

# FIRE Interfaith Dialogue on Islam



January 23, 2022



**F.I.R.E.**

**Fostering Interfaith  
Relationships on the Eastside**

**<https://fire-wa.org>**

**[info@fire-wa.org](mailto:info@fire-wa.org)**



# **Welcome!**

**The Dialogue will start promptly at 7:00 and finish at approximately 8:30.**

**You're welcome to stay after for open conversation among all participants!**



# **Our Vision**

**We envision a world where people of all faiths and spiritual traditions live together in peace and harmony with a strong foundation of trust and respect.**



# **Our Mission**

**We provide inclusive, supportive opportunities for people of all faiths and spiritual traditions to gather together, learn from each other, and foster positive, collaborative relationships through interfaith activities and dialogues.**

**Thanks to Pacifica Foundation Seattle  
for hosting tonight's Zoom conference!**



# **Tonight's Program**

**Welcome by Toby Nixon (Church of Jesus Christ of  
Latter-day Saints)**

**Invocation**

**Presentations on Islam by panel**

**Participant Instructions by Steve Wilhelm (Eastside  
Insight Meditation)**

**Q&A with panelists and participants**

**Closing Remarks by moderator**

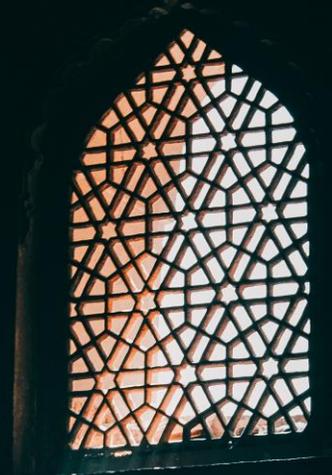
**Open Discussion**

What are the unique teachings of Islam?



# Overview

- Basic Terms
- 5 Pillars of Islam
- 6 Articles of Faith
- Principles / Moral Values





Allah



Islam



Muslim

**Declarati  
on of  
Faith**

**Prayer**

**5 Pillars  
of Islam**

**Alms**

**Fasting**

**Pilgrima  
ge**

# Declaration of Faith (Shahadah)



# Prayer (Salah)



# Alms (Zakat)

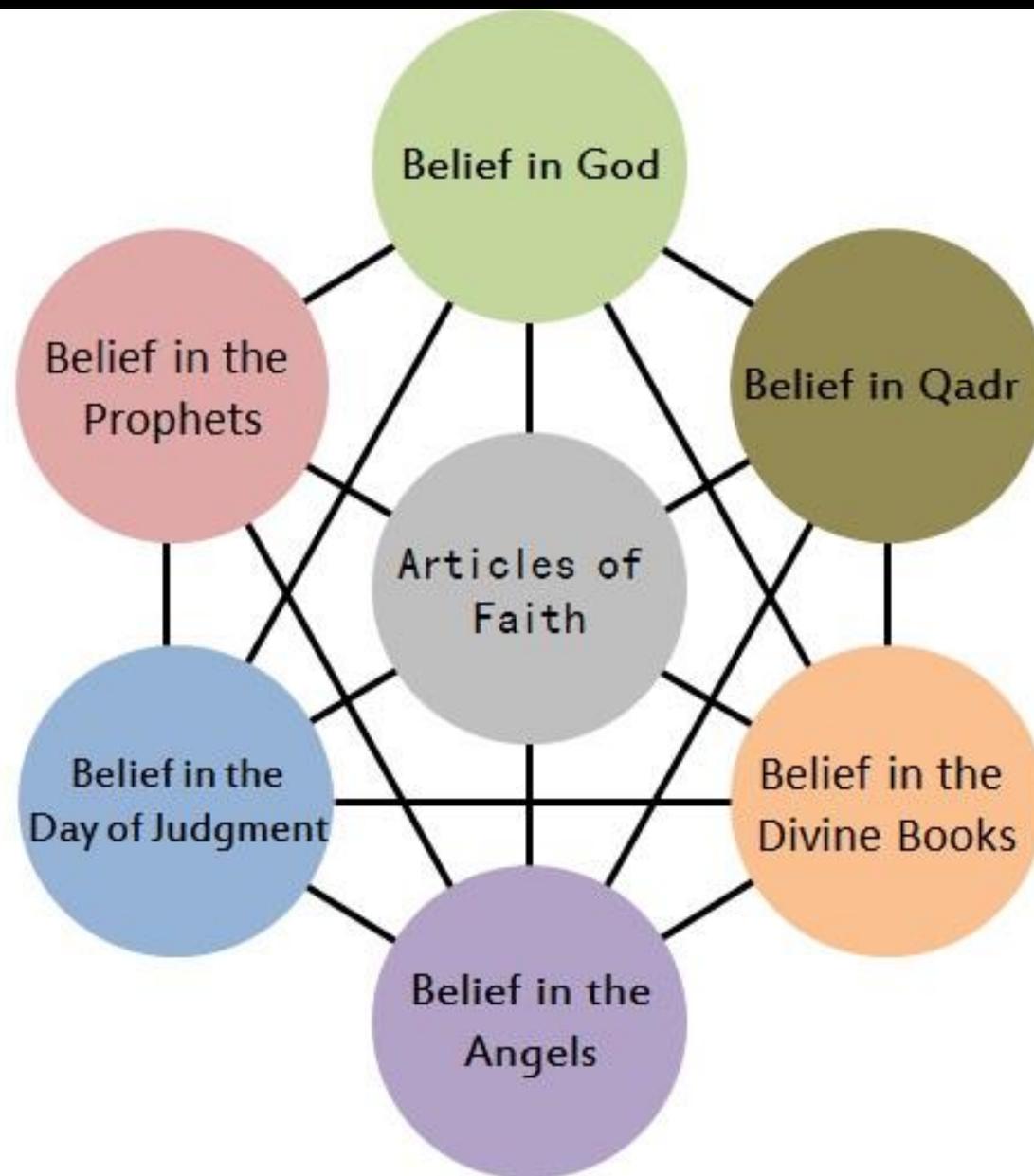


# Fasting (Sawm)



# Pilgrimage (Hajj)





# Belief in Allah (Tawhid)



# Belief in the Revealed Books

- Tawrat (Torah) (Moses)
- Zabur (Psalms) (David)
- Injil (Gospel) (Jesus)
- Quran (Muhammad)

(Peace be upon them all)



# Belief in the Prophets

Adam

Idris (Enoch)

Nuh (Noah)

Hud (Heber)

Saleh (Methusaleh)

Lut (Lot)

Ibrahim (Abraham)

Ismail (Ishmael)

Ishaq (Isaac)

Yaqub (Jacob)

Yusuf (Joseph)

Shu'aib (Jethro)

Ayyub (Job)

Dhulkifl (Ezekiel)

Musa (Moses)

Harun (Aaron)

Dawud (David)

Sulayman (Solomon)

Ilyas (Elias)

Alyasa (Elisha)

Yunus (Jonah)

Zakariya (Zachariah)

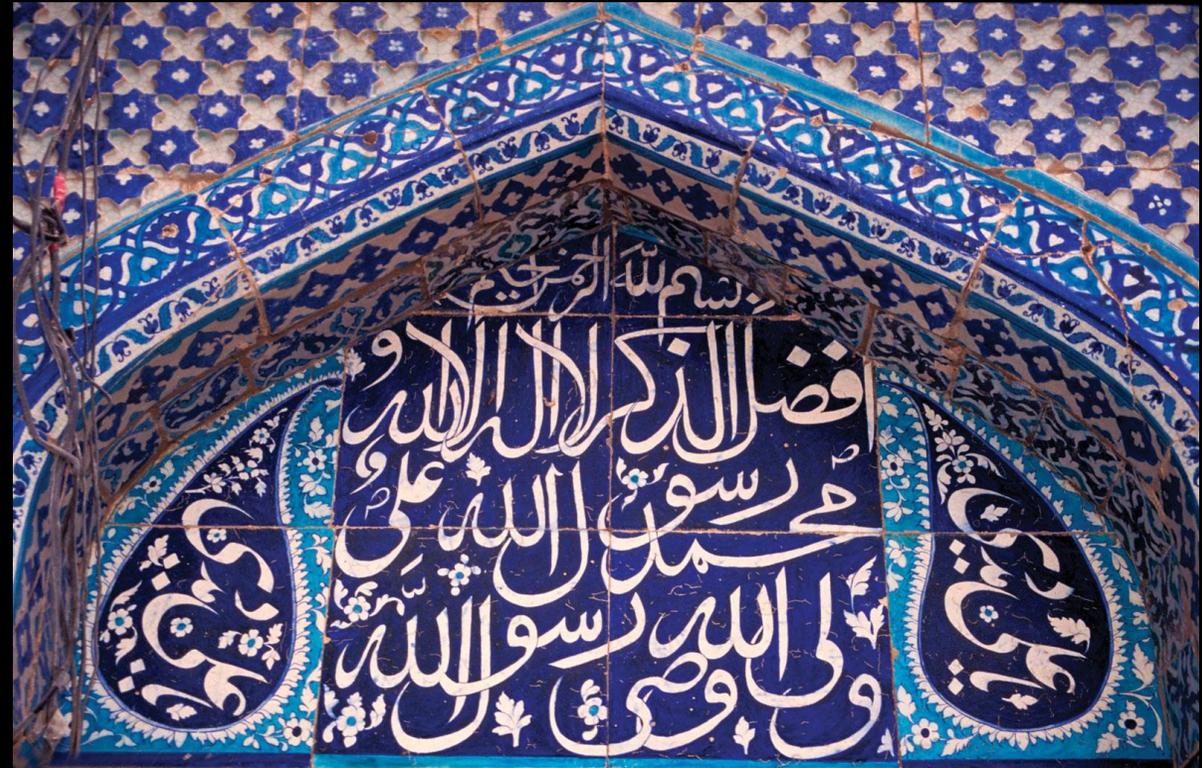
Yahya (John the Baptist)

Isa (Jesus)

Muhammed

(Peace be upon them all)

- Belief in the Day of Judgement (Akhirah)
- Belief in the Divine Decree (Al-Qadar)



# Respect for Humanity

"O humankind! 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)."

(Quran, 49:13)



"All mankind is from Adam and Eve, and Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab nor a non-Arab has any superiority over an Arab; also a white has not superiority over black nor, a black has any superiority over white except by piety and good action."

(Prophet Muhammed (Pbuh)'s Last Sermon)

# Respect all Creation



# Promoting Justice and Social Equality

“O you who believe! Stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to Allah, even if it be against yourselves, your parents, and your relatives, or whether it is against the rich or the poor...”

(Quran, 4:135)



# Morality

Prophet said, “The dearest and nearest among you to me on the Day of Resurrection will be one who is the best of you in manners”.

(Prophet Muhammed (Pbuh))



# Service to Others

Kindness, Charity, Greetings,  
Forgiveness...



**THANK YOU!**

# The Character of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ

Mustafa Sir

# Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was a human being

Say, “I am only a human being like you. It is revealed unto me that your God is one God. So whosoever hopes for a meeting with his Lord, let him perform righteous deeds and make no one a partner on his Lord in worship.

Quran 18: 110

Did He not find thee an orphan and shelter, find thee astray and guide, find thee in need and enrich? So as for the orphan, scorn not. And as for one who requests, repel not. And as for the blessing of thy Lord, proclaim!

Quran 93: 6-11

# Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was a human being

A Messenger has indeed come unto you from among your own.

Quran 9: 128

And they say, “What ails this Messenger, who eats food and walks in the markets? Why is there not an angel sent down unto him to be a warner with him, or no treasure cast upon him, or no garden for him from which to eat?”

Quran 25: 7-8

Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was a human being

Say, “O mankind! I am only a clear warner unto you!”

Quran 22: 49

And truly thou are of an exalted character.

Quran 68: 4

# His Prayers and Supplications

O God, I ask You to enable me to do good, to refrain from vice, to love the poor, and to forgive me and have mercy on me. When You will people's deviation and dissension and disorder in public life, make me die before taking part in that disorder. I ask You for Your love and for the love of whom You love, and the love of the acts that will make me nearer to Your love.

# His Compassion for the Entire Humanity

“Yet perhaps thou wouldst destroy yourself with grief for their sake, should they believe not in this account.”

Quran, al-Kahf, 6

“A Messenger has indeed come unto you from among your own. Troubled is he by what you suffer, anxious is he over you, full of concern for you, kind and merciful unto the believers”

Quran, al-Tawbah, 128

When he was wounded severely at Uhud, he raised his hands and prayed:

“O God, forgive my people, for they do not know.”

# His Forgiveness

When he conquered Mecca, he asked the Meccans, who persecuted him and his followers for years:

“How do you expect me to treat you?”

They responded unanimously:

“You are a noble one, the son of a noble one.”

He then told them:

“You may leave, for no reproach this day shall be on you.

May God forgive you.

He is the Most Compassionate.”

# His Compassion for Children

“I stand in prayer and wish to prolong it. However, I hear a child cry and shorten the prayer to lessen the mother's anxiety.”

He took children in his arms and hugged them. Once when hugging his beloved grandsons Hasan and Hussayn, a companion told him:

“I have 10 children, and have never kissed any of them.”

The Messenger responded:

“What can I do for you if God has removed compassion from you?”

# His Compassion for Underprivileged

A maidservant informed the Messenger of how her master had beaten her. The messenger said to the master:

“You have beaten her without any justifiable right. Free her.”

After the first Revelation, his wife Khadija told him:

“I hope you will be the Prophet of this Umma, for you always tell the truth, fulfill your trust, support your relatives, help the poor and weak, and feed guests.”

# His Generosity

Once, a Bedouin kept asking things from the Messenger and he kept complying with the requests. When he had nothing left, he promised to give it when he had it.

Angered by such rudeness, 'Umar said to the Messenger:

“You were asked and you gave. Again you were asked and you gave, until you were asked once more and you promised!”

'Abd Allah ibn Hudafa al-Sahmi stood up and said:

“O Messenger, give without fear that the Owner of the Seat of Honor will make you poor!”

Pleased with such words, the Messenger declared:

“I was commanded to do so!”

# His Modesty

People could not tell who the Messenger among a gather and they asked:

“Who among you is Muhammad?”

When a man seeing him for the first time began trembling out of fear, because he found the Prophet's appearance so awe-inspiring, the Messenger calmed him:

“Brother, don't be afraid. I am a man, like you, whose mother used to eat dry bread.”

An insane woman pulled him by the hand and said:

“Come with me and do my housework.”

He complied with her request.

We end with Ali

We end with Sayyidina Ali ibn Abi Talib's timeless words:

He was the most generous person in giving, v the mildest and the foremost in patience and perseverance.

He was the most truthful in speech, the most amiable and congenial in companionship, and the noblest of them in family.

Whoever sees him first is stricken by awe, but whoever knows him closely is deeply attracted to him.

Whoever attempts to describe him says:

“I have never seen the like of him.”

# Sunni and Shia Islam: Commonalities and Differences

Mohamed Jawad Khaki

January 23, 2022

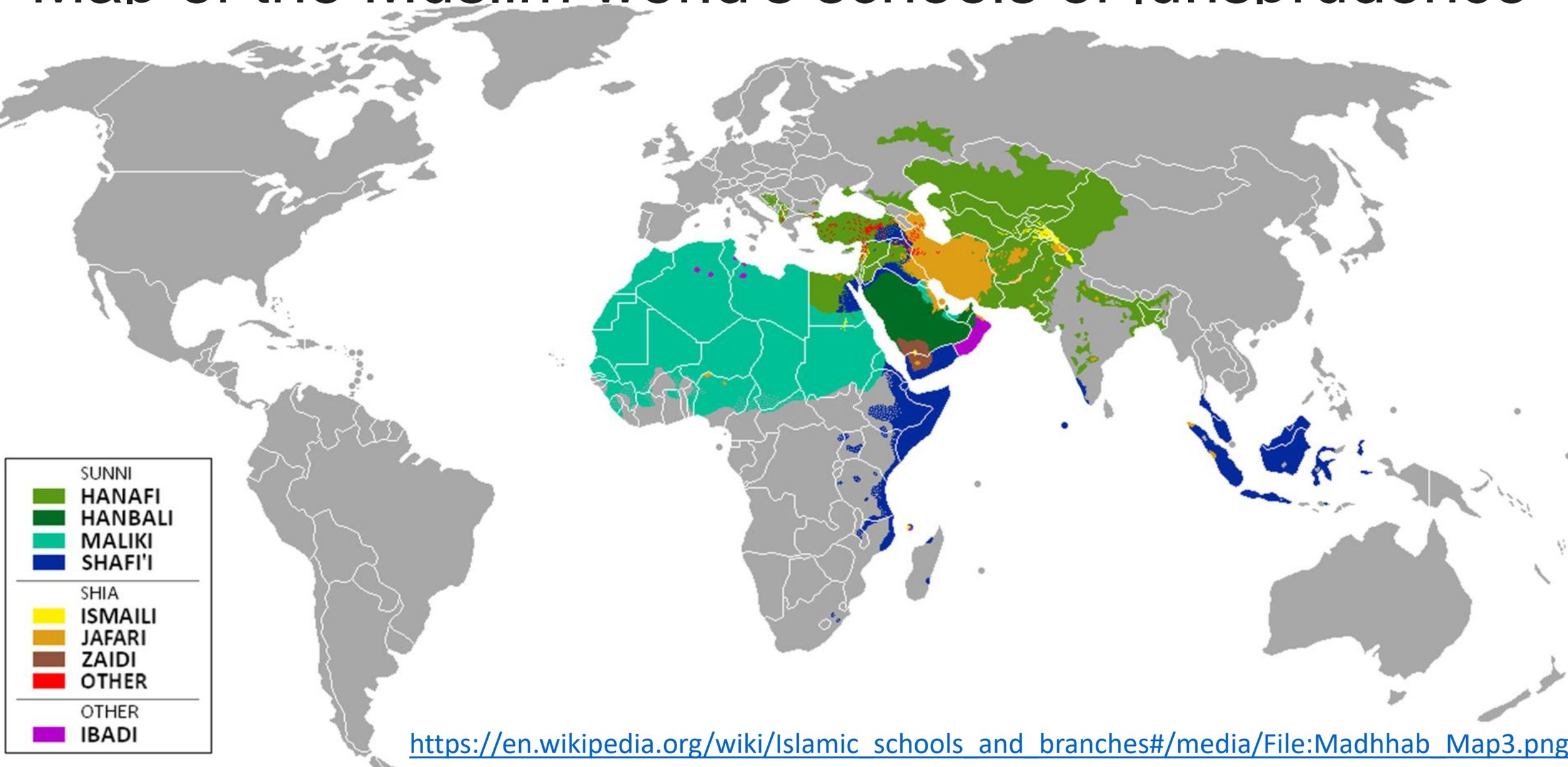
# Islamic schools and branches

- There are many different sects or denominations, [schools of Islamic jurisprudence](#), and [schools of Islamic theology](#), or [‘aqīdah](#) (creed)
- Within Islamic groups themselves there may be differences, such as different orders ([tariqa](#)) within [Sufism](#), and within [Sunnī Islam](#) different schools of theology ([Atharī](#), [Ash‘arī](#), [Māturīdī](#)) and jurisprudence ([Hanafī](#), [Mālikī](#), [Shāfi‘ī](#), [Hanbalī](#))
- Groups in Islam may be quite large (for example, [Sunnīs](#)) or relatively small in size ([Ibadis](#), [Zaydīs](#), [Ismā‘īlīs](#))
- Differences between the groups may not be well known to Muslims outside of scholarly circles or may have induced enough passion to have resulted in [political](#) and [religious violence](#) ([Barelvi](#), [Deobandi](#), [Salafism](#), [Wahhabism](#))
- There are informal movements driven by ideas (such as [Islamic modernism](#) and [Islamism](#)) as well as organized groups with a governing body ([Ahmadiyya](#), [Ismā‘īlism](#), [Nation of Islam](#))
- Some of the Islamic sects and groups regard certain others as not truly Muslim ([Ahmadiyya](#), [Alawites](#), [Quranists](#))
- Some Islamic sects and groups date back to the [early history of Islam](#) between the 7th-9th centuries CE ([Kharijites](#), [Sunnīs](#), [Shī‘as](#)), whereas others have arisen much more recently ([Islamic neo-traditionalism](#), [liberalism and progressivism](#), [Islamic modernism](#), [Salafism and Wahhabism](#)) or even in the 20th century ([Nation of Islam](#)).

# Schools of Islamic jurisprudence

- [Sunnism](#) (85% of all Muslims) contains several schools of thought ([madhhab](#))
  - [Hanafi](#) school, founded by [Abu Hanifa an-Nu'man](#) (699 – 767 CE)
  - [Maliki](#) school, founded by [Malik ibn Anas](#). (711–795 CE)
  - [Shafi'i](#) school, founded by [Muhammad ibn Idris ash-Shafi'i](#) (767–820 CE)
  - [Hanbali](#) school, founded by [Ahmad ibn Hanbal](#) (780-855 CE)
- [Shi'ism](#) is divided into two main groupings
  - [Twelver Shi'ism](#) (85% of shias) believe in [the divinely ordained twelve Imams](#), who not only guide the community with justice, but keep and interpret [sharia](#) and the [esoteric meaning of the Quran](#). The twelfth and final Imam is [Muhammad al-Mahdi](#), who is believed by the Twelvers to be currently alive and hidden in [the Major Occultation](#) until he returns to bring justice to the world.
  - [Ismā'īlism](#) get their name from their acceptance of Imam [Isma'il ibn Jafar](#) as the appointed spiritual successor to [Ja'far al-Sadiq](#), wherein they differ from the [Twelver Shia](#), who accept [Musa al-Kadhim](#), the younger brother of Isma'il, as the [true Imām](#). Larger sect of Ismaili are [Nizaris](#), who recognize [Aga Khan IV](#) as the 49th Imam, while other groups are known as the [Tayyibi](#) branch.

# Map of the Muslim world's schools of jurisprudence



[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islamic\\_schools\\_and\\_branches#/media/File:Madhhab\\_Map3.png](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islamic_schools_and_branches#/media/File:Madhhab_Map3.png)

# Sunni and Shia – Common Beliefs

- Unity and Justice of God
- Angels
- Prophets
- Holy Books
- Day of Judgment
- Equality of all people before God

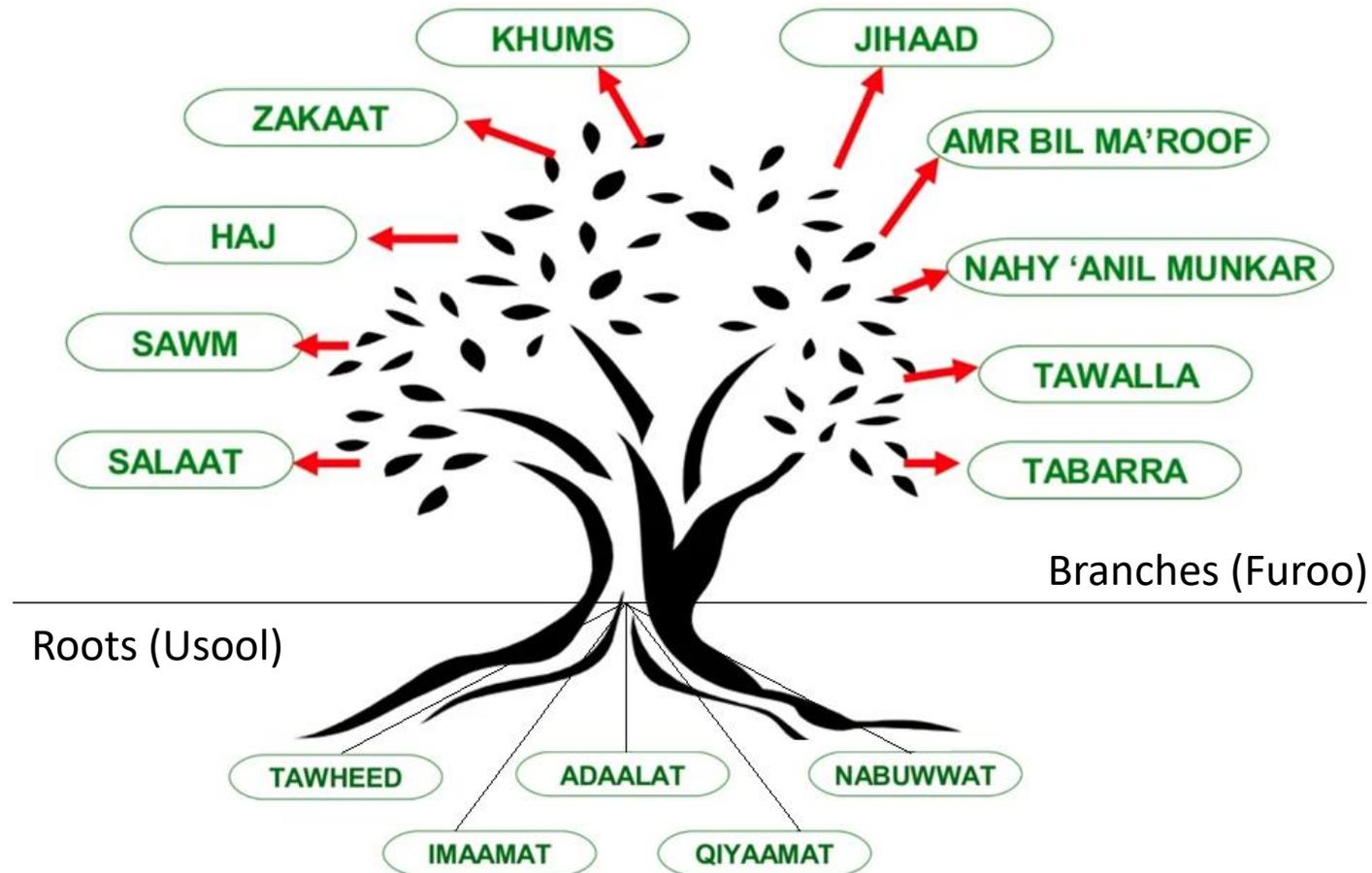
# Sunni and Shia – Common Values

- Enjoining the Good, forbidding the Evil
- Self exertion: urged to strive and act
- Pursuing social justice and fairness
- Humility and modesty
- Importance of family as basic social unit
- Pursuing truth and knowledge
- Worshipping God and serving humanity

# Sunni and Shia – Common Practice

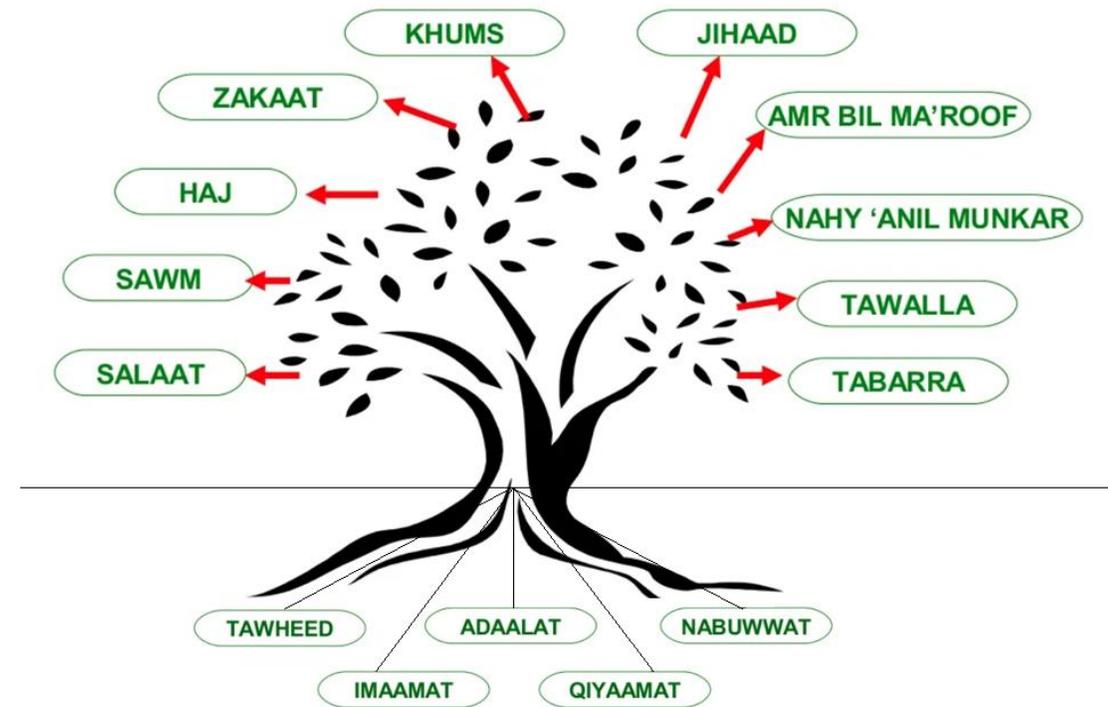
- Shahadah: Declaration of faith
- Salat: Ritual prayer 5 times a day
- Zakat: Giving to charity minimum of 2.5% of wealth annually
- Sawm: Fasting during the month of Ramadan
- Hajj: Pilgrimage to Mecca, for those who can afford the journey

# Tree of Islam – (Twelver Shi'ism)

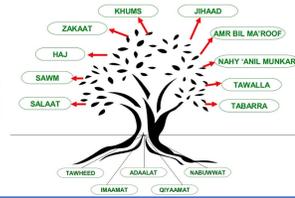


# Usool e deen – Roots of religion

- Tawheed – Unity (Oneness) of God
- Adalat – God is Just
- Nabuwwat – Prophethood
- Imaamat – Successors to the Prophet
- Qiyaamat – Day of Judgment



# Furoo e deen – Branches Roots of religion



| Branch            | Meaning                                    | Reference  |
|-------------------|--|--|
| Salaat            | Daily Prayer x 5                           | Q 2:45: And seek help through patience and prayer,   |
| Sawm              | Ramadhan Fasting                           | Q 2:183: O you who have believed, decreed upon you is fasting as it was decreed upon those before you that you may become righteous -  |
| Hajj              | Pilgrimage to Mecca                        | Q 2:196: And complete the Hajj and 'umrah for Allah ...  |
| Zakaat            | Almsgiving<br>(2.5% of accumulated wealth) | Q 2:277: Indeed, those who believe and do righteous deeds and establish prayer and give zakah will have their reward with their Lord, and there will be no fear concerning them, nor will they grieve. |
| Khums             | Almsgiving<br>(20% of savings from income) | Q 8:41: then indeed, for Allah is one fifth of it and for the Messenger and for [his] near relatives and the orphans, the needy, and the [stranded] traveler...  |
| Jihad             | Struggle                                   | Personal struggle against one's evil inclinations and passions (jihad-ul-akbar). 2 <sup>nd</sup> type of jihad, (jihad-ul-asghar), is for for self-defense and self-preservation.                      |
| Amr bil ma'roof   | Encourage good                             | Q 3:104: And let there be [arising] from you a nation inviting to [all that is] good, enjoining what is right...   |
| Nahi 'anil munkar | Forbid wrong                               | Q 3:104: ...and forbidding what is wrong, and those will be the successful.  |
| Tawalla           | Keep good company                          | Befriend and associate with those who love God, Prophets and Imams   |
| Tabarra           | Avoid bad company                          | Avoid and do not associate with who are enemies of God, Prophets and Imams   |

# Sunni Shia Differences

- Shia and Sunni division dates to the death of the Prophet [Muhammad](#) in 632
- It was over question of Leadership: Who was to take over the leadership of the Muslim nation?
  - Sunni Muslims elected [Abu Bakr](#) from among one of the companions to succeed
  - Shia Muslims believe in divinely appointed leadership of [‘Alī ibn Abī Tālib](#) per Prophet’s declaration
- Leadership differences had spiritual significance.
  - Shia Muslims believe that the divinely appointed Imam is sinless by nature
  - Imam’s authority is infallible because it comes directly from God
- This has led to practices that also have spiritual significance
  - Shia Muslims venerate Imams as saints.
  - Observe annual birthday celebrations and death commemorations
  - Perform pilgrimages to their tombs (Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Iran) for inspiration and draw spiritual strength
  - In the absence of the [12<sup>th</sup> Imam](#), shias have a well-defined clerical hierarchy to guide the community
- Sunni Muslims counter that there is no basis in Islam for a class of spiritual leaders
- Some Shias feel animosity towards some companions of the Prophet Muhammad due to early discord
- [States, dynasties](#) and [imperial](#) powers continue to exploit the sunni/shia fault line for divide and control
- Sunn, in Arabic, means "one who follows the traditions of the Prophet"
- Shia, in Arabic, means a group or supportive party of people
- All Shia’s follow traditions of the Prophet. All Sunnis regard Ali as their 4<sup>th</sup> [caliph](#)
- Most Muslims do not distinguish and prefer, simply, to call themselves "Muslims"

**World needs “SuShi”s who build on commonalities and tolerate differences!**

# Acknowledgment

- The above presentation has been made possible using information readily available on: [Wikipedia](#)



# Promoting culture of coexistence

*since 1993*



# MUSLIMS MUST COMBAT THE EXTREMIST CANCER

LEAD ARTICLE

M. Fethullah Gülen

**A**s the group that calls itself Islamic State, known as ISIS, continues to produce carnage in the Middle East, Muslims must confront the totalitarian ideology that animates it and other terrorist groups. Every terrorist act carried out in the name of Islam profoundly affects all Muslims, alienating them from

fellow citizens and deepening the misperceptions about their faith's ethos.

It isn't fair to blame Islam for the atrocities of violent radicals. But when terrorists claim the Muslim mantle, then they bear this identity, if only nominally. Thus members of the faith must do whatever possible to prevent this cancer from metastasizing in our communities. If we don't, we'll be

partly responsible for the smeared image of our faith.

First, we must denounce violence and not fall prey to victimhood. Having suffered oppression is no excuse for causing it or for failing to condemn terrorism. That the terrorists are committing grave sins in the name of Islam is not merely my opinion; it is the inevitable conclusion of an honest reading of primary sources: the Quran and the

RELIGION

Aydogan Vatandas  
Professor of physics at Celal Bayar University, Turkey

## Does Islam Promote Violence?

There is no imperative in the Qur'an to destroy the West. Quite the opposite: Islam should build upon Western civilization, not seek to replace it.

**I**n the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, a huge number of books and articles have been published investigating the link between some certain interpretations of Islam and the terrorist attacks.

Further terrorist attacks in certain countries, and the brutal emergence of ISIS right after the Syrian crisis, have led to the embers of anti-Islamic sentiments burning in the west.

Just last year, comedian Bill Maher identified ISIS with Islam, stating, "If vast numbers of Muslims across the world believe, and they do, that humans deserve to die for merely holding a different idea, or drawing a cartoon, or writing a book, or eloping with the wrong person, not only does the Muslim world have something in

common with the West, but it is also

In addition to the arguments that simplify Islam, the fight against terrorism is a fight for truth.

Mr. Fethullah Gülen's challenge to the extreme statements in his book "The Caliphate of the Prophet" is a challenge to the world. Today, that Islam is not a religion of violence. No person can be an innocent victim of a fatwa (a

November / December 2015

## JIHAD AND QITAL TWO CONCEPTS WHERE CONFUSION ABOUT ISLAM STARTS

**I**n this article, I will try to summarize the concept of jihad and war according to the Qur'an, and analyze their practices during the time of the Prophet. As these concepts have often been confused, it has led to some common misjudgments about Islam.

In the early years of Islam, the faith was taught with a focus on common sense with spiritual counsels, arguments in the belief of God's existence, and the Afterlife. When some Muslims who faced insults and persecution tended to react against adversaries, the Prophet calmed them down and asked them to show patience. When pressures increased, the Prophet recommended a group of Muslims immigrate to Abyssinia to evade persecution, but the Meccan chieftains made the issue into an international scandal and sent

envoys so the Muslim refugees could be handed over to them.

Unable to prevent the spread of Islam, they increased their violence. The leaders of the Quraysh tribe, except for the Hashimi clan which the Prophet belonged to, decided to implement a severe embargo. They forced Muslims to live in a field known as Shib al-Abu Talib and cut off all relations with them. Even selling something to them was banned. This embargo meant a wholesale condemnation to famine, meaning even women, children, and the elderly suffered. One memory from Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas can give us an idea about how horrible their situation was: one night, after he relieved himself in a remote corner, he found a piece of animal skin on the ground. He first cleaned it, then held it out to fire, and then tried to appease his feeling of hunger by gnawing at it.

RELIGION

Suat Yıldırım  
Professor of Qur'anic exegesis, Fatih University, Turkey



# The story of Abel and Cain

- Qur'an 5:27-31 Genesis 4:1-9
- 5:32 He who kills a soul unjustly will be as if he had killed all humankind...

# Extremism comes not from religion, but from...

- the absence of true religion
- how we interpret religion
- how we abuse religion

## Religion

- invites, it does not destroy
- is to overcome self, to adopt a second nature to be insan al-kamil
- is a civilizing dynamic – from Yathrib to Medina

## Lesser jihad vs Greater jihad

Returning from a battle the Prophet said:

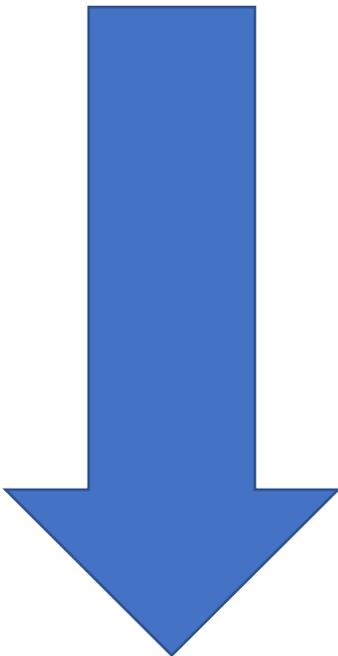
“We are now going to a greater jihad from a lesser jihad. It is the struggle against one’s desires.”

# Jihad is

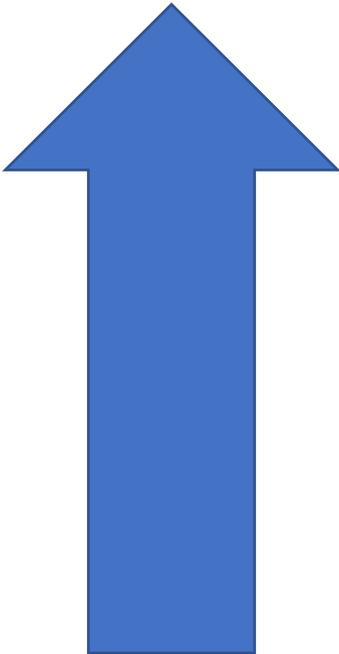
- To strive to remove all the obstacles between the human and the Divine.
- It is basically a very spiritual act



ISLAM



Inverse relationship



VIOLENCE



INDEPENDENT

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[News](#) › [World](#) › [Europe](#)

# Isis recruiting violent criminals and gang members across Europe in dangerous new 'crime-terror nexus'

Exclusive: More than half of European jihadis have criminal histories as Isis offers 'redemption'

[Lizzie Dearden](#) | [@lizziedearden](#) | Monday 10 October 2016 17:18 BST | [122](#) [comments](#)

[News](#) › [UK](#) › [Home News](#)

# Isis: UN study finds foreign fighters in Syria 'lack basic understanding of Islam'

Research shows economic factors and 'lack of meaning' in life makes warzone attractive

[Lizzie Dearden](#) Home Affairs Correspondent | [@lizziedearden](#) | Friday 4 August 2017 17:30 BST | [728 comments](#)

# Young men who leave their homes to fight for terrorist groups in [Syria](#) ...

- mainly come from **disadvantaged** backgrounds,
- have low levels of **education**
- “lack any basic understanding of the **true meaning of jihad** or even the Islamic faith”
- most of the returned fighters were “**novices**” in their religion and some did not know how to pray properly.
- Most saw their religion in terms of **justice** and injustice rather than in terms of piety and spirituality.

# a typical fighter

- “is most likely to be male, young and **disadvantaged** economically, educationally, and in terms of the labour market”.
- “He is also more likely than not to come from a **marginalised background**, both socially and politically,”
- “Most were **unemployed**, or underemployed, and/or said that their **life lacked meaning.**”
- Come from [dysfunctional families in deprived parts of cities](#) where they were “**isolated** from mainstream social, economic and political activity”.

# Goals are more secular than religious

- *More than anything, the terrorist group's outward expressions of religious fervor serve its secular objectives of controlling resources and territory.*
- *What 95 percent of all suicide attacks have in common, since 1980, is not religion, but a specific strategic motivation to respond to a military intervention, often specifically a military occupation, of territory that the terrorists view as their homeland or prize greatly.  
(Robert Pape)*

# Who are the new jihadis?

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Biographies of 'homegrown' European terrorists show they are violent nihilists who adopt Islam, rather than religious fundamentalists who turn to violence

by Olivier Roy

# Who are the new Jihadis? By Olivier Roy

- The systematic association with death is one of the keys to understanding today's radicalisation: the **nihilist** dimension is central. What seduces and fascinates is the idea of **pure revolt**. Violence is not a means. It is an end in itself.
- It is too often forgotten that suicide terrorism and organisations such as al-Qaida and Isis are **new** in the history of the Muslim world, and cannot be explained simply by the rise of fundamentalism. We must understand that terrorism does not arise from the radicalisation of [Islam](#), but from the Islamisation of radicalism.

# Where is the religion going?

- Religion
- Belief without belonging
- Belonging without believing
- Secret atheism

(Grace Davie)

# How to respond

- Abel: “Yet if you stretch out your hand against me to kill me, I will not stretch out my hand against you to kill you. Surely I fear God, the Lord of the worlds.” 5:28
- Religion as very powerful social and spiritual dynamic.

# Solution:

Dar al-Islam vs Dar al-harb

## • Dar al-Hizmet

- Fighting ignorance with education
- Eliminating poverty with free enterprise, cooperation, and sharing
- Eliminating conflict by promoting dialogue and understanding

# Values

- There is no compulsion in religion. 2:256
- The material sword has been placed in its sheath.
- Retaliation in kind is a cruel principle
- Abel: “Yet if you stretch out your hand against me to kill me, I will not stretch out my hand against you to kill you. Surely I fear God, the Lord of the worlds.” 5:28

# Hostility towards Jews and Christians

# People of the Book

- Muslims, Jews, and Christians lived side by side for thousands of years.
- A Muslim man can marry a Jewish or Christian woman
- Millet system recognized their rights
- Medina Contract
- Jewish tribes fighting on the side of the Prophet
- “There is no compulsion in religion” verse came not to force Jews to become Muslim.

- Ottomans saved Jews in Spain and allowed to live freely
- Umar, the Caliph, allowed Jews into Jerusalem – Christians did not allow them before
- “Muslim Spain was a paradise for the Jews. There has never been a Jewish Holocaust in the Muslim world. Muhammad decreed that the Peoples of the Book be treated tolerantly, subject to conditions that were incomparably more liberal than those in contemporary Europe.”

Uri Averny, Israeli author, former member of Knesset



HISTORY

Elif Cansu Guler

A freelance writer from Germany with an interest in history

# CHURCH OF MARY

## KIBBUTZ RAMAT RACHEL AN EXEMPLARY CASE OF DIALOGUE FROM THE EARLY ISLAMIC PERIOD

The recent discovery of the remains of an ancient structure near Bethlehem serves as a capsule of how people of different faiths once lived together in peace – and how someday, they could do so again.

In his book, *The Culture of Ambiguity: Another History of Islam*, the contemporary Islamic scholar Thomas Bauer wrote:

For about a thousand years Arab-Islamic societies cultivated a “culture of ambiguity.” Various truth claims were allowed to stand next to one another, and the search for the probable seemed to be satisfying enough. Only the colonialism practiced in the Middle East in the 19th century exerted pressure to define oneself through unique standards.<sup>1</sup>

Today, Islamism (or the political interpretation of Islam) strives for self-definition through demarcation, “... in a merely apparent

reference back to traditional Islamic values.”<sup>2</sup>

Professor Dr. Dieter Dieterich in turn referred “... to the tolerant and very fruitful Islamic high culture in ‘Moorish Spain’ between 714 and 1492 and ... to the high esteem of Islam influenced by Sufism on behalf of Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729-1781), J.W. Goethe (1749-1832), Friedrich Rückert (1788-1866), and the Islamic scholar Annemarie Schimmel (1922-2003).”<sup>3</sup>

But does Islam really teach tolerance? How did Muslim rulers of the early Islamic period treat people of other faiths? How did Umar ibn al-Khattab, the second successor of the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him after Abu

Bakr, deal with the year 638, when he encountered people of different faiths in villages inhabited predominantly by Christians? Is there any evidence that Umar tried to establish dialogue?

In this essay, I will examine the issue and concern myself with a place that could, today, be the place of a similar encounter between faiths – the Kathisma Church located between Jerusalem and Bethlehem. I will document the church’s history, and then study how the Muslims dealt with this Christian place of worship. In addition, I will try to clarify why the ruins of the church bear witness to the existence of a Muslim prayer niche, the *mihrab*.

### Kathisma – a place of worship for both Christians and Muslims

The Greek word “Kathisma” can be translated to mean “seating” or “rest area.” The Kathisma church, rediscovered in 1992 during excavations at the Kibbutz Ramat Rachel, halfway between Jerusalem and Bethlehem, is considered a model and a symbol for successful peaceful coexistence in early medieval times. In pre-Islamic times, the site is supposed to have served Christians on the pilgrimage from Jerusalem to Bethlehem as a rest area and a place of worship. It is alleged that the very pregnant Holy Mary herself rested on the rock over which this facility was built, when she made her way to Bethlehem. The church was in the form of an octagon, featuring the same scheme as the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem. Figure 1 shows the octagonal shape of the building, with the apse aligned to the east, the rock in the middle and - added later - the Muslim prayer niche, the *mihrab*:

### Literary sources

#### a) The Gospel of James

In the so-called Gospel of James, an early Christian writing, which is believed to have been composed in the middle of the second century, there is an indication that on her way from Jerusalem to Bethlehem, Holy Mary stopped for a rest. However, there is only vague information provided, which also varies depending on the translation. In James 17:5-11, we read:

And he saddled his donkey and sat her on it and his son led and Samuel followed. And they arrived at the third mile and Joseph turned and saw that she was sad. And he said to himself, “Perhaps the child within her is troubling her.” And again Joseph turned around and saw her laughing and said to her, “Mary, what is with you? First your face appears happy and then sad?” And she said, “Joseph, it is because I see two people with my eyes, one crying and being afflicted, one rejoicing and being extremely

happy.” When they came to the middle of the journey, Mary said to him, “Joseph, take me off the donkey; the child is pushing from within me to let him come out.” So he took her off the donkey and said to her, “Where will I take you and shelter you in your awkwardness? This area is a desert.”

#### b) A travel report by Archdeacon Theodosius

Another source noted that Mary may have rested at the place of the Kathisma church:

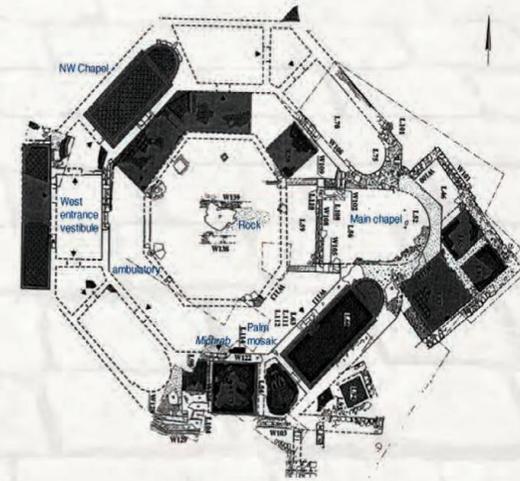
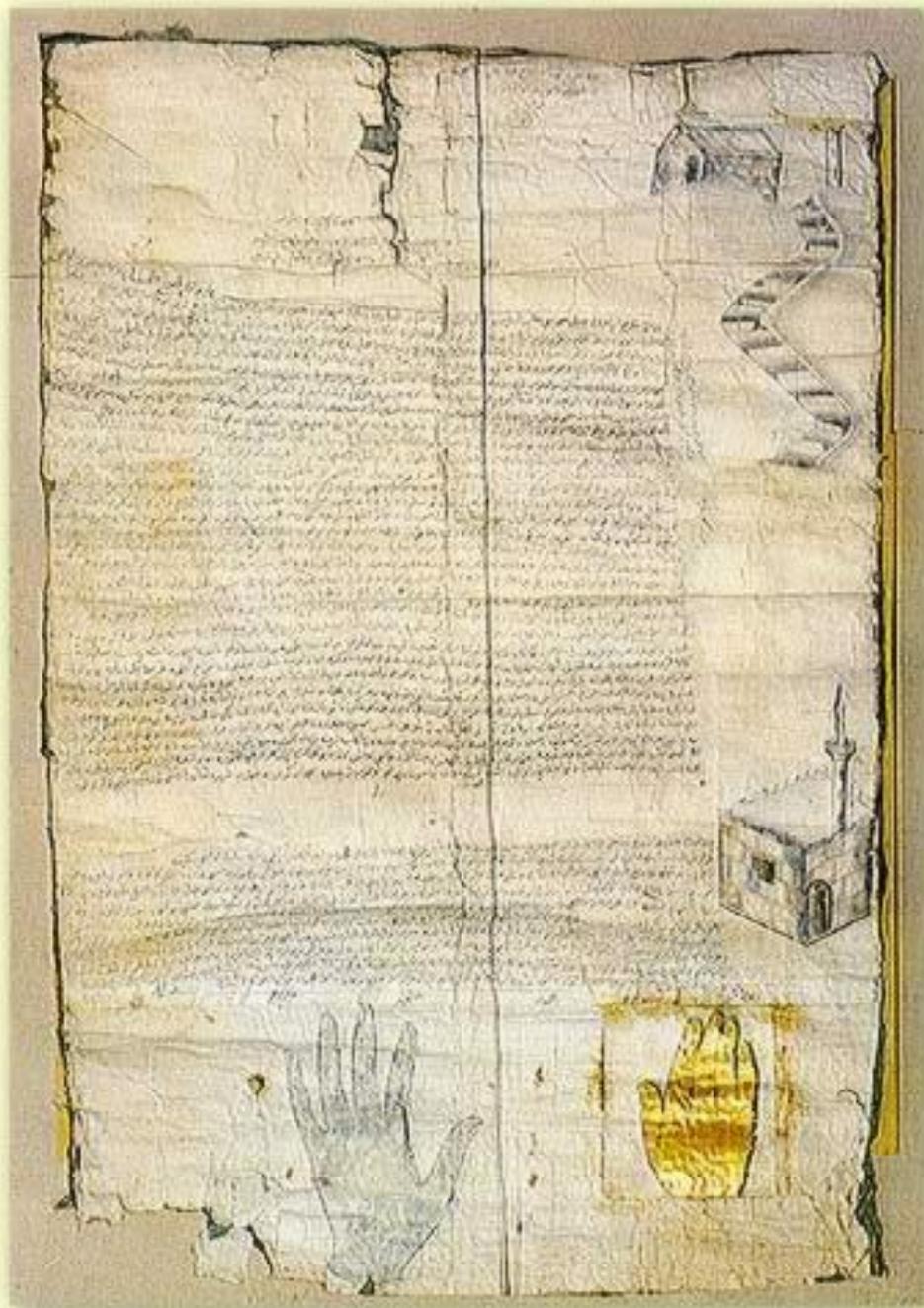


Figure 1: Kathisma-stone plan / floor plan, approximately 8th century 4





# Monastery of St. Catherine, Egypt

Ashtiname of Muhammad

“If any monk or pilgrim entrench himself in mountain, valley, cave, township, level, sand or church, I shall be behind them defending them from any that shall envy them, by myself, my helpers, my people, my sect, and my followers, inasmuch as they are my subjects and the people of my covenant.”

Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)

Christians of  
Najran  
Worshipping  
in the  
Prophet's  
mosque



# Treaty between Umar (ra) and Patriarch Sophronius in Jerusalem

- *In the name of God, the Most Merciful! The following is granted by Umar, servant of God and Commander of the Faithful, to the people of Aelia [Jerusalem] as a security guarantee: He has given them a guarantee for their lives, their possessions, their churches and crosses, for the sick and the healthy, and for the whole population [of the city]. Their churches are not to be destroyed or used for housing; neither the churches itself nor the associated property shall suffer any loss; nor their crosses or their other property. They shall not be affected in their religion, nobody is to suffer loss. [...] (from Tabari)*

# Core Values of Hizmet Movement



Alliance *for*  
Shared Values

# RESPECT FOR HUMANS AND FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN RIGHTS

Hizmet participants believe that every human has inherent value and everyone should be treated with dignity. Every person is equal as a human being and before the law, and no one person is superior to anyone else. Hizmet participants uphold all human rights and freedoms expressed in the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Social justice and equal opportunity are requirements for equality among people.



Hizmet Core Value #2

## RESPECT FOR THE RULE OF LAW



Hizmet participants respect the rule of law. They do not see anyone as above the law, and they act within the framework of protection of human dignity, universal legal principles and the laws of their country of residence. They manage their organizations in a way to meet or exceed the transparency and accountability norms of their society.

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## **PEACEFUL AND POSITIVE ACTION**

Hizmet is a peaceful movement. Hizmet participants reject using violence as a political tool. Hizmet participants prefer positive and constructive actions and reject hostility-driven and destructive actions.



Hizmet Core Value #4

# EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

HIZMET PARTICIPANTS ARE COMMITTED TO THE IDEAL THAT WOMEN ARE PROVIDED WITH EQUAL OPPORTUNITY AND CAN CONTRIBUTE TO ALL ASPECTS OF SOCIETY WITHOUT DISCRIMINATION, AND THEY STRIVE TO MEET THIS IDEAL IN ALL ACTIVITIES.

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Hizmet participants pay attention to both ethical norms and moral principles in their activities. They abide by fundamental ethical principles including honesty, trustworthiness, harmlessness and fairness. They believe that legitimate and rightful goals should be obtained through legitimate and rightful means.

Hizmet Core Value #6

## RESPECT FOR DIVERSITY AND PLURALISM

Hizmet participants see collective and individual diversity as richness as long as they do not contradict fundamental human rights. They adopt an attitude necessary to avoid conflicts that stem from differences in sacred beliefs.



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Hizmet Core Value #7

# VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION AND ALTRUISM

FOR HIZMET VOLUNTEERS, JOINING  
ACTIVITIES OR LEAVING THEM IS A  
PERSON'S INDIVIDUAL CHOICE.  
HIZMET PARTICIPANTS CONTRIBUTE  
TO PROJECTS THAT BRING TO LIFE  
THEIR VALUES AND BENEFIT  
HUMANITY EITHER THROUGH  
DONATIONS OR VOLUNTEER WORK.

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Hizmet Core Value #8

## CONSULTATION AND SHARED WISDOM



Hizmet participants benefit from shared wisdom through discussions of different perspectives and opinions.

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Hizmet Core Value #9

## CIVIC NATURE AND INDEPENDENCE

Hizmet is a civil society movement and acts independently. It is not an extension of a state or a political entity. Hizmet volunteers emphasize the internalization of democratic values, active citizenship and community participation, and they respect every individual's political choices. They stand against turning religion into a political ideology or making religion a tool of politics.



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Hizmet Core Value #10

## **CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY**

Hizmet participants consider it a social responsibility to contribute to society and to help solve societal problems. They see themselves as part of the human family. They are sensitive toward humanity's problems and aim to serve humanity.



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# PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT

Hizmet participants view our earth, including all the ecosystems within it, as a trust that we must preserve for future generations and they strive to protect the environment.



Hizmet Core Value #12

## **HOLISTIC VIEW TOWARD HUMANITY (AND UNITY OF THE MIND AND THE HEART)**

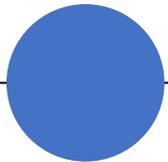
Humans are both material and spiritual beings. Spiritual disciplines should be pursued along with reason and scientific research so that their material and spiritual needs are met, and they can flourish in both dimensions.



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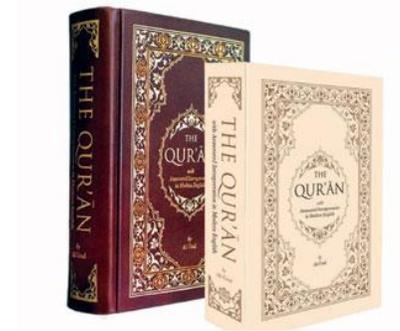
# Panel on Islam



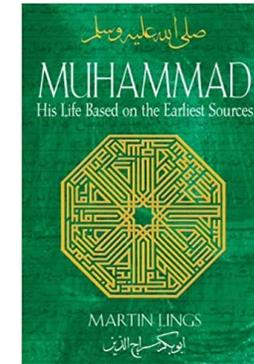


# RESOURCES

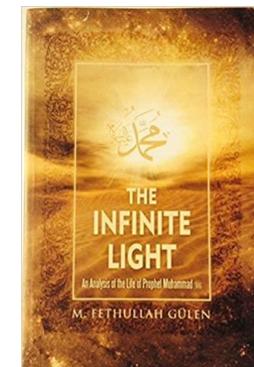
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<https://www.amazon.com/Infinite-Light-Hardcover-M-Fethullah-Gulen/dp/B08B6BZCRZ/>



<https://www.antstores.com/collections/english/products/messenger-of-god-muhammad-the-paperback>

<https://mapsredmond.org>

**Muslim Association of Puget Sound**



<https://www.iman-wa.org/aboutislam>

<https://www.iman-wa.org/islam101>

**IMAN Center of Kirkland**



<https://www.al-islam.org>

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