

Explore Beliefnet

New Member? REGISTER

Email:

Religions

- [Baha'i](#)
- [Buddhism](#)
- [Christianity](#)
  - [Catholic](#)
  - [Christian Science](#)
  - [Eastern Orthodox](#)
  - [Mormon](#)
  - [Protestant](#)
  - [Quaker](#)
- [Falun Gong](#)
- [Hinduism](#)
- [Islam](#)
- [Jainism](#)
- [Judaism](#)
- [Nation of Islam](#)
- [Pagan & Earth-Based](#)
- [Scientology](#)
- [Secular Philosophies](#)
- [Shinto](#)
- [Sikhism](#)
- [Taoism](#)
- [Unitarian](#)
- [Universalist](#)
- [Zoroastrianism](#)

Islam Tools

- [Find a Mosque](#)
- [Hadith Search](#)
- [Qur'an Search](#)
- [Islam Quiz](#)
- [Prayer Times](#)
- [Islamic Calendar](#)
- [Prayer Circles](#)
- [Prayer Finder](#)
- [Memorials](#)
- [Celebration Albums](#)
- [Ask the Imam](#)
- [Religion Q&A](#)
- [Islam Links](#)

Daily Offerings

Home > Religions > Islam > Understanding Islam

PRINT E-MAIL

Save a Life, Save All Humanity--Take a Life, Kill All Humanity

What the Islamic scriptures really say about jihad and violence.

For years Islamic terrorists have justified their actions as being compelled by their faith. Osama Bin Laden reportedly thanked Allah when he heard the news of this week's attack. Other terrorist groups invoke Islam as well. Hezbollah, the name of one militant group, is the Arabic word for Party of God; Hamas is the Islamic Resistance Movement.

Are the terrorists who cite the Qur'an distorting the spirit of the religion or depicting its emphasis accurately? Here are several of the Qur'an passages most frequently cited, and analysis from Islamic scholars.

On Jihad or "Holy War"

Chapter 2, verse 190: Fight in the cause of Allah those who fight you, but do not transgress limits; for Allah loves not transgressors.

Discussions

[Beliefnet members react](#)

[Talk about the tragedy](#)

More Articles and Resources

[Prayer Circle](#)  
Post your prayers for the victims and their families

[How you can help](#)

This portion of the Qur'an was written in about 606 C.E., when the Prophet Muhammad and his followers were under attack in the city of Medinah, says [Imam Yahya Hendi](#), a Qur'anic scholar who is the Muslim chaplain at Georgetown University. There, they had established their own state. But various coalitions of non-Muslim tribes --

special feature

[Understanding Islam](#)

Today's Top Picks

Enter the Dharma Door

Listen to a Thich Nhat Hahn meditation to end suffering

[More...](#)

Urgent: Be Carefree!

Been too busy? Here's a few ways to catch up with your life

[More...](#)

Looking for the Feminine Divine

Why a scholar says scribes may have "erased" women's roles in the Bible

[More...](#)

Poll: Feuding Faiths

Can rabbis and imams break bread together in peace?



[More...](#)


- [The Dalai Lama](#)
- [Prayer of the Day](#)
- [Spiritual Parenting](#)
- [Inspiration](#)
- [Loose Canon](#)
- [Swami Uptown](#)

More 

**Find**



 Beliefnet 

- [Sacred Texts](#)
- [Columnists](#)
- [Holidays](#)
- [Houses of Worship](#)
- [Prayers](#)
- [Meditations](#)
- [Site Map](#)
- [Soulmatch](#) 

[Being Muslim in America Today](#)  
By Michael Wolfe

[What Happens When You De-Sanctify Life](#)  
By Michael Lerner

[Let's Not Let Suspicions Run Rampant](#)

[A War Against Terrorism Is Moral](#)  
By Rabbi Joseph Telushkin

[Anti-Muslim Backlash on Beliefnet Message Boards](#)

**[Complete Coverage](#)**

don't keep going on with it--only if you are attacked, if there is an oppression applied to you. The idea is that justice prevails. You don't fight because you enjoy fighting, but because there is an oppression.

"It could be military force or [in today's world] it could be media force, writing against you. But when the hostilities are over and the enemy offers a peace treaty, you should submit. Muslims are obliged to submit to a peace treaty offered by the enemy. You don't keep fighting."

Al-Hajj Talib 'Abdur-Rashid, imam of the Mosque of Islamic Brotherhood in Harlem, says the word jihad has its origin in the verb jahada which means to struggle, to fight. The word has a few different connotations, since struggle can occur on several levels.

"Muslims understand these levels based not only on the words of Allah in the Qur'an, but also on the authentic statements of the Prophet Muhammad as recorded in our oral traditions, preserved as hadith," he says. According to 'Abdur-Rashid, there are three levels of jihad:

**Personal Jihad:** The most excellent jihad is that of the soul. This jihad, called the Jihadun-Nafs, is the intimate struggle to purify the soul of satanic influence--both subtle and overt. It is the struggle to cleanse one's spirit of sin. This is the most important level of jihad.

**Verbal Jihad:** On another occasion, the Prophet said, "The most excellent jihad is the speaking of truth in the face of a tyrant." He encouraged raising one's voice in the name of Allah on behalf of justice.

**Physical Jihad:** This is combat waged in defense of Muslims against oppression and transgression

including Christians, Jews, atheists and animists-- continued to go to war with them. This portion of the Qur'an explains their reasoning behind striking back.

The passage actually refers to a defensive war. "You fight back. You go as far as it takes to stop the aggression but you do not go beyond that. So if you have to, you go as far as fighting verbally to get someone out of your home--but you don't shoot him after he is out. You

by the enemies of Allah, Islam and Muslims. We are commanded by Allah to lead peaceful lives and not transgress against anyone, but also to defend ourselves against oppression by "fighting against those who fight against us." This "jihad with the hand" is the aspect of jihad that has been so profoundly misunderstood in today's world.

---

<Prev Page | [Next Page](#)>

Page 1 [2](#) [3](#)

 PRINT  E-MAIL



Explore Beliefnet

New Member? REGISTER

Email:

Religions

- Baha'i
- Buddhism
- Christianity
  - Catholic
  - Christian Science
  - Eastern Orthodox
  - Mormon
  - Protestant
  - Quaker
- Falun Gong
- Hinduism
- Islam
- Jainism
- Judaism
- Nation of Islam
- Pagan & Earth-Based
- Scientology
- Secular Philosophies
- Shinto
- Sikhism
- Taoism
- Unitarian Universalist
- Zoroastrianism

Islam Tools

- Find a Mosque
- Hadith Search
- Our'an Search
- Islam Quiz
- Prayer Times
- Islamic Calendar
- Prayer Circles
- Prayer Finder
- Memorials
- Celebration Albums
- Ask the Imam
- Religion Q&A
- Islam Links

Home > Religions > Islam > Understanding Islam

PRINT E-MAIL

Save a Life, Save All Humanity--Take a Life, Kill All Humanity

< Prev Page | Next Page > Page 1 2 3

special feature

Understanding Islam

On Non-Muslims

Chapter 2, verse 256: Let there be no compulsion in religion: Truth stands out clear from Error: whoever rejects evil and believes in Allah hath grasped the most trustworthy hand-hold, that never breaks. And Allah heareth and knoweth all things.

Today's Top Picks

Enter the Dharma Door

Listen to a Thich Nhat Hahn meditation to end suffering

Urgent: Be Carefree!

Been too busy? Here's a few ways to catch up with your life

Looking for the Feminine Divine

Why a scholar says scribes may have "erased" women's roles in the Bible

Poll: Feuding Faiths

Can rabbis and imams break bread together in peace?

Discussions

Beliefnet members react

Talk about the tragedy

More Articles and Resources

Prayer Circle Post your prayers for the victims and their families

How you can help

Being Muslim in America Today By Michael Wolfe

What Happens When You De-Sanctify Life By Michael Lerner

Let's Not Let Suspicions Run Rampant

A War Against Terrorism Is Moral

This passage has been cited to justify expelling non-Muslims from Muslim countries. But Imam Hendi says that not only does the Qur'an avoid any such suggestion, it even prohibits aggressive efforts to convert. "No Muslim is allowed to go out and force people to become Muslim. In the early days of Islam, Jews came to Islam and had younger children and asked Muhammad if they could force Islam on their children because they are younger. This verse [which was] revealed to him says that there can be no compulsion on other religions. This is very clear.


"I have had people come to my office and say they wanted to convert to Islam. I talked to them and it turned out they just weren't



**Daily Offerings**


- [The Dalai Lama](#)
- [Prayer of the Day](#)
- [Spiritual Parenting](#)
- [Inspiration](#)
- [Loose Canon](#)
- [Swami Uptown](#)

More 

**Find**

 Beliefnet 

- [Sacred Texts](#)
- [Columnists](#)
- [Holidays](#)
- [Houses of Worship](#)
- [Prayers](#)
- [Meditations](#)
- [Site Map](#)
- [Soulmatch](#) 

By Rabbi Joseph Telushkin

[Anti-Muslim Backlash on Beliefnet Message Boards](#)

[Complete Coverage](#)

quite religious pluralistic. For instance, chapter 29, verse 46, says: "And dispute ye not with the People of the Book, except with means better (than mere disputation), unless it be with those of them who inflict wrong (and injury): but say, 'We believe in the revelation which has come down to us and in that which came down to you; Our Allah and your Allah is one; and it is to Him we bow (in Islam).'"

[People of the Book](#) is the term Muslims use to refer to Jews and Christians. "This is the most-viewed verse in terms of how we talk to non-Muslims. We have common ground between us and them," says Imam Hendi.

happy in their own faiths. So I said, no, go back to your own faith."

What's more, fundamentalist Muslims seldom cite the passages of the Qur'an which are


< [Prev Page](#) | [Next Page](#) >

Page [1](#) [2](#) [3](#)

 PRINT  E-MAIL



**700** Nationwide *WHENEVER* Minutes<sup>®</sup>  
**UNLIMITED** in-network calling  
**\$59.99** for two lines/mo.  
 Plus taxes and fees



Explore Beliefnet

New Member? **REGISTER**

Email:

**Religions**

- [Baha'i](#)
- [Buddhism](#)
- [Christianity](#)
  - [Catholic](#)
  - [Christian Science](#)
  - [Eastern Orthodox](#)
  - [Mormon](#)
  - [Protestant](#)
  - [Quaker](#)
- [Falun Gong](#)
- [Hinduism](#)
- [Islam](#)
- [Jainism](#)
- [Judaism](#)
- [Nation of Islam](#)
- [Pagan & Earth-Based](#)
- [Scientology](#)
- [Secular Philosophies](#)
- [Shinto](#)
- [Sikhism](#)
- [Taoism](#)
- [Unitarian Universalist](#)
- [Zoroastrianism](#)

**Islam Tools**

- [Find a Mosque](#)
- [Hadith Search](#)
- [Qur'an Search](#)
- [Islam Quiz](#)
- [Prayer Times](#)
- [Islamic Calendar](#)
- [Prayer Circles](#)
- [Prayer Finder](#)
- [Memorials](#)
- [Celebration Albums](#)
- [Ask the Imam](#)
- [Religion Q&A](#)
- [Islam Links](#)

[Home](#) > [Religions](#) > [Islam](#) > [Understanding Islam](#)

**Save a Life, Save All Humanity--Take a Life, Kill All Humanity**

< [Prev Page](#) | [Next Page](#) > Page [1](#) [2](#) [3](#)

**On Martyrdom:**

*Chapter 3, verse 169: Think not of those who are slain in Allah's way as dead. Nay, they live, finding their sustenance in the presence of their Lord.*

**Discussions**

[Beliefnet members react](#)

[Talk about the tragedy](#)

**More Articles and Resources**

[Prayer Circle](#)  
Post your prayers for the victims and their families

[How you can help](#)

[Being Muslim in America Today](#)  
By Michael Wolfe

[What Happens When You De-Sanctify Life](#)  
By Michael Lerner

[Let's Not Let Suspicions Run Rampant](#)

[A War Against Terrorism Is Moral](#)  
By Rabbi Joseph Telushkin

*Chapter 3, verse 172: Of those who answered the call of Allah and the Messenger, even after being wounded, those who do right and refrain from wrong have a great reward."*

Does Islam have a special emphasis on martyrdom? Those who believe so often look at these verses. Imam Hendi says there is, indeed, a special place for those who die in the service of God, though that service needs to be of a different sort than that provided by terrorists. "Suppose I'm on the pulpit teaching and giving my sermon," says Imam Hendi. "If someone shoots me because of what I'm saying about God, the Qur'an says I'm not really dead because I'm with God. If I'm feeding the poor, and calling for justice, I can't be called dead. My

PRINT E-MAIL

special feature

[Understanding Islam](#)

**Today's Top Picks**

**Enter the Dharma Door**



Listen to a Thich Nhat Hahn meditation to end suffering

[More...](#)

**Urgent: Be Carefree!**

Been too busy? Here's a few ways to catch up with your life

[More...](#)

**Looking for the Feminine Divine**

Why a scholar says scribes may have "erased" women's roles in the Bible

[More...](#)

**Poll: Feuding Faiths**

Can rabbis and imams break bread together in peace?


[More...](#)



Daily Offerings


- [The Dalai Lama](#)
- [Prayer of the Day](#)
- [Spiritual Parenting](#)
- [Inspiration](#)
- [Loose Canon](#)
- [Swami Uptown](#)

More 

Find



 Beliefnet 

- [Sacred Texts](#)
- [Columnists](#)
- [Holidays](#)
- [Houses of Worship](#)
- [Prayers](#)
- [Meditations](#)
- [Site Map](#)
- [Soulmatch](#) 

[Anti-Muslim Backlash on Beliefnet Message Boards](#)

soul is alive and God sustains me."

[Complete Coverage](#)

"If you are a teacher in a school and you die while teaching, you are a martyr. If you die while doing a service for people, you are a martyr. If I am traveling on American Airlines 700 going to London for a conference or to learn something, if that plane, God forbid, crashes, I am a martyr. Travelers for learning are martyrs.

So to claim martyr status, all terrorists have to do is convince themselves that they are fighting for "justice," which is, of course, highly subjective. "They say that America is the leader of injustice worldwide because of the embargo against Afghanistan, and the thousands of people suffering in Iraq. Some people think America has a double standard when it comes to the Middle East and Israel. [Terrorists] think if they hurt Americans, they serve the cause of justice. They use these verses," says Imam Hendi.

But the Qur'an has just as many passages describing how martyrdom cannot cause harm to others. "The prophet Muhammad said, 'Do not attack a temple a church, a synagogue. Do not bring a tree or a plant down. Do not harm a horse or a camel. He went on and on in detail about what Muslims cannot do."

[On Terrorism and Violence](#)

Obviously the Qur'an doesn't condone terrorism, though Muhammed was the leader of a military force and therefore used violence. "In the West," writes scholar Karen Armstrong in her book, *Muhammad*, "we often imagine Muhammad as a warlord, brandishing his sword in order to impose Islam on a reluctant world by force of arms. The reality was quite different. Muhammad and the first Muslims were fighting for their lives, and they had also undertaken a project in which violence was inevitable."

It is true, she says, that unlike Christianity, Islam's leader was not a pacifist. "Islam fight tyranny and injustice. A Muslim may feel that he has a sacred duty to champion the weak and the oppressed," she writes. "Fighting and warfare might sometimes be necessary, but it was only a minor part of the whole jihad or struggle. A well-known tradition (hadith) has Muhammad say on returning from a battle, 'We return from the little jihad to the greater jihad,' the more difficult and crucial effort to conquer the forces of evil in oneself and in one's own society in all the details of daily life."

While there are passages in the Qur'an, like the Old Testament of the Bible, that celebrate military

victory, the overall gestalt of the Qur'an promotes a more restrained view. Chapter 5, verse 32, for instance, states: *On that account: We ordained for the Children of Israel that if any one slew a person--unless it be for murder or for spreading mischief in the land--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.*

That passages places a great value on the sanctity of a single life. "If you kill one person it's as if you kill all humanity," says Imam Hendi.

Indeed, Hendi says, the Qur'an goes one step further in chapter 8, verse 61, "But if the enemy incline towards peace, do thou (also) incline towards peace, and trust in Allah."

---

<[Prev Page](#) | [Next Page](#)>

Page [1](#) [2](#) [3](#)

 PRINT  E-MAIL