



JUBILO

CONFLICT PREVENTION, ETHNIC INTEGRATION AND PEACE BUILDING
THROUGH INTERFAITH DIALOGUE



WAR

IN JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM

A COMPARATIVE APPROACH



SPANDA

TEA FOR PEACE

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TEA FOR PEACE

SECTION THREE



WAR

*IN JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM
A COMPARATIVE APPROACH*



SPANDA

C O N T E N T S



TEA FOR PEACE
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in Judaism, Christianity and Islam.
A comparative approach.*

Section 3 - War

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R E S E A R C H E R S

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E D I T I N G

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EVEN IN THE MOST SECULARIZED SOCIETIES, THE DECISION TO WAGE WAR CAN BE informed and influenced by religion. Many wars without the explicit designation of 'religious' contain religious elements, just as many religious wars have secular implications. At times, religious distinctions in warfare can be used as a stand-in for cultural and historical differences between adversaries, leading to the misunderstanding that a conflict is due to matters of faith. Contrary to this standing, the international community regards religious practice as being conducive to peace and stability and, furthermore, believes that cooperation among different religions is both viable and beneficial for this purpose.

The UN General Assembly *Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief* (UNGA, 1981) has formally established the international community's commitment to respecting the religious beliefs of people as a "fundamental element in his conception of life", agreeing that it is essential to promote a common "understanding, tolerance and respect". Furthermore, the declaration highlights the international community's belief that using religion to justify acts that are contrary to the Charter of the UN is untenable. It is understood that religious practice is compatible with the purpose of the UN in pursuing international peace and security. The pursuit of facilitating increased religious tolerance continues in the UN's current activities with the declaration of the year 2010 as the International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures, with the purpose of facilitating mutual understanding and cooperation for peace through events on interreligious and intercultural dialogue. This emphasises the international community's interpretation of religious conflicts as being caused by a lack of understanding rather than an inherent conflict between different religious practices.

S A C R E D T E X T S A N D W A R

Sacred texts have often been used to legitimate a certain course of action, recommending belligerence or peace to adherents of a religion. Jewish, Christian and Muslim sacred texts all contain passages that can be emphasized or construed to

justify warfare and that, not taken in their proper textual and historical contexts and depending on how they are presented, can easily be manipulated and distorted as pro- and anti-violence. History testifies to this occurrence with passages in the texts taken out of their scriptural and historical frame of reference and used to instigate campaigns of war carried out for reasons of faith.

8 ¶ Judaism maintains that war is sometimes necessary. Jewish scripture relates that at times evil must be expunged through war in order to attain justice. Y_h_w_h mandated one such war between the Hebrew tribes and their long-standing enemy, the Amelekites: “The L_rd will be at war with Amalek throughout the ages” (Exodus 17:15b), which can be understood to mean that God sanctioned an everlasting war against the modern-day equivalents of Amalek. Passages such as this can be used to condone violence, especially against those who advocate the destruction of Israel as the Amelekites once did. However, scholars now interpret Amalek as an allegory for evil. This perspective views the war sanctioned by God as the eternal struggle against humankind’s inclination to sin, rather than a war with any specific group. Other passages in the Torah support this interpretation: “They shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore (Isiah 2:4).

By acknowledging that war is at times inevitable, the Torah provides guidelines for its humane conduct. Even as Jews prepared for battle, they were commanded to act with mercy. Before attacking, they must offer terms of peace or the opportunity to flee. If their enemy accepted those terms they were not to be harmed (Deuteronomy 20:10-12). An extraordinary respect for life extends down to the least of God’s creations, the helpless and innocent of all creation are to be recognized and respected, in war as in peace. This is depicted in the forbiddance of cutting down a fruit tree in the field of the enemies as they were unable to flee or accept the terms of peace themselves, “Are trees of the field human, to withdraw before you into a besieged city?” (Deuteronomy 20:19).

9 ¶ The New Testament does not offer many explicit guidelines when it comes to waging war and, in considering violence, some passages can seem contradictory. For example, in one instance Jesus says that he came to bring not peace, but the sword (Matthew 10:34), while later, in the same Gospel, he admonishes his disciple to put down his weapon, as those who live by the sword, die by the sword (26:42).

Many violent campaigns waged throughout history have been legitimated by the concept of Christian ‘holy war’ or ‘crusade’ that were seen as being supported by scripture. In the 11th century, the first crusaders were enjoined to join the cause when Pope Urban II reiterated Jesus’ invitation to his disciples:

“If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me” (Matthew 16:24). Another passage in the New Testament that has been indicated to validate war comes from St Paul, “For [the ruler] does not bear the sword in vain! [The ruler] is the servant of God to execute his wrath on the evildoer” (Romans 13:4). This syllogism serves to legitimate both a leader’s right to rule and right to wage war, as it comes from God. Yet, the overwhelming majority of Jesus’ words preach a message of peaceful co-existence and acceptance. A Christian predilection for harmony is clearly laid out by Jesus in the New Testament, as he insists that “blessed are the peacemakers” (Matthew 5:9) and admonishes followers to love their enemies (Matthew 5:43).

9 ¶ Amongst Muslim scholars there exists some disagreement over the Qur’an’s stance on the use of armed force. Some of those who claim to represent the ‘true’ Islam draw upon the so-called ‘sword’ Qur’anic verses to legitimate violence against both fellow Muslims and non-Muslims. For instance, one oft-cited verse that advises Muslims to kill infidels “wherever they are found” (9:5) has been used to justify offensive violence in the name of Islam, despite the fact that this abrogates the more numerous teachings of the Qur’an encouraging peace. Such apparent inconsistencies can be addressed by interpreting the ‘sword verses’ in the context within which they were formed. They dealt with specific situations experienced by the Prophet Mohammed and the earliest Muslims, which have been regarded as forcing him to act violently, but in self-defence to an aggressor. This makes them compatible with the Islamic imperatives for peace, which is understood as a situation of both security and justice, for which it can become necessary to fight for.

Muslim scholars emphasize that the Qur’an does not endorse the constant use of force to resolve disagreements and proper conduct during war is mandated. This is reflected in the admonition to fight “those who fight you, but do not transgress limits; for God loves not transgressors” (2:190). On the whole, the Qur’an reads in favour of peace and against violence. A powerful endorsement of Qur’anic devotion to peace is the passage “[...] if anyone slew a person [...] it would be as if he slew the whole people: and if anyone saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of the whole people” (5:32).

J U S T W A R

Just war refers to the body of thought relating to the ethical conduct of armed conflict. This splits into two referent parts: the justification for entering into conflict and the methods of combat employed during warfare. Thus, there are two distinct conditions that need to be met to justify a war: the reasons for

entering into conflict must be legitimate; and the methods employed must be proportional to the imposing threat. The principles of Just war originated with classical Greek and Roman philosophers and were further developed by the Christian thinkers Augustine and Thomas Aquinas. The Just war school of thought seeks to develop a legitimate framework for the conduct of war rather than abolishing it totally, as in pacifism. It is therefore based on the assumption that warfare is a necessary aspect of human relations. By attempting to define legitimate causes for resorting to violence, it seeks to restrain its use and allow room for the pursuit of alternatives. Furthermore, within the confines of a conflict pursued with legitimate goals, it endeavours to provide moral governance for the methods employed in the conflict.

The term “Just war” is often misused to refer to other types of war. It can be used to describe the concept of holy war that entails no ethical boundaries, unlike the strict requirements of Just war. Or it can be confused with a political war. These are military interventions made for reasons deriving from economic or national interests. These wars have often been labelled religious, but they are motivated by worldly, not religious, concerns. Among the international community, the attempt to reconcile the inviolability of state sovereignty with concerns for human rights and balance the pursuit of justice with global stability has witnessed a significant development with the articulation of the principle of ‘responsibility to protect’ – the subject of a report submitted to the attention of the international community in 2001 by the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS). The precept ascribes the responsibility of protection of a state’s people to its government; failing this, other states are obligated to intervene using measures appropriate to the goal of restoring human dignity and welfare, and to use armed intervention only when necessary for achieving these goals. The “responsibility to protect” also extends the requirement of action to both before and after the acts of intervention. This endeavours to both limit the escalation of injustice and to remain committed to the rebuilding of the national community of the relevant state.

Attempts to develop martial guidelines are evident in each Abrahamic faith. They all contain pacifist movements, but the majority of adherents acknowledge that at times war is necessary to preserve justice, without which peace cannot flourish. Each faith has its own interpretation of what constitutes a Just war.

¶ Within Judaism, rabbis consider two types of war legitimate: obligatory war (*milhemet mitzvah*) and discretionary war (*milhemet reshut*). *Milhemet mitzvah* are those commanded by God; these include the wars of the Israelites in the Bible as well as those fought in self-defence. *Milhemet reshut* are those

wars fought to enlarge Israel beyond its biblical borders, however, according to rabbis, they must be approved by the High Court of 71 judges (*Sanhedrin*).

The commandment to not kill is assumed as translated from the original Hebrew as “thou shall not *murder*”, rather than *kill*. Murder is understood as the taking of innocent life and is prohibited. In certain cases, it can be legitimate to kill individuals that have been sentenced for certain major crimes (under biblical law such crimes included murder, adultery and desecration of the Sabbath) as well as those individuals who pose a clear and direct threat to the lives of innocent civilians. The conduct of any war is guided by explicit rules. Firstly, before launching an attack upon an enemy it is essential to offer a conditional peace to resolve the conflict. Such conditions must remain within the boundaries of legitimate warfare. This is essential to avoid the misuse of the threat of force as an unrestricted device of diplomatic persuasion.

Judaism also calls for sensitivity to human life during warfare. For example, it prohibits the tactical creation of a kill zone by surrounding the enemy in order to guarantee non-combatants a safe avenue to escape as well as to avoid needless violence; non-combatants must be allowed to leave the conflict zone before hostilities begin; civilians must be allowed to be safely evacuated and combatants must be granted an opportunity to surrender. The celebrations of victory are to be restrained, limited to celebration of the war being over and the retention of lives. Rejoicing over the deaths of the enemy is prohibited, as they are human beings, the creation of God.

¶ The legitimacy requirements in Christianity for Just war are grounded in the idea that the human race is bound to the condition of sin, which becomes entrenched in social and political structures. Human disobedience of God’s will is inevitable, argue Just war theorists. Therefore, people need rulers who can use force if necessary to restrain injustice and maintain peace and order. The rationale for Just war in the Christian tradition comes less from the New Testament than historical theological reasoning based on interpretations of the Old Testament.

A war is only considered a Just war if the use of military force is deemed legitimate and if it is fought in the correct manner. Wars can be waged for the right reasons but still not qualify as *just* if they are not carried out in the right way. The requirements for waging a Just war have been distilled into the following criteria: it must be waged as a last resort; it must be waged by a legitimate authority, recognized by the society and outsiders; it must be fought for right intentions, e.g., acting in self-defence; it must be entered into with a reasonable chance of success – casualties incurred while fighting for a impossible cause are not justifiable; the ultimate goal is to establish

peace – this post-war peace must be preferable to the situation that would have prevailed if the war had not been fought; the violence used in the war must be proportional to the damage caused by the adversary, unnecessary force is not sanctioned; fighting is limited to obtaining the specific objective of addressing the wrongs suffered; the violence must be limited to fellow combatants, civilians must not be targeted.

12 ¶ Islam maintains that war should only be conducted for self-defence and for the pursuit of justice. The Qur'an does not prohibit the use of violence, but it does expect it to be conducted within strict limitations. Permission is given to fight when people have been seriously wronged, as when severely persecuted due to their faith, and this extends to the fighting on behalf of others. This use of violence in the pursuit of justice is supported by the will of God. Those in power are expected to support the teachings of Islam, deal with poverty and maintain justice. War is justified when used to defend people's rights to their own beliefs. Furthermore, once believers achieve victory over their aggressors, they are not allowed to portray themselves as superior, nor be triumphant about their feat.

The Qur'an provides that fighting is only to be in self-defence or for the establishment of justice, and it must be the last resort; it particularly eschews initiating violence as an aggressor as being unfavourable in the eyes of God. Furthermore, it provides that it is better to forgive and reconcile with an aggressor than to seek justice through reprisals, as justice driven by revenge subverts its true meaning.

Islam sets out rules for the conduct of Muslim soldiers, providing limits on their behaviour during warfare. Soldiers should treat the dead with respect, fight against combatants only, not destroy the environment and respect those who adhere to other faiths. Accordingly, war cannot be used to harm civilians or to spread the faith itself, as during wartime Muslims are still required to respect the faith of an enemy and the security of their people, and captured combatants are to be treated fairly and justly, and not executed.

H O L Y W A R S

For a war to be a Holy war, religion has to be the driving force. Holy wars typically have three elements: are waged to achieve religious goals; authorized by a recognized religious leader; and offer spiritual reward for those who fight. Historically, religion has often been a motivating factor for what are now regarded as unnecessary, or unjust wars, facilitating violence against others. In Holy wars, violence is usually justified using an alternative interpretation of religious teachings than a Just war perspective would use.

13 ¶ Despite the existence of Holy wars commanded by God (*milhemet mitzvah*), these have been conducted rarely throughout the last two thousand years of Jewish history. In biblical times, the categorization of Holy wars were simply those that had been authorized directly by God, illustrated by the successful campaigns of leaders such as Joshua, Gideon, Saul, David and Moses against enemies of the Jewish community. Biblical doctrine equated military success to obedience to God and failure to disobedience. However, the conception of Holy war was eventually altered in rabbinical thought. The two major Jewish uprisings against the Roman Empire – the Great Revolt and the Bar Kokhba Rebellion, 66-73CE and 132-135CE respectively – were categorized as 'Holy' at the time, but their catastrophic failures led to the pursuit of such wars to be rejected as dangerous and self-destructive courses of action. The rabbinical classification of what comprised a *milhemet mitzvah* was refined to the point as to be almost impossible to justify in contemporary contexts, "Every war is considered discretionary aside from the war of Joshua which was to conquer the Land of Israel" (Rishi on Sanhedrin 2a). Thus, the concept of a Holy war lay dormant for centuries, until its partial revival in the 20th century by those seeking support for Zionist action to reclaim Israel from the Palestinians.

¶ The military expeditions of the crusades (1096-1270) express the violence of European Christianity engaging in Holy war. The crusades were initiated by Pope Urban II, who demanded that the Christian kingdoms of Western Europe "reclaim" the Holy Land (Palestine) from Muslim control. The Pope had intended the knights of Europe to take up this quest, but had not envisioned the mass of peasantry that would join them. The disorganized multitudes met with brutal hardship on the way to the Middle East. The acts of hatred and atrocities committed by these expeditions, such as the killing of Jews encountered along the way and the massacres of both Jews and Muslims when capturing cities, may somewhat be attributable to the rancour stirred by these unforeseen hardships.

¶ In Islam, the concept of Holy war has been interpreted as synonymous with the term *jihad*, utilising force to achieve the power-centred goals of the religion. The meaning of *jihad* is striving or struggle, and the term bears a three-fold connotation: the believer's struggle to live out the faith as well as possible, sometimes referred to as inner *jihad* or greater *jihad*; the struggle to build a good Muslim society; and the struggle to defend Islam, if necessary with force (Holy war). This last connotation has been in most common, and controversial, usage in recent years and has become closely associated with terrorism, employed to justify the use of violence against civilians and the use of suicide bombers.

14 *Jihad* can embody a violent aspect, but it remains centred around the values of Islam. It can involve armed violence so long as it remains within the confines of the Islamic requirements of Just war. When Muslims, or their faith or territory, are under attack, Islam permits the believers to wage military war to protect them. However, Islamic law (*shariah*) sets very strict rules for the conduct of such a war. There are a number of conditions under which *jihad* is justified: self defence; strengthening Islam; protecting Muslims against oppression, which could include overthrowing a tyrannical ruler; punishing an enemy who breaks an oath; and putting right a wrong ... but the Qur'an is clear that self-defence is always the underlying cause.

INTERFAITH CONFLICTS

The framework for Just war can be subverted when its goals and imperatives merge with other interests and ideologies, particularly when religion interacts with the political sphere and its inherent plurality of interests. This facilitates the misappropriation of the faiths' concept of Just war as other powerful actors undermine its authority by drawing upon their own interpretation of the codification to endorse their own beliefs or justify their actions. This can be achieved through malice, but may also occur through a genuine righteousness driven by religious fever.

Usually, a conflict involves two or more distinct groups pursuing goals perceived to be mutually exclusive, which draws them into a clash with one another. The divergent identities existing or formed between these groups help to facilitate hatred and violence by defining a clear enemy, an 'other' who exists as an incompatible entity. Religious identity can act as a clear definer of these groups, institutionalising these differences through spiritual beliefs, worshiping practices, morality and cultural heritage. Religion can entrench conflict by emphasising the differences, rather than the commonalities.

¶ In the 20th century, the establishment of the Israeli state was seen by Jews as a refuge and solution to their insecurity as a people, but has become a new locus for hostilities. The state has used military force to enforce its historical claim to the land of Israel. This has been made possible, in part, by the successful characterization of Israel's military policy as a Holy war commanded by God to recapture the promised land, though this contrasts traditional rabbinic interpretation of Holy war (i.e., Rashi's limitation of "commanded war" to the ancient wars of conquest of the land of Israel in the Book of Joshua, Rashi on Sotah 44). This characterization of the conflict as "commanded war" (*milhemet mitzvah*) elaborates on the rhetoric of Moses ben-Maimon

(Maimonides, 1135-1204 CE) in which Israeli military forces are seen as saving Israel from an attacking enemy (Law of Kings 5:1). This position of self-defence also can involve pre-emptive attacks if it is reasonable to assume that the enemy would cause Israeli deaths.

¶ Due to the secularisation of state governments with Christian majority populations, it is difficult to draw a strict correlation between war waged by modern Westernized states and Christian beliefs. However, despite this separation of state governance and religious institutions, religion can still affect the pursuit of war through influencing the decisions of its leaders, shaping political ideology, and playing a part in the democratic process, as people's own religious beliefs play out in their support for state policies. Leaders may draw upon their own religious beliefs to recommend their actions when having decided to use force. In turn, these decisions can be presented to the religious majority of its citizens as being based upon a religious interpretation of the threat.

¶ When Islam does authorise the use of violence, it is for the pursuit of peace and justice and explicitly defines those not physically fighting against Islam as non-combatants that are to be protected from the ensuing violence. In this context, a particular point of turmoil is the notion of terrorism that embodies two fundamental points of concern: the assumption that violence is spurred by the faith's teachings; and the ideological use of the term 'terrorism'. The term terrorism itself is troublesome due to the divergent conceptions of such fighters' identities and the need to demonise them. While some groups may suffer from the unjust application of the definition, there are those whose methods clearly demonstrate terror tactics. This has left Islam particularly associated with the term and with methods such as suicide bombings and the active targeting of civilians – the civilians become legitimate combatants due to their inclusion as the oppressors of Muslims, and suicide bombers become glorified by notions of martyrdom.

INTRAFaITH CONFLICTS

All Abrahamic religions have split into numerous branches, and conflicts between communities of the same faith are a common phenomenon. In the predominantly secular states of the West, religion is currently not explicitly used as a rationale for war, but its subtext is often clear in rallying support for conflict. Modern conflicts spark mostly from political and economic reasons, but when leaders employ religious vocabulary to justify them, it becomes difficult to separate the secular and religious logic surrounding a conflict.

Historically, Jewish communities were never in violent opposition between each other and differences amongst their branches were generally settled in a peaceful manner. Most of the divergence occurred over the differences concerning the law (*halachah*) and the structure that defined how to observe the Torah and the biblical commandments (*mitzvot*). During the 9th century CE the Karaites (literally, people of the scriptures) garnered opposition from the Rabbanities, or Rabbinical observers, after initiating a movement denying the validity of the Oral Torah and Rabbinic texts such as the Mishnah and the Talmud. The Karaites believed in the strict interpretation of the literal text of scripture, without rabbinical interpretation, which they did not consider to have been directly imparted or inspired by God, and thus fallible. The major difference between Karaites and the Rabbanities was in regards to the observation of the Sabbath. The former observed that the sacred texts forbade a flame on the Sabbath – and as a result kept their house unlit – and disallowed sexual interaction on the day; while the latter allowed for light on the Sabbath and believed that the day was the ideal time for sexual interaction.

In the 1700s, the Hasidism movement promoted a less doctrinal way of engaging with God than conventional Judaism's emphasis on education as the optimal spiritual path. Hasidism elected a more personal, mystic approach that incorporated many aspects of Jewish mysticism (*kabbalah*) and prioritized a pure spirit over knowledge of scripture, which resonated with poor and poorly educated Jews who at the time were experiencing great persecution in Europe. Still, the ideas of Hasidism were considered revolutionary to Orthodox Jews, and an active opposition was launched by those who became known as Mitnagdim (opponents). This conflict involved both groups excommunicating each other from Judaism, physical altercations and general avoidance of the other. Eventually, the Hasidim and the Mitnagdim came to see that their differences were reconcilable and united to oppose yet another movement perceived as a threat to Judaism, the 19th century Jewish Enlightenment (*Haskala*) which pushed for a more social Jewish integration, more secular education and greater engagement outside the confines of the Jewish establishment. The Haskala would inspire the ideals of the Reform movement, which advocated the abandonment of those aspects of the law identified as purely ritualistic, enforcing obedience only to those laws seen as having a moral component. This has led to an ongoing clash between the Orthodox (*heredi*) movement and the liberal Reform (*hiloni*) movement. *Heredi* believe that God gave Moses the complete Torah (both oral and written) at Mount Sinai and that it has been passed down intact and unaltered. *Hiloni* maintain that God did not write the Torah, thus they follow the ethical codes of the religion but leave obeying traditional laws

such as dietary restrictions up to the individual. They believe Judaism has evolved and adapted throughout its history and it must continue to do so.

Zionism has been another divisive agent among the Jewish community, with some secular, as well as religious, Jews opposing the creation of a modern Jewish state. Among those who do not condone the Israeli state are many Hasidic Rabbis who cite the Jewish biblical oaths, taken at the time of their liberation from Egypt, not to immigrate to the land of Israel *en masse* and to not rebel against the nations of the world (Talmud, *Tractate Kesubos* 111a).

In the 11th century, the split between the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church branch brought no large-scale conflicts between the two. Despite this peaceful precedent, Christian Europe was ravaged by intense religious wars in the 15th and 16th century during the Protestant Revolt, or Reformation, against the Catholic Church. While the Church struggled to defend the unity of the faith, the Reformers aimed to preserve the purity of belief untainted by the material and earthly. Reformers objected to the corruption of the doctrines, practices, rituals and bloated hierarchy of the Church, and sought to eliminate what they saw as Church inventions unconnected with the original message of Jesus contained in scripture: the sale of indulgences, the belief in the purgatory, the devotion to Mary and the saints, many of the sacraments, celibacy requirements for the clergy and papal authority.

Though there had been earlier grumblings of discontent, the Reformation is generally considered to have begun in 1517 with Martin Luther pinning his 95 theses against the sale of indulgences (forgiveness of sins in lieu of penance) on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany. The theses were written in protest of Pope Leo X's practice of granting indulgences for those who gave alms to rebuild St Peter's basilica in Rome, which Luther condemned as bartering for eternal salvation. Luther would inspire Reformers in other countries, notably John Calvin, which would eventually manifest into the existence of many different Protestant denominations.

The religious dissension between Catholics and Protestants combined with a prevailing mentality that linked religion with political issues, which made it unfathomable for either side to tolerate the others existence, converged to push Western Europe into a century of brutal wars concluded only in 1648 with the Treaty of Westphalia.

The main split within Islam occurred between Sunni and Shi'a over the functions and qualifications of the successor of the prophet Muhammad as the leader of the Muslims community (*Hummah*).

Sunnah is the Arabic terms for “habit” or “usual practice” and, in the religious context, denotes the practice taught and instituted by prophet Muhammad as part of his responsibility as a messenger of God. The term *Sunni* denotes those who practise these usages, also referred to as *Ahl as-Sunnah wa'l-Jamā'ah* (people of the tradition and the community (of Muhammad)) or *Ahl as-Sunnah* for short.

Shī'a is the short form of the Arabic *Shī'atu 'Alī*, followers of 'Alī. Shī'a Muslims believe that just as God alone appoints a prophet, only God has the prerogative to appoint the successor to his prophet. They believe that God chose 'Alī to be the successor, maintaining that Muhammad, before his death, appointed him as his successor.

While the Sunni denomination followed the companions of Muhammad, the Shī'a followed 'Alī ibn Abī Tālib – Muhammad's first cousin and closest living male relative, as well as his son-in-law, having married his daughter Fatimah – the fourth caliph [*khalīfab*] and the first *imām*, and, later, his descendants.

The dispute broke up into a series of revolts against 'Alī ibn Abī Tālib and led to the first civil war (first *fitna*) marked by Muawiyah's assumption of the caliphate (Umayyad dynasty). The second *Fitna* broke up when Yazid, caliph Muawiya' son, succeeded the caliphate (680 CE). Yazid's opposition came from the supporters of Husayn ibn 'Alī – grandson of Muhammad and son of the former caliph 'Alī ibn Abī Tālib, who had been assassinated. Husayn and his closest supporters were killed by Yazid's troops at the Battle of Karbala, which marked the definitive break between the Shī'a and Sunni denominations of Islam. The battle is still commemorated each year by Shī'a Muslims on the Day of Ashura.

This gave rise to the idea of martyrdom and betrayal in the Shī'a. The split was violent and marked the way the two communities would coexist with each other for centuries. Throughout the years, Shī'a and Sunni lived in peace, with wars occurring occasionally in the regions where the two groups had conflicting interests.

Beside the succession theme, one of the main distinction between the two denominations lies in the difference in interpretation of the Qur'an and *Hadith* (extra-qur'anic revelations): Shī'ia favour *hadiths* attributed to Muhammad and *imāms*, and credited to the Prophet's family and close associates, while the Sunni hold to be trustworthy the *Sunnah*, largely narrated by the Prophet Muhammad's companions.

Another point of divergence between the two denominations is the eschatological figure of the Mahdī, the Guided One, the prophesied redeemer of Islam who will stay on Earth and, alongside Jesus, rid the world of wrongdoing, injustice and tyranny on the Day of Judgment (*yawm al-qiyamah*, the Day of Resurrection). Sunnis believe that the Mahdī will appear seven, nine or nineteen years – according to various interpretations – before the Day of Judgment, whilst Shī'a believe that the Mahdī, the Twelfth *imām*, Muhammad al-Mahdī is already on Earth in occultation, is currently the 'hidden *imām*' who works through *mujtahids* – those whom make decision in Islamic law (*shariah*) by personal effort independently of any school of jurisprudence (*fiqh*) as opposed to those who copy or obey without questions – to interpret the Qur'an, and whose return from occultation at the end of time is analogous with the coming of the Mahdī.

In the present day, the divide between the two branches of Islam is a source of great internal struggle, especially in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION / TRANSFORMATION

Conflict is an expected fact of human existence, but if effort is made to comprehend and manage it effectively, the utter devastation of war and violent conflict can be avoided. Many violent conflicts stem from the injustices perceived by people all over the world, thus, addressing these issues is central to moving beyond war. Peaceful conflict resolution is the solving of disputes without resorting to violence. In situations of war it is a complex process, requiring an extensive range of actions effectuated by many actors in different arenas and at different stages, encompassing everything from the prevention of violence to the reconstruction of a nation after a conflict. The contribution that the three Abrahamic faiths can make to the practice of peace making is extremely valuable; they contain directives for peace making in their sacred texts as well as similar, though not identical, moral methodologies for peace building. These include social and economic justice, reintegration support for human rights and forgiveness that stems from personal transcendence and inner transformation.

Two of the primary ways to attain peaceful unity within society is through interfaith dialogue and striving for social and economic justice.

The starting point for all faith-based peacemaking actions is interfaith dialogue, a method of peaceful conflict resolution that comprises an exchange of beliefs with others cultures and religions. It involves a deep sharing of values and activities, and an assessment of the similarities and the core differences

between the participating actors. In general, these dialogues are led by religious leaders able to offer their moral knowledge, provide different perspectives in conflict prevention and mediation and implement key objectives, of which the promotion of social and economic justice – that set of common values that guide individuals in judging what is wrong and what is right, no matter their culture, religion and society in which they live – is of great import.

¶ In Jewish tradition, peace (*shalom*) is one of the most important principles of the Torah and mediation (*psharah*) is the ideal method of creating peace. Yet, interfaith dialogue has been a controversial subject within Orthodox Jewish society as, in the past, they have refused to take part in any form of dialogue because the prohibition of proselytism within Judaism puts them at a disadvantage, in that they would be overwhelmed by more proselytizing religions. This stance has been widely reversed by Jewish Orthodox leaders participating in interfaith dialogues to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The Jewish model of social and economic justice emphasizes helping the impoverished attain self-sufficiency rather than dependence on charity. The pursuit of justice is considered the route to reach harmony and sustainability. Medieval Rabbis even conceived guidelines for righteousness (*tzedakah*) meant to create “paths of peace”, among which was a mandate for the economic support of non-Jews (Talmud, Gittin 61A).

¶ In Christianity, conflict resolution implies that the harmony and well being of the society must be granted. Jesus evidenced the importance of dialogue amongst people of different backgrounds by respectfully and graciously engaging with strangers and foreigners (Mark 7:25-30; John 4:1-26). However, the nature this dialogue ought to assume is a matter of debate. Arguments are made that past dissension should be forgotten, such as when the second Vatican Council (1962-1965) begged followers to “forget the past” in order to “promote peace, liberty, social justice and moral values” (*Nostra Aetate* 3). This argument is countered by one that believes an acknowledgment and “reconciliation of memories” has to take place first to be able to truly understand each other and to change the mentality of those involved. The Bible places great emphasis on the necessity to eliminate and reduce inequality and segregation, thus Christians are called to actively pursue peace. A series of ecumenical Christian conferences (Society of Christian Ethics 1993-1998) attempted to do so, publishing a list of ten “Just Peacemaking” (1998) methods that emphasize cooperation, human rights, sustainable economic development, reducing weapons trade and increasing the power of international efforts like the UN.

¶ The most appropriate definition of peace building in Islam is associated with the word *islah*, used in the Qur’an as an indicator of development and improvement. Islamic peacemakers are considered agents of peace and honesty

in a context of war or conflict, while those who create violence are recognized as elements of dishonesty and offense. Both peace and peacemaking are deemed a significant part of human development and wellbeing. The Qur’an holds that when two parties are involved in a conflict, then peace must be made, and if one of the parties has caused damaged to the other, it is necessary to repair the mistake, only then can the offender return to the peace of God (49.9).

Islam has long practiced interfaith dialogue and its usefulness in religious conflicts is illustrated by historical examples from Muslim Spain and Mughal India. Interfaith dialogue is seen as a channel of communication that looks for a moral understanding of the individuals in order to discover similarities between people and put their differences aside. There is a great emphasis in the Muslim community to focus on social and economic equality and justice for all. This necessitates the fair distribution of property and services amongst all those in society (Qur’an 17:27). One of the primary duties in Islam is almsgiving (*zakah*) in support of the poor and society in general, this promotes civil equality and connotes freedom from hatred, jealousy, selfishness and greed.

CONCLUSION

Each of the Abrahamic faiths incorporates an understanding for the undesirable existence war. Rather than wholly rejecting the use of armed conflict and violence, they all seek to encourage the resolution of issues by peaceful means, while understanding that people are imperfect beings, making the resort to violence at times unavoidable. To mitigate the dangers, both physical and spiritual, of pursuing violence, the Abrahamic faiths all utilise a conception of Just war that seeks to restrain the use of violence and limit the pursuit of warfare. Notions of peace and justice are deemed the only legitimate goals of warfare. The means they employ are to be limited to achieving these ends, with emotional restraint imposed upon the revelry of warfare in order to protect the spirit from the inherent evil of bloodshed. Furthermore, all faiths support the necessity of protecting non-combatants from the violence, thereby retaining peace and security.

Despite this understanding, it has been demonstrated that religious beliefs and values have been utilised to wage conflict outside these parameters.

This subversion has occurred in a number of forms, including the overriding of religious values entailed by the pursuit of power, the politicisation of religious influence, and the utilisation of religious teachings to justify violence. †

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Related to Jewish [J] and Muslim [M] culture.

Amalek [J] See Amalekites.

Amalekites [J] A nomadic tribe descended from Esau, who dwelled in the desert between Sinai and Canaan and were enemies of the Israelites. They were defeated by Saul and destroyed by David (I Samuel 15-30).

Bar Kokhba rebellion [J] The third revolt (from 132-135 CE) against the Roman Empire by the Jews of Judea and the last of the wars between the Roman Empire and the Jews. The rebellion was led by Simon bar Kokhba, who was proclaimed to be the messiah by his followers who believed he would restore Israel as a sovereign nation. The uprising failed and helped to define Christianity as a separate religion from Judaism as well as contributed to the spread of Jewish diaspora, as they were dispersed or sold into slavery after their defeat.

Fiqh [M] The theory or philosophy of Islamic law, based on the teachings of the Quʾran and the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad.

Fitna [M] Unrest or rebellion, especially against a rightful ruler.

Gemarrab [J] Commentaries of the Babylonian Talmud.

Gematria / gimatria [J] A system of assigning numerical value to a word or phrase, in the belief that words or

phrases with identical numerical values bear some relation to each other, or bear some relation to the number itself as it may apply to a person's age, the calendar year, or the like. It is likely that the term derives from the order of the Greek alphabet, *gamma* being the third letter of the Greek alphabet (*gamma* + *tria*).

Great Revolt [J] The first (66-73 CE) of three major rebellions by Jews against the Roman Empire. The revolt was put down by the Roman legions who left Jerusalem in ruins and looted and burned the Temple of Herod.

Hadith [M] Lit. "narrative". § A collection of traditions featuring sayings of the prophet Muhammad which, along with narratives of his daily life (the Sunna, see), constitute the major source of guidance for Muslims apart from the Quʾran.

Halakha [J] The collective body of Jewish law, that includes biblical law (the 613 *Mitzvot*) and later talmudic and rabbinic law, as well as customs and traditions.

Haredi [J] A member of any of various Orthodox Jewish sects characterized by strict adherence to the traditional form of Jewish law and rejection of modern secular culture, many of whom do not

recognize the modern state of Israel as a spiritual authority.

Hasidism [J] The term has been applied to movements at three distinct times, but refers here to the mystical Jewish movement founded in Poland in the 18th century in reaction to the strict academicism of rabbinical Judaism. The rapid spread of Hasidism in the second half of the 18th century troubled many traditional rabbis who saw it as a potentially dangerous opponent to mainstream Judaism. The movement declined greatly in the 19th century, but fundamentalist communities emanated from it, and Hasidism is still significant in Jewish life, with large communities in Israel and New York.

Haskala [J] The Jewish Enlightenment, a movement among European Jews in the 18th-19th centuries that supported adopting enlightenment values, pressing for better integration into wider European society, and increasing education in secular studies, the Hebrew language and Jewish history.

Hiloni [J] Term used in Israel for secular Jews. The Hiloni of Israel are embroiled in many disagreements with the religiously observant, or Haredi (see), population.

Hummah [M] The whole community of Muslims, bound together by the religion.

Ijma [M] Term referring to the scholarly consensus of the Muslim community; the concept is attributed to the *hadith* (see) of Muhammad stating “My community will never agree upon an error”.

Islah [M] Lit. “to repair” or “reform”. § Also the name of several reform parties.

Jihad [M] Lit. “struggle”. § An important religious duty for Muslims, it can refer to three types of struggle: an internal struggle to maintain faith; the struggle to improve Muslim society; and the struggle in a holy war.

Kabbalah [J] The Jewish tradition of mystical interpretation of the Bible, first transmitted orally and using esoteric methods, including ciphers (*gematria*, see). It reached the height of its influence in the later Middle Ages and remains influential in Hasidism (see).

Karaites [J] Jewish movement characterized by the recognition of the *Tanakh* (see) alone as its supreme legal authority in *Halakha* (see), as well as in theology, as opposed to Rabbinic Judaism which considers the oral law of the *Mishnah* (see) or Talmud (see) to be authoritative interpretations of the Torah.

Mabdi [M] The spiritual and temporal leader who will rule before the end of the world and restore religion and justice.

Milbemet mitzvah [J] Lit. “War by Commandment”. § The term for a war during the times of the *Tanakh* when a king of Israel would go to war to fulfill something based on, or required by, the Torah. These tended to be defensive wars, such as a war against Amelek (see), that did not require approval from a Sanhedrin because their mandate derived from God.

Milbemet reshut [J] Discretionary war, which requires the permission of a Sanhedrin (see). These tended to be fought to expand territory or for economic reasons.

Midrash [J] Lit. “to investigate” or “study”.

§ A homiletic method of biblical exegesis. The term also refers to the whole compilation of homiletic teachings on the Bible. It is a way of interpreting biblical stories beyond simple distillation of religious, legal or moral teachings.

Mitnagdim [J] Refers to European Jews who opposed the rise and spread of the early Hasidism (see).

Mitzvot [J] It refers to the 613 commandments provided in the Torah and the seven later rabbinic commandments. It can also refer to an act of human kindness.

Mujtabid [M] A person accepted as an original authority in Islamic law. Such authorities continue to be recognized in the Shī’a (see) tradition, but Sunni (see) accord this status only to the great lawmakers of early Islam.

Psbarah [J] Process of mediation.

Qur’an [M] Lit. “a recitation”. § The central religious text of Islam, which Muslims consider the verbatim word of God and the Final Testament, following the Old and New Testaments. The Qur’an is divided into 113 *suras* (see) of unequal length classified either as Meccan or Medinan depending upon their place and time of revelation.

Qiyas [M] Analogical reasoning as applied to the deduction of juridical principles from the Qur’an and the Sunnah (see) (normative practice of the community); the extension of precedent to new situations by means of analogy. Along with the Qur’an, the Sunnah, and *ijma* (see), it constitutes the four sources of Islamic jurisprudence.

Rabbinite [J] One who adhered to the Talmud (see) and the traditions of the

rabbis, in opposition to the Karaites (see), who rejected the authority of rabbinical tradition.

Sanhedrin [J] The highest court of ancient Israel comprised of 71 members and had powers that lesser Jewish courts did not have, such as the ability to try the king and extend the boundaries of the Temple and Jerusalem.

Shari’ah [M] Islamic canonical law based on the teachings of the Qur’an and the traditions of the Prophet, deriving from the Qur’an, *hadith* (see), *ijma* (see), and *qiyas* (see).

Shī’a [M] One of the two main branches of Islam, followed by about a tenth of Muslims, particularly in Iran, that rejects the first three Sunni (see) caliphs and regards Ali, the fourth caliph, as Muhammad’s first true successor.

Sunnah [M] Lit. “clear, well trodden, busy and plain surfaced road” and “habit, usual practice”. § In the discussion of the sources of religion, Sunnah denotes the practice of Prophet Muhammad that he taught and practically instituted as a teacher of the *shari’ah* (see) and the best exemplar. Sunnis (see) are also referred to as *Ahl as-Sunnah wa’l-Jamā’ah* (“people of the tradition and the community (of Muhammad)”) or *Ahl as-Sunnah* for short.

Sunni [M] One of the two main branches of Islam, commonly described as Orthodox, and differing from the Shī’a branch in its understanding of the *Sunnah* (see) and its acceptance of the first three caliphs as legitimate successors to Muhammad.

Torah [J] Lit. “instruction”. § The Five Books of Moses (*Bereshit*, Genesis;

Shmot, Exodus; *Vayikra*, Leviticus; *Bamidbar*, Numbers; and *Dvarim* Deuteronomy. The entirety of Judaism's founding legal and ethical religious texts.

Talmud [J] The collection of ancient Rabbinic writings consisting of the *Mishnah* (see) and the *Gemarah* (see), making up the basis of religious authority in Orthodox Judaism.

Tanakh [J] The sacred book of Judaism, consisting of the Torah, the Prophets, and the Writings; the Hebrew Scriptures.

Tzedakah [J] Charity or the giving of charity, usually seen as a moral obligation.

Zakah [M] A tax, comprising percentages of personal income of every kind, collected as almsgiving for the relief of the poor. As the third of the Pillars of Islam, it is a duty for every Muslim and a right of the poor.

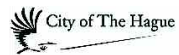
Zionism [J] A Jewish political movement that supports the self-determination of the Jewish people in a sovereign Jewish national homeland.





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