

Is the Current war in Iran a Biblically sound “Just War”?

With the ongoing kinetic actions in Iran and Lebanon being conducted by the United States and Israel the Follower of Jesus faces a doctrinal challenge. The concept of a “Just War” has been part of church doctrine since almost the very beginning. Is this current action a “Just War?”

Background

Let me begin with a brief background of the doctrine of “Just War.” “Jus ad Bellum” in Latin. “Just War” is a philosophical framework of ethical and legal principles used to determine the morality of going to war. Many people believe that “Just War” has its origin in the church, but it is actually older than the church.

Cicero, Plato and many other Greek and Roman thinkers first argued that war was only just or right for the defense of people or for the punishment of wrong. Cicero also argued that it always required a formal legal declaration of war. The declaration of war requires a legitimate government, not gangs, or militias. This becomes a little fuzzy in tribal people groups who may occupy areas across international borders.

In the Church age Augustine in the 4th century argued that war was a “mournful necessity to protect the innocent and to preserve peace. Then in the 13th century Thomas Aquinas formalized the criteria that a just war required “Right Authority,” “Just Cause,” and “Right Intention.”

Criterion, Definition

Below are the common criterion and their definitions as used in the geopolitical world today.

Just Cause "There must be a specific, serious wrong to prevent or correct (e.g., self-defense or stopping genocide)."

Right Authority “Only legitimate governments or international bodies (like the UN) can declare war, not private individuals."

Right Intention “The ultimate goal must be to establish a fair peace, not for land-grabs, resources, or revenge."

Last Resort “All diplomatic and non-violent options (sanctions, talks) must be exhausted first."

Proportionality The good expected from the war must outweigh the destruction and suffering it will cause.

Probability of Success You shouldn't start a war if there is no realistic chance of winning; doing so only causes useless slaughter.

But as followers of Jesus the common geopolitical use is not sufficient for our use. We must focus on what God says and the principles that God has established for a “Just War.”

Biblical Criteria for a Just War

While the Bible never presents a single “Just War Manual,” Scripture consistently reveals “principles” that shape when war is morally legitimate and when it is condemned. These principles later informed Christian Just War tradition (e.g., Augustine, Aquinas), but their roots are deeply biblical.

1. Just Cause

War must be fought for a morally legitimate reason—never for conquest, revenge, or greed.

Biblical foundations:

Defense against aggression

Deuteronomy 20:1–4 (ESV)

20 “When you go out to war against your enemies, and see horses and chariots and an army larger than your own, you shall not be afraid of them, for the LORD your God is with you, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt. 2 And when you draw near to the battle, the priest shall come forward and speak to the people 3 and shall say to them, ‘Hear, O Israel, today you are drawing near for battle against your enemies: let not your heart faint. Do not fear or panic or be in dread of them, 4 for the LORD your God is he who goes with you to fight for you against your enemies, to give you the victory.’

Rescuing the oppressed

Genesis 14:14–16 (ESV)

14 When Abram heard that his kinsman had been taken captive, he led forth his trained men, born in his house, 318 of them, and went in pursuit as far as Dan. 15 And he divided his forces against them by night, he and his servants, and defeated them and pursued them to Hobah, north of Damascus. 16 Then he brought back all the possessions, and also brought back his kinsman Lot with his possessions, and the women and the people.

1 Samuel 23:1–5 (ESV)

23 Now they told David, “Behold, the Philistines are fighting against Keilah and are robbing the threshing floors.” 2 Therefore David inquired of the LORD, “Shall I go and attack these Philistines?” And the LORD said to David, “Go and attack the Philistines and save Keilah.” 3 But David’s men said to him, “Behold, we are afraid here in Judah; how much more then if we go to Keilah against the armies of the Philistines?” 4 Then David inquired of the LORD again. And the LORD answered him, “Arise, go down to Keilah, for I will give the Philistines into your hand.” 5 And David and his men went to Keilah and fought with the Philistines and brought away their livestock and struck them with a great blow. So David saved the inhabitants of Keilah.

Punishing grave evil

1 Samuel 15:2–3 (ESV)

2 Thus says the LORD of hosts, 'I have noted what Amalek did to Israel in opposing them on the way when they came up out of Egypt. 3 Now go and strike Amalek and devote to destruction all that they have. Do not spare them, but kill both man and woman, child and infant, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.' ”

Romans 13:4 (ESV)

4 for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer.

Key idea:

War is justified only to “restrain evil”, “defend the innocent”, or “restore justice”.

2. Legitimate Authority

Only those with God-ordained authority may declare war.

Biblical foundations:

Kings and judges lead Israel into war

1 Samuel 8:20 (ESV)

20 that we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles.”

Judges 4–5

Government bears the sword as God's servant

Romans 13:1–4 (ESV)

13 Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. 2 Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. 3 For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, 4 for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer.

Key idea:

Private individuals cannot wage war; only recognized governing authorities can.

3. Right Intention

Even if the cause is just, the motives must also be just.

Biblical foundations:

“Seek peace and pursue it”

Psalm 34:14 (ESV)

14 Turn away from evil and do good;
seek peace and pursue it.

Avoid vengeance

Deuteronomy 32:35 (ESV)

35 Vengeance is mine, and recompense,
for the time when their foot shall slip;
for the day of their calamity is at hand,
and their doom comes swiftly.’

Romans 12:19 (ESV)

19 Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written,
“Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.”

War must aim at restoring peace, not exploiting enemies

Deuteronomy 20:10–12 (ESV)

10 “When you draw near to a city to fight against it, offer terms of peace to it. 11 And if it responds to you peaceably and it opens to you, then all the people who are found in it shall do forced labor for you and shall serve you. 12 But if it makes no peace with you, but makes war against you, then you shall besiege it.

Key idea:

The goal must be “peace”, “justice”, and “protection”, not hatred or self-glory.

4. Last Resort

All reasonable peace efforts must be exhausted before war begins.

Biblical foundations:

Israel required to offer peace before attacking

Deuteronomy 20:10 (ESV)

10 “When you draw near to a city to fight against it, offer terms of peace to it.

Negotiation and diplomacy precede conflict

Judges 11:12–28 (ESV)

12 Then Jephthah sent messengers to the king of the Ammonites and said, "What do you have against me, that you have come to me to fight against my land?" 13 And the king of the Ammonites answered the messengers of Jephthah, "Because Israel on coming up from Egypt took away my land, from the Arnon to the Jabbok and to the Jordan; now therefore restore it peaceably." 14 Jephthah again sent messengers to the king of the Ammonites 15 and said to him, "Thus says Jephthah: Israel did not take away the land of Moab or the land of the Ammonites, 16 but when they came up from Egypt, Israel went through the wilderness to the Red Sea and came to Kadesh. 17 Israel then sent messengers to the king of Edom, saying, 'Please let us pass through your land,' but the king of Edom would not listen. And they sent also to the king of Moab, but he would not consent. So Israel remained at Kadesh.

18 "Then they journeyed through the wilderness and went around the land of Edom and the land of Moab and arrived on the east side of the land of Moab and camped on the other side of the Arnon. But they did not enter the territory of Moab, for the Arnon was the boundary of Moab. 19 Israel then sent messengers to Sihon king of the Amorites, king of Heshbon, and Israel said to him, 'Please let us pass through your land to our country,' 20 but Sihon did not trust Israel to pass through his territory, so Sihon gathered all his people together and encamped at Jahaz and fought with Israel. 21 And the LORD, the God of Israel, gave Sihon and all his people into the hand of Israel, and they defeated them. So Israel took possession of all the land of the Amorites, who inhabited that country. 22 And they took possession of all the territory of the Amorites from the Arnon to the Jabbok and from the wilderness to the Jordan. 23 So then the LORD, the God of Israel, dispossessed the Amorites from before his people Israel; and are you to take possession of them? 24 Will you not possess what Chemosh your god gives you to possess? And all that the LORD our God has dispossessed before us, we will possess. 25 Now are you any better than Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab? Did he ever contend against Israel, or did he ever go to war with them? 26 While Israel lived in Heshbon and its villages, and in Aroer and its villages, and in all the cities that are on the banks of the Arnon, 300 years, why did you not deliver them within that time? 27 I therefore have not sinned against you, and you do me wrong by making war on me. The LORD, the Judge, decide this day between the people of Israel and the people of Ammon." 28 But the king of the Ammonites did not listen to the words of Jephthah that he sent to him.

Key idea:

War is morally permissible only when *peaceful options have failed***.**

5. Proportionality

The anticipated good must outweigh the expected harm.

Biblical foundations:

God condemns excessive destruction

Deuteronomy 20:19–20 (ESV)

19 *“When you besiege a city for a long time, making war against it in order to take it, you shall not destroy its trees by wielding an axe against them. You may eat from them, but you shall not cut them down. Are the trees in the field human, that they should be besieged by you? 20 Only the trees that you know are not trees for food you may destroy and cut down, that you may build siegeworks against the city that makes war with you, until it falls.*

Punishment must fit the offense

Exodus 21:23–25 (ESV)

23 But if there is harm, then you shall pay life for life, 24 eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, 25 burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.

Key idea:

War must not unleash destruction greater than the evil it seeks to stop.

6. Discrimination / Non-Combatant Immunity

Combatants must distinguish between legitimate military targets and civilians.

Biblical foundations:

God forbids harming the innocent

Proverbs 6:16–17 (ESV)

16 *There are six things that the LORD hates,
seven that are an abomination to him:*

17 *haughty eyes, a lying tongue,
and hands that shed innocent blood,*

Cities offered peace before attack

Deuteronomy 20:10 (ESV)

10 *“When you draw near to a city to fight against it, offer terms of peace to it.*

Collateral damage is tolerated only when unavoidable and not intentional

Deuteronomy 20:13–14 (ESV)

13 And when the LORD your God gives it into your hand, you shall put all its males to the sword, 14 but the women and the little ones, the livestock, and everything else in the city, all its spoil, you shall take as plunder for yourselves. And you shall enjoy the spoil of your enemies, which the LORD your God has given you.

Key idea:

Intentional targeting of civilians is always unjust.

7. Right Conduct During War

Even in war, God's people must act with restraint and righteousness.

Biblical foundations:

No mutilation or torture

Deuteronomy 21:10–14 (ESV)

10 "When you go out to war against your enemies, and the LORD your God gives them into your hand and you take them captive, 11 and you see among the captives a beautiful woman, and you desire to take her to be your wife, 12 and you bring her home to your house, she shall shave her head and pare her nails. 13 And she shall take off the clothes in which she was captured and shall remain in your house and lament her father and her mother a full month. After that you may go in to her and be her husband, and she shall be your wife. 14 But if you no longer delight in her, you shall let her go where she wants. But you shall not sell her for money, nor shall you treat her as a slave, since you have humiliated her.

Respect for property and environment

Deuteronomy 20:19–20 (ESV)

19 "When you besiege a city for a long time, making war against it in order to take it, you shall not destroy its trees by wielding an axe against them. You may eat from them, but you shall not cut them down. Are the trees in the field human, that they should be besieged by you? 20 Only the trees that you know are not trees for food you may destroy and cut down, that you may build siegeworks against the city that makes war with you, until it falls.

Humane treatment of captives

2 Kings 6:21–23 (ESV)

21 As soon as the king of Israel saw them, he said to Elisha, "My father, shall I strike them down? Shall I strike them down?" 22 He answered, "You shall not strike them down. Would you strike down those whom you have taken captive with your sword and with your bow? Set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink and go to their master." 23 So he prepared for them a great feast, and when they had eaten and drunk, he sent them away, and they went to their master. And the Syrians did not come again on raids into the land of Israel.

Key idea:

War must be fought with "moral discipline", not brutality.

8. "Reasonable Hope of Success"

War should not be undertaken if it is futile or suicidal.

Biblical foundations:

Jesus' principle of counting the cost

Luke 14:31–32 (ESV)

31 Or what king, going out to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? 32 And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace.

*Israel sometimes refrained from battle when outmatched unless God commanded otherwise
Numbers 14:41–45*

Key idea:

A war with no chance of achieving justice only multiplies suffering.

History of Conflict between Iran and US and Israel.

The current regime in Iran came to power in 1979 when the Shah of Iran was deposed, with at least the indifference of the United States. While the US had previously supported the Shah of Iran President Carter turned his back on the Shah and refused to protect him as had been agreed to. When the current radical Shia Mullahs took control they declared war on the United State. They stormed our embassy and took 66 Americans hostage for more than 400 days. Iran led proxies killed 220 Marines in Beirut. During the Iraq war more than 600 Americans were killed by Iran's proxies with thousands being mutilated by roadside IEDs. On October 7 2023 Iran's proxies killed 11000 Israelis, 48 Americans and taking 12 American hostage. The Shia Mullahs also issued Fatwahs, or religious declarations invoking death to several US and Israel political leaders, including President Trump and Prime Minister Netanyahu.

Iran's proxies, Hamas, Hezbollah and the Houthis in Yamen are responsible for thousands of deaths in Israel, the United States and around the world. All three groups, funded by Iran have declarations against Israel and the US.

Hamas in their charter calls for the destruction of Israel. Hezbollah has declared it will rain down destruction on Israel and the US. The Houthis have said: "Allah is the greatest, death to America, death to Israel, curse on the Jews, victory to Islam."

War has been declared, by Iran and its proxies on Israel and the US.

The religious sect that controls Iran is known as the "Twelever Shia." It is under the guidance of a system referred to as "Wilayat ai-Faqih." (Guardianship of the Islamic Jurist) This system places a radical Shia Cleric as the supreme leader.

Iran is a Shia majority nation. They are not Arab, but are Muslim. Iraq is about 60% Shia, Azerbaijan is about 65% Shia and Bahrain is about 65% Shia. All the other Islamic nations are majority Sunni. This places Iran at odds with the majority of the Islamic nations.

Twelver Shia Islam is led by a supreme leader who serves as the chief jurist, law maker, and exercises complete sovereign control over Iran.

Here's a clear, structured breakdown of the **main doctrines of Twelver Shia Islam**, grounded directly in the search results you triggered.

Summary

Twelver Shia Islam is built around **belief in the Twelve Imams**, their **divine appointment**, **infallibility**, and the expectation of the **Hidden Imam's return** as the Mahdi. It emphasizes both the **outer (exoteric)** and **inner (esoteric)** meanings of the Qur'an and rejects the idea that Islamic law can be abrogated.

Core Doctrines of Twelver Shia Islam

1. The Imamate (Leadership by the Twelve Imams)

- The central doctrine: **God appointed twelve Imams** as the rightful spiritual and political successors to Muhammad.
- Begins with **Ali**, ends with **Muhammad al-Mahdi**, the 12th Imam.
- Imams are considered **divinely guided**, authoritative interpreters of the Qur'an and Islamic law.

2. Infallibility (Ismah)

- Muhammad and the Twelve Imams are believed to be **free from sin and error**.
- Their teachings and actions are considered a **perfect model** for the Muslim community.

3. Divine Appointment (Nass)

- Each Imam is chosen by **explicit divine designation**, passed from one Imam to the next.
- This distinguishes Twelvers from Sunni Islam, where leadership is not considered divinely appointed.

4. Occultation of the Twelfth Imam (Ghaybah)

- The 12th Imam, **Muhammad ibn al-Hasan**, is believed to have entered a state of **occultation** (hiddenness) around 874 CE.
- He is still alive and will return as the **Mahdi**, the divinely guided leader who will establish justice at the end of days.

5. Esoteric and Exoteric Interpretation of the Qur'an

- Twelvers emphasize both:
 - **Zāhir** — the outward, literal meaning
 - **Bāṭin** — the inward, spiritual meaning
- Imams are believed to possess the authoritative understanding of both.

6. Finality of Prophethood

- Muhammad is the **Seal of the Prophets** — no prophet comes after him.
- This distinguishes Twelvers from some other Shia branches (e.g., certain Ismaili interpretations).

7. Permanence of Sharia (No Abrogation)

- Twelver theology rejects the idea that Islamic law can be **abrogated** or replaced in later eras.
- The Imams interpret Sharia but do not change or override it.

8. Justice and Divine Guidance

- Imams are believed to rule with **perfect justice** and preserve the true meaning of Islam.
- This is tied to the belief that God would not leave the community without a divinely guided leader.

Below is a **clear, evidence-based, tightly structured explanation of Twelver Shia end-times (eschatology)**, grounded directly in the search results you triggered.

1. Summary (Direct Answer)

Twelver Shia eschatology centers on the **Hidden Imam (Muhammad al-Mahdi)**, who is believed to be alive, in occultation, and destined to reappear at the end of time to establish global justice. The period before his return is expected to be marked by **severe injustice, violent upheaval, and major geopolitical conflict**, culminating in the Mahdi's decisive intervention.

2. Core Doctrines of Twelver Shia End-Times Belief

A. The Hidden Imam (al-Mahdi)

- The 12th Imam, **Muhammad ibn al-Hasan**, disappeared in 874 CE.
- Twelvers believe he is **miraculously alive** and in **occultation** (ghaybah).
- His return will **end the occultation** and inaugurate the final age of justice.

B. The Reappearance (Zuhūr)

When the Mahdi returns, he will:

- Overthrow oppressive world systems
- Establish universal justice
- Rule decisively over the world

This is not symbolic—Twelver theology treats it as a **literal, global political transformation**.

C. Signs Before the Mahdi's Return

Twelver hadith literature describes the pre-appearance era as marked by:

- **Severe injustice**
- **Violent upheaval**
- **Large-scale conflict in the Middle East**
- **Dramatic confrontations** preceding the Mahdi's rise

These themes are widely used in Shia preaching and political rhetoric.

🔥 3. Apocalyptic Themes Unique to Twelver Shiism

A. Structural Tension: The Only Legitimate Ruler Is Absent

Because the Imam is hidden:

- No earthly ruler is fully legitimate.
- This creates a theological vacuum that shapes Shia political thought.

This tension is what later enabled Iran's clerical rule (more on that below).

B. The Mahdi's Return Is Violent and Transformative

Twelver sources portray the Mahdi's intervention as:

- **Forceful**
- **World-reordering**
- **Accompanied by major conflict**

This differs from some Sunni interpretations that emphasize a more peaceful restoration.

C. The Mahdi as a Global Ruler

The Mahdi is expected to:

- Rule from **Kufa (Iraq)**
- Lead a universal government
- Purify the world of injustice

This is not metaphorical in Twelver doctrine—it is political and literal.

🌀 4. How Iran Uses This Eschatology (Key Insight)

The search results show that the Islamic Republic of Iran **actively uses Twelver eschatology as a political resource**:

A. Khomeini's Innovation

- Historically, Shia clerics avoided ruling.
- Khomeini argued that during the Imam’s absence, **jurists must rule as his deputies**.
- This became the doctrine of **Wilayat al-Faqih** (Guardianship of the Jurist).

B. The Regime’s Legitimacy Is Theological

The Supreme Leader is not just a political figure—he is:

- **Steward of the Islamic Revolution**
- **Representative of the Hidden Imam**
- **Guardian during the occultation**

C. Apocalyptic Expectation as Political Fuel

Iran’s leadership frames:

- Conflict with the West
- Hostility toward Israel
- Economic sacrifice
- Regional proxy warfare

as **participation in sacred history** leading toward the Mahdi’s return.

This is why Iran’s foreign policy often appears absolutist or uncompromising—it is tied to eschatological meaning.

6. Bottom Line

Twelver Shia eschatology is not just theology—it is **political architecture**.

It shapes:

- Iran’s government
- Iran’s foreign policy
- Iran’s alliances (Hezbollah, Houthis, etc.)
- Iran’s framing of conflict as sacred history

The belief in the Hidden Imam’s return is the **central pillar** of Twelver Shia end-times doctrine and the ideological backbone of the Islamic Republic.

Iran’s hate of Israel and the United States is theological and not simply geopolitical. Since Iran believes they can bring about end times and have the 12th Imam rise to control through the elimination of Israel and the US. This makes Twelver Shia Islam very dangerous.

But does it rise to the point of a “Just War.”

1. Just cause

Biblical question: Is the war truly about **defense, restraining grave evil, or rescuing the innocent**, not conquest or revenge?

- **Us Claim:** Preemptive and defensive as the intelligence indicated imminent attack from Iran, along with the long standing public declaration against US and Israel
- **Israel's claim:** Preemptive and defensive action against Iran's nuclear program and missile/drone attacks, framed as preventing existential threat and mass casualties.
- **Iran's claim:** Resistance to "Zionist aggression," defense of Palestinians and regional allies, and response to Israeli strikes on its territory and partners.

Biblical evaluation: There *is* a real defensive element on both sides—missiles, drones, and cross-border attacks are not imaginary.

- But **retaliation cycles, prestige, and regional dominance** clearly play a role. That mixture already weakens "pure" just cause on both sides.

2. Legitimate authority

Biblical question: Are those who wage war **God-ordained governing authorities**, not private actors?

Daniel 4:17 (ESV)

*17 The sentence is by the decree of the watchers, the decision by the word of the holy ones, to the end that the living may know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and **gives it to whom he will and sets over it the lowliest of men.***

- **States:** United States, Israel and Iran are recognized governments; they meet the "authority" criterion in a formal sense.
- **Proxies:** Hezbollah, militias in Syria/Iraq, and other armed groups operate with varying degrees of Iranian backing but are not accountable in the same way as states.

Biblical evaluation:

- State actions can be evaluated under Romans 13.
- **Proxy warfare**—armed groups with thin or no real accountability—sits much closer to **private violence**, which Scripture does not legitimize as "just war."

3. Right intention

Biblical question: Is the **true aim** to restore peace and protect life, not humiliate or annihilate the enemy?

- Public rhetoric on all sides mixes **security language** with **ideological and religious framing**, sometimes dehumanizing the other.

- Strategic goals often include **deterrence, regional influence, and domestic political gain**, not only protection of innocents.

Biblical evaluation:

- Even if there is a just cause (defense), **right intention is compromised** whenever:
 - Revenge is celebrated,
 - Civilian suffering is used as leverage,
 - Or maximal humiliation of the enemy is treated as a win.

4. Last resort

Biblical question: Have **serious peace efforts** been tried and exhausted?

- There are ongoing **nuclear talks, back-channel diplomacy, and international mediation**, but they repeatedly stall or are undercut by new strikes and escalations.
- Both sides have a long history of **covert operations, proxy attacks, and red-line testing**, which often precede or accompany negotiations rather than genuine de-escalation.

Biblical evaluation:

- From a just war lens, the pattern looks like “we tried everything and then fought”
- That does not fall short of the **spirit of Deuteronomy 20:10**—offer peace first, not as a side-channel while violence continues.

5. Proportionality

Biblical question: Does the **scale and type of force** match the threat, or does it unleash greater evil?

- The United States and Israel’s large-scale strikes on nuclear and military infrastructure in Iran are framed as preventing catastrophic future harm, but they also risk **regional war and major civilian disruption**.
- Iran’s missile and drone attacks have repeatedly hit or endangered **civilian areas** in Israel and elsewhere, which is hard to justify as proportionate defense. While Iran claims to not be targeting civilians it is clear that they do, in multiple countries, not just Israel.

Biblical evaluation:

- Some targeted strikes may be **arguably proportionate** if they genuinely avert mass casualties.
- But **broad, escalatory campaigns** that predictably expand civilian suffering and regional instability strain the proportionality criterion on both sides.

6. Discrimination and non-combatant immunity

Biblical question: Are **civilians intentionally spared**, with force directed only at combatants and military targets?

- Both sides *claim* to target military sites, but:
 - Iranian missiles and drones have struck or threatened **cities and civilian infrastructure**.
 - Israeli strikes inside Iran and in neighboring countries risk **civilian casualties** and broader economic harm.

Biblical evaluation:

- Whenever **civilian areas are knowingly targeted or treated as acceptable pressure points**, the discrimination criterion is violated.
- Even when civilians are not the *intended* target, **foreseeable, large-scale civilian harm** without serious mitigation efforts is morally suspect.

7. Right conduct during war

Biblical question: Is there **restraint, mercy, and respect for limits**, even in conflict?

- Use of **terror tactics, psychological warfare, and attacks designed to create mass fear** (e.g., city-wide barrages) contradicts the spirit of biblical restraint.
- Proxy groups sometimes operate with **looser rules of engagement** than regular armies, increasing the likelihood of abuses.

Biblical evaluation:

- The more a side relies on **indiscriminate weapons, proxy militias, and intimidation of civilians**, the further it drifts from biblically just conduct.

8. Reasonable hope of success

Biblical question: Is there a **realistic path** to a more just peace, or only endless bloodshed?

- Militarily, both Israel and Iran can **inflict serious damage** and achieve tactical wins.
- But the deeper issues—ideology, regional power, nuclear status, proxy networks—make a **decisive, peace-producing victory** very unlikely through force alone.

Biblical evaluation:

- If war **cannot realistically deliver a more just and stable order**, but only resets the cycle of revenge, the “hope of success” criterion is weak.