



## Core Curriculum

### 3 Foundations of Islam - Obligatory Acts

#### 3.2 **Jihād in Islamic Law and Spirituality**

##### INTRODUCTION

Bismillāhir Rahmānir Rahīm, As-salāmu ‘Alaykum wa rahmatullāhi wa barakātuh. Peace be upon you brothers and sisters.

Welcome back to the Muslim Converts Channel! Religion is not always an easy thing. For many people, believing in Islam isn't too hard. More difficult than this is practicing Islam and its commandments. This is often where the real struggle lies.

However, there is a struggle that we don't see which put frankly, is the most difficult of our struggles. Recall in our last section we discussed the issue of the nafs that commands us to evil. The duty of a Muslim is to struggle against evil. The hardest evil to fight against is the evil of ourselves.

As in the case with the nafs, evil begins from the inside which everyone must struggle against. Sometimes this evil manifests itself outwardly as well so if you are evil inside, you may also do evil things on the outside.

The evil within and without must be struggled against. This struggle in Islam is called jihād. Jihād is the 6th item of the furū' al-dīn and is one of the most critical religious practices of Islam. In this lesson, we will look at the two kinds of jihad, the major and minor. The major jihad is the internal jihad, and the minor jihad is the external one.

## BODY OF TEXT

“O Prophet! Encourage the believers to go for Jihad. If there are twenty patient ones amongst you, you will overcome 200...” (Chapter 8, verse 65 of the Holy Qur’an)

Imam Ja‘far al-Sādiq (a) said: The Messenger of Allah (s) dispatched a contingent of the army (to the battlefield). Upon their (successful) return, he (s) said: Blessed are those who have performed the minor jihad and have yet to perform the major jihad. When asked, What is the major jihad? the Prophet (s) replied: The jihad of the self (struggle against self).

Jihad literally means struggle. In Islam, it means to struggle for the sake of Allah. This can be done in two ways. The first way is through something we call the “Minor Jihad” and the second way is what we call the “Major Jihad”.

The Minor Jihād or al-Jihād al-Asghar, is the most well-known kind of Jihād because there is so much coverage of it on TV nowadays. The minor Jihad is sometimes known as “holy war” and it is a means for self-defense. This Jihad can also be looked at as an “outer jihad” or a “fighting jihad”. Its portrayal in the media, of course, is not really correct even if some fundamentalist Muslims encourage and stick to this false narrative.

First, according to the Prophet Muhammad (s) and the Imāms of the Ahl al-Bayt (as), this fighting Jihad is not supposed to be offensive. If you look at the life of the Prophet (s), there is not a single instance where he went to war with non-Muslims who were at peace with him. The God of Islam is a God of peace.

All of his wars were defensive in nature. This kind of defensive Jihad was also practiced by the Imams like Imam Husayn (as) at Karbala.

So basically the minor Jihad is when an aggressing army attacks you, or your village or town is invaded and you defend yourself. It is a defense

of the Muslim community or Ummah. The defense takes place as long as the aggressing party is attacking you. In Islam, if they want to make peace, then we are advised to accept peace and turn away from war as much as we can.

This jihad comes with strict rules and regulations. Even in a state of defense, Muslims are not allowed to kill innocent civilians, including old men, women and children. Furthermore, they are not allowed to destroy property or even trees.

Sometimes this jihad can also take place in other “outer” forms. For example, one can have a jihad of the pen where one defends Islam against vicious propaganda. In this sense, it is a defense of one’s religion. At other times, one can lead a “jihad” against poverty. What all these have in common is that they are a jihad or struggle against evil.

The second form of Jihad is called the Major Jihad or al-Jihād al-Akbar. According to the Prophet Muhammad (s), this is the most difficult evil to fight for it is a struggle for one’s own soul. Within ourselves, there is an inner self called the nafs al-ammāra, or the nafs which commands to evil and immorality.

This is in contrast to one’s “good” self that has two levels. The first is the nafs al-lawwāmah or the reproaching self. This is where we resist our evil thoughts and inclinations. The second level of the “good self” is the nafs al-mutma’innah, that is, the peaceful soul, where one reaches such a high degree of self-control that the struggle barely takes place anymore.

So the jihād al-akbar is the jihad against the evil self. This one is the hardest because it is an on-going struggle inside our hearts against bad desires and sins (like wanting to lie, gossip, fornicate, being jealous etc.) throughout our lives.

In this sense, this jihad is a struggle between 1) the divine and angelic powers that we have inside us which command us to the good and 2) the satanic forces that want us to follow our bad desires.

How does one win this battle though? It sounds like a pretty tough struggle. Remember we had a specific discussion on the nafs previously. Winning this inner battle means winning against our bad habits and developing new and good ones. The more we get used to saying no to our bad desires, the stronger our will becomes and the easier it becomes to say “no” to them overtime. But if we are constantly submitting to whatever desires our evil selves push us to, we will get used to that and over time, it will get harder and harder to say no to the bad desires.

Until Next Time, Thank you for watching. As-salāmu ‘Alaykum wa rahmatullāhi wa barakātuh