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# Who Is The God of Islam?

And Why Do Some Islamic  
Clerics Preach Terrorism?

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# Who Is The God of Islam?

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# Introduction

**M**uhammad, whose "recitations" are preserved in the Koran, worshiped the "...only true God" (John 17:3), as Jesus described the "Lord God" revealed by Abraham and Moses (Gen. 15:2). So, what on earth did Muhammad also say 1400 years ago that is driving Muslim extremists to conduct a "holy war" against Jews, Christians and all other "infidels," or "unbelievers," as they now identify everyone who is not a "properly observant" Muslim?

If you are not a Muslim, until recent times you might have given no thought to the often strangely dressed people that some outsiders call "Mohammedans," because they wrongly assume that Muslims worship Muhammad, as Christians worship the Christ. Today, many outsiders still have no interest in the religious beliefs of people who actively support or passively permit bloody atrocities committed in their religion's name. But the fact that you have chosen to read this implies that you are seeking knowledge of the people who have finally commanded the world's attention.

A vital difference, however, between the self-aggrandizing Muslims and the self-aggrandizing Christians rests in the Muslim terrorists' belief that they must now rid the world of "unbelievers"—beginning with the Jews in Israel and all who support them.

To understand why Muslim extremists have, in effect, declared war on all "unbelievers," we need at least an initial acquaintance with the Koran. Only then, can we recognize the basis of teachings currently preached by some Muslim clerics, whose interpretations of Muhammad's recitations sometimes differ from their fellow clergymen's — even as individual Jews and Christians practice their own religion according to the teachings of their chosen sect. And even as many Christians believe themselves the only persons worthy of being "saved," so some Muslims believe they are the world's only "true believers."

A vital difference, however, between the self-aggrandizing Muslims and the self-aggrandizing Christians rests in the Muslim terrorists' belief that they must now rid the world of "unbelievers" — beginning with the Jews in Israel and all who support them. Their "holy war" is not the result of mere "self-delusion," which the world can surely dispel. If we console ourselves by believing that terrorists are simply a sect of violent religious extremists who can eventually be killed or captured, we prove our ignorance. In truth, they are an ever-growing congregation of devout believers in their clerics' interpretations of the Koran. And those interpretations could make them willing to use weapons of mass destruction that would set the whole world on fire.

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Many people these days are asking, "If terrorists have spread all over the world, can we ever get rid of them?" In truth, they pose an unprecedented threat to everyone, everywhere, which requires an unprecedented response: Unless we favor terrorism, we must improve our own religious understanding sufficiently to persuade the terrorists to improve theirs!

Obviously, that is a monumental task, since most people won't even consider altering their religious beliefs or unbelief. But they know the people who should! Nevertheless, in this brief book, I offer a glimpse of the Koran and some of the Hebrew and Christian teachings directly related to Islam, in the hope it will whet your appetite to learn more.

We urgently need to improve our understanding of the teachings that have inspired hatred and bloodshed for 2,000 years. Otherwise, some people, somewhere, will use our vastly "improved" weapons to destroy the people they condemn as "God's enemies." In the pitch blackness of a nuclear winter, everyone will be desperately praying that the promised Messiah proves as real as the prophesied "gross darkness" (Isa. 60:2) — which the Prophets told us we could avoid, *if* the "fathers" and the "children" learn what they must to turn their hearts to each other (Mal. 3:24).

## Deadly Divisions

**B**efore we embark on our study of the Scriptures, I offer this succinct summary of the one subject that has always divided believers in Abraham's God.

The beliefs that have set Jews, Christians and Muslims against each other have little to do with the *Father* of mankind, in Whom all believers place their faith. They've warred with each other over the *Messiah*, who, ironically, is expected to establish true and enduring peace on earth.

From the start, the Jews would not acknowledge Jesus as the promised Messiah because he did not fulfill explicit prophecies associated with the Messiah in the Hebrew Scriptures — most notably, the promise of "peace without end" (Isa. 9:6).

When Muhammad delivered the Koran, he often spoke of "the Messiah Jesus" (Women 4:171) — which infuriated the Jews. But Muhammad also sternly reprimanded Christians for identifying the Messiah as the second member of a Divine Trinity — which infuriated the Christians. So, both the Jews and the Christians, each for their own reasons, declared

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Muhammad a "false Prophet" and Islam a "false religion" — which infuriated the Muslims. They responded by proclaiming that Islam had wholly supplanted Judaism and Christianity, which were perpetuating "false teachings." Furthermore, they declared Jews and Christians who believed those falsities "unbelievers" in Abraham's God.

## Unity

**M**uhammad received his “recitations,” which became the Koran, from God’s angelic Messenger Gabriel, who occasionally visited Muhammad over a period of 22 years. Gabriel is also mentioned in the Hebrew Scriptures and the Christian Bible, and in spite of Muhammad’s severe reprimands of Jews and Christians concerning the Messiah, his recitations *never* dishonor their Scriptures, though the behavior of many Muslims now conveys the opposite impression! Moreover, the Koran respectfully speaks of Jews and Christians as “the People of the Book” (The Family of Imran 3:113; Women 4:171). In fact, the Koran honors all the Divinely instructed Messengers introduced and quoted in the Old and New Testaments, and it reverently summarizes the history of monotheism.

For example, the Sacred Book of Islam says, “...We have revealed the Torah [the first Five Books of the Hebrew Scriptures], in which there is guidance and light. By it the prophets who surrendered themselves [to God] judged the Jews....” “After them We sent forth Jesus...and gave him the Gospel...corroborating what was revealed before it in the Torah.... ” “And to you [Muhammad] We have revealed the

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Book with the truth. It confirms the Scriptures which came before it and stands as a guardian over them" (The Table 5:44,46,48).

The Koran names many of God's Messengers, whose submission to Him was exemplary. Chief among them is Abraham, the Patriarch of Jews, Christians, and Muslims; Moses, to whom God revealed the Torah, "in which there is guidance and light"; "the Messiah, Jesus," who "does not disdain to be a servant of God" (Women 4:172); and Muhammad, "the Seal of the Prophets" (The Confederate Tribes 33:40), who contradicted both Jewish and Christian beliefs about Jesus.

Muhammad told Muslims to believe "...what was revealed to Abraham and Ishmael, to Isaac and Jacob and the tribes, and what was given to Moses and Jesus and the prophets." Muslims are to "...discriminate against none of them"

The Koran also honors other servants of God, introduced in the Hebrew Scriptures. While those men delivered God's teachings directly to the Hebrews, they were actually speaking to everyone who is willing to listen. But most believers only listen to the teachings of their chosen sect within their chosen religious family. They pay scant attention to the teachings of other sects and spurn the teachings of the other monotheistic families.

Hence, Jews, Christians, and Muslims each live in a self-imposed ignorance of what the others know about God. That

means Christians and Muslims have proven no wiser than the Jews they've scorned: Each family is certain the others can't teach them anything about God that they don't already know!

Nevertheless, Muhammad told Muslims to believe "...what was revealed to Abraham and Ishmael, to Isaac and Jacob and the tribes, and what was given to Moses and Jesus and the prophets." Muslims are to "...discriminate against none of them" (The Family of Imran 3:84). In actual practice, however, Muslims do exactly what Muhammad condemned, which is exactly what Jews and Christians do, with arrogant certainty. They "...draw a line between God and His apostles, saying: 'We believe in some but deny others....'" (Women 4:150).

Although the Koran preaches respect for the Torah, the Gospels, and "the People of the Book," the Text speaks better of the Christians, who acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah, than of the Jews, who don't. Still, when speaking of Jews, the Koran says, "There are among the People of the Book some upright men who...believe in God and the Last Day; who enjoin justice and forbid evil and strive with one another in good works. These are righteous men: whatever good they do, its reward shall not be denied them. God well knows the righteous" (The Family of Imran 3:113-115). Another time, the Koran plainly tells Muslims, "...among the people of Moses there are some who preach the truth and act justly" (The Heights 7:159).

For our purpose, the most significant single word in the previous paragraph is "some." Instead of approaching Jews with

respect because *some* are "upright men" who "preach the truth," more than a few Muslims have become convinced there are no "righteous" Jews, because all Jews now support the sinful resurrection of Israel, the nation God, Himself, destroyed. Clearly, those Muslims are not obeying Muhammad, since they don't believe what was revealed to Moses, who foretold the final exile and eventual return of the Jews to Israel before the Hebrews had even entered the Promised Land (Deut. 30:1-5). If Muslims obeyed Muhammad by believing Moses, they could never strive to "drive Israel into the sea."

Worse yet, numberless Muslims neglect other specific instructions Muhammad recited. For instance, he told them that even if Jews and Christians try to lure them away from Islam, Muslims should, "Forgive them and bear with them until God make[s] known His will" (The Cow 2:109). Muhammad also explicitly instructed Muslims to "Be courteous when you argue with the People of the Book, except with those among them who do evil" (The Spider 29:46).

Thus, Muhammad told Muslims to treat their fellow believers in God with *respect, tolerance, forgiveness, and patience*, except those "do evil." But, according to today's most widely heard Muslims, all the "People of the Book" now "do evil."

Muhammad had much to say about the treatment due idolaters and all "evildoers." And those are the teachings countless Muslims have practiced with zeal.

## Believers and Unbelievers

**T**he Koran unconditionally denounces idolatry. Muslims are told, "Idolatry is more grievous than bloodshed." Therefore, Muslims should "Fight for the sake of God those [idolaters] that fight against you...Slay them wherever you find them...." "Fight against them until idolatry is no more and God's religion reigns supreme." But, the Koran adds, "...do not attack them first. God does not love the aggressors" (The Cow 2:190,191,193). Furthermore, Muslims are *explicitly forbidden* to attack "...those idolaters who have honoured their treaties with you...." "So long as they keep faith with you, keep faith with them. God loves the righteous" (Repentance 9:4,7).

Muslims, however, are warned, "...do not befriend your fathers or your brothers if they choose unbelief in preference to faith" (Repentance 9:23), but "...if they mend their ways, know that God is forgiving and merciful" (The Cow 2:192). Otherwise, "It is not for the Prophet [Muhammad] or the believers to beg forgiveness for idolaters, even though they be related to them...they have earned the punishment of Hell" (Repentance 9:113).

Jews and Christians might instantly shrink from a religion that forbids prayer for unbelieving kin and unconditionally condemns them to hell. Indeed, the Old Testament rarely even mentions a "netherworld" (Ps.139:8; Prov. 5:5.) And the New Testament, though it speaks of hell and "...the fire that shall never be quenched..." (Mark 9:43), quotes Jesus asking God to forgive his own heathen executioners (Luke 23:34).

The Koran, however, has much to say about hell. And the Text doesn't leave "the punishment of Hell" to the imagination. Unbelievers are told of "...water as hot as molten brass, which will scald their faces" (The Cave 18:29). The damned will be dragged with "...chains and shackles round their necks..." (The Believer 40:71), and "...lashed with rods of iron" (Pilgrimage 22:21).

Outsiders like to cite those grisly descriptions as proof that Islam is an "absurd religion," deliberately designed to frighten childishly superstitious people into worshipful obedience of Muhammad, their new leader. Yet, not one word in the Koran suggests that Muslims should worship Muhammad. And they *never have*. He called the Arabs to obey and worship the One and Only compassionate and merciful God of all mankind — but a God Who is not *wholly* compassionate and merciful, as the Hebrew Prophets made clear.

Long before Muhammad lived, the Hebrew Scriptures occasionally described the Lord God as a merciless and terrify-

ing "man of war" (Ex. 15:3), as evidenced when He ordered the Hebrews to kill every Canaanite man, woman, child, and animal in certain cities (Josh. 6:21; 10:30-40; 11:9-15). In light of modern medical knowledge, we could reasonably wonder if that seemingly merciless order was actually merciful to mankind. Some sexually promiscuous Canaanites, whose behavior God specifically condemned, might have acquired diseases that urgently needed to be eradicated, until men became able to recognize how those deadly diseases are transmitted.

Unlike the Hebrews, who fought the heathen Canaanites solely to gain control of the Promised Land, Muhammad declared war on idolatry wherever it flourished. The Christians had been commissioned to love their fellowmen; the Muslims would have a very different role to play. They were to introduce God to the unbelievers that Christianity could not persuade. And if Muhammad's teachings about the "forgiving and merciful" God didn't sway them, his vivid depictions of the hell awaiting unbelievers got their attention!

Although, by Muhammad's time, Christianity had made a little progress among the Arabs, Christian teachings were utterly foreign to the vast majority of desert dwellers. Their sense of justice didn't include "turning the other cheek," as Christianity would have them do. To the desert-hardened Arabs, accustomed to dispensing swift and often barbaric retribution for offenses, Muhammad's fearsome descriptions of hell weren't inconceivable. Besides, if the promise of hell's agonies left some idolaters

unmoved, the threat of total ostracism by their own converted families would cause them to "think twice" about Muhammad's God.

Actually, the Arabs had always been aware of the invisible God worshipped by Abraham and his firstborn son, Ishmael. And the Arabs had always included Abraham's God in their pantheon of gods. But they gave their real devotion to the hundreds of visible gods surrounding the Kabah, the sacred shrine in Mecca. The city was more than Arabia's commercial hub; it was the nation's religious center. All Arabs revered the shrine and the 360 idols surrounding it.

Hundreds of years later, the refurbished Kabah became the Holy House of Islam. The Koran reveals that Abraham and Ishmael built the structure as a "House" of worship (The Cow 2:125,127). But soon after Ishmael died, the Arabs began housing idols in and around the shrine.

Despite a long history of tribal warfare, once a year, members from all the heathen tribes made a holy pilgrimage to the Kabah, where violence was strictly forbidden. The nomads, who also made lesser pilgrimages throughout the year, brought gifts to the official keepers of the Kabah, who were members of Muhammad's tribe, the Quraysh. The idolatrous pilgrims also traded goods in the Meccan marketplace — all of which helped to make the Quraysh wealthy!

Thus, the Muslims became dedicated to reducing the number of unbelievers in the world, by peacefully introducing them to Islam or by killing them if they broke their treaties.

Muhammad sternly told the idolaters: "Call on no other god besides God..." (The Poets 26:213); "...there is no god but Him...He is the Executioner of Justice, the Only God, the Mighty, the Wise One" (The Family of Imran 3:18). Muhammad gave his people no leeway. It was not enough to include Abraham's God with their other gods. They had to destroy all their idols or suffer the excruciating punishments of hell.

That all-encompassing and uncompromising command soon prompted the Quraysh to draw their swords to defend their gods — and their income from the pilgrims! During all the ensuing battles, the words of the Koran sounded in the ears of the faithful. "When you meet the unbelievers in the battle-field strike off their heads and, when you have laid them low, bind your captives firmly...Had God willed, He could Himself have punished them; but He has ordained it thus that He might test you..." (Muhammad 47:4).

Thus, the Muslims became dedicated to reducing the number of unbelievers in the world, by peacefully introducing them to Islam or by killing them if they broke their treaties. Muhammad, however, didn't confine his attention to heathens, alone. Nor were heathens the only persons who resisted Muhammad. The Jews living in Arabia also saw him and his new religion as a serious threat.

## The Jews

In 70 A.D., the Romans destroyed the Great Temple in Jerusalem and expelled the Jews from their Promised Land, as Moses had foretold hundreds of years before. Some Jews took refuge in Arabia, where, for the next 600 years, they would live in relative peace among their Semitic cousins who, like most heathens, allowed men to worship their own gods, without interference. But the emergence of the Muslims in 622 A.D. worried the Jews, for they already had bitter knowledge of the Christians who adamantly believed that everyone must embrace Christian teachings or suffer eternal damnation! Besides, those preachers of "love and mercy" were seldom loving and merciful toward the people who had wanted Jesus crucified.

Many Christians openly despised Jews and relentlessly demanded their total allegiance to Jesus. Although Muhammad treated the Jews respectfully, the Jews feared the Muslims would ultimately turn against them, as the Christians had done. And the day finally came when Muhammad announced that Islam is "The only true faith in God's sight..." (The Family of Imran 3:19).

...above all else, Muhammad's teachings focused on the *omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent God and the promised Messiah*. Those teachings "confirm the Scriptures and stand as a guardian over them."

While Muhammad's recitations praised the Scriptures, his instructions for daily behavior differed from Moses' teachings. Ritual worship, rules for marriage, and other conduct prescribed for Muslims was in keeping with Arabic culture, not Jewish traditions. In like manner, Christian rituals, rules, and dietary laws differed from Jewish customs. (From those facts, we can reasonably conclude that some Divine edicts are the laws for the day, not the Laws for all time.) But, above all else, Muhammad's teachings focused on the *omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent God and the promised Messiah*. Those teachings "confirm the Scriptures and stand as a guardian over them." In *that sense*, an unprejudiced eye can see Islam as *the essence* of Judaism and Christianity combined into one "true faith."

No matter how the unprejudiced might see Islam, the greatly outnumbered Jews in Arabia didn't trust the Muslims to "be courteous" to them or to guard their Scriptures! Moreover, the Jews' distrust of the Muslims could only intensify, as they listened to Muhammad's recitations. He frequently spoke of some Jews who "...believe in idols and false gods..." (Women 4:51), and those who "...believe neither in God nor the Last Day..." (Repentance 9:29). "You see many among them vie with one another in sin and wickedness and practice what is unlawful" (The Table 5:62).

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Furthermore, "...they broke their covenant, denied the revelations of God, and killed the prophets unjustly" (Women 4:155).

The Jews could never forget or deny their ancestors' transgressions, which their Scriptures thoroughly describe. Muhammad, however, was also speaking of "many among" the Jews currently living in Arabia. But Muhammad's condemnation of "unbelievers" was not restricted to idolaters and faithless Jews. He delivered equally serious charges against the Christians who, by Muhammad's time, prayed to saints and officially identified Jesus as "God the Son."

## The Christians

**M**uhammad says of Christians, "They make of their clerics and their monks, and of the Messiah ... Lords besides God; though they were ordered to serve one God only" (Repentance 9:31). Mary and Jesus came as "...a sign to all mankind" (The Prophets 21:91), but "Unbelievers [in God] are those that say: 'God is the Messiah, the son of Mary.' For the Messiah himself said: '...serve God, my Lord and your Lord'" (The Table 5:72).

The Koran warns Christians: "People of the Book, do not transgress the bounds of your religion. Speak nothing but the truth about God...and do not say: 'Three'...God is but one God...The Messiah does not disdain to be a servant of God..." (Women 4:171-172).

From the start, the Jews had denounced the Christians for corrupting the worship of the One and Only "Lord God." And the Christians had denounced the Jews for denying that Jesus fulfilled Old Testament prophecies of the Messiah. So, both families could wholly agree with Muhammad's condemnation of the other. But both families wholly rejected his condemnation of themselves!

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Consequently, neither the Jews nor the Christians would give their allegiance to Islam and Muhammad. The Koran succinctly describes the situation: "The Jews say the Christians are misguided, and the Christians say it is the Jews who are misguided...God will judge their disputes on the Day of Resurrection" (The Cow 2:113).

Nevertheless, some Muslims haven't been content to instruct heathens and wait for God to judge "misguided" Jews and Christians. They've preferred to obey another Koranic teaching, which they speak of as "the law of retaliation."

## The Muslims Fight in “the cause of God”

**W**hen Muhammad received his "recitations," Gabriel told him: "Your only duty is to give warning.. We have sent you with the truth to proclaim good news and to warn your people.." (The Creator 35:23-24). "If they become Muslims they shall be rightly guided; if they give no heed, then your only duty is to warn them" (The Family of Imran 3:20).

Islam teaches that persons who are "rightly guided" submit to God's Will, as Abraham did. But Abraham lived in peace with his neighbors and waited, submissively, for God to fulfill His promises. Some Muslims, however, believe they should evidence their submission to God by strictly administering "the law of retaliation."

The Koran says, "Believers, retaliation is decreed for you in bloodshed...In retaliation you have a safeguard for your lives; perchance you will guard yourselves against evil" (The Cow 2:178-179). Yet, the Koran also tells Muslims, "If you punish, let your punishment be commensurate with the wrong that has been done you. But it shall be best for you to endure your

wrongs with patience" (The Bee 16:126). "To endure with fortitude and to forgive is a duty incumbent on all" (Counsel 42:43).

For close to 1,400 years, uncountable Muslims have chosen forgiveness over retaliation. Therefore, they've treated their fellow believers, regardless of their religion, race, or nationality, with respect, tolerance, and patience. But the world seldom hears about them. Other Muslims, who prefer retaliation, have commanded the world's attention.

Muslims who are bent on retaliating like to believe they're following Muhammad's example. Indeed, for all his patience, Muhammad adhered to the precept, "Let evil be rewarded with like evil...Those who avenge themselves when wronged incur no guilt" (Counsel 42:40-41). Furthermore, the Koran assures Muslims who answer the call to war against evil, "If you should die or be slain in the cause of God...before Him you shall all be gathered" (The Family of Imran 3:157-158).

The problems that arise from those teachings rest in the infinite ways individuals can believe themselves "wronged," or believe they are fighting and dying "in the cause of God." Muhammad, however, set examples of righteous retaliation against evildoers, by attacking some Jews who had clearly wronged him.

## The Spirit of Faith

**A**t first, the Jews didn't fear the small group of Arabs who had renounced idolatry and embraced monotheism. Muhammad had always treated the Jews graciously. Even when arguing with them, he obeyed the Koran's injunction to "be courteous." So, those Jews who found themselves living in the midst of a growing community of Muslims entered into a treaty proposed by Muhammad. The Jews solemnly promised to side with the Muslims against heathens, in case of war. But, in truth, the Jews privately hoped for and expected the quick demise of Muhammad and his "false teachings" about the Messiah. As the Jews saw their pact with Muhammad, it could benefit them while they waited for the Quraysh to permanently dispense with their renegade kinsman!

The Jews could enter into a solemn covenant with Muhammad — which they believed they would never have to honor — because he did not require them to acknowledge him as a true Prophet of God. Muhammad's first concern was not with persuading Jews to believe him, but with his own idolatrous people, to whom he was bringing a Sacred Book in their own language.

Instead of embracing the Book, the Meccans took up their swords. In the Battle of Badr, in 624 A.D., Muhammad's 319 men fought 1,000 Meccans. Like Abraham's tiny force, which had rescued his nephew, Lot, and other prisoners from their enemies, (Gen. 14:12-16), the greatly outnumbered Muslims routed the Meccans. Their victory surprised and alarmed the Jews. They feared the victorious Muslims would soon turn their attention to them. And their fear had a basis in fact.

Muhammad tried to persuade the Jews to see his victory at Badr as a Divine "sign" (The Family of Imran 3:13), and he urged the Jews to rid themselves of erroneous beliefs by embracing Islam. The Jews saw his victory only as the defeat of inferior soldiers. But they also believed they were hearing the beginning of the dreaded demands for allegiance to Islam. They replied by mocking Muhammad and his often imprecise Bible stories. Muhammad might have forgiven their mockery, but the Jews did something far worse. They conspired with the heathens against him.

Hence, some Jews not only ridiculed Muhammad and his teachings, they broke their covenant with him by joining his enemies! Muslims were specifically forbidden to war with idolaters who honor their treaties. But persons who *break their solemn word* prove themselves *evil*. Therefore, in 626 A.D., Muhammad ordered a military attack against a specific Jewish settlement and, later, against other Jewish enclaves.

Muhammad attacked particular Jewish settlements that had "wronged" him, by evilly breaking their treaty with him. But, through the centuries, individual Muslims have had to judge for themselves who has "wronged" them and what they should do about it. And Muslims have never lacked spiritual shepherds who have urged them to choose retaliation over forgiveness.

Innumerable outsiders think of Islam as, "A hateful religion that breeds crazed fanatics, who are forever seeking vengeance and self-proclaimed martyrdom."

To avoid abusing the privilege to retaliate, a person must practice profound self-restraint and constant caution. Individual Muslims, however, are no more self-controlled or cautious than most human beings. And they're as subject as anyone else to think themselves innocent of committing wrongs and to judge others guilty.

Those common human flaws, combined with a religious directive to protect oneself from evil by killing evildoers, have resulted in acts of merciless violence, perpetrated by organized groups and individual Muslims against often randomly selected persons in various nations. In turn, those violent acts have elicited a response from Jews, Christians, heathens, and skeptics that is expressed today in a widely held opinion. Although their shared opinion is usually couched in more "diplomatic" terms, in essence, innumerable outsiders think of Islam as, "A hateful

religion that breeds crazed fanatics, who are forever seeking vengeance and self-proclaimed martyrdom."

Still, death-dealing, death-seeking persons who call themselves Muslims do not reflect *the spirit* of Muhammad's teachings any more than the persons who called themselves Christians while incinerating millions of Jews and other "inferior people" reflected *the spirit* of Jesus' teachings.

\* \* \* \* \*

The Hebrews, as the first monotheists, were the first to behave in ways that bore little or no resemblance to their Prophets' teachings. For example, more than a few Hebrew kings openly practiced idolatry, and many Israelites welcomed those kings. Under their reign, disaffected Hebrews were free to perform acts of devotion to idols — especially to the gods of Syria, which were known to enjoy watching humans mate on the hilltops!

The Prophets strongly condemned such practices. But many Israelites, having tasted freedom from religious restraints, didn't want to return to their parents' "old-fashioned ways." So, they scorned the Prophets who rebuked them. Still, not all Hebrews rebelled. Some strictly obeyed *the letter* of every law decreed by their spiritual shepherds. Nevertheless, there were always Hebrews who sincerely tried to obey *the spirit* of God's Commandments, which, in essence, forbid them to do unto others what they would not want done to themselves.

Early on, Christians also began to argue over leaders and rules. But, when Christians disagreed, they divided into sects that killed each other. Of all such divisions, the Koran says, "...men have divided themselves into factions, each rejoicing in its own doctrines. Leave them in their error till a time appointed" (The Believers 23:53-54).

Today, countless Muslims evidence their submission to God by practicing the patient and forgiving spirit of Islam. But other Muslims zealously devote their lives to avenging evil "with like evil,"

Thus, Muslims were distinctly told how to treat their fellow believers in God. They were to "leave them in their error," if that's where they chose to remain, wait for God to "judge their disputes," and adhere to the precept that forgiveness is "a duty incumbent on all."

Still, it didn't take long for Muslims to behave like their elders! They, too, divided into feuding factions that argued over leaders and rules. The divisions began shortly after Muhammad died. He had no son, and he left no instructions about his successor, an omission that caused an immediate problem. One Muslim sect, known as Shiites, believed the rightful leader of Islam was Muhammad's male cousin. But most Muslims, known as Sunnites, did not believe their leader must come from Muhammad's family. The two factions not only argued with each other, they argued among themselves and divided into more sects.

Today, countless Muslims evidence their submission to God by practicing the patient and forgiving spirit of Islam. But other Muslims zealously devote their lives to avenging evil "with like evil," never doubting they are wise enough to impose a punishment "commensurate with the wrong that has been done." In other words, individual Muslims, like individual Jews and Christians, observe some of their religion's teachings more diligently than others, and each applies those teachings as he personally sees fit. Moreover, most Muslims, like most Jews and Christians, are unconcerned with how poorly their actions reflect on the God they claim to honor and obey! Such behavior, however, is only another way Muslims have followed the dreadful examples set by their elders — as Muhammad predicted!

Muhammad's personal conversations, preserved by his Companions, reveal his accurate perception of the future. He warned his people that they would follow the same degenerate path tread by Jews and Christians: "Ye will follow them that were before you span by span and cubit by cubit until if they went down the hole of a poisonous reptile ye would follow them down."

Today, the Jews, the "fathers" of monotheism, and the Christians and Muslims, the "children" of the faith, are leading themselves and the world toward the "gross darkness" foretold by Isaiah, solely because they have refused to learn more about God from each other — which could turn their hearts to each

other. Yet, if enough "outsiders" were to improve their own understanding by learning from all the Prophets, the arrogantly proud "believers" would be shamed into rethinking their own beliefs.

**Religious terrorism poses an unprecedented threat to everyone, everywhere, which requires an unprecedented response: Unless we favor terrorism, we must improve our own religious understanding sufficiently to persuade the terrorists to improve theirs!**

## About The Author

If really wanting someone to "drop dead" counts as murder, there isn't a Commandment I haven't broken. But today I'm in my 70s, and I try not to break any of the Commandments. Still, I can hardly condemn those who do, having been one of them! Indeed, I've become proficient at truly not judging my fellowmen, though I sometimes have trouble with self-satisfied people who are contemptuous of everyone they consider morally or socially "beneath them." When I find myself in their company, they are likely to hear the very sharp tongue I was born with and which I have spent a lifetime trying to control — since life has taught me that when I use my tongue wrongly, my wrongs will return upon my own head. And you can be sure I am conscious of that truth when I choose my written words.

I was born in St. Louis, Mo. in 1927 and raised in a moderately orthodox Jewish home, which means there were many rules to obey! I didn't like the rules and broke them whenever I thought I could get away with it. Nor did I like the way those rules set me apart from the Christian children in my school. So, I began to regret being Jewish. My childish regret proved to be

of great importance to me, for it made me acutely aware, from an early age, of the different beliefs about the God Who had always seemed very familiar to me. From the time I was six years old, I had a strong sense of God's nearness, and His understanding and forgiveness of human frailties — which I would come to be grateful for, when I finally recognized all the Laws I'd broken! In my adolescence, my constant awareness of what others believed about God led me to begin reading the Sacred Scriptures of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. I soon became amazed and repulsed by some official interpretations of those written Scriptures, which the organized religions developed and preached as Truth!

In my youth, I never expected to write the book I've now written. For the most part, my life, like my book, has been a total surprise to me. Only in my later years did I realize that practically everything worth noting about my life — especially the persons I purposely set out to meet, from the highly respected to the scorned and imprisoned — had given me a broad understanding of the bewilderment and confusion that the teachings of organized religions impart. My understanding was expanded during the two years I lived in Jerusalem, among many "devout" Jews, Christians, and Muslims, who were so certain of their own religion's superiority they barely concealed their contempt for each other!

When I was in my 30s, I wrote a book about God, having long since learned that my familiarity with Him was not some-

thing everyone experienced, as I had naively assumed in my childhood. My premature effort to write about Him ended in failure, and I never expected to try again. But, thirty years later, I started to write a short "essay" about Him for a troubled friend who had lost all faith in Abraham's God. Ten years later, I ended the "essay" that had become a book! I stopped writing, not because I thought I had spoken as clearly as I could, but because I suddenly felt it was time for the book to be published. Evidently my feelings were right, since *Of Promises and Previews* was released a few months before 9/11, when the whole world would finally begin to seriously think about the nuclear warfare my book discussed.

This synopsis of my life means that I didn't prepare to write about God by seeking college degrees in any field that could recommend me to persons only impressed by scholastic credentials. In fact, I never consciously prepared to write it, and I offer only one reason for people to read it. The combined teachings of all the Prophets could make believers and skeptics, alike, wise enough to avoid the "gross darkness" explicitly described in the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures, a darkness that could now be nearer than we want to believe! At the least, my book could help readers maintain their sanity while they struggle to endure the "darkness," which, if we must endure it, we're promised will end when the sun rises "with healing in its wings."

We urgently need to help each other recognize — and resolve — the arguments that threaten to severely interrupt our

Who Is The God of Islam?

generation's life on earth! If enough people, one person at a time, become involved, we CAN CHANGE OUR WORLD, which is one thing everyone agrees sorely needs improvement!