsibility.

### **Jihad for the environment**

Make all necessary efforts to protect the environment.

## 4.6 TRANSCRIPT OF THE VIDEO

Ahmed starts sparring with his sparring partner. He is extremely aggressive today. After the spar session:

Sparring partner: Hey Ahmed, what's going on? You are full of aggression! I've never seen you sparring like this.

Ahmed: Pfff I don't want to talk about it.

Sparring partner: Tell me, you shouldn't keep your problems for yourself, talk about it. You can share it with me.

Ahmed: I'm really mad! I was on my way to the club after school. The police stopped me. AGAIN. They were looking for me and started investigating my sportbag and even my schoolbag.

It all happened close to my school. People I know from school looked at me as if I had stolen something. I felt so humiliated. They really treated me without respect. I'm so done with these situations happening so often.

Sparring partner: I know what you're going through. I've also experienced it many times. They hate Muslims. They are actually our enemies because they are not muslims.

A friend of mine recently said that even the Quran speaks about our "enemies" and that jihad is even allowed. "And those who strive for Us - We will surely guide them to Our ways. And indeed, Allah is with the doers of good."

Ahmed: Wow yes bro...I don't know if it's true but it is not the first time I have heard about these Quranic verses.

Trainer Samir hears the boys talking to each other. He interrupts them

Trainer Samir: Guys, these are recognizable stories. This is called "racial profiling". It is unfair to experience this kind of injustice. On the other hand, we should not generalize the problem. It often concerns a few individuals. This type of frustration can generate so much anger and I understand that. It can even lead you to dangerous ideas. But please don't quote Quranic verses in such a situation and don't take them out of their specific context. The word jihad has much more meanings than the one often used by everyone.

Ahmed: Really? How can we understand jihad then?

Trainer Samir: According to well-known scholars, spiritual jihad is the highest form of jihad. In this concrete situation, it would imply to control your frustrations and don't generalize whole groups by criticizing an individual's behavior. It is very difficult, I know, but that's why it is also called jihad. Because jihad originally means making a great effort.

Ahmed: Samir... I feel like the society doesn't want us to be part of it, no matter how hard we try. I will forever remain the 'on of the other ones'. I'm so tired of that feeling.

Trainer Samir: Ahmed listen up. Just look at the diversity within our boxing club. This diversity reflects the reality in our society. It doesn't matter who you are or where you come from. We share the same passion, in this case boxing, and that is what is binding us.

I'll tell you something. I have been a trainer of a very talented champion boxer. He had a lot of potential to break through. The problem was that he was full of frustrations. He even didn't show up to the boxing club and in the end lost his motivation. Boxing means fighting back. You might be knocked down 10 times but you have to get up 11 times. You have to stay dedicated if you want to achieve your goals and create changes. And what do you think the talented boxer did to achieve changes and to reach his goals?

Ahmed: No idea trainer, what did he do?

Trainer Samir: He stopped believing in himself. He has given up on himself. He no longer believed in our society or in the possibility of change. He went to Syria believing he could change our society here by fighting there. He dealt with the wrong people that made him believe that he could change society through violence. He and his group of extremists made a strategic call to jihad. They considered the leaders of Islamic countries as non-believers because they were partners Western countries.

Ahmed: Really?

Trainer: Their vision on the use of violence is totally wrong. To consider a muslim as an non-believer or takfir is dangerous. Besides, there is no compulsion in our religion. As indicated in surat al baqarah verse 256: "There is no compulsion in our religion". Therefore, this form of violence is by no means legitimate even if someone is a non-believer, that would be her or his choice.

Ahmed: Hmmm okay...

Trainer Samir: Muslimscholars have also attached conditions to the use of violence: The conditions are:

- 1) When all alternatives to stop violence are exhausted.
- 2) When a country is wronged.
- 3) When people are driven from their homes.
- 4) You may never kill women, children, the elderly or sick people
- 5) When using violence, always respect nature and the animals.
- 6) Respect people's homes.
- 7) Looting is not allowed.

None of these rules were respected by the jihadi extremists. While Islam commands us to peacefully arrange everything, they go directly to violence. Like the example of Pharaoh and prophet Moses in the Quran: "Go both (Moses and his brother Aaron) to Pharaoh, for he has transgressed. Speak to him both softly. Maybe he will take it to heart."

The scholars conclude from this verse that one must first choose the diplomatic path to stop violence. Pharaoh is known as a great tyrant and yet Allah commands Moses and his brother Haroon to speak softly to him.

Ahmed: It is certainly not a matter of them against us, nor is it that non-Muslims are our enemies. So they are using jihad in a wrong way?

Trainer: : Exactly. Set goals in life and be ambitious. I learned how to accept failures and to move on without losing hope. Courage is the willingness to face fear. Also as Muslims, we are responsible for our contribution to society. Everyone is welcome here. WE ARE ONE TEAM. We are in this together.

Ahmed: I really look up to you trainer. Your words are so inspiring!

Trainer Samir: Thanks kiddo. By the way, A friend of mine is giving a lecture to the police and social workers about cultural and religious awareness. The lecture can be held in our club, maybe? In that way we can have a dialogue with them and share our daily experiences with racial profiling. What do you think?

Ahmed: I would love to share my frustrations with them.

Trainer Samir: Ok great! Let's organize a meeting with the club members and brainstorm together. I'll invite my friend!

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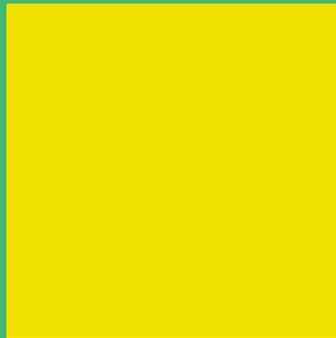
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# 5

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DIVINE AND HUMAN  
LAWS: COMPATIBLE OR NOT?

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## MODULE FIVE

# **DIVINE AND HUMAN LAWS: COMPATIBLE OR NOT?**

## **5.1 GENERAL INTRODUCTION**

This teacher's manual is a didactic package in which the following theme is dealt with: "Divine and human laws. Compatible or not?" This package has been developed for the age group of 12 to 18 year olds and offers the teacher or supervisor of a learning group the opportunity to develop this theme at the level of their own class group.

In this manual, the teacher can work on a variety of topics related to the overarching theme "Divine and Human Laws. Compatible or not? " On the basis of impulses and didactic suggestions it is possible to approach this theme from different perspectives. Impulses are elements that the teacher can bring into the classroom to start the conversation.

This manual contains a variety of impulses with different difficulty levels. These impulses aim to contribute to the learning process and exist in various forms. It is not necessary to use all impulses. The teacher can select the most appropriate impulses based on (the initial situation in) his learning group. The didactic suggestions are concrete proposals for working with the impulses and are aimed to start communication and reflection. This ensures that the teacher can approach the different impulses that correspond to their own learning group in a varied way.

### 5.1.1 STRUCTURE OF THE MODULE

The following chapters are covered in this manual:

- Firstly, there is a general historical introduction to the tension between faith and reason. Then the term “Divine Laws” is explained in order to make a difference between Divine Laws and Human Laws. This chapter belongs to the basic material of the students.
- Secondly, we give a general historical introduction to human law. Then the concept of ‘human laws’ is explained. This chapter belongs to the basic learning material of the students.
- The third chapter of this manual handles the reconciliation between reason and faith. On the basis of this chapter, students learn different forms of interpretation to overcome this contradiction. This chapter belongs to the basic learning material of the students.
- The fourth chapter deals with the importance of ijtihad. In this chapter, the teacher considers the different forms of interpretation while taking into account the context. This is an in-depth chapter.
- Finally, this manual contains a glossary in which all difficult concepts are briefly and concisely explained at the level of the student. This is followed by a bibliography per chapter of this didactic collection.

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Figure 5.1  
Source: © Murrstock /  
Adobe Stock

The contradiction between divine laws and human laws is an age-old discussion. This, in fact, fits in the context of “How does reason relates to faith?” The ancient Greeks spoke of logos (ratio) versus mythos (belief). They tried to explain everything rationally.

The Islam has known the tension between mind and faith in the past as *tarud al aql wa annaql*. Several scholars, such as the great muslim philosopher Ibn Rushd (Averroes) has attempted to remove that contradiction. In his book *Fasl Almaqaal* (the decisive word) he spoke out the fatwa that reason and Islam complement each other and do not contradict each other.

Ibn Rushd explains how to interpret the Quran in such a way that it doesn't contradict with reason. In fact, using reason is a religious obligation, he says. He substantiates this statement with a few verses such as “Take this for your example, O you understanding ones” (Quran 59: 2), “Have they not seen the kingship of the heavens and the earth, and all the things that God has created?” (Quran 7: 185).

Ibn Rushd explains the first verse as follows: “This is a textual foundation for the obligation to use logical reasoning, or possibly a combination of logical and legal reasoning.”<sup>3</sup> The second verse, according to the author, is an incentive to study everything that exists.<sup>4</sup> Then he comes to the conclusion that the Quran obliges man through reason to think about everything that exists.

Ibn Rushd was strongly convinced that it is impossible for reason to be in contrast with Islam. That is why he says: “After all, the truth is not contrary to truth, but rather must agree with it and be a confirmation of it.”<sup>5</sup> With the first truth he refers to the truth that one obtains through the mind and the second truth refers to Islam. Finally, he concluded his book with the following statement: “... by this I mean that the mind is the friend and foster sister of religion.” In other words, reason and faith are two methods of finding out the truth.

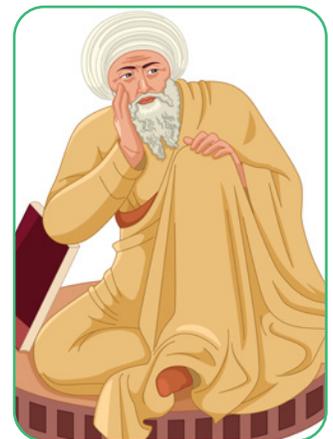


Figure 5.2  
Source: © artisticco /  
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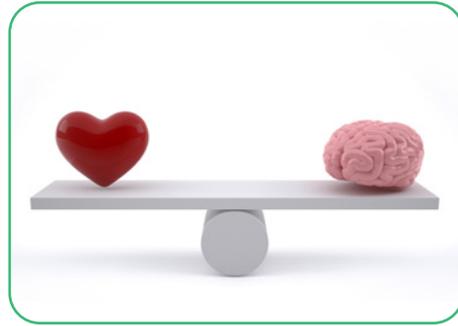


Figure 5.3  
Source: © harunyigit /  
Adobe Stock

Of course, everything depends on the interpretation of rules in the right context. If you choose for a literal interpretation of rules of centuries ago in order to apply them today, you will face some problems. By the way, the Prophet has never been obsessed with the rules, but with justice as an outcome.

### 5.2.2 DEFINITION OF DIVINE LAWS

Divine law according to Islam is the will or guidance of Allah revealed to man through his prophets. This will or guidance can be found in the first place in the Quran and in the second place in the Sunna.

The basic question is, *“How can man find out the will of Allah?”* Many Islamic scholars have investigated this very carefully. They use the method called *ijtihad*.

*Ijtihad* is a well-known term in Islamic teachings. The term literally means *“to make every effort”*. However, as it is the case with all definitions, there is also no generally accepted definition of the term *ijtihad* in Islamic legal terminology.

Here are some definitions of *ijtihad*:

- Albaidawi describes the term as *“to make every effort to discover the Islamic guidelines”*.
- Ibn Hajib defines *ijtihad* as *“The full effort of a faqih (jurist) to form an opinion on the guidelines of Islam.”*
- Alkamal bin Hammam defines it as *“The full effort of a faqih (jurist) to reach either an opinion on the guidelines of Islam or a final position, both through reason and through the texts”*.

From these three definitions we can conclude:

1) The three definitions have in common that the *mujtahid* (the one who does the *ijtihad*) must make a full effort. He or she should use all means and do the utmost to finally have an opinion on the guidelines of Islam.

2. After all, every effort is made in order to create an opinion on the guidelines of Islam. It is important to emphasize that it's an opinion for no one can claim the absolute truth with all certainty. In other words, no one represents God on earth and only He knows the absolute truth. That is why all scholars always end their *ijtihad* with Allahu a'lam ( which means "Allah knows better"). In short, the divine laws include the will or guidance of Allah and these are interpreted through *ijtihad*.



Figure 5.4  
Source: © rudall30 /  
Adobe Stock

## 5.2.3 EXERCISES

### Exercise 1: Answer the following questions individually

**1. What was the fatwa that Muslim philosopher Ibn Rushd spoke out in his book Fasl Almaqaal?**

Answer: Ration and Islam (faith) complement each other. They are not in contrast with each other.

**2. What is a religious obligation according to Ibn Rushd?**

Answer: We are obliged to use our ratio.

**3. Was Prophet Mohammed obsessed with rules?**

Answer: No, Prophet Muhammad was not obsessed with the rules, he focused on creating justice.

### Exercise 2: Missing words

Fill in the missing words.

Religious obligation - Complement- Muslim Philosopher - Quran - Reason

- Islam also dealt with problems between **reason** and belief.
- Ibn Rushd, a **Muslim philosopher**, spoke out a fatwa (the decisive word) in his book Fasl Almaqaal.
- Ratio and Islam **complement** each other and are not in contradiction with each other.
- Averroes teaches us how to interpret the Quran and he considers **it a religious obligation** to constantly use our ratio.

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## 5.3 THE RECONCILIATION BETWEEN DIVINE AND HUMAN LAWS

Each country has its own legal system to maintain order in society. Human Laws strive for harmonious societies in which justice and equality stand central. Therefore, people are expected to fulfill duties and avoid society harming behavior.



Figure 5.6  
Source: © kuroksta /  
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### 5.3.2 MEANING AND FUNCTION OF HUMAN LAWS

Human or secular laws<sup>7</sup> are not inspired by religion. In the Roman Empire, religion was a state affair (state religion) where the state tolerated or suppressed certain religions. Christianity became the state religion of the Roman Empire in the 4th century. Until the 18th century, there was a direct relationship between church and state: coronation of the emperor by the pope, appointment of bishops by the local king, link between local law and church law, inquisition, local tax and church tax, waging war in the name of religion,.... This direct relationship started ending from the Enlightenment: the state did not interfere anymore within the personal faith of the citizens, nor with the church, and the church does not interfere with the state. A separation of institutes arose. Therefore, the state from then on cannot condemn or punish anyone for particular religious beliefs and it does not determine or judge the truth claim of a religion.

The European model has always left room for religion and allows people to draw inspiration from their faith. Freedom of religion is thus an important good in Europe. As long as that inspiration is in accordance with the constitution, science and reason, it can fit within the story of European values. But this requires a reflection for muslims by reading their faith more to the spirit and less to the letter.



Figure 5.7  
Source: © MIND AND I /  
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Philosopher Karl Popper makes a difference between “the context of discovery” and “the context of justification”. The “context of discovery” indicates where a theory comes from and that it should not play a role where the rule comes from. Someone may even dream about a theory.

Moreover, laws are nothing more than values converted into standards. Values can have their origin anywhere, even in ideological ideas. Laws are not secular or religious, laws are formal rules of the game that can be justified or articulated into a common basis in the public space from both secular and other philosophies of life.

For believers, those values grow from the fact that every human being is a child of God. Rationalists see every person as a rational being and seek their values from that rational perspective. Utilitarians start from the idea that everyone is entitled to the highest form of happiness and ecologists refer to the idea that everyone is part of an ecological system seeking a balance. In this way there is a common basis that be formed into different laws. In addition, standards are not static, but dynamic and evolving depending on the context.

### 5.3.3 EXERCISES

#### Exercise 1: Definition of values and norms

Give your own definition of the term “values” and norms.

*For Example:*

- *Values are ideals that are pusued by a group of by an individual. They are beliefs thate considered important.*
- *Norms are ruels of conduct or manners that arise from values.*

#### Exercise 2: Value Top

**A. Make a list of 5 values that are importat to you.**

**B. The teacher divides the class into groups. Students create their top 3 of values:**

**C. Each group must write its top 3 of values on the board:**

### Exercise 3: Conflict of values

1. **Fist case:** Anes's friend makes a discriminating comment about a female classmate. Anes thinks his friend's comment is unacceptable.

In conflict of value, you start doubting between two values that are conflicting. **What are the conflicting values in the case of Anes and his friend?**

**Answer:** Friendship(between Anes and his friend) and gender equality.

- What value would you let go first in this situation. Why?
- **Second case:** Wearing a headscarf is very important to Selma. Her headscarf helps her express herself in her own way. At school on the other hand, they think Selma should take off her headscarf. Religious symbols are prohibited at school, this is stated in the school regulations. Selma finds her education very important and has a lot of respect for the school, but she also considers her freedom, self-determination and religious beliefs important.
- **What are the conflicting values in the case of Anes and his friend?**

**Answer:** Neutrality, No religious symbols in public, self-determination, Free expression of belief

## 5.4 THE RECONCILIATION BETWEEN DIVINE LAWS AND HUMAN LAWS

### 5.4.1 INTRODUCTION

*"If we are to think intelligently about the relations between Islam and British law, we need a fair amount of 'deconstruction' of crude oppositions and mythologies, whether of the nature of sharia or the nature of the Enlightenment"*

This citation from former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams points out that the expanded meaning of the term Sharia is very important. In other words, it is unjustified to reduce the term *sharia* to a narrow interpretation of Islamic criminal law.

The correct interpretation of the term is important to know whether or not there is a contradiction between divine laws and the human laws. Many people associate the term *sharia* with injustice, harsh legislation and brutal punishment such as oppression of women, corporal punishment, etc. This is because the media, certain politicians and jihadists use the term inappropriately. But are they using the term correctly?

The meaning of the term sharia means more than just Islamic law. It does not only contain legislation but also rituals, doctrine and philosophy. It is therefore incorrect to limit the translation of *sharia* only to Islamic law.

Sharia is not a law that contains strict rules. There is no book on sharia that contains islamic laws as is the case with the Belgian code. All books on Islamic fiqh are individual interpretations of the Quran and Sunnah.

Allah's words are eternal, but the one who interprets Allah's words is only a product of his time. There are thousands of *tafsiers and books about the fiqh*, everyone has a different interpretation and opinion. All those books are obviously works made by humans and therefore may contain errors in contrast to the words of Allah.

## 5.4.2 WHAT DOES SHARIA REALLY MEAN?



The Arabic term *sharia* originally means the path that leads to the water. This does not refer to a well from which you get water, but refers to the road that you have to follow to find a fertile place or a place where water flows to.

Figure 5.8  
Source: © David Carillet /  
Adobe Stock

Water represents life. That means that *sharia* is the way to go to protect human nature. The natural disposition of man must be protected and this will automatically lead to a more just and peaceful society. Unfortunately, this term is often misinterpreted and misunderstood.

## 5.4.3 CONTRADICTIONARY OR RECONCILABLE?

Usually the term *sharia* is considered as Islamic law. This interpretation does not cover the entire content of sharia. *Sharia* largely contains religious norms pertaining to doctrine and rite (*ibadaat*), the latter of which falls within the freedom of religion granted by the European legal order. Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights guarantees freedom of religion and also guarantees its expression.

Even when *sharia* is translated as Islamic law, there is still a wide range of sharia norms that are fully consistent with European legal norms, provided the term sharia is understood in its entirety.



In view of the foregoing, there is no problem for Islam to function reasonably in a democratic state. Islam contains a large extent of religious norms pertaining to doctrine and rite, and the latter falls within the freedom of religion granted by Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights. On the other hand, Islam also contains many norms relating to social actions (*mu'amalaat*), but as

mentioned earlier, it is Islamically legitimate to approach this category rationally provided that Islamic principles are taken into account. And the latter almost always coincide with Western norms and values.

Figure 5.9  
Source: © STOATPHOTO /  
Adobe Stock

So if secularism means the separation between Church and State and the State determines its norms and values by reason, then there is no problem. Because the State usually regulates the mutual social actions of its subjects on a rational basis, which is an Islamic belief, provided that justice is the ultimate goal. If secularism is a form of managing philosophical diversity, then Islam has no problem here either. For it is Islamic irresponsibility to enforce any religion individually as plainly and clearly states Al-Baqara verse 256: **"In religion there is no coercion. Reasonable insight is clearly distinguished from corruption."**

As mentioned before, justice is the highest principle of sharia and it doesn't matter how this is realized or brought about as Ibn Alqayyim beautifully stated.



Figure 5.10  
Source: © mehmet /  
Adobe Stock

### 5.4.4 EXERCISES

**Exercise 1: Are the following statements true or false? Motivate your answer.**

Statement	True	False	Reason
1. Sharia only means Islamic law.		<b>X</b>	
2. Tafsirs and books on the fiqh do not contain mistakes because they are made by man.		<b>X</b>	
3. The term sharia is often associated with injustice and oppression.	<b>X</b>		
4. There is no book on <i>sharia</i> containing Islamic laws.	<b>X</b>		
5. The books on Islamic fiqh are not individual interpretations of the Quran and Sunnah.		<b>X</b>	
6. It is correct to reduce the term sharia to a narrow interpretation of Islamic criminal law.		<b>X</b>	
7. Media, certain politicians and jihadists often use the term sharia without the proper meaning and context.	<b>X</b>		

## Exercise 2: Sharia

1. With what did you associate the term *sharia*?

2. With what did you associate the term *sharia*?

## 5.5 THE IMPORTANCE OF IJTIHAD

### 5.5.1 INTRODUCTION

*This chapter can be used by the teacher as an in-depth look and is not part of the standard package for students.*

*Ijtihad* is a tool that enables Muslims to constantly renew their understanding of reality and revelation. Moreover, there is a hadith in which the Prophet strongly encourages Muslims to use *ijtihad*, namely: **“If a wise man makes an effort in his research and his result is correct, he will receive two hasanaat (rewardings) and if he has made a mistake (in his *ijtihad*), he gets one hasana”**.

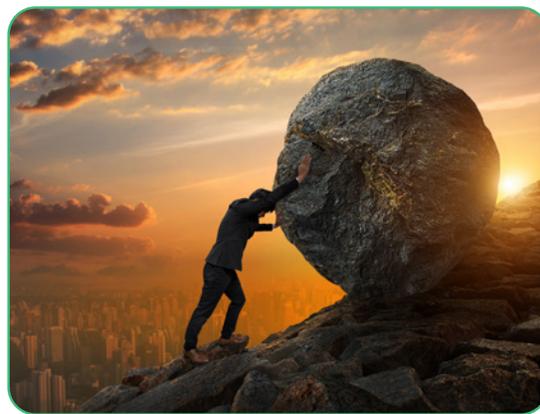


Figure 5.11  
Source: © chaiyapruerk /  
Adobe Stock

Logically, an individual is rewarded for being correct and assisted if he makes a mistake, but the Prophet Muhammad formulates a double reward for a correct act and one reward for a wrong act. Thus, closing the doors of the *ijtihad* is unjustified, because the Prophet Muhammad consciously left those doors open. In addition, the Prophet Mohammed also performed *ijtihad*.

There are hadiths showing that Muhammad did *ijtihad*, some of his *ijtihad*s being rejected by his companions.

Although there is freedom within Islam for the application of the *ijtihad*, the responsibility must also be mentioned. It is not the case that every individual can say and do whatever he wants in the name of Islam. People have a certain responsibility, so it is impossible to attribute things to the revelation without using a method. That is why Islamic scholars have developed certain methods throughout the history of Islam to interpret texts on the basis of these methods. Although these methods are open to criticism, arbitrarily interpreting texts is very dangerous and can lead to harmful consequences, as we sometimes see today.

## 5.5.2 MASLAHA OR HUMAN WELLBEING

Figure 5.12  
Source: © igorbukhlin /  
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A competent mujtahid is thus necessary, especially in the case of a conflict between nas (text, revelation) and maslaha (well-being). In that case, some give full priority to maslaha, for according to them the essence of revelation is to maintain maslaha. Najmuddien Attofi is a well-known



proponent of this. He explains that evil and corruption cannot possibly be supported by Islam, for many passages in the Quran and from the tradition of the Prophet Muhammad show the contrary, for example: "God wishes to make it easy for you and not difficult". **"God wishes to make it easy for you; after all, man was created weak"; "God does not wish to impose anything troublesome on you, but only to make you clean and to show his grace to you fully. Maybe you will give thanks". "And commit yourself to God with the commitment due to Him. He has chosen you and He has not imposed anything on you in religion".** There are also hadiths that subscribe to such opinions, such as: **"Religion is a solace". "Most of the loving religion with Allah is the peaceful Hanafia."** And **"Do no evil, and do not return evil for evil".**

According to Najmuddien Attofi, Islam in general is a solace for the people and when certain passages from the Quran or the tradition contrast with the common good, the common good prevails. The core of the message of Islam is peace and well-being and not misery, as in verse 1 Surat Ta-Ha: **"We have not sent down the Quran to you to make you unhappy".**

That is why a mujtahid (someone who does ijtiḥad) should always take into account the situation of the people when interpreting the texts. In addition, maslaha is in his eyes the highest principle of Islam and God - He claims - is bound to take into account the welfare of the people as Allah Himself states in the Quran: **"Peace be upon you, your Lord has mercy on Himself.** Prescribed. Allah thus declares that he will be merciful to his creature, and so anything that contradicts mercy is ungodly.

From what is said above, we can conclude that the well-being of people is of great importance in the Islam. Well-known expressions from Islamic teachings confirm this as follows: **"Wherever well-being occurs, there is Islam."**, **"The message of Islam is to maintain well-being and to diminish evil."**, **"The message of Islam is to maintain and increase well-being and to decrease and avoid evil."**, **"The purpose of Islam is to maintain the well-being of the people during their lifetime and after death."**, **"Islam is based on wisdom and well-being and is generally just and merciful."**

**“Alistihsaan is the failure to observe a general rule within Islam in order to accommodate people in their well-being.”** The well-known Muslim philosopher Algazali is of the same opinion as Najmuddien Attofi (see above). In his book he writes: **“Sometimes we see the welfare of the people as a sign of an Islamic guideline, but sometimes an Islamic guideline is a sign of well-being.”**

From the foregoing we can clearly deduce that there a lot of *maslaha*. Therefore, this collection of *masalih* requires a *mujtahid* with a sharp mind who considers all aspects. If this is the case between *maslaha* themselves, what about a contradiction between *maslaha* and *nas* (text/revelation)?

### 5.5.3 CONTRADICTION BETWEEN MASLAHA (WELFARE) AND NAS (TEXT/REVELATION)

Najmuddien Attofi is a strong advocate of the full priority of *maslaha* in case of contradiction between *maslaha* and *nas* or between *kitab almandur* (reality) and *kitab almastoer* (revelation). However, it is appropriate to qualify his position here. After all, he makes a difference between *ibadaat* (rituals) and *Muamalaat* (social affairs).

In the first case, the *ibadaat* takes full precedence over *maslaha*, while in the second case, *mu'amalaat* takes second place after *maslaha*. This classification has to do with the fact that the first term, namely *ibadaat*, is not open to reason, which makes it impossible to determine the motive or the reason for a ritual act. The second term *mu'amalaat* (social affairs) is reasonable and so there can be the full precedence of the *maslaha*.

## 5.5.4 EXERCISES

### Exercise 1: Definitions

Give the correct Arabic term for each description below

**Moe'amalat - Ijtihad - Maslaha – Alistihsaan- Ibadaat**

#### Ijtihad

Enables Muslims to constantly renew their understanding of reality and revelation.

#### Alistihsaan

Not observe a general rule of Islam in order to accommodate people in their well-being.

#### Moe'amalat

Is reasonable and so there can be full precedence of the maslaha.

#### Maslaha

The highest principle of islam and Allah is to take into account the welfare of the people as Allah himself declares in the quran: *"Peace be upon you, your lord has prescribed mercy to himself."*

#### Ibadaat

Reasonably impossible to determine the motive or reason for a ritual act..

### Exercise 2: Choose the correct answer

#### 1. Hadith

- A. There is no Hadith in which the Prophet strongly encourages Muslims to use ijtiḥad.
- B. There is a hadith in which the Prophet strongly encourages Muslims to use ijtiḥad.

#### 2. Individual

- A. It is true that any individual can say and do whatever he likes in the name of Islam.
- B. Not every individual can say and do whatever he wants in the name of Islam.
- C. Sometimes an individual may be able to say and do whatever he wants in the name of Islam.

#### 3. Methods

- A. Islam scholars have developed certain methods of interpreting texts throughout the history of Islam.
- B. Islam scholars have not developed specific methods of interpreting texts.
- C. There are hardly no methods for interpreting texts.

## 5.5.6 EXERCISES

### Exercise 3: Values, Human Rights and Quran

Fill in the correct letter of the human rights article and the number of the Quran Verse under the corresponding value:

	<b>Human Rights</b>
<b>A</b>	<b>Article 2</b> Everyone has right to all human rights, regardless of age, gender, skin colour, religion, language,...
<b>B</b>	<b>Article 4</b> No one will be kept in bondage or enslavement. Slavery and slave trade in any form are prohibited.
<b>C</b>	<b>Article 11</b> You are innocent until proven guilty; you have the right to defend yourself against allegations.
<b>D</b>	<b>Article 14</b> If you become a victim of human rights violations, you have the right to go to another country and ask that country to protect you.
<b>E</b>	<b>Article 12</b> You have the right to privacy: to protection if someone harasses you, opens your letters or speaks bad of you.
<b>F</b>	<b>Article 23</b> You are entitled to work in the profession of your choice. You are also entitled to a fair wage for your work. Men and women must be paid equally for the same work.
<b>G</b>	<b>Article 18</b> You have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

QURAN	
1	"... Men are allotted what they earn, and women are allotted what they earn ..." (Quran 4:32) [17]
2	"O people! Verily your Lord is One and your father (Adam) is one. An Arab is no better than a non-Arab, and a non-Arab is no better than an Arab; a white man is no better than a black and a black is no better than a white - except in terms of piety and good deeds ". (Statement of the Prophet Mohamed, reported by Imaam Ahmad, 22391, al-Silsilat al-Saheeh 2700)
3	"God does not like openly speaking evil except when someone has been wronged. God is hearing and knowing." (Quran 4: 148)
4	"In religion there is no compulsion." (Quran, 2: 256) "He who wills it must believe, and whoever wants it must be unbelieving." (Quran 18:29)
5	"And if any of the polytheists seek protection from you, then give him protection until he hears the word of God, and then let him reach a place where he is safe ..." (Quran 9: 6)
6	"There are three people to whom I myself will prosecute on Judgment Day. One of these three, is he who makes a free man a slave, then sells him and eats this money." (Bukhari, Ibn Majjah)
7	"You who believe! Do not enter houses other than your own houses when you have asked whether it is convenient and have greeted their inhabitants. That is better for you; perhaps you will be admonished. And if you find no one in them, there will be then only come in when they give permission, but when they say to you, "Go back," go back. That is purer for you; God knows what you are doing. " (Quran 24: 27-28)

Values	Equality	Safety	Independence	Privacy	Self etermination	Freedom of religion	Justice
Human Rights Justice	A	D	F	E	B	G	C
Quran / Sunnah	2	5	1	7	6	4	3

## 5.6 GLOSSARY

**Ta'rud al'aql wa annaql:** Tension between mind and faith.

**Ibn Rush, Averroes:** Muslim Philosopher.

**Fasl Almaqaal:** Book written by Ibn Rush.

**Ijtihad:** Make full effort.

**Allahu a'lam:** Allah knows better.

**Divine Laws:** The will or guidance of Allah.

**Sharia:** Islamic Law, Rituals, Doctrine, Philosophy.

**Tafsir:** Interpretation of Islam.

**Fiqh:** Doctrine of duties, Islamic Rituals, Islamic Law.

**Mu'amalaat:** Social acts.

**Secularism:** Separation of Church and State.

**Hasana:** Reward for a good deed.

**Hadith:** Traditions of events in the Life of the Prophet Muhammad.

**Maslaha:** Well-being.

**Nas:** Revelation or text.

**Hanafia:** The Pure Religion.

**Kitab Almastoer:** Revelation.

**Kitab almandoer:** Reality.

**Ibda'at:** Rituals

## 5.7 SCENARIO

**Ahmed:** “Father, next Tuesday we will celebrate International Day of Democracy at school. It’s really an interesting topic. We are going to do different types of activities.”

**Father Harun:** “No my son. You cannot go to school during that day. We are Muslims. We do not acknowledge democracy.”

**Ahmed:** “Why father? I don’t understand???”

**Father Harun:** “Because democracy is not allowed in Islam. It’s just like that.”

**Ahmed:** “My friend told me that it’s just a way of organizing a community or a country.

There is nothing wrong with that”

**Father Harun:** “Listen Ahmed. Islam means everything to us. And nothing is above the Islam. Nothing. We must act according to the precepts of our faith.”

**Samir:** “Hmm. About what kind of Islam are you talking. Because it can be interpreted in different ways. It is also culture-bound. If a certain culture or country has a conservative interpretation, you will also notice that in the laws of that country.”

**Father Harun:** “But democracy is about human laws. And it is only Allah who may make laws.”

**Samir:** “The first is correct, but the second, namely that only Allah can make laws, is not correct.

Islamic scholars believe that you should obey the rules of the country where you live, as long as these laws are fair. The ethical principles of the Islam are the foundation of our faith and not the detailed rules that are invented by man. Islamic values and norms are universal.

Human law forbids murder, stealing, injustice, discrimination, etc. So does Islamic law.

Human law and standards can also be found in the Islamic laws.” Ibn Alqayem Aljawzija, an important scholar in Islam believes that Justice is the law of Allah. “When one recognizes signs of justice and the direction is clear, then this is the Islamic law and his religion.”

**Ahmed:** “So human laws can contain Islamic principles? ”

**Samir:** “Certainly, these principles are universal. For example: Article 18 of the Declaration of Human Rights: Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right also includes the freedom to change one’s religion or belief, as well as the freedom, either alone or with others, both in public and in one’s private life, to practice one’s religion or belief by teaching it, by its practical application, by worship and observance of the commands and regulations. “

The Islam shares the same values. The Quran says: “There shall be no compulsion in [acceptance of] the religion. The right course has become clear from the wrong.”(Quran 2: 257)”

**Father Harun:** “Hmmm, I see it. It’s actually about the way of interpreting. Nobody ever told me about this. I always thought it was just forbidden in Islam.”

**Samir:** “As I mentioned before. It can be interpreted in different ways. It is also culture-bound. If a certain culture or country has a conservative interpretation, you will also notice that in the laws of that country.

In addition, many democratic countries have constitutions that guarantee freedom of religion. Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights also guarantees freedom of religion and also guarantees its expression.”

**Father Harun:** “This is actually true. Therefore we have freedom in Europe. We have religious associations, religious places of worship of different faiths, Islamic religion is given in school. There are quite a few great examples.”

**Samir:** “That’s right. In a theocracy that would not be true. In other words, when a particular religion determines policy. Democracy, by contrast, guarantees the freedom of all philosophy, provided it does not harm society.”

**Harun:** “The Prophet Muhammad led efforts for preparation of the constitution of Medina which established love, tolerance and coexistence between different communities and tribes, regardless their religion.”

**Samir:** “Very correct (very satisfied).

You have been paying close attention, Samir. You begin to understand the nuances of Islam.”

**Father Harun:** “Remember my words Samir. My son is going to be a great imam one day (laugh).”

**Harun:** “Father, chill i don’t know yet what I want to become, but I will certainly look up more information about this. I want to be able to explain all this properly in class on Tuesday.”

**Samir:** “The world is yours, you can become anything you want if you just work hard for it.”

**Father Harun:** “Let’s have a tea on this. Our meetings always end in interesting discussions and conclusions.”

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# 6

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FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION:  
PROFANE OR SACRED?

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## MODULE SIX

# **FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION: PROFANE OR SACRED**

## **6.1 GENERAL INTRODUCTION**

This manual for teacher' is a didactic packet that elaborates on the following theme: "Freedom of expression: profane or sacred?" Developed for the age group of 13 to 18 year olds, this package offers the teacher or supervisor of a learning group the opportunity to work out this theme at the level of their own class group. In this guide, the teacher can work around various topics that connect to the overarching theme of "Freedom of expression: profane or sacred?" Using impulses and didactic suggestions, it is possible to approach this theme from different perspectives. Impulses are elements that the teacher can bring into the classroom to start the conversation.

This manual contains a variety of impulses with different levels of difficulty. These impulses aim to contribute to the learning process and come in different forms. It is not necessary to use all impulses. The teacher can select the most appropriate impulses based on (the starting situation in) his learning group. The didactic suggestions are concrete proposals to work with the impulses and are aimed at philosophical reflection and communication. This ensures that the teacher can approach the different impulses in a varied way that fits in with his own learning group.

### 6.1.1 STRUCTURE OF THE MANUAL

The following sections are covered in this manual:

- First, a general introduction to the meaning of freedom of expression is offered. Then it is examined whether freedom of expression is absolute or not. Finally, moral responsibility is explained. This chapter belongs to the students' basic learning alongside 'theme 3.3 moral responsibility'.
- Secondly, there will be an explanation of the Prophet's biography. In this chapter, students get to know the Prophet better. This chapter is also part of the students' basic curriculum.
- The third chapter of this manual goes into detail about how the Prophet dealt with personal insults and mockery. Using this chapter, students learn to reject violence as a response to insults. This chapter is part of the students' basic learning.
- Fourth and final chapter deals with a number of real-life cases approached in the light of the prophetic and Quranic ideal. Based on this chapter, students learn how to deal with some cases from reality that mock Islam. This is an in-depth chapter.

To conclude, this manual contains a glossary where all difficult terms are explained briefly and concisely at the student's level. This is followed by a bibliography for each chapter of this didactic volume.

## 6.2 FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

### 6.2.1 INTRODUCTION

Freedom of expression means that every individual has the right to express his beliefs both religiously, philosophically, politically, as well as personally.

Expression can occur in a variety of ways both through word, writing and actions:

a) Word: such as through education or media

b) Writing: Press or petition

c) Acts: Worship services, meetings and associations



Figure 6.1  
Source: © Trifonenko  
Ivan / Adobe Stock

These freedoms are explicitly protected by democratic constitutional states, for example in Article 19 of the Belgian Constitution as well as in Articles 9 and 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights. In concrete terms, this means that every individual can express his beliefs without fear of persecution.

Every individual therefore has the right to practice his beliefs. For example, a Muslim can freely practice his beliefs in words, writing and actions. He can found schools, publish a weekly newspaper and build mosques. In Belgium, the community is eligible for recognition, provided it meets certain conditions, and can therefore be subsidized.

Freedom of speech and writing also means that everyone is free to say and write whatever they want without fear of prosecution, therefore censorship is out of the question. Especially in press and cartoonist circles, “self-censorship” is unacceptable.

Indeed, freedom of the press means that journalists are not kept within bounds. The danger is that important information will be withheld from the public.

Consequently, the question that this subject undoubtedly raises is, “Is freedom of speech absolute?” We will discuss this in detail in the next subchapter.

## 6.2.2 IS FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION ABSOLUTE?

For a time, wars were waged to claim the right to freedom of expression. They succeeded and this right was then enshrined into rules and laws that guarantee our freedom of expression.

Yet it is not always possible to say or write everything at will. Incitement to racism, xenophobia, defamation or insulting speech, hatred or violence are punishable by law.

The question is whether insulting the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) falls under freedom of speech. Or should this also be punishable?



Figure 6.2  
Source: © Siam /  
Adobe Stock

As mentioned earlier, freedom of speech is a common good. Therefore, minorities can openly and freely practice their beliefs. If the majority can decide for themselves to whom freedoms are or are not granted, then this is an undermining of free democratic society.

Through legislation, people tried to organize society in such a way that the weak would be protected from (the abuse of power by) the strong.

The French preacher and activist Henri Lacordaire says: "Entre le fort et le faible, entre le riche et le pauvre, entre le maître et le serviteur, c'est la liberté qui opprime et la loi qui affranchit." ("Between the strong and the weak, between the rich and the poor, between the master and the servant, it is freedom that oppresses and law that sets free").

Mocking the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) is undoubtedly hurtful to Muslims. However, if Muslims demand that it be banned by law because it comes across as hurtful, then they should be consistent in doing so. Suppose a citizen demands that the Quran should be banned by law because it contains passages that are offensive or because he/she believes it incites violence. Imagine that every time someone is offended by statements, pictures,... of his fellow citizen, he can sue him. Then we would end up on an endless street that leads to absurdities.

But that same freedom of speech means that the Muslim can morally disapprove of those same cartoons and has the right to feel offended. Citizens have the right to freedom. But those who exercise that right may also prepare for a non-violent rebuttal. In other words, you may disapprove matters that are legally permissible within the framework of freedom of expression.

This freedom is enshrined in the laws of democratic constitutional states as well as in the European Convention on Human Rights and has provided the foundation for peace that has been fought for over time.

### 6.2.3 MORAL RESPONSIBILITY

A harmonious society is only possible if people respect each other. Therefore, the moral question that arises is, "Is everything that is legally possible also morally desirable?" In other words, not everything that can and may be said should be said. Imagine a man and a woman humiliating each other every day on the basis of freedom of speech. Will their marriage last long then?

Having the right to do something as an individual is fundamental. But Islam also obliges one to show reverence for one's fellow man. For example, Islam forbids disrespecting saints or important characters of other believers. In Surah al-An'am verse 108 we read the following about this: *"And do not insult those whom they worship besides Allah, lest they accuse Allah without knowledge."*<sup>1</sup> The verse commands the Muslim to value that which is valuable to someone.

In a hadith, the Prophet (pbuh) forbade insulting the father of others: *"One of the greatest sins is for a man to insult his own parents. It was said, O Messenger of God, and how can a man insult his own parents? He (pbuh) said, When someone insults the father of another person, then that person will insult his father and mother."*

In other words, the Prophet (pbuh) teaches us to be respectful of one another and teaches us standards of decency. In another hadith, he (pbuh) says: *"No one is a true believer until he wishes for his fellow man the same as he wishes for himself."*

Treat another as you wish to be treated yourself. A harmonious society is only possible if we apply this golden rule. However, this is not a simple task in a time where the freedom of the individual is central. In an individualized society, it is difficult to take account of others. Everything starts from "me." "Each to his own, and God to us all, and to the devil with those left behind."

This way of life undermines the solidarity that is nurtured, among other things, by faith. As a result, today man feels obliged to mould everything into laws in order to bring order to society. Indeed, God is no longer central in the West and is no longer allowed to determine anything. *"God is dead,"*<sup>2</sup> said Nietzsche. But Nietzsche also said, *"Is not the magnitude of this act too great for us?"*

Man will henceforth take the wheel and use reason as his moral compass. This has undoubtedly brought great progress in many areas. But a human being also has its weaknesses; such as greed or ego. As Polish writer Sławomir Mrozek, an inveterate freethinker disgusted by the clergy and all things clerical, discovered, "When we felt unhappy in earlier times, we blamed God, who was the manager of the world in those times; we assumed He

<sup>1</sup> <https://koran.nl/soera-6-al-an-am-het-vee/> (consulted on 07.02.2021).

<sup>2</sup> Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche is a German philosopher who is considered one of the most influential modern thinkers. Lived between 1844 - 1900.

was not doing His job properly. Therefore we dismissed Him and appointed ourselves as new rulers." He also said, "...Things did not get better under the new management and that was because when the dream and hope of a better life is completely focused on our own egos and reduced to tinkering with our own bodies and souls, there is no limit to our ambition for honor and to the temptation to make that ego bigger and bigger but to refuse to accept any limit in the first place (...). People said to me 'invent yourself, invent your own life and lead it as you wish, at any time and from the beginning to the end'. But am I capable of accomplishing this task? Without help, without trial and error, without trial and error, and above all without doubt."<sup>3</sup>

So the human being is central, the ego or the "I" is central. This is actually what modern Western philosophy is based on. The philosophy of Descartes<sup>4</sup>, the father of modern philosophy. His famous statement is, "cogito ergo sum", "I think therefore I exist, I think therefore I am." Here again we see the term "I" pop up. While solidarity considers the 'other' as important as the "I".

This is also what the French philosopher Emmanuel Levinas<sup>5</sup> observed. His philosophy involves a reflection on his experience as a Jew in the concentration camps and argues that concentration camps are not an accidental phenomenon, but a corollary of the ego-logical and totalitarian nature of Western thought.<sup>6</sup>

The philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas is based on the relationship with the "Other." The face of the "Other" is an ethical signal to the fellow human being that he also exists or that he also has a right to a full existence.

Islam is a religion of "I," the "Other," and "Allah". When too much emphasis is placed on any of these three aspects, a disturbance in the faith occurs. When, for example, an individual puts too much emphasis on his rights, so that no account is taken of his fellow man (the other), then his relationship with Allah is, as it were, also disturbed. Indeed, according to Islam, God manifests Himself in relation to fellow human beings, as one can clearly deduce from the following hadith:

*"The Messenger of Allah (pbuh) said, "Allah (will) say on the Day of Judgment, O son of Adam, I felt ill and you did not visit Me." He will say, "O Lord, and how should I have visited You when You are the Lord of the worlds?" He will say, "Did you not know that My servant, such and such, fell ill and you had not visited him? Did you not know that if you had visited him, you would have found Me with him? O son of Adam, I have asked you for food and you have not fed Me." He will say, "O Lord, and how should I have fed You, when You*

<sup>3</sup> M. BAUMAN, *Vloeibare tijden, Leven in een eeuw van onzekerheid*, Zoetermeer, Uitgeverij Klement 2011, pag. 138.

<sup>4</sup> René Descartes is a French philosopher and mathematician. Is known for his method of doubt. He lived between 1596 -1650).

<sup>5</sup> Emmanuel Levinas is a French-Jewish philosopher of Lithuanian descent. He lived between 1906 - 1995.

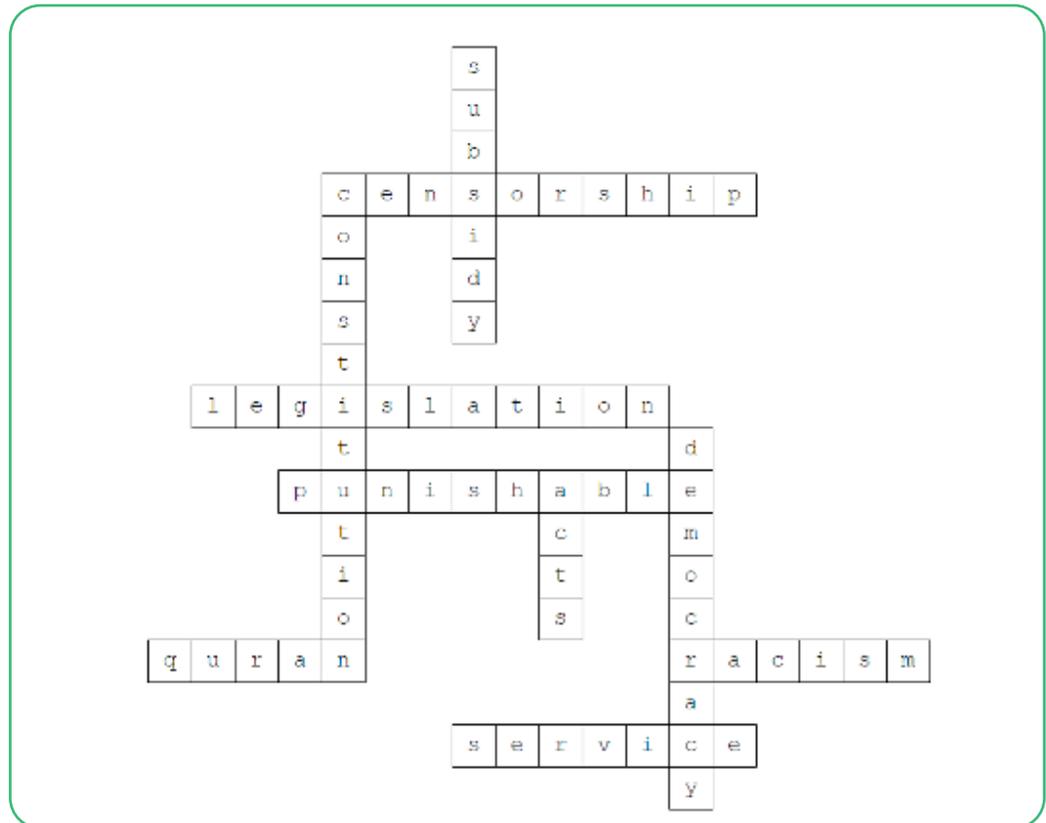
<sup>6</sup> A. CLOOTS, *Fundamentele wijsbegeerte*, Leuven, Acco, 2013, pag. 185.

*are the Lord of the worlds?" He will say, "Did you not know that my servant, such and such, had asked you for food and you did not feed him? Did you not know that if you had fed him, you would surely have found it with Me. O son of Adam, I asked you to give Me drink and you did not give Me drink." He will say, "O Lord, how should I have given You to drink for You are the Lord of the worlds." He will say, "My servant such and such, has asked you for drink and you have not given him drink. If you had given him to drink you would surely have found it with Me.""*

Indeed, when each individual takes into account himself and his fellow man, peace automatically arises in society. In fact, that peace cannot and must not only be guaranteed in law, but also in morality.

Our task is to sincerely seek, time and again, an open and tolerant society in which peace and free speech find each other in law and morality.

### Exercise 1: Complete the crossword puzzle



#### Horizontal

2. Check for prohibited items in publications or films and omit them
3. With this, the society protects the weak from the rich
5. It is ... to incite racism, xenophobia and insults
7. The holy book of the Muslims
8. The view that one human race is better than another
9. Another word for ceremony in a religious context

#### Vertical

1. This a community can receive from the government when it meets certain conditions
2. Freedom of expression is enshrined in the Belgian ...
4. A type of government over a country in which the inhabitants have a great deal of say
6. In addition to word and writing, you can express your opinion in this way

## Exercise 2: Answer the following questions.

1. How is freedom of expression defined in the Belgian Constitution?

Every individual can express their beliefs without fear of persecution.

2. In what ways can a believer practice his right to hold his own beliefs?

He can found schools, publish a weekly newspaper and build houses of worship.

3. Has the right to free speech always existed?

No, there was a long struggle for this. Eventually it was established in several articles to protect this right.

4. What is the main purpose of the European Convention on Human Rights?

To establish peace among people by protecting everyone's rights.

5. Can a Muslim demand by law that the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) not be insulted?

No, this freedom exists in a democratic country. At the same time, a Muslim does have the right to disapprove of this insult and to feel insulted. However, if incitement to hatred or insult is made, it is punishable.

## 6.3 WHO WAS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD (PBUH)?

### 6.3.1 BIRTH OF THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD (PBUH)

Muhammad was born in the Year of the Elephant which corresponds to the year 570 of the Gregorian calendar. He was born into a noble family in Mecca, the Banu Hashim clan which was held in high esteem by the other tribes in Mecca and surrounding areas. Even before his birth, Muhammad had lost his father and therefore from the beginning he was given the double status which, for the people of Mecca, constituted the prestige of the descendant and the frailty of a fatherless child. At that time, the name "Muhammad" was completely unknown in the Arabian Peninsula. His mother had received this name through a vision during her pregnancy. In it, the birth of the '*lord of this people*' was also announced. During the birth she was instructed to say, "*I place him under the protection of the One and Only from the falsity of all envious people.*" The Quraish, the tribe that included the Banu Hashim, had a special relationship with the nomadic lifestyle of the Arab Bedouins. They entrusted their boys to the care of Bedouin foster families. They believed that the Bedouins lived a freer, healthier and nobler lifestyle than those who lived in the city. To have a successful life in the desert required a high level of solidarity and consequently a high level of respect for one's personality and appreciation of human value.



Figure 6.3  
Source: © meen\_na /  
Adobe Stock

Halimah bint Abi Dhu'ayb and her husband Harith ibn 'Abd al'Uzzah of the Hawazin tribe came to Mecca in search of an infant to take to the desert. They were the poorest of their clan and could not convince any family of the Quraish to entrust them with the care of their child. Aminah, Muhammad's mother, was also in a desperate situation and could not find a Bedouin foster family to care for Muhammad because he was fatherless. Halimah realized that a young widow like Aminah could not afford her services. Nevertheless, she agreed to take Muhammad with her because she did not want to return to her people empty-handed. Even though it would not bring her any material gain, Halimah thought their generosity might bring them other blessings. Her decision indeed brought good changes to their lives because Muhammad's presence brought a lot of blessings to their household. Halimah and Harith raised Muhammad as their own son and returned to Mecca regularly to show Aminah his progression.

One day Halimah returned to Mecca to tell Aminah about an incident that Muhammad had experienced. Halimah's son had seen the incident and came to tell her about it. Two men in white garments came up to Muhammad with a golden basin full of snow. They took hold of him and opened his chest, took out his heart and opened it. They took out a black clot and threw it away.

Then they washed his heart and body with snow until they made him clean. Troubled by this event, Halimah brought Muhammad back to his mother. Aminah was not surprised by this incident and told them that she herself had witnessed signs that her child was being prepared for a special fate.

Aminah had been living separately from her son for four years now and decided to keep him in Mecca where he grew up with his playmates Hamzah and Safiyyah. When he was six years old, Muhammad traveled to Yathrib with his mother to visit their relatives of the Khazraj tribe. On the return trip, his mother fell ill and died in the city of Abwa'. Muhammad then returned with Barakah, the servant of Aminah, to Mecca where his grandfather 'Abd al-Muttalib was waiting for him. 'Abd al-Muttalib was inseparable from the young Muhammad and took him with him wherever he went. Two years after his mother's death, however, Muhammad's grandfather also died at the age of 81. Before he died, he entrusted the guardianship of Muhammad to 'Abd Allah's brother, Abu Talib. He and his wife Fatimah bint Asad loved their nephew very much and sacrificed a great deal for him.

At the age of 8, Muhammad already knew what it was to be fatherless, to be poor, to be lonely, to lose his mother and grandfather, ... In addition to the grief, suffering and distress, there are also many signs in his path of a predestined life that would facilitate his development and education. Many family members will care for him and love him. The Qur'an will also later recall Muhammad's special position as a fatherless orphan and the spiritual lessons of living in the desert:

“Did He not find you an orphan; He took you in! Did He not find you when you were lost; He guided you! Did He not find you when you were poor, He made you rich! Therefore ... Never treat the orphan badly, do not reject the needy, and make known the beneficence of your Lord!” (Qur'an 93: 6-11).

### 6.3.2 THE CHILDHOOD OF THE PROPHET (PBUH)

The fact that Muhammad was both orphaned and poor caused him to experience vulnerability and humility first hand when he was very young. After that he loses his mother on the young age of 6, it brings him almost directly under the care of God but at the same time very close to people who have nothing at all. The Qur'an reminds him not to forget this throughout his life and especially during his prophetic mission.

Your past is a school of learning from which you can gain practical and concrete knowledge. Also, the time he spent with the nomads in the desert has given him certain experiences that will guide his life later. The first years of the Prophet's life are the breeding ground for a very special relationship with nature that will play a constant role throughout his mission. Thus, the Prophet had an important relationship with nature from an early age. Living close to nature, observing, understanding and respecting it is necessary for a deep faith. The universe is full of signs that remind us of the presence of the Creator and the desert opens the human mind for observation, meditation

and initiation. The first years of Muhammad's life were undoubtedly years of preparation in which his gaze was directed to the signs of the universe.

There is a very important spiritual lesson to be learned from this, both in terms of the formation of the Prophet himself and our own formation through the centuries. Living in nature, respecting it, as well as looking at and reflecting on what it shows us, has to offer us, and takes (back) from us are requirements of a faith that seeks to nurture and deepen itself in its quest. Nature is a school whose signs and meaning the mind gradually learns to understand. Nature is the first guide and intimate companion of faith. Far removed from soulless religious rituals, this kind of education establishes a relationship with the divine based on contemplation and depth that will later allow for a second phase of spiritual education. In a second spiritual learning moment, the meaning, form and purposes of the religious ritual can then be understood. Far away from nature, in our cities, we seem to have forgotten the meaning of this message, so much so that we make a dangerous inversion of the order of religious obligations and think that learning techniques and forms (prayers, pilgrimages, etc.) is sufficient to grasp and understand their meaning and purposes. This is a mistake with great consequences because in the end it causes religious education to be so stripped of its spiritual substance that should be its very beating heart.



Figure 6.4  
Source: © Michael /  
Adobe Stock

### 6.3.3.EXERCISES

**Exercise 3: Match the following columns and write down the answer below.**

1. Year in which the Prophet was born.	A. 6 years
2. Clan from which the Prophet came	B. Abu Talib
3. Foster mother of the Prophet	C. Banu Hashim
4. How old was the Prophet when his mother died	D. His heart
5. This person took care of the Prophet after his grandfather died	E. Halimah bint Abi Dhu'ayb
6. Which part of the Prophet's body was washed by angels when he was only 4 years old	F. Yathrib
7. The ancient name of the city of Medina	G. His mother Aminah
8. Who gave the Prophet the name Muhammad?	H. Year of the Elephant (570 A.D.)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
H	C	E	A	B	D	F	G

#### Exercise 4: Answer the questions below.

1. What was the wisdom behind the Prophet experiencing what it is like to be a poor orphan at a young age?

The fact that Muhammad was both orphaned and poor caused him to experience vulnerability and humility first hand when he was very small. In this way, he later learned to have affection for the weak as a messenger.

2. Why were newborn children raised in the countryside?

The countryside had a freer, healthier and nobler lifestyle.

3. What role did nature play in preparing the Prophet's task as messenger?

The countryside had a freer, healthier and nobler lifestyle. Living close to nature, observing, understanding and respecting nature is necessary for a deep faith. The universe is full of signs that remind us of the presence of the Creator and the desert opens the human mind for observation, meditation and initiation.

Living in nature, respecting it, as well as looking at and reflecting on what it shows us, offers us, and takes (back) from us are requirements of a faith that seeks to nurture and deepen in its quest. Nature is a school whose signs and meaning the mind gradually learns to understand. Nature is the first guide and intimate companion of faith. Far removed from soulless religious rituals, this kind of education establishes a relationship with the divine based on contemplation and depth that will later allow for a second phase of spiritual education.

4. What was the wisdom behind the story where the Prophet's heart was cleansed?

This protected him from future mistakes and misdeeds that would be committed.

5. What influence did the Prophet have on the household of Halimah?

His presence brought many blessings.

## 6.4 TRIALS, HUMILIATION AND MOCKERY OF THE PROPHET

### 6.4.1 REVELATION AND RESISTANCE

When the Prophet Muhammad received the revelation and began to proclaim it publicly, he encountered resistance from the chiefs of Mecca. Every day they became more aware of the danger lurking: it was, in their opinion, a rebellion against their gods and their customs. This could eventually endanger their power.



Figure 6.5

Source: © Erica Guilane-Nachez / Adobe Stock

The tribal leaders first tried to convince Muhammad to stop the proclamation of his message. For this purpose they sent his uncle Abu Talib but this did not bring any results and the Prophet persisted and said, *"O my uncle, I swear by God that even if they put the sun in my right hand and the moon in my left hand to dissuade me from this matter, I will not let them discourage me from this matter until He (Allah) has brought it to a successful conclusion or I die!"*

Because the Prophet persisted, his opponents began a campaign of slander against him in which hostilities broke out against him: the Prophet (pbuh) was insulted and called a sorcerer and insane. Abu Lahab had his two sons who had married the daughters of the Prophet separated from them. And Abu Lahab's wife scattered her garbage cans whenever the Prophet walked by. She told the people that Muhammad was possessed by the devil and that he broke up families and promoted chaos and debauchery. In none of these cases did the Prophet (pbuh) respond to these insinuations with violence.

When people outside Mecca came to Mecca to listen to Muhammad's message they were warned against the Prophet's so called misdeeds. The Prophet also faced humiliation and ridicule. But the Prophet (pbuh) never used violence in response.

The pressure grew and the opposition manifested itself more and more violently: the tribal leaders were particularly targeting the weaker Muslims. For example, Bilal, who was then a slave, was tortured by his master. Later Abu Bakr bought him and immediately gave him back his freedom.

One day, the Prophet was humiliated by Abu Djahl so harshly that even the non-Muslims considered that he had transgressed the limits of decency. The situation became increasingly difficult for the Muslims and especially

for the most vulnerable among them but the Prophet remained steadfast and he answered every attack with wisdom and not with violence.

#### 6.4.2 THE HUMILIATION OF THE PROPHET (PBUH) IN TA'IF

The humiliations and persecutions were getting worse and worse. Therefore, the Prophet decided to go to the city of Ta'if in the hope that the leaders of the city would heed his message and protect him from his enemies.

He was not received as he wished and the leaders mocked him. They not only refused to comply with his request but also turned the population against him. Upon his departure, insults rained down and children threw stones at him resulting in bloody injuries.

He was unable to find support among his fellow men and took refuge in an orchard to get rid of his assailants. There he turned to Allah and prayed to Him, *"O God, to You alone I complain of my weakness, my impotence and my insignificance in relation to men. O most Merciful among the merciful, You are the Lord of the weak and You are my Lord. To whose hands do You entrust me? To some distant stranger who will treat me badly? Or to an enemy to whom You have given power over me? As long as You are not angry with me, I know no fear. Your gracious support, however, would open for me a wider road and a vaster horizon! I take refuge in the light of Your countenance, with which all darkness is illumined and things in this world and the other are put right, so that You do not cause Your wrath to descend upon me and I am not touched by Your wrath. Yet to You belongs the right to rebuke, as long as You are not satisfied. There is no power beyond You."*

At the moment when there seemed to be no way out, he turned to God for spiritual revival and mental strengthening.

All in all, we have noticed that in no case did Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) seeked refuge in violence. He was mocked, humiliated, insulted and even physically attacked. The Prophet (pbuh) always resisted these insults and mockeries with wisdom.

### 6.4.3 EXERCISES

#### Exercise 5: Insight questions. Answer the questions below.

1. Give five examples of how the Quraish fought the Prophet.

- They accused him of being a sorcerer and a lunatic.
- Abu Lahab had his two sons who had married the daughters of the Prophet separated from them.
- Abu Lahab's wife scattered her garbage cans when the Prophet walked by.
- The Prophet was humiliated and mocked.
- New Muslims like Bilal were tortured.

2. What was the reason the Prophet went to Ta'if?

The Prophet had hoped that the leaders of the city would heed his message and want to protect him from his enemies.

3. What lessons can you draw from the supplication the Prophet made after he was expelled from Ta'if?

- We should always trust in Allah and never become desperate
- The most important thing is that Allah is pleased with us
- Allah has power over all things and thus also over our destiny
- In times of difficulty we should always turn to Allah because only He can offer us a way out.

4a. How would you react if you had experienced the same thing as the Prophet (both in Ta'if and Mecca)?

- Angry
- Frustrated
- Giving up
- Fighting Back
- ...

4b. What can you learn from the way the Prophet responded to the various confrontations?

- Never answering hostility with violence or insulting back but always with patience and wisdom.
- Always rely on Allah and never stop making supplications.

## 6.5 SOME CASES IN THE LIGHT OF THE PROPHETIC AND QUR'AN

### 6.5.1 #JESUIS(PAS)MILA

**Title article: #JeSuis(Pas)Mila, or how a French girl of 16 is fueling the discussion on Islam and intolerance<sup>7</sup>**

This article is about a French teenage girl who caused a stir in 2020 by distributing a video message in which she made inappropriate insults toward Islam and Muslims. She had also spoken harsh words about God. This caused a stir in France and abroad. So much so that even the girl was threatened. The Prophet also experienced similar insults, indeed, he was even physically attacked several times. Just think of the events in Ta'if. There the Prophet was treated in a terrible way by the people of Ta'if. He was even pelted with stones and physically beaten badly. The Prophet saw could easily have made a supplication and asked Allah to punish and destroy these people, but he did not! On the contrary, he hoped that in the future there would be only one among them who will embrace Islam and took peace with that.

In the Qur'an Allah says: "And (remember) when We made a covenant with the Children of Israel, saying: "Worship none but Allah and be dutiful and good to parents and relatives and orphans and the poor who beg, and speak well to people and perform the prayers and give zakat. Then you shirked it, except for only a few of you, turning away." (Al Baqarah: 83)

Allah exhorts us to always speak with the good word towards our fellow man. Allah used the word 'people' and not 'Muslims'. From this we may deduce that dissenting people also have the right to be addressed with the good word. Only in this way will we achieve results.

### 6.5.2 RAMADAN PROGRAM ENDS IN DEATH THREAT

**Title article: Dutch Ramadan program stops after threats: 'Gonna riddle you with bullets<sup>8</sup>**

Dutch radio station FunX is stopping "Ramadan Late Night. That decision came after presenter Morad El Ouakili received very explicit death threats. "If I walk out of the studio with two security guards riding along to my house, it stops," he said. Dj Moradzo - as El Ouakili's stage name goes - received death threats for playing music during Ramadan Late Night, which would be inappropriate during the Islamic month of fasting. "Several FunX employees and those around them have received death threats and as their safety is paramount we have had to hire additional security," the station stated in a press release. "An unacceptable consequence for us of an initiative that was meant to bring people together." FunX, a radio station of the Dutch

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.vrt.be/vrtnws/nl/2020/02/03/mila-eeen-frans-meisje-van-16-ontketent-politieke-rel-over-islam/> (consulted on 27.04.2021)

<sup>8</sup> [https://www.standaard.be/cnt/dmf20200505\\_04946017](https://www.standaard.be/cnt/dmf20200505_04946017) (geraadpleegd op 27.04.2021).

public broadcaster that focuses on the cities with a lot of urban music, started the program last year and decided to resume it this year after a lot of positive reactions. It is a program in which we want to bring out the beauty of Ramadan, El Ouakili explained this morning on the NOS Radio 1 Journaal. "That beauty is gone when I walk out of the studio with two security guards riding along until I get to my house. Then it stops." The radio presenter already reported the death threats last week. According to him, they come mainly from extremist quarters, after campaigning against him on Instagram. El Ouakili read on the NOS Radio 1 News some of the very explicit threatening messages he received in recent days: "Morad imagine that you walk out of the studio after a long night, you see two guys in rain suits get off a motor scooter and then riddle your chest with bullets. Would this have been worth it all then? Things like that really happen."

Nowadays, it is a trend to be quick to judge and condemn your fellow man. This often involves not thinking things through or giving the benefit of the doubt. Nor is it realized that it is a characteristic of every human being to make mistakes or commit sins. In this case, however, the artist's intention was to unite people but was misconstrued by a small group. The Qur'an mentions this:

"O you who believe, avoid many of (your suspicious) suspicions. Verily, some of these (suspicious) suspicions is a sin. And do not spy on one another..." (Suraat al- Hudjuraat: 12)

Islam emphasizes the importance of continuously engaging in dialogue with each other and correcting each other in a friendly manner. Furthermore, it should be realized that the final judgment always rests with God:

"Judgment belongs to Allah, the Exalted, the Greatest." (Surah Ghaafir: 12)

Surely when these verses are read it is very clear that one should not threaten each other because you have a different view, or because someone lives other than you. Consequently, the first thing that should always be considered is the perspective of the Qur'an or the hadith before formulating an opinion.

**Title article: Foreign troops set fire to Qur'an in Afghanistan<sup>9</sup>**

U.S. General John Allen apologized to the Afghan people after reports that soldiers at the Bagram base improperly disposed of a large number of Islamic documents overnight including the burning of the Quran. Thousands of Afghans protested violently in front of Bagram, the largest U.S. military base in Afghanistan, near the capital Kabul. They threw firebombs, among other things. The population accuses the foreign troops of burning the Quran in the base, police recently reported. John Allen ordered an investigation to be opened. When we found out about those practices, we immediately intervened and stopped them, the general said. The religious authorities will take care of the documents. Similarly, we will teach our soldiers how to be respectful of other faiths mentioned the general. The desecration and burning of the Koran by foreign soldiers, which occurs regularly in Afghanistan, leads time and again to violent manifestations.

A similar scene occurred during the Prophet's life. One day when the Prophet was sitting in the mosque along with his companions, a Bedouin came in and started urinating in the mosque. The companions immediately wanted to attack the man and punish him but the Prophet ordered that he first complete his need. When the man had completed his need he saw that the people around him did not attack him because the Prophet showed mercy to the man. The man then made a supplication and left. This gentle approach teaches us that we must always reciprocate evil with good. The Qur'an says the following about this:

*"And good and evil are not alike: Answer evil with that which is better, then the one with whom you were at enmity will become a sincere friend."* (Surah Foessilat: 34)

<sup>9</sup><https://www.demorgen.be/nieuws/buitenlandse-troepen-steken-koran-in-brand-in-afghanistan~bf1c42fc/>  
(geraadpleegd op 27.04.2021).

6.5.4 EXERCISES

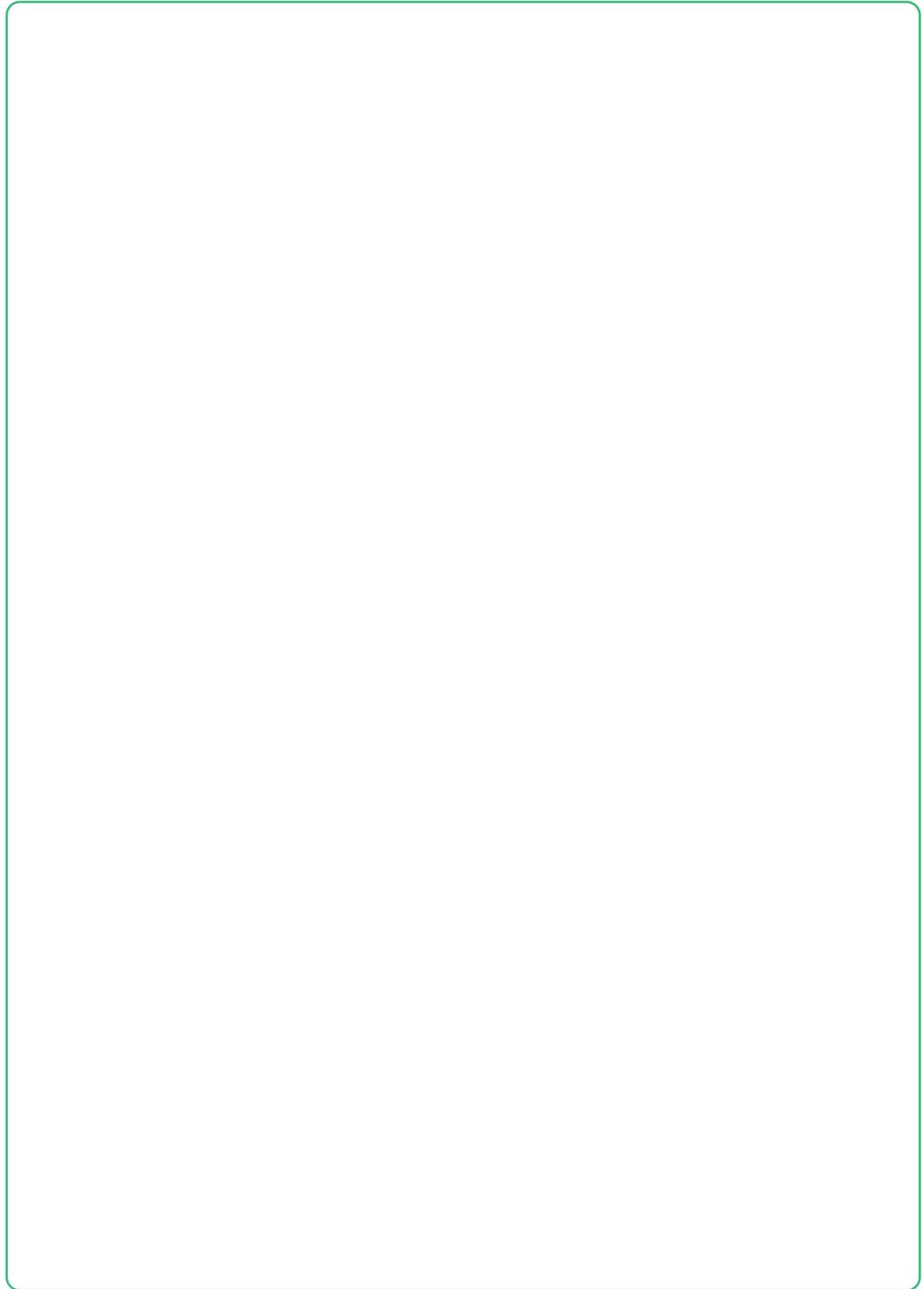
Exercise 6: Rebus. Make the rebus and write the answer at the bottom.

 s=n  x=f  y+  x=u  
 NONE OF YOU  
 -ck+  n=l  l=i+  y=v  
 TRULY BELIEVES  
 a=u+  -sk+l  -art  +s  
 UNTIL HE LOVES  
 f+  x=r  -at+i+  -ki  
 FOR HIS  
 b+  -eu+  -wea  c=t  
 BROTHER THAT  
 -ale+i+  -at  -art  +s  
 WHICH HE LOVES  
 f+  x=r  
 FOR  
 -at+i+  -an+  -ro+  -go+.  
 HIMSELF

**Answer:**

None of you truly believes until he loves for his brother that which he loves for himself.

**Exercise 7: Write in 10 to 15 lines what you have learned from this bundle. In doing so, write down lessons you would like to apply in your personal life.**



## 6.6 GLOSSARY

**Freedom of expression:** Means that every individual has the right to express his beliefs both in terms of faith, philosophical, political, as well as personal.

**Self-censorship:** Is a version of censorship in which media or individuals impose publication restrictions on themselves. This is done, for example, to spare feelings of their audience or to avoid problems with the government.

**Xenophobia:** is the fear or hatred of that which is perceived to be foreign or strange.

**Rebuttal:** a statement that a claim or criticism is not true.

**Nomads:** people who travel from place to place to find fresh pasture for its animals and have no permanent home.

**Slander:** a false spoken statement about someone that damages their reputation.

**Debauchery:** behavior considered to be excessively decadent, indulgent, and depraved.

## 6.7 TRANSCRIPT OF THE VIDEO

We see Ahmed and Pieter-Jan walking on the playground while a bully calls out to Ahmed:

*Bully:* ah look there you have one of those Muslims. I hope he hasn't seen the new cartoon of the week in Minmaxed magazine yet.... he'll explode...

*Ahmed:* Huh? Sigh... What are you talking about now?

*Bully hands Ahmed the magazine.*

*Bully:* Here you go! (laughs mockingly)

*Pieter-Jan jumps in and grabs the magazine and looks at the cartoon.*

*Pieter-Jan:* WOW, sorry but this is unacceptable. I'm not even Muslim but this is just mocking their religion.

*Bully:* Yeah yeah sure.... it's just a cartoon man.... Muslims need to learn to accept self-mockery for once. Freedom of expression is a fundamental right, here in the West and we are not going to deviate from that. That's what our ancestors fought for.

*Ahmed casts a glance at the magazine and is disgusted....*

*Ahmed:* (saddened) Why is it always about my religion. If it was any other group you wouldn't be so insensitive. But because we are Muslims it is okay to insult us. Two weights and two measures. Islam, Islam, Islam... and it's always negative.

*Bully:* boo hoo hoo.... Go cry to your mother about it.... I'm out of here.

We see the bully leave

*Ahmed goes home and tells about the cartoons that were shown. Father Harun reacts very*

*angrily. He doesn't understand why the prophet Mohammed is brought in. He is offended. Mother Fatima calls for peace. Uncle Samir, who is also present, calls for dialogue.*

*Ahmed:* Dad, a kid at school showed me cartoons today. Guess what those cartoons were about.... indeed, the Prophet Muhammad.

*Father:* Our Holy Prophet. Surely that can't be true. They are doing this to bully us. This makes me so angry. How hard it is to respect others. When they attack the Prophet, it's like they're attacking me personally.

*Mother:* Calm down, calm down. You shouldn't get so excited. It's not good for your heart. Maybe we should put everything in perspective. I think our prophet Muhammad was a strong person. He was insulted, scolded and humiliated and even then, he was the bigger person.

*Ahmed:* Is that so? I just don't see why freedom of speech is a good thing if it only serves to bully the Islam community....

*Later, Ahmed is surfing the computer while in videocall with Pieter-Jan.*

*Ahmed:* I can't imagine that 'Freedom of Speech' is just an excuse to insult others....

*Pieter-Jan:* Yes, of course it's not... Just look at this website: It says that the idea of freedom of speech is to make sure that even unpopular opinions can be heard in order to move society as a whole forward.

*Ahmed:* Yes I can understand that. But why do people always use this as an excuse to ridicule Islam?

*Pieter-Jan:* Maybe this man can give you an answer to that question.

Pieter-Jan sends a link to a blog by an Arab reporter named Mousa Karim.

Ahmed opens the web page and goes back to Pieter-Jan:

Ahmed: Look it seems he also has an opinion page on freedom of speech.

Ahmed clicks on the link and a pop-up appears.

'Mousa Karim has just gone offline. If you want to contact him, please wait a moment'

Ahmed: I hate these pop-ups.... Where can I close this.

He looks for a cross to close the pop-up. We see a countdown begin.

Computer: Contact Mousa Karim in 5...4....3...

Ahmed: no I don't want to contact him!

Pieter-Jan: quickly... close it then!

Computer: 2 ... 1.... Calling....

We hear a sound of a call being started...

Mousa Karim appears on the screen.

Mousa (surprised): Well, hello young friends. How are you today? What can I do for you?

Ahmed: Oh, I'm sorry to disturb you. It was a mistake.

Mousa: Oh I don't think so.... Why did you visit my website?

Pieter-Jan: We were looking on the internet why freedom of speech is used as an excuse to ridicule Muslims... My friend Ahmed here was confronted with some Mohammed Cartoons earlier today....

Ahmed: yes... sigh....

Mousa: Ah I see, and how did that make you feel?

Ahmed: It felt very bad... I just don't understand why it's always us who are targeted....

Mousa: I'm going to tell you a story. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was also ridiculed. And those who converted to Islam were persecuted and tortured.

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) met with the chiefs of the most important tribe in Ta'if. The Thaqeef tribe. He told them about Islam, but they rejected his message. The Thaqeef tribe insulted him. They released the children to throw stones at him. As he bled and the people laughed at him, he fled and found shelter in an empty orchard. And he never used violence.

He returned to his God and pleaded the following: "To You, my Lord, I complain of my weakness, my lack of support, and the humiliation inflicted on me. Most merciful and gracious, You are the Lord of the weak and You are my Lord. To whom do You leave me? ...."

Ahmed: I cannot imagine how he must have felt.

Mousa: He was alone, bleeding, and rejected by other people. The Prophet was resting on a rock. He was praying to Allah. He was so compassionate and merciful. He did not ask Allah to punish the people of Ta'if or take revenge on them.

Ahmed: Wow...so intense. How did Prophet Muhammad respond to those who insulted and attacked him?

Mousa: He chose mercy and not violence towards them. He was not overcome by hatred or revenge. He said to the angel Jibreel, "I prefer that Allah should beget from their progeny people who will worship Allah the One and will not ascribe to Him any partners."

This means that he also found a way to deal with these feelings. Tell people how you feel. Engage in a dialogue with them. That is the only way you can understand each other.

Ahmed: *pff what a headache. I don't know how to deal with this.*

Mousa: *Maybe you should talk about it in class with your classmates. That way they can support you. There will always be bullies in this world, but try to ignore them. Most people are willing to listen to your feelings and show empathy. At least that's my experience....*

Ahmed: *Thank you, Mousa.*

*We see Ahmed and Pieter Jan standing in front of the class.*

Ahmed: *When the Prophet (pbuh) himself was mocked, insulted and even molested, he responded by saying, "O Allah, forgive my people, for indeed they know not what they do."*

*And after his entourage encouraged him to curse his opponents, he said, "I have not been sent as a curse, but as a mercy."*

*Furthermore, we also read in the Qur'an that Allah spoke to His Prophet (pbuh) and said, "And be patient with what they say about you. And turn away from them appropriately."*

*The Prophet stood up for the weak. He fought injustice. He was reasonable and always respected others. That is what the prophet means to me. So yes that's why it hurts to see him as the subject of ridicule....*

Pieter-Jan: *Everyone is allowed to have an opinion, but I don't think it's ok for my friend to be offended. A harmonious society is only possible if people respect each other. For example, if a man and a woman belittle each other every day based on free speech, their marriage will not last long.*

Ahmed: *The Prophet Muhammad has several hadiths in which he calls on people to love each other, be in solidarity with each other, respect each other despite different opinions.*

Teacher: *Thank you for sharing this with us. I think we learned a lot today! And remember: Violence should never be tolerated. Take care of each other. Show empathy. You may have an opinion, but don't impose it. Respect each other.*

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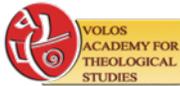


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