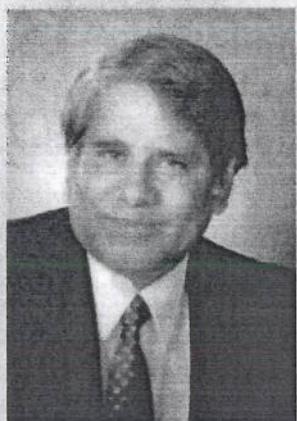


racess, ages, socioeconomic status, educational and religious backgrounds. Family roles, values, customs and expectations are deeply rooted within a person's culture and religious traditions. As our society becomes increasingly multi-cultural, it is critical that we understand domestic violence within a cross-cultural context. Such an understanding will enable us to develop culturally appropriate interventions in addressing the issue of domestic violence in our communities.

Many community and religious leaders are not familiar of the incidence of domestic violence among immigrant population and lack the knowledge of the effect of domestic violence on the victims, their children, the legal implications and the resources available for them. This book is written for health professionals, religious and community leaders in a simple language to familiarize them with unique features of people from different religious and cultural backgrounds.



M. Basheer Ahmed, M.D., has served as Chairman of the Board and Executive Director for the Muslim Community Center for Human Services located in North Texas which offers free medical and social services focusing on helping the victims of domestic violence.

A native of Hyderabad, India, Ahmed, immigrated to the United States in 1968. He obtained his medical degree from Dow Medical College in Karachi, Pakistan, and completed postgraduate psychiatric studies at Glasgow University in Scotland. He is board certified by the American Board of Psychiatry and a

distinguished Life Fellow of the American Psychiatric Association.

In addition to his educational and philanthropic accomplishments, Ahmed has held faculty positions at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine in New York City, NY; Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio; and was professor of Psychiatry at Southwestern Medical School in Dallas, Texas. In 1985, Ahmed established a private practice in Fort Worth, Texas. He has presented and published many papers on domestic violence.

Xlibris

ISBN: 978-1-4415-4472-8

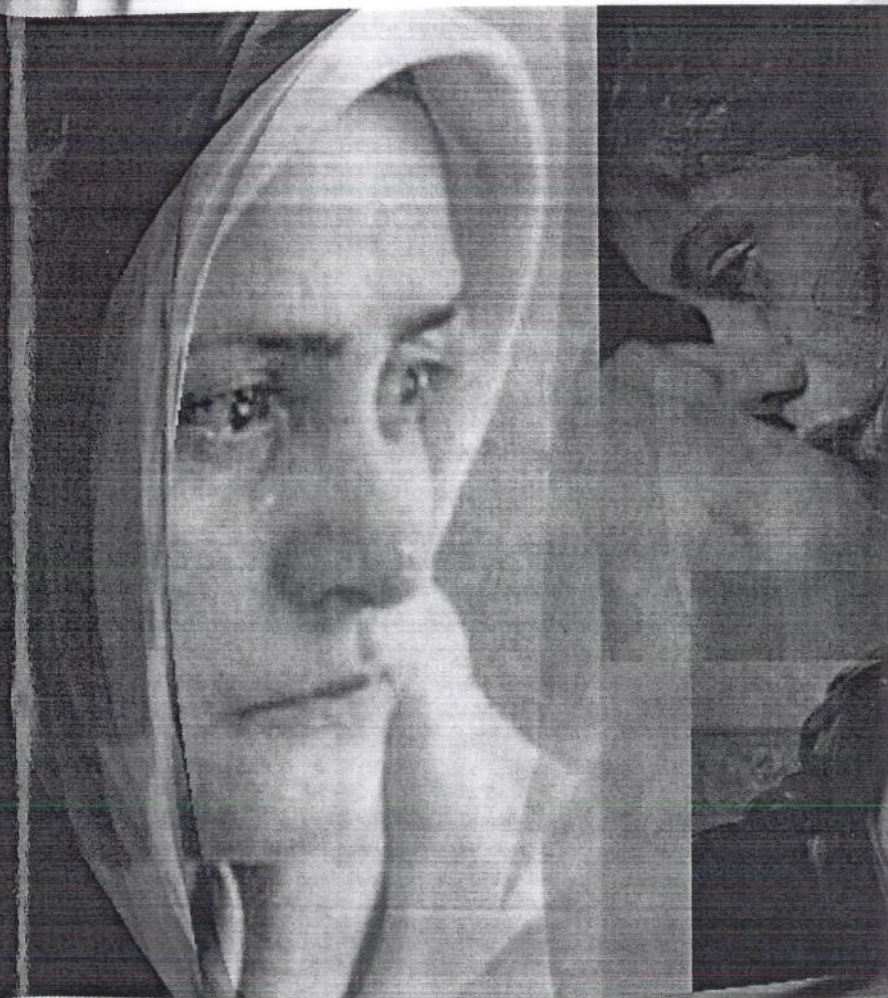


UC-917-900

Domestic Violence Cross Cultural Perspective

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE - CROSS CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

M. BASHEER AHMED



M. Basheer Ahmed

Published by

MCC for Human Services, North Texas

Family Relations: An Islamic Perspective

Zainab Alwani, Ph.D.

ISLAM, AS GOD'S final message to humanity, came to light in a brutal and cruel environment. Violence was a common practice in pre-Islamic Arabia, and the weak and the needy, orphans and widows, and slaves and servants, both there and around the world, had no defined rights. Islam came to establish justice and mercy in the heart of a cruel world. The Qur'an emphasizes that all people are created equal as regards their inherent worth and value, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, or class. Islam prohibited any oppressive behavior that violates justice, mercy, equality, and freedom.

In light of this, the Qur'an revolutionized the status of women by critically analyzing and reforming various local and global customs and traditions related to gender relations. Women were not even considered human beings in pre-Islamic Arabia; Islam recognized them as full human beings and as equal to men before God:

"O humanity, reverence your Lord, who created you from a single soul, and created, of like nature, its mate, and from them twain scattered (like seeds) countless men and women. Reverence God, through whom you demand your mutual (rights), and (reverence) the wombs (that bore you), for God ever watches over you." (4:1). One of the most grotesque abuses against women at the time was female infanticide. Men who were ashamed of their daughters buried them alive (Qur'an 16:58 and 81:8-9). The Qur'an abolished this horrific act of violence by addressing it at various points. In addition, as women were considered the man's property, a man's brother or adult son could "inherit" the deceased man's wife and take her for himself without her consent (Qur'an 4:19). Qur'an 9:71 established that men and women were considered partners of each other, for in this verse God makes it clear that both of them have the same obligation to enjoin what is good and forbid what is evil. In other words, men have no level of moral authority over women, and both men and women are obliged to keep each other on

The believers, men and women, are protectors one of another (*awliya*). They enjoin what is good and forbid what is evil. They observe regular prayers, practice regular charity, and obey God and His Messenger. On them will God pour His Mercy, for Allah is Exalted in Power, Wise. (9:71)

The Qur'an not only deconstructed unjust and misogynistic practices, but also offered practical and healthy alternatives. Consequently, most of the first Muslims were poor, slaves, and women. A justly balanced community soon evolved, enjoining what is good and forbidding what is evil.

In pre-Islamic Arabia, it was socially acceptable for a man to kill his wife if he suspected her of having an affair (Badawi, J., 1995). The Qur'an prohibited this grotesque act of violence and introduced reforms to protect the wife and women accused of immoral conduct by introducing less destructive ways to address the problem. For example, chapter 24 establishes the legal procedures for prosecuting adultery. A man's testimony against his wife is equivalent to her testimony in defense of herself. Even if she is lying, her testimony claiming innocence is enough to avert her punishment (Qur'an 24:8: "But it would avert the punishment from the wife, if she bears witness four times (with an oath of) by Allah, that (her husband) is telling a lie"). Furthermore, the same chapter prescribes a severe punishment for men who accuse chaste women of adultery without bringing sufficient evidence (four witnesses of upright character who witnessed the act of sexual intercourse firsthand). By establishing procedural principles for prosecuting adultery and other charges often raised against women, the Qur'an sent the message that husbands had no right to take the law into their own hands. If male witnesses could not produce sufficient evidence, or if a wife denied the charges made by her husband, no punishment was enacted.

The Controversy Surrounding Quranic Verse 4:34

In this context, the Qur'an also addressed a wife's lewd conduct (*nushuz*) in verse 4:34 (Qur'an 4:34-35: "And as for those women whose (*nushuz*) lewd conduct, you have reason to fear, admonish them [first]; then leave them alone in bed; then hit them (lightly) [*daraba*]. And if thereupon they pay you heed, do not seek to harm them. Behold, God is indeed Most High, Great. And if you have reason to fear that a breach might occur between a [married] couple, appoint an arbiter from among his people and an arbiter from among her people. If they both want to set things aright, God may bring

While this verse has been the subject of great controversy due to the term *daraba*, which is mistranslated as “to beat,” this verse in no way sanctions domestic violence. First, the primary means of Qur’anic interpretation applied by scholars is to read the Qur’an intra-textually, known as *tafsir al-Qur’an bil Qur’an* (allowing the Qur’an to interpret itself). Hence, it is critical to understand verse 4:34 in light of the Qur’an’s overall gender paradigm. Upon examining the countless verses governing marital relations, it becomes quite clear that the Qur’an demands that both partners treat each other with respect, justice, and mercy.

The second most important source that exegetes use to interpret the Qur’an is the Prophet (peace be upon him [pbuh]), whose life, words, and actions are regarded as a living commentary on the Qur’an and provide the framework within which *tafsir* is to be exercised. This mode is known as *tafsir bil-ma’tbur* (interpretations transmitted through prophetic traditions [*hadith*]). When 4:34 is measured against the Prophet’s (pbuh) constant condemnation of domestic violence in both word and deed, it becomes clear that this verse does not allow domestic violence, but rather condemns it.

In a number of authentic *ahadith* (Prophetic traditions), the Prophet (pbuh) prohibited domestic violence. For example, he said: “Never beat God’s handmaidens (female believers)” (Asad, M., 1980). In reference to men who use violence at home, he asked: “Could any of you beat his wife as he would beat a slave and then lie with her in the evening?” (Sahih Bukhari, Vol. 7, book 62, no. 132). The Prophet (pbuh) was known to never hit a woman or a child. His wife Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) is reported to have said: “The Prophet never beat any of his wives or servants. In fact, he did not strike anything with his hand, except if he were struggling in the cause of God.” (*Fath al-Bari*, vol. 9, p. 249). He was a man whom Aisha described as having internalized the teachings of the Qur’an in his character and personality.

If the Prophet (pbuh) had internalized the Qur’an’s teachings (His wife Aisha described the Prophet as a walking Qur’an) and never hit a woman or a child, then how could the Qur’an sanction domestic violence? The Prophet (pbuh) was put in several situations where he could have beaten his wives, had he chosen to understand verse 4:34 as allowing this. When he was faced with serious marital disputes, however, he never resorted to violence. Rather, he gave his wives the option of leaving or remaining with him: “O Prophet, say

I will provide for your enjoyment and set you free in a handsome manner. But if you seek God and His Messenger and the Hereafter, verily God has prepared for the well-doers among you a great reward” (33:28-29). This is why the contemporary researcher AbdulHamid AbuSulayman notes that the most accurate meaning of *daraba* is “to separate.” After carefully analyzing all seventeen instances in which the Qur’an uses *daraba*, he concludes that the general connotations of its root form in the Qur’an means “to separate, to distance, to depart, to abandon, and so forth.” (AbuSulayman AbdulHamid, A., 2003). After analyzing verse 4:34 within the Qur’an’s overall framework, he concludes that *daraba* means the husband’s temporary separation from his wife (AbuSulayman AbdulHamid, A., 2003).

This understanding is supported by the Prophet’s (pbuh) actions, as explained above. Even when some people accused Aisha of adultery, he neither raised his hand nor even his voice against her (Even an assertion of adultery, a serious offense in the Islamic context, is grounds for a legal proceeding.). Instead, he allowed her to stay at her father’s house for a month at her request, until the Qur’an established her innocence (Qur’an 24:11-20). As explained earlier, when the Prophet’s (pbuh) wives complained against him, he gave them the option of leaving or remaining with him.

In a historical context in which a man did not need permission to beat his wife, the Qur’an restricted domestic violence by prescribing certain procedures to resolve a marital dispute in which a husband feared his wife’s lewd conduct. First, it is important to note that 4:34 can be used only in a very specific situation: the wife is thought to be guilty of lewd conduct. Second, the Qur’an established certain procedures to which a husband must adhere when confronted with such a situation. First, he is to advise her. If she refuses to heed his verbal counsel or admonition, then he can respond by not sleeping with her, thereby giving her the chance to realize the risks involved if she does not resume her commitment to the marriage. Third, and finally, *daraba* suggests that the husband can tap her symbolically with something very light, like a tissue, which is the most traditional interpretation.

But even when this traditional interpretation is applied, in no way does it allow abusive behavior, as it clearly specifies that *daraba* is to operate symbolically in this context. Traditional scholars placed so many conditions upon this light “hitting” or “tapping” that they rendered it merely symbolic. Among these conditions is that a husband could only use a *siwak* (wooden toothbrush) or a folded handkerchief, and that he must not hit her or leave

way be considered a license. As Jamal Badawi points out, this verse limits the severity of intervention, thereby preventing people from the excessive abuse that may occur if the steps had not been specified and limited to what they are (Badawi, J. 1995).

Regardless of the interpretation applied this verse in no way sanctions domestic violence. Therefore, such contemporary jurists as Dr. Taha Jabir Al-Alwani (President of the Graduate School of Islamic Social Sciences, Leesburg, Virginia, 2003) suggest that in today's societies, the third step (i.e., "hitting" the wife) might not be applicable. He bases his opinion on the legislative rulings of the Prophet's (pbuh) Companions and other jurists in this matter and in other areas of Islamic law where rulings take into consideration the given issues' specific circumstances and elements. Al-Alwani explains that jurists consider the purposes of marriage when deriving rulings from verses: fulfilling the conditions needed to live in tranquility and harmony, build family relationships and networks, and procreation. Any application of the Qur'an's teachings cannot contradict or undermine these goals. Sometimes, jurists apply a verse's literal meaning if doing so will achieve these goals; at other times, they apply a verse's spirit if the literal meaning hinders the achievement of these goals.

In the case of 4:34, emphasis is placed on the verse's spirit, which involves protecting the family unit from a real threat to its survival. In today's world, beating one's wife would surely lead to the very destruction of the family unit that this verse seeks to preserve. According to Al-Alwani's methodology, the last step of the three-step process in verse 4:34 might be no longer applicable, considering the changes in context and circumstances.

The Modern Context

Cruelty comes into view again in today's world in different forms. However, the cruelest violence is when it happens within the family. Such violence occurs every six to twenty seconds in the United States, the United Kingdom, and many other countries, including Islamic ones. Domestic violence, recognized as one of the complex global societal dilemmas, is defined as a "pattern of abusive behaviors used by someone to establish power and control over another person in a relationship. After a period of abuse, batterers are often apologetic, but as the cycle repeats the abuse usually gets worse over time" (www.peacefulfamilies.org/aboutdu.html). Experts agree that

result of a complex interplay of psychological and social factors that have created an imbalance of power between the sexes, races, status, and other differences. Where there is an imbalance of power, power may be abused. And it is this, coupled with society's tolerance, which allows domestic violence to flourish (Horley, S., 2001).

The Islamic Paradigm

The Qur'an represents a comprehensive model to protect the family from any type of oppression. The essence of the Islamic paradigm is grounded in the concept of *tawhid* (God's Oneness and Uniqueness). Muslims believe that God created men and women to worship and serve Him as *khalifahs* (representatives or vicegerents of God): "Behold. Your Lord said to the angels: "I will create a vicegerent (trustee) on Earth" (2:30). The only aspect by which one person is deemed better than another in God's sight is that of piety: "O humanity, We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female and made you into nations and tribes that you may know each other (not that you may despise each other). Verily, the most honored of you in God's sight is the most righteous of you . . ." (49:13).

Qur'anic teachings clearly outline the gender roles and relations through major concepts, such as (1) *Zawjiyah* (pairing), which establishes equality and cooperation: "O humanity, reverence your Lord, who created you from a single soul, and created, of like nature, its mate, and from them twain scattered (like seeds) countless men and women. Reverence God, through whom you demand your mutual (rights), and (reverence) the wombs (that bore you), for God ever watches over you" (4:1); (2) *Wilayah* (protectors of each other). The Qur'an outlines the relationship between men and women as partners (*awliya*) of one another in establishing a healthy family and just society. This concept, which was explained in Surat al-Tawbah and applied by Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), establishes that men have no superiority over women, as God orders both genders to guide and keep each other in check: "The believers, men and women, are protectors one of another (*awliya*). They enjoin what is good and forbid what is evil. They observe regular prayers, practice regular charity, and obey God and His Messenger. On them will God pour His Mercy, for Allah is Exalted in Power, Wise" (9:71); and (3) *Qiwamah*, the Qur'anic mandate that men are financially responsible for the family (Qur'an 4:34). As a result, women are free to take

earning an income. While men are obliged to work to support the family, women may or may not choose to work outside the home, depending on the family's circumstances. Accordingly, each gender has special qualities that better enable it to perform a certain societal role. When that role is fulfilled, then society as a whole functions more effectively (Abugideiri, S. and Alwani, Z., 2003).

As Qur'an 4:1 shows, Islam teaches that all people are created equal as regards their inherent worth and value, regardless of race or ethnicity, gender or class. It is important to make a distinction here between *identical* and *equal*. Islam recognizes that men and women have different abilities and strengths that complement each other. Although they differ physically and emotionally, their differences do not cause one gender to be superior to the other. While men and women are considered equal in God's sight, they have different roles to play as regards their attempts to live according to God's will. However, no higher value is placed on one role versus the other, since both men and women must work as partners to have healthy families and societies (Abugideiri, S. and Alwani, Z., 2003).

In order to implement this, the Qur'an addresses the following issues in great detail: family structure, gender roles, inheritance, and the rules of *mahram* (an unmarriageable kin with whom sexual intercourse would be considered incestuous,) marriage and divorce laws, reconciliation, and financial matters. The Qur'an and Sunnah emphasize the connection between justice and piety, accountability to God, and the significance of taking preventive measures to avoid injustice and oppression.

The Qur'an recognizes that historically, in many societies, men have had power over women. In pre-Islamic Arab society, for example, many women had very little or no property, status, and/or rights. Therefore, the Qur'an and the traditions of the Prophet warned men (husbands, fathers, brothers, or guardians) not to hurt or take advantage of them in any way. In times of conflict or discord, the reminder to be God-conscious when making choices and decisions was repeated over and over (Qur'an 65:1-12). These reminders emphasize the hierarchical relationship between each individual and God, which helps guide every other human relationship (Abugideiri, S. and Alwani, Z., 2003).

Unfortunately, many Muslim-majority societies have cultural values that conflict with this understanding of equality. In some cultures women have an inferior position, as evidenced by their limited legal rights or limited

of women in other countries as inferior simply because it differs from the position of women in their own societies. For example, Muslim women may choose not to work outside the home because they do not need to do so and because it is the husband's moral and social obligation to support them. By not working, they may be taking advantage of their right to be supported and dedicate themselves more fully to taking care of their children or making some other contribution to society through their social activities. In this case, it may actually be a position of honor and respect not to work outside the home, acknowledging that being a mother and homemaker are real jobs in and of themselves.

The Islamic Perspective on Marriage

Marriage in Islam is noble and universally necessary, because it brings tranquility, progeny, and continuation of life with purity and responsibility. Marriage is an act of worship that provides a legitimate sexual relationship between a man and a woman and, most importantly, provides a vehicle for fulfilling humanity's divine purpose as God's vicegerents through procreation and human relations (Al Faruqi, I., 1992). Its foundation and purpose are as follows: "And among His signs is this: that He created for you mates from among yourselves, that you may dwell in tranquility with them, and He has put love and mercy between your (hearts). Verily in that are signs for those who reflect" (30:21). This verse can be taken as a reminder that both spouses are inherently equal and that the union between them is a peaceful and compassionate one.

As I wrote in my chapter "The Qur'anic Model for Harmony in Family Relations, God said: "They are your *libas* (garments) and you are their garments" (2:187). Garments protect us from the dirt and grime of the outside world, are the closest things to our bodies, and wrap us in comfort. Being naturally conscious of appearance, people take time to choose the style and color, as well as the time to clean, iron, and generally maintain their garments. When the various meanings of *libas* are translated into the context of a relationship, the parallels are obvious: Men and women are mutual garments for each other. They cover each other's weaknesses, serve as protection and comfort from the harsh elements of reality, and safeguard the precious intimacy and secrets shared between them (Alwani, Z., 2007).

When two individuals decide to unite in marriage, they are bound

makes a covenant with God to adhere to the Qur'an and the Sunnah in fulfilling the obligations of the marital relationship. God is a witness over this marriage contract. Any behavior or interaction done with the intent of upholding the divine instruction will be rewarded by God in the Hereafter and, at the same time, will contribute to a healthy family unit. Likewise, God will punish all behaviors that violate the divine instruction, including the foundation of mercy and love.

It is important to remember that the Muslim family structure is part of a larger context within the overall Islamic paradigm of holding men responsible for maintaining the family financially (Qur'an 4:34). Men are responsible for providing a broad range of spiritual, emotional, educational, and other needs. Without this divine law, some of them may not fulfill their financial responsibility toward their family and women are then freed to take care of the family by providing nurture and care, without having the added stress of earning an income.

Men and women are partners in maintaining a healthy family unit in which children are raised to be God-conscious members of society. The Qur'an sets up the framework for different roles that are equal in value and complementary. Each gender has special qualities that, in general, lead it to be better qualified for a particular role. The Qur'an says: "And do not covet that by which God has made some of you excel others. Men shall have the benefit of what they earn, and women shall have the benefit of what they earn. And ask God of His grace. Surely God knows all things" (4:32).

The fact that husband and wife have different roles in no way suggests that men are better than, or have God-given power over, women. Furthermore, these roles are not mutually exclusive, for both parents must be involved in raising the children. Although each may participate in different aspects of the child's upbringing, both are equally responsible for the child's overall welfare. *Shura* (mutual consultation), an important practical principle and tool rooted in the Islamic teaching, is designed to be used as an essentially a decision-making process among equals, for the envisaged goal is the reaching of a collective decision (Qur'an 2:233 and 42:38).

The fact that women are the primary managers of household affairs does not mean that husbands should not help or that women are restricted exclusively to this role. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), the model husband, used to help with such domestic chores as sweeping and mending his clothes (Abu Shaqqah, 1990) and Aisha became a noted leader and teacher to many

Distortions of Religious Teachings

Islam frequently and decisively prohibits any form of oppression, which can be defined as "an unjust or cruel exercise of authority or power" (*Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*, 1983). The philosophy or objective of this ruling is designed to resolve problems that occur in human society and to present an alternative model.

These statements may contradict what is said by people who do not have an adequate understanding of the Islamic paradigm. Sometimes, Muslims themselves may take verses or sayings of the Prophet (pbuh) out of context to justify their behavior. Such manipulation of religious teachings should be viewed as the same type of behavior that abusers of other faiths engage in to justify their actions. One example of this is the practice of polygamy. As Karen Armstrong writes in her book *Muhammad: A Prophet for Our Time*

The Qur'anic institution of polygamy was a piece of social legislation. It was designed not to gratify the male sexual appetite, but to correct the injustice done to widow, orphans, and other female dependants, who were especially vulnerable. They were often sexually abused by their male guardians or converted into a financial asset by being sold into slavery. Polygamy was designed to ensure that unprotected women would be decently married, and to abolish the old loose, irresponsible liaisons; men could have only four wives and must treat them equitably, it was an unjustifiably wicked act to devour their property. The Qur'an was attempting to give women a legal status that most Western women would not enjoy until the nineteenth century" (Armstrong, K., 2006).

Another example of the abuse of religious law occurs in the case of marital discord or a serious dispute within the family. The Qur'an provides a method for resolving such disputes, one that consists of different steps designed to reach the ultimate solution in a peaceful manner. For example, Qur'an 4:34-35 outlines these steps and forbids skipping one step and going on to the next one without exhausting every possible aspect of the previous step. The Qur'an emphasizes good communication. Muslim men who abuse their wives completely neglect and misunderstand this verse. First, let's be clear that religion is never a cause of domestic violence. While Muslim men may try to justify their abuse according to this verse, the truth is that the motive for their abuse is not (and can never be) religion. How can one's relationship with God, which is the essence of religion, be a motive for

domestic violence are many, and experts in the field have elucidated them. Regardless of the reasons, however, we can agree that God's teachings are not one of them.

While Muslim men who are guilty of domestic violence might, in retrospect, cite 4:34 to justify their behavior, the truth is that they are attempting to skip the first two steps and jump to the third (which, nevertheless, is symbolic and not literal in its most conservative interpretation). In this regard, they ignore the general purposes of marriage in Islam, which include fulfilling the conditions needed for living in tranquility and harmony, building family relationships and networks, and procreation.

Despite the teachings and values that regulate appropriate behavior in order to prevent oppression and maltreatment, oppression occurs in all populations, including Muslim families, and exists in many forms. Victims of oppression are expected to strive to find solutions while exercising patience and forgiveness: "And those who, when an oppressive wrong is inflicted on them, (are not cowed) but help and defend themselves. The recompense for an injury is an injury equal thereto (in degree). But if a person forgives and makes reconciliation, his/her reward is due from God, for (God) loves not those who do wrong" (42:39-40). Also Qur'an 5:45 says: "We ordained therein for them: a life for a life, an eye for an eye, a nose for a nose, an ear for an ear, a tooth for a tooth, and wounds equal for equal. But if anyone remits the retaliation by way of charity, it is an act of atonement for himself. And if any fail to judge by (the light of) what God has revealed, they are (no better than) wrongdoers."

The Qur'an indicates that exercising patience and forgiveness is a positive part of the victim's healing process. Therefore, it encourages them to be strong and to seek justice without blaming themselves:

The blame is only against those who oppress people with wrongdoing and insolently transgress beyond bounds throughout the land, defying right and justice. For such (people) there will be a grievous penalty. But indeed, if any show patience and forgive, that would truly be an exercise of courageous will and resolution in the conduct of affairs. (42:42-43)

People of authority within society, such as religious leaders (e.g., imams, Muslim jurists, priests, and rabbis), should effectively push abusers to seek counsel through intervention programs, therapy, and spiritual counseling. When oppression exists anywhere, society as a whole has an obligation to interfere and prevent further abuse from occurring. Punishing people for

through its established authorities. Individuals do not have the authority to carry out the punishment as vigilantes; rather, recourse should be had to the established channels mandated and enforced by the society's legal system (Qur'an 12:1-12).

References

- Abu Shaqqah, *Tabrir al-Mar'ah*, vol. 1, pp. 128-129. Dar al-Qalam, 1990.
- Abugideiri, S. and Alwani, Z. (2003). *What Islam Says about Domestic Violence: A Guide for Helping Muslim Families*. Herndon, VA: FAITH.
- AbuSulayman AbdulHamid, A. (2003). *Marital Discord: Recapturing the Full Islamic Spirit of Human Dignity*. London: The International Institute of Islamic Thought, p. 19.
- Al Faruqi, I. (1992). *Al-Tawhid: Its Implications for Thought and Life*. Herndon, VA: International Institute of Islamic Thought. Pp. 130-133.
- Alwani, Z., "The Qur'anic Model for Harmony in family relations": chapter in *Change from within: Diverse Perspectives on Domestic Violence in Muslim Communities*. Edited by Maha B. Alkhateeb & Salma Elkadi Abugideiri. Peaceful Families Project, Great Falls, VA 22066 P. 51, 2007.
- Armstrong, K., *Muhammad: A Prophet for Our Time*. Atlas Books & Harper Collins Publishers, 2006. P. 147.
- Asad, M., (1980), *The Message of the Qur'an*. Gibraltar: Dar al-Andalus. Cited by Asad, p. 110.
- Badawi, J. (1995). *Gender Equity in Islam: Basic Principles*. Plainfield, IN: American Trust Publications.
- Fath al-Bari*, vol. 9, p. 249
- Horley, S., "Domestic Violence: The Issue Explained." See www.guardian.co.uk/society/2001/mar/12/6, 2001.
- Sahih Bukhari, Vol. 7, book 62, no. 132.

Jewish Perspectives in Domestic Violences

Toby Myers, Ed. D.

National Center on Domestic & Sexual Violence, Texas

*In her heart she is a mourner for those who have not survived.
In her soul she is a warrior for those who are now as she was then.
In her life she is both celebrant and proof of women's capacity and
will to survive, to become, to act, to change self and society.
And each year she is stronger and there are more of her.*

Andrea Dworkin 1978

Introduction

IN THIS PAPER, I posit different ideas relative to Judaism in regard to domestic violence, offer Jewish precepts and texts, raise current problems for Jewish battered women, describe Jewish programs, make known Jews in the movement/field, cite Jewish Domestic Violence cases, and conclude with Creating Rituals and Blessings.

Depending on whom one consults about the topic of Domestic Violence in the Jewish community, Naomi Graetz (1998) noted the responses may vary. Some accept and legitimize the occurrence as the exercising of the husband's inherent right to educate, discipline, and/or correct a disobedient wife. According to Jewish law, the man owns the wife. When a man is betrothed the Hebrew word *koneh* translates to the verb acquires. Some reject the concept that it is permissible for Jews to use domestic violence because of adherence to the principle that a husband is bound to honor his wife over others. That women, as well as men, are made in the image of God is a more egalitarian interpretation for rejection of domestic violence and some who respond in that way actively promote equality within Judaism. "God created man in His image, male and female, He created them," (Genesis 1:27). Some respond with denial that domestic violence occurs in Jewish families. We have heard that Jewish men make the best husbands and even

