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**HOLY WARS: A HISTORICAL AND THEOLOGICAL COMPARISON
BETWEEN JOSHUA’S CONQUESTS VS. MOHAMMAD’S FIRST THREE
INCURSIONS**

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Abstract: The purpose of this paper is to show that there are substantial differences between the Jewish and the Islamic wars, and these differences reveal two different concepts of the deity among Judaism and Islam.

Many people refuse to believe in any of the Abrahamic religions because they claim that “religions are violent, and, therefore, they are the source of violence.” The line of argument that they use is related to the concept of holy wars; God in the OT ordered Joshua to annihilate many nations for their disbelief and, similarly, Allah in the Qur’an ordered Mohammad to fight those who do not believe in Islam. However, a theological and historical investigation regarding the concepts of holy wars among these religions—especially Islam and Judaism—reveals that they are not the same. On the contrary, they differ in their purpose, nature, and rule. Therefore, presenting these differences while relying on Islamic and Judeo-Christian resources should help to refute the previous claim.

Key words: holy war, Joshua’s conquest, ḥerem, jihad, Judeo-Christian faith.

1. Introduction

People refrain from believing in God because they associate Abrahamic religions with violence. They view the holy wars in the OT and Islamic history as the source of ferocity and terrorism. Charles Kimball, who holds to this opinion, states that religion has caused more violence than any other “institutional force in human history” (Kimball 2002, 1). Such a view does not take into consideration the historical and theological details between holy wars in religions. These scholars see God (Yahweh) as a warrior and Allah as a military commander.

There is a misconception that the word Allah in Arabic is used to refer to the name of the Islamic God. However, it is worthy to note that Allah means God in Arabic language; Allah is not a proper noun. Arab Christians use the word Allah to refer to the Christian God in their Arabic Bible and literature. In this study, however, I will be using the word Allah to refer to the God of Islam, and I will be using the two words God and Yahweh interchangeably to refer to the God of OT.

As a result of these similarities, advocates of this view believe that while God ordered Joshua to commit genocide against the Canaanites and other nations, Allah commanded Mohammad to annihilate the polytheists and the Jews in the Arabic peninsula.

This paper shall argue that a superficial reading of the Old Testament and the Qur’an might reveal some similarities between the wars in both religions. However, a deeper historical and theological study will uncover striking differences related to the nature, purpose, and rules of these wars. Due to lack of space, this paper will focus on Joshua’s conquest in the Old Testament and the first three incursions of Mohammad (Badr, Uḥud, and Khaybar).

2. The Conquest of Joshua

After the Hebrews left Egypt and while they were passing through different lands on their way to Palestine, they did not launch wars against any nations. Instead, they warred against those who were hostile to Israel. For example, when the Israelites approached Canaan, the Canaanite king Arad attacked Israel and took some of them captive (Lev 21:1). Israel asked permission from Sihon, the king of the Amorites, to pass through their land without diverting into the fields or vineyards or drinking from the water of their wells. But king Sihon refused to allow them to pass and gathered his people to attack Israel (Num 21: 21-24). A similar incident occurred with Og, king of Bashan (Deut 3:1).

Israel’s offensive wars started when Joshua led God’s people to the

specified land. The first war was against Jericho. By God's command, Joshua ordered seven priests to bear seven trumpets of rams' horns and march before the ark of the covenant. On the seventh day, the men of war marched around the city seven times; and when the priests blew the trumpets, all the people of Israel shouted and the walls of Jericho fell down supernaturally. A careful reading of the text shows that God fought miraculously in this battle. The military aspect only came after the fall of the city.

Israel's second offensive war was conducted against the small city of Ai. The spies estimated that 2000-3000 soldiers should be enough to take it down; however, the Israelites were easily defeated the first time because they did not take counsel with God. A careful reading of the text shows that God was not present among Israel, nor He did fight for them because of Achan's sin. Achan breached the ban by taking from the *herem* for himself and his family (Josh 7:1, 11). The case was not solved, nor was Ai taken back until Achan and his family were put to death according to the ban's law.

After the fall of Jericho and Ai, the nations in the region (the Hittites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites) "gathered together as one to fight against Joshua and Israel" (Josh 9:1). When other kings (such as Adoni-Zedek the king of Jerusalem and Jabin the king of Hazor) heard about Joshua and what he had done in Jericho and Ai, they formed a militant alliance with other kings to fight the Israelites (Josh 10 & 11). "There was not a city that made peace with the people of Israel except the Hivites, the inhabitants of Gibeon" (Josh 11:19), all the other cities assembled to fight Joshua and Israel.

3. The Major Battles of Mohammad

While the Israelites battles were few, Mohammad's battles were numerous. According to the book of *al-Maghazi* by al-Waqidi, prophet Mohammad "actively participated in twenty-seven raids. He fought in nine of them: Badr, Uḥud, al-Muraysı, al-Khandaq, Qurayza, Khaybar, the Conquest of Mecca, Hunayn, and al-Taif. He directed forty-seven expeditions" (Faizer 2011, 5). Mohammad conducted all his incursions in a span of ten years. Since this paper cannot cover all Mohammad's incursions and battles, the study will focus on the three major battles: Badr, Uḥud, and Khaybar. Badr's battle was Mohammad's first war, Uḥud's battle was his second where the Muslims were defeated, and Khaybar's battle was both the longest campaign and the first one against the Jews.

Mohammad chose to conduct his first incursion against his own people, the tribe of Quraysh. This is due to a long history of enmity between Mohammad and his tribe (Bashmail 1985, 69). Al-Sirah al-Nabawiah is a primary source of Mohammad's biography. Iben Ishaq, Iben

Hisham biographies, and Maghazi by al-Waqidī are primary resources about the early history of Islam. These resources appear in the *isnads* (reference) of the canonical collection of Islamic history. According to the *al-Sira al-Nabawiah*, Mohammad offended bani (the children of) Quraysh by ridiculing their dreams, cursing their fathers, shaming their religions, dividing their group, and cursing their gods (al-Tadmuri 1990, 319). He even threatened to slaughter them when they responded to his beliefs with mockery (al-Tadmuri 1990, 320). During the thirteen years of enmity, Quraysh persecuted Mohammad but did not attempt to kill him. They tried several other methods to make him recant his *da'wa*. In one instance, they pleaded with his uncle, offering him money, authority, and power. They even consulted the Jews because Jewish history is filled with prophets and people claiming to receive a message from God. Finally, they asked Mohammad for a miracle. When Mohammad could neither answer their questions nor fulfill their requests, they decided to economically boycott him and the people who supported his *da'wa*.

Around that time, Mohammad left Mecca and moved to an area called Yathrib, near Medina. He met with two tribes: al-Khazraj and al-Awss, both of which later converted to Islam and supported him. Mohammad and his *Ansar* (supporters) started raiding the caravans that traveled between Mecca and the Levant. Muslims confiscated one of Quraysh's caravans and took two captives back to Mohammad in Medina. Quraysh became angry because of these raids and decided to meet with Mohammad and his *Ansar*. Mohammad took counsel with his supporters and declared war against Quraysh. He met Quraysh in a location called Badr, where several of Mohammad's men dueled with their peers from Quraysh. Mohammad's fighters won the battle and took several men from Quraysh as prisoners. The Muslims considered this triumph as a sign from God, who sent his angels to fight with the believers against their enemies (Surah 3:123-126; Shaw, Demy 2017, 106). It is worth noting that no one saw any angels, but Mohammad claimed that the angels were fighting with the Muslims.

The battle of Uḥud was Mohammad's second major battle. Quraysh's tribe initiated this battle to take revenge of Badr's incursion. The Meccan survivors were not expecting violence at Badr. In fact, they were shocked because they thought Mohammad would just intercept their caravan and steal their properties as he used to do before. They did not expect him to kill his own kin. While Quraysh's soldiers outnumbered the Muslims, the latter were winning at the beginning of the fight. Muslims killed several of Quraysh's finest knights. When the people of Quraysh started fleeing the scene, the Muslims abandoned their positions to steal the booties, including the shooters who left their positions against Mohammad's order. One of the courageous men of Quraysh gathered a group and attacked the Muslims from behind. As the Muslims fled the scene, Mohammad was injured, but survived (Bashmail 1985, 117).

After Uḥud's battle, Mohammad attacked the Jews. He accused them of plotting against him (Guillaume 1967, 437), and forced bani Nuḍir to leave Medina within ten days. They moved to Khaybar and lived among their fellow Jews (Bashmail 1985, 33). According to Bashmail, "there is no historical evidence (as far as we know) that the Jews of Khaybar had any intentions or efforts to attack the Muslims in Medina" (Bashmail 1985, 33). The Arabic renders as: "لم نر احداً من المؤرخين ذكر (فيما نعلم) ان هناك عزمًا قد تبلور لدى هؤلاء اليهود لأن تقوم قواتهم من خبير بغزو المسلمين في المدينة." However, Islamic literature states that Mohammad decided to fight them because the Jews were a close ally to Quraysh and other polytheistic tribes in the desert of Najd. Khaybar's battle came after Mohammad's expulsion to bani Nuḍir, and his attack against the Jews of bani Qurayza. Although the Jews were expecting this incursion and had prepared for it, the Muslims won the battle (al-Sallabi 2007, 227).

A critical observation should be mentioned at this point, which is that Mohammad did not offer the Jews at Khaybar the option of *jizya* (tax), as he is supposed to do. According to Islamic legislation, when Muslims conquer a land that is preoccupied with *ahal al-kitab* (the people of the book), they should give them options of converting to Islam, paying *jizya*, or being killed. Some scholars assert that by the time of the battle, the *jizya's* law had yet to be legislated. Others say that Mohammad did not offer the *jizya's* option because he never trusted the Jews (al-Sallabi 2007, 97-99). Whatever the reason, Mohammad gained great support and power in the Arabic peninsula after Khaybar's battle. Within nine months, he was able to conquer Mecca, and within two years he took control of the entire Arabic peninsula (al-Sallabi 2007, 10).

4. The Differences Between Mohammad's Incursion and Joshua's Battles

4.1. The Nature of Biblical and Islamic Battles

The biblical text does not portray the Hebrew battles as a merciless slaughter. Instead, their nature is judicial. According to the book of Genesis, Yahweh waited for 430 years before judging the Amorites because "the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete" (Gen 15:16). In other words, during Abraham's days, the time was not right for the Amorites to be judged. The time of judgment only arrived after Israel's lengthy enslavement in Egypt, and the Amorites' evil was perfected— "because of the wickedness of these nations" (Deut 9:4-5), as God declares. "Sometimes God simply gives up on nations, cities, or individuals," says Paul Copan, "when they've gone past a point of no return. Judgment—whether directly or indirectly—is the last resort" (Copan 2011, 133). The Canaanites were not living moral lives; their deities engaged in incest, which in turn was

practiced among the people and accepted without any restraints. The Canaanites also practiced adultery (temple sex), bestiality, homosexuality, and child sacrifice (Lev 18:20-30). Copan explains how the Canaanites worshiped their gods and how this way of worship affected their morality: „The sexual acts of the gods and goddesses were imitated by the Canaanites as a kind of magical act: the more sex on the Canaanite high places, the more this would stimulate the fertility god Baal to have sex with his consort, Anath, which meant more semen (rain) produced to water the earth. Canaanite idolatry wasn't simply an abstract theology ... It was a worldview that profoundly influenced Canaanite society” (Copan 2011, 134).

God did not want the Israelites to fraternize with the Canaanites because He knew that they would lead them astray.

Islamic wars, on the other hand, were not judicial. Allah did not use the Muslims to judge the polytheists or the Jews living in the Arabic peninsula. Muslims believe that all non-Muslims are sinners and therefore deserving of punishment. However, there is no mention in the Islamic literature that Allah sent Mohammad to judge unbelievers. As stated earlier, the main motivations behind Mohammad's initiation of his first war (Badr battle) against Quraysh were revenge and retaliation for the mistreatment and the personal rejection he received while in Mecca. According to al-Waqidi, Mohammad made several raids on Quraysh's caravans, and once he heard that Quraysh sent their people to Badr, he deployed his army and captured two of their warriors (Faizer 2011, 9-10).

While Mohammad's motives seem subjective and whimsical, the God of the Hebrews demonstrates just and objective judgment. The Hebrew battles were judicial, and God's judgment was just because it was objective. God's judgment was equally applied to all, Jews and non-Jews. God was not racist or genocidal, as some scholars claim. He did not show favoritism or treated the Jews in partiality against the Canaanites. Despite the fact that the Jews were God's chosen people, He did not turn a blind eye to their sins. On the contrary, God hold them to a higher standard. When they committed sin, God judged them as He did to other nations. Copan explicates, “The land of Canaan was no paradise before the Israelites got there. Israel had no inherent right to inhabit the land (as an undeserved gift from God), and neither did the Canaanites have a right to remain in it. In fact, both the Canaanites and the Israelites would experience (partial) removal from the land because of their wickedness” (Copan 2011, 134). God warned the Israelites of what would happen when they disobey him (Deut 28:41-68; Jer 15), and He fulfilled these curses when Israel worshiped other gods.

The Islamic wars, on the other hand, were unjust wars, and Allah was not objective in his judgment of the disbelievers. In fact, Allah's partiality toward the Muslims and against the disbelievers was clear. The Muslims and Quraysh fought each other because of Mohammad's continuous

attempts to rob Quraysh's caravans. Although robbing is wrong by Islamic definition, there is nothing in the Qur'an nor in the Hadiths that condemned Mohammad's attacks. In fact, Islamic scholars approve these attacks. Bashmail, for instance, calls Uḥud's War, "a just war" because "the purpose of the polytheists in Uḥud's Battle was to take revenge from the Muslims, and the purpose of the Muslims was to defend their religion and protect it to be able to spread it" (Bashmail 1985, 9). If this standard is true, and the war is just when Muslims defend their *da'wa*, then Mohammad's other battles (like Khaybar and Badr) are unjust because they were not based on self-defense principle but on retaliation toward disbelievers. Additionally, there was neither a divine condemnation of Mohammad caravan's attacks nor toward the wars that he initiated. Al-Waqidī recalls a story about the Jews in Husayka, who were rich "and they had many houses there" (Faizer 2011, 13). Mohammad's army "marched to the Jews of Husayka, and they were the mightiest of the Jews at that time. We fought them as we wished, and have to this day kept the rest of the Jews humble" (Faizer 2011, 13). This shows that some of Mohammad's wars were to scare the enemies or to take revenge, not to defend Allah's cause.

The Hebrew wars were not only just, but they were also miraculous. God himself was involved in these wars by fighting and defending his own people in miraculous ways (Josh 10:14, 42). For instance, during the war against the Amorites, God stopped the sun in the sky for about a day until the Israelites finished driving out the Amorites (Josh 10:12-14). While they fled before Israel, "the LORD threw down large stones from heaven on them as far as Azekah, and they died. There were more who died because of the hailstones than the sons of Israel killed with the sword" (Josh 10:11). In other words, the divine presence among the Jews was obvious and clear that even their enemies attested it (Josh 2:9-11).

Mohammad, on the other hand, claimed that Allah fought with the Muslims by sending five thousand of his angels. However, it is hard to verify this claim because there were no extra signs and wonders to support it (Surah 3:124-125). The Hadith that points to angelic aid is mentioned in *Sahih Muslim*. *Sahih Muslim* and *Sahih Bukhari* are the second major official books in Islamic literature after the Qur'an, according to the Sunni sect of Islam. Any Hadith (collective talks based on Prophet Mohammad's words and acts) is treated as authentic and authoritative as the Qur'an. It states: „While on that day a Muslim was chasing a disbeliever who was going ahead of him, he heard over him the swishing of the whip and the voice of the rider saying: Go ahead, Haizum! He glanced at the polytheist who had (now) fallen down on his back. When he looked at him (carefully he found that) there was a scar on his nose and his face was torn as if it had been lashed with a whip, and had turned green with its poison" (Muslim, no. 1763).

There are several problems in this text: 1) The person who recalled

this story is not identified. The Hadith refers to him as “a Muslim,” which makes the story difficult to verify. Also, the person who told this story is a Muslim, not a man from Quraysh; therefore, his testimony is not as strong as it would be if coming from an enemy—as Rahab’s testimony does. 3) The Qur’an states that in Bader’s battler, God sent 3000-5000 angels to fight beside the Muslims; however, this Hadith mentions only 1000 of them (Surah 8:9). Islamic literature does not agree on how many angels were helping. 4) Finally, it is unclear why an angel would not be satisfied with killing the disbelievers and would go on further to desecrate their bodies. If God sent his angel to fight with the Muslims, signs and wonders should have appeared, but the only one that is mentioned is impossible to verify.

The Hebrew wars were not meant to be repetitive. God did not command Joshua to make unlimited attacks; instead, he declared his plan right from the beginning. He notified Abraham of what was going to happen to the fourth generation of the Jews (Gen 15:16), He informed Moses of future battles, and He appointed Joshua to conduct them. In other words, the wars were well known, defined, and announced by God to several prophets. There was no room for ambiguity or surprises. One well-defined aspect of these battles is the borders of the land that the people should not go beyond (Num 34: 1-15). The people were asked to take the defined borders of the land seriously, settle there, and worship God. The OT does not mention that other wars will be conducted in the future, nor will extra lands be conquered. The Islamic wars, on the other hand, have no limits. Muslims are required to keep fighting until they conquer the entire earth or until all people surrender to Allah and his prophet, Mohammad. This idea is stated in the Qur’an in Surah 9:29 and in several Hadiths (Bukhari, Hadith no. 392& 2946).

4.2. The Purpose of The Hebrew and the Islamic Wars

The main purpose of the Hebrew wars was to provide a salvation plan for all humanity. Yahweh initiated the plan when he chose Abraham and promised to make him a great nation. Yahweh said that He would live among this nation as long as they kept themselves pure. God is holy, and He cannot live where sin resides. God knew that human beings have a fallen human nature and cannot purify themselves. He sent to Moses the law and commanded the nation to observe it. The law includes a sacrificial system that should be observed in a particular manner and in a particular location. With the law in place, God took Israel from Egypt to the land that He has shown to their father Abraham. While there is room enough for Israel to live alongside or amidst the other nations in the land, God could not dwell among them because of their unholiness. The purpose of the wars was to purify the land in order for God to reside among his people and become a light for the other nations. Eugene H. Merrill states, “He wants them [Israel] to know that he is their God as he, the God of all the

earth (Josh 2:11), is present with them to accomplish the work of conquest (2:10). It follows, moreover, that all the peoples of the earth will recognize that Israel's God is God indeed (4:24)" (Merrill 2003, 80). When Israel obeys and God resides among them, the other nations will realize that Yahweh is the real God and perhaps will believe in him.

The second purpose is to purify the land and keep Israel a holy nation so that God can remain among them. The means of fulfilling this purpose was revealed in the "driving out" verses. The intention of the Hebrew wars was not simply to kill the Canaanites nor to convert them to Judaism but instead to drive them out of the land. On several occasions, God tells the Israelites that He will be with them and will drive out the people before them. "I will send an angel before you," says Yahweh, not to kill the people, but to "drive out the Canaanites, the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites" (Exod 33:2). Yahweh even repeated this promise several times and kept reminding Israel that it is he who will fight for them (Exod 23:27-31, 34:11; Num 33:51-52; Deut 9:3, 11:23; Josh 3:11, 13:6, 23:5). When the inhabitants of the land did not want to leave, then Israel was to take it by force.

For purification purposes, Israel was to destroy the temples, places of worship, and centers of pagan sacrifices. "You shall surely destroy all the places where the nations whom you shall dispossess served their gods," says Yahweh, "You shall tear down their altars and dash in pieces their pillars and burn their Asherim with fire. You shall chop down the carved images of their gods and destroy their name out of that place" (Deut 12:2-3). Asherim means figures of Asherah, who was the Canaanite goddess of sexuality/sensuality. The reason behind this destruction (*herem*) is provided earlier in the book of Exodus. Yahweh warns the Israelites not to "make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and when they whore after their gods and sacrifice to their gods and you are invited, you eat of his sacrifice, and you take of their daughters for your sons, and their daughters whore after their gods and make your sons whore after their gods" (Exod 34: 12, 15-16). That is to say, living among the Canaanites would affect the morality of the Israelites. Therefore, destroying the Canaanite religion was a priority over destroying the Canaanite people because the root of the dilemma was not the people themselves but their immoral and idolatrous way of life (Copan 2011, 145). This method would prevent future exchanges with evil—and thereby diminish future defilement of God's people.

While Muslims agree partially with this framework for understanding Jewish history, the purpose of the Islamic wars takes a completely different direction. Mohammad's wars were supposed to purify the whole earth by converting all people to Islam. The danger does not lie with the polytheistic religions but with the polytheists themselves (Surah 9:67-68). Therefore, Mohammad's wars became means to annihilate unbelievers rather than destroying their beliefs. The main purpose of the Islamic wars

is to convert people to Islam. When they refuse, the only option left for them is to be killed—unless they are Jews or Christians, in which case they will be offered the choice of paying *jizya*. Mohammad did not offer the option of being driven from the land to any group except the Jews of bani Nuḍīr. He started the *jihād* against the infidels, and the caliphs carried on the tradition through the Umayyad and the Abbasi eras until Islam was spread in most of Europe by the Turks.

4.3. The Rules of the Hebrew and the Islamic Wars

The rules of the Hebrew wars were given to Israel during Moses' days long before the actual conquest started. Some scholars call Deuteronomy 20:1-20 the “Manual of War” (Merrill 2003, 70). This passage includes instructions about ordinary wars, including distant cities—not just the ones in the holy land. After defining the qualifications of the person participating in war, Moses lists several other conditions: 1) Israel is not to start attacking distant cities but should offer peace first. 2) If a city accepts the terms of peace, then its people shall do forced labor for Israel. 3) If a city launches a war against Israel, then it should be besieged. 4) If the besieged city falls, then all its males should be put to death; women, children, livestock, and everything else in the city shall be taken as plunder.

The other important rule of war in Israel relates to captive women. If an Israelite wants to take one of the captive women as a wife for himself, he needs to follow a particular protocol. He cannot just rape her or take her right away after the battle. The protocol starts with shaving her head, paring her nails, changing her clothes, and letting her lament her parents for a full month. If the Israelite no longer delights in her after this period, he should let her go where she wants; he should neither treat as a slave nor sell her for money (Deut 21:10-14).

In Shari'a law, however, the protocol of war is different. The command of fighting the non-Muslims came down gradually. In other words, when Mohammad started his *da'wa*, there were no fixed standards, instructions, or a particular goal for Islamic wars. When the Muslims were still weak in Mecca, they asked Mohammad to allow them to fight the Meccans; but Mohammad told them, “Be steadfast, for I have not been commanded to fight” (Al-Wahidi 2019). *Jihād* was not officiated until they moved to Medina and formed a strong army (Surah 9:36). Islamic scholar Ali al-Sallabi explains that the graduation in the command of fighting was “based on the condition of the rising of the Islamic government ... and with the fighting permission is being activated, the prophet of Allah legislated the military training of his friends” (al-Sallabi 2007, 8). The original Arabic renders as: “... ومع نزول الاذن بالقتال شرع رسول الله في تدريب اصحابه على فنون القتال والحروب”

The Mufti of Saudi Arabia, Saleh ben Fozan al-Foran, agrees with al-

Sallabi and says: „There has to be a power among the Muslims to call for *jihād* in Allah’s path, and they have to be fully ready for it, otherwise they should postpone it until they have power and ability. This is why prophet Mohammad and his supporter were persecuted by the polytheists. Allah ordered his prophet to forgive and wait for his command...it is because of their weaknesses ... because *jihād* needs power” (al-Foran, 2015).

The permission for *jihād* was given in Surah 8:60 when Mohammad gained great power and support from al-Ansar in Medina. At that point, Mohammad started preparing, training, and practicing the lesser *jihād* with his fighters. It seems as if the idea of fighting was not in the original plan of Mohammad or Allah but was rather only conceived and permitted once Mohammad had gained strong military power. This is a weakness in the divine plan because it gives the impression that Allah did not know what he was doing, or he was improvising as events were unfolding. Meanwhile, in the Hebrew Bible, God revealed his plan as early as Abraham’s days, demonstrating consistency in Yahweh’s nature once the conquest started.

In Islamic law, the spoils of war belong to Allah and Mohammad, his only heir. Therefore, Mohammad had the privilege of making decisions regarding the captives, and all the booties should go to him to be divided as he pleases (Surah 8:1). In contrast to the Hebrew wars, no clear guideline of how or what to do with the captives existed. While Mohammad spared the lives of some of his opponents (such as Muhtam ben Oday) (Al-Sallabi 2007, 64), he killed others because he considered them a risk against his *da’wa* (‘Uqba b. Abi Mu’ayt) (Faizer 2011, 57) and he released others in exchange for money or livestock (Surah 8:70-71). Al-Sallabi mentions several names of Quraysh’s warriors—such as ‘Uqba b. Abi Mu’ayt and al-Nudr ben al-Hareth—whom Mohammad killed in retaliation for what they have done to him when he was living among them (Al-Sallabi 2007, 65). It is important to note that many of whom Mohammad spared accepted Islam. One whom Mohammad captured during Badr’s battle is Omair ben Wahab’s son. Mohammad called Omair Quraysh’s demon, dog, and enemy of Allah. However, once Omair converted to Islam, he released his son (Al-Sallabi 2007, 75-76).

In Mohammad’s wars, women taken into captivity are classified as booty, an action legalized by Mohammad himself (Muslim, Hadith no. 1456 a). In a lesser-authenticated Hadith, Mohammad forbids sexual relationships with pregnant captives and with women who are not free from their menstrual courses (Al-Albani, Hadith no. 2158). In the authenticated hadiths, Mohammad “seemed to refrain from having intercourse with captive women because of their husbands being polytheists. Then Allah, Most High, sent down regarding that: ‘And women already married, except those whom your right hands possess (Surah 4:24)’ (i.e. they were lawful for them when their ‘Idda period [menstrual] came to an end)” (Muslim, Hadith no. 1456 a). In other words, Muslims

were not asked, like the Jews, to follow a protocol. As long as the woman is not pregnant or has her period, she can be treated as a sexual slave or as a wife. Moreover, Mohammad himself married several female captives. One such woman is Safiya bent Huyay, a Jew. After Mohammad killed her father, husband, and brother, he married her. He took her from another Muslim fighter. *Sahih Bukhari* mentions that Mohammad did not treat her as his other wives, and he did not pay her a *mahr* (dowry). “Herself was her Mahr for he manumitted her and then married her. While on the way, Um Sulaim dressed her for marriage and at night she sent her as a bride to the Prophet (ﷺ)” (Bukhari, Hadith no. 371). This hadith shows that Mohammad could not wait for Safiya to mourn her family, nor he could wait to reach Medina to create a decent marriage ceremony for her. He treated her like a captive; however, Muslim scholars deny that he mistreated her.

The last major variance that should be pointed out is the concept martyrdom between Islam and Judaism. In Islam, there are several verses in the Qur’an and hadiths which encourage death in Allah’s way (Surah 2: 218; 3:158; 4:74). In fact, dying while fighting is depicted as the only way that guarantees heaven. Someone asked Mohammad, “O Alla’s Messenger (ﷺ)! Who is the best among the people? Allah’s Messenger (ﷺ) replied ‘A believer who strives his utmost in Allah’s Cause with his life and property’” (Bukhari, Hadith no. 2786). On another occasion, Mohammad himself indicated that “Paradise is under the shades of swords” (Bukhari, Hadith no. 2818). These verses and hadiths include the lesser and the greater *jihād*. The one who dies while defending Allah’s cause is to be considered the best believer. In contrast, the encouragement of martyrdom while fighting infidels is not found anywhere in the OT.

5. Conclusion

The previous analysis shows that the nature of the Hebrew and the Islamic wars are different. The nature of the Hebrew wars is judicial, whereas the nature of the Islamic wars is vengeful. While the Canaanites were judged because of their evil perversions, the tribe of Quraysh was attacked because they mistreated Mohammad, and the Jews of Khaybar were struck because they had conspired against the prophet. Moreover, the divine treatment in the Hebrew wars was not as biased as in the Islamic wars. While the Jews received fair punishment when they disobeyed God, Mohammad showed favoritism to his own people and was biased against all those who do not believe in him and his religion. This is to say, while the Canaanite, Amorites, and Amalekites were attacked because of their sexual immorality, pollution of the land through idolatry, and their own aggressive military efforts to exterminate Israel (not because of their ethnicity or political identity), Mohammad targeted the Jews of Khaybar based on their ethnicity and political affiliation with

Quraysh. The Hebrew wars and the Islamic wars are not the same because the purpose of Mohammad's wars prioritized the annihilation of people who disagree with Mohammad and focused on the destruction of their religions. The Islamic wars had no limitations: Muslims ought to fight all disbelievers until they confess that there is no God but Allah, and Mohammad is the prophet of Allah. These differences between the religions should lead the reader who is struggling with the issue of violence in religions to see that the two religions treated their holy wars differently, therefore, it is unjust to treat them the same way as if they are all violent and the source of violence.

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