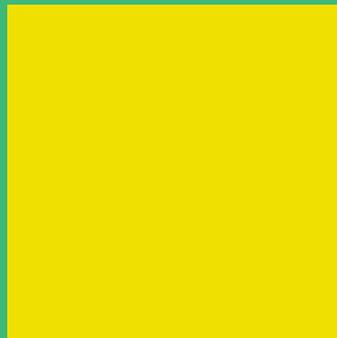


2



ENCOUNTER WITH SACRED TEXTS:
TEXTS OF VIOLENCE

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."¹

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.

¹ <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.”²

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”³. 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”⁴. The verse clearly takes place in the situation of a war and from a defensive position.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ 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"⁵ 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"⁶.

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.

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

⁶ <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...."⁷.

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

⁷ <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.

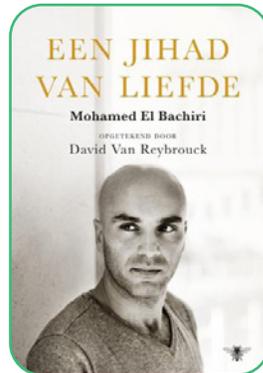


Figure 2.6
Source: © [Goodreads](#)

Mohamed El Bachiri is a Moroccan Belgian, Muslim and lives in Molenbeek. He lost his wife Loubna Lafqui 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

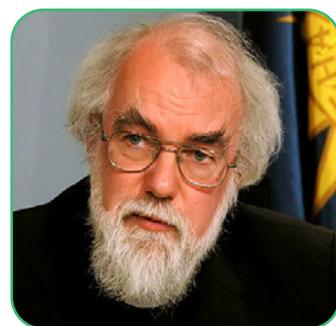
But what does “*sharia*” actually mean?

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? | | X |
| Does <i>sharia</i> refer to divine principles that support life? | X | |
| Is chopping hands off someone who stole an eternal rule? | | X |
| Can someone discuss and contradict the interpretation of Islamic scholars? | X | |
| Did people continue to discuss throughout history about the precise interpretation of <i>sharia</i> ? | X | |

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

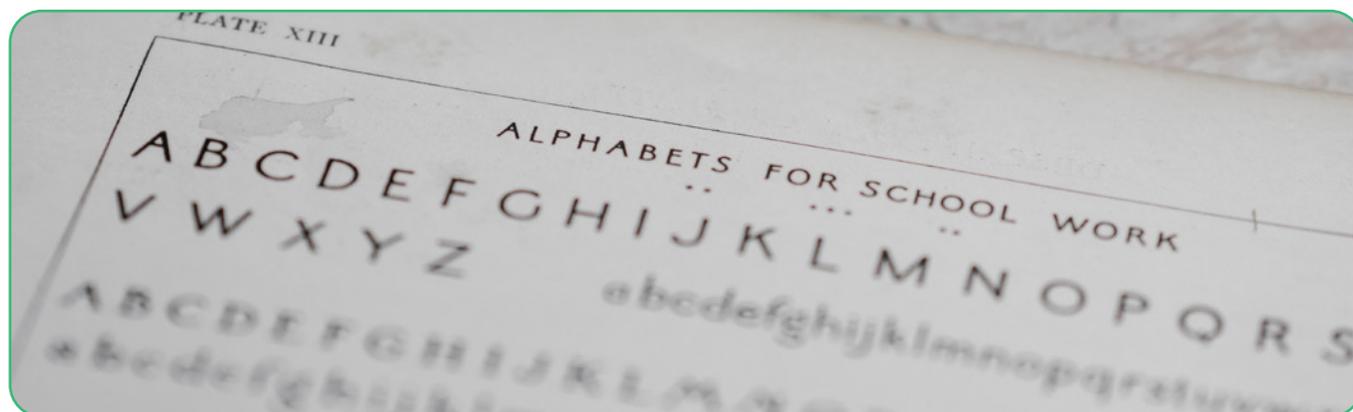


Photo: © Annie Spratt | Unsplash

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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