

# The Operation Reveille Shotar

“Test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out.”

## Frequently Asked Questions about Islam

by Bruce Sidebotham

### What is the difference between “Muslim” and “Islam”?

“Muslim” is a descriptive adjective like the word “Christian” (a Muslim book), or it can be a noun when referring to a person (a Muslim). “Islam” is the religion and is a noun like the word “Christianity.” “Islam” becomes an adjective by adding “-ic” to become “Islamic.”

### What is *Shari’a* ?

*Shari’a* is Muslim law. It is based on the Qur’an (Muslim scriptures) and the Haddith (extra scriptural writings about Muhammad). Just as the Constitution rules the United States, *Shari’a* rules Muslim countries. Muslim courts interpret *Shari’a* like U.S. courts interpret the Constitution. Each Muslim country has its own unique interpretation of *Shari’a*. For example, in some countries women must cover their faces completely. In others they only need to cover their hair.

### What is the difference between Shiite and Sunni Muslims?

The difference between Shiite and Sunni Islam is like the difference between Protestant and Catholic Christianity. Sunni Muslims accept only the Haddith and Qur’an as authoritative for guiding faith and practice much like the Protestant principle reflected in the Reformation slogan “*sola scriptura*.” Shiite Muslims also accept authority of the Ayatollah, as Catholics accept the authority of the Pope.

### Is Islam the fastest growing religion?

Actually, for the past one hundred years, atheists and those adhering to ‘no religion’ have grown 45 times faster than Muslims, and 75 times faster than Christians. People with no religion have grown from a minuscule 0.2 percent to over fifteen percent of world population in just one century. Although atheism’s growth has stagnated since Soviet Communism collapsed, secularism has replaced religion as undergirding nearly all of social and political life throughout most of the world.

In the same century, Islam grew from twelve to twenty percent of world population while Christianity remained stagnant at one third. However, strictly comparing Muslim and Christian population growth percentages is misleading.

High birthrate (2.07%) accounts for nearly 97 percent of Muslim growth while Christian birthrate (1.22%) falls below the world average (1.41%). Ten percent of Christian growth comes from conversions. Annual converts to Christianity (2.5 million) outnumber converts to Islam (865,000) three to one. Islam may have the fastest growing population, but Christianity is more successfully penetrating new (usually non-Muslim) populations.



### What is *jihad* ?

Well, what is a crusade? Both words have literal and figurative uses. When President Bush slipped, mentioning a crusade on terrorism, he was not talking about evangelistic outreach. Campus Crusade for Christ is not a militant organization. In one sense *jihad* means “struggle,” and in another it means “holy war.” If Christians can use “crusade” in both figurative and literal senses, then we need to allow Muslims the same linguistic latitude.

### Do Muslims and Christians worship the same God?

By saying, “They surely disbelieve who say, ‘Lo Allah is the Messiah, son of Mary’ . . . who say, ‘Lo Allah is the third of three’” (Surah 5:72), the Qur’an denies Christ’s deity and God’s trinity. Thus, by not believing the same thing about God, Muslims and Christians do not worship the same God. However, the word “Allah” for God is actually closer in spelling and pronunciation to the generic word “Ellohim” used for God in the Old Testament.

Since neither ancient Arabic nor ancient Hebrew vowels were written, and the consonants in “Allah” and the singular form of “Ellohim” are the same, they are technically the same word. The word “God,” on the other hand, comes from the Germanic tribal and pagan word “Gott” which has no cognate in the Bible’s original languages. English uses an originally pagan term for the God of the Bible. At least Arabic uses a term that appears transliterated from Old Testament Hebrew in its versions of the Old and New Testament.

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### Why do fundamentalist Muslims hate America?

Once united into the world's dominant empire, fundamentalist Muslims now feel humiliated by the United States and her allies who export decadence, impose international laws, and sustain Middle Eastern political divisions (including Israel). Observe Muslims practicing their religion, and you will see that public conformity and external appearances rather than internalized beliefs and motives define Muslim identity. Islam does not prosper without socially controlling the community within which it is expressed. The same struggle with secularism which eliminates expressions of religious faith from public life in America (i.e. school prayer and the Ten Commandments) agitates fundamentalists by threatening to make Islam politically irrelevant.



The Sidebotham family knows what it means to conform.

### Is Islam a threat to Western civilization?

Although Muslim civilization is the only one to have ever threatened Western civilization's existence, today's risk from Islam is like that from a cornered animal. Suicide bombers are desperate people on desperate missions for desperate causes. Islam cannot return to its former glory because the foundation for its past prosperity has been destroyed.

Islam's once great empire that was the most advanced for its time in virtually every field was made possible through the productivity of overrun Christians. In *The Decline of Eastern Christianity Under Islam* (p. 128), Bat Ye'or writes, "Scribes, secretaries, treasurers, accountants, architects, craftsmen, peasants, doctors, scholars, diplomats, translators, and politicians, the Christians formed the base, the texture, the elite, and the sinews of the Muslim empire. . . . Islamic literature, science, art, philosophy, and jurisprudence were born and developed not in Arabia, within an exclusively Arab and Muslim population, but in the midst of conquered peoples."

### Was 9/11 a judgement on American decadence?

God's judgement always demonstrates his mercy and results in lasting change. While 9/11 did awaken many from complacency about spiritual and national values, it has not brought lasting change regarding the sins which were supposed to have been judged.

The attack on America was actually an indirect answer to prayer. When Habakkuk cried to the Lord for deliverance from violence, God answered by raising up the Babylonians (Hab. 1:2-6). Since persecution of Christians in places like Pakistan, Sudan, Indonesia, Nigeria, and Saudi Arabia began rising, millions have been praying for divine intervention. Besides liberating Shelter Now workers accused of evangelizing Afghans, resultant military and economic actions are constraining fanatic groups that have been responsible for much human suffering.

### Why did Muslim terrorists attack America?

Following the example set for them by the CIA and Special Forces, after consolidating power in Afghanistan, the Taliban began exporting their fundamentalist revolution by funding and training insurgencies in places like Chechnya, Yemen, the Philippines, and Indonesia. To inspire followers, America needed to be humiliated. To deter interference, America needed to be intimidated. Underestimating American resolve as the Japanese did at Pearl Harbor, the terrorists expected this devastating symbolic blow would drive Americans into isolationism just as America retreated from Vietnam, Lebanon, and Somalia when challenged and disgraced.

### What happened to Christianity in the Middle East?

Seventh century Middle Eastern Christianity was divided among Greeks, Syrians, Armenians, Samaritans, and Egyptians and into Monophysite, Nestorian, Jacobite, Melchite, and Orthodox factions the way that North and South America were once divided among warring Indian tribes when Europeans arrived. In the same way that American Indians were either killed, assimilated, or put on reservations by immigrating Europeans, Middle Eastern Christians were killed, enslaved, assimilated, marginalized, and overwhelmed by migrating Arabs (7<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> cent.) and Turks (13<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> cent.).

### Is Islam a religion of violence or peace?

Islam is almost evenly split between secular-leaning moderates and intolerant extremists. Fighting between these groups sheds more blood than war between Muslims and non-Muslims.

Moderates and extremists divide over the same issue separating liberal and fundamentalist Christians. Fundamentalists interpret their scriptures literally. Liberals, however, interpret their scriptures allegorically or symbolically. Just as liberal Christians doubt that Moses really parted the Red Sea and that Jesus really rose from the dead, moderate Muslims don't believe the Qur'an intends what the extremists say that it does. Just as fundamentalists don't believe the liberals are "real" Christians, extremists say the moderates are not "real" Muslims.

### Does Islam allow freedom of religion?

Just as modern American courts allow Christians to practice privately without imposing their "values" on secular society, Islam usually allows Christians to worship freely provided they do not disturb Muslims.

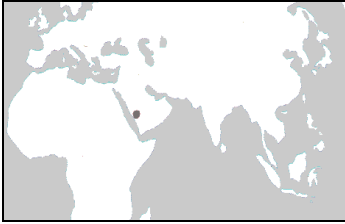
Unfortunately, Muslims are often easily disturbed, as in Saudi Arabia where crosses may not be publicly displayed and in Egypt where ancient churches may not be repaired.

The Qur'an verse saying, "There is no compulsion in religion" (Surah 2:256) supports freedom of religion but does not support freedom of conscience. Unlike Christian children who must still choose a religion for themselves, Muslims are born into Islam much like Americans are born into U.S. citizenship. Leaving Islam is like renouncing one's citizenship. Even most moderate Muslims accept that converts out of Islam may be killed as traitors.



# A Brief History of Muslim Civilization

## 570 - 632, Birth



In 570 Mohammed was born in Mecca, a staging town for Arabian camel caravans. In 610 he began receiving and promoting revelations. In 622 he fled to Medina. This is called the *Hijra*. Muslim years are numbered from this event.

In 630 he returned to Mecca and conquered it. These two "holy" cities, called the *hijjabs*, are forbidden to non-Muslims. When Mohammed died in 632, his teachings had spread throughout Arabia. His followers consolidated his teachings in the Qu'ran and embarked on a holy war, *jihad*, to spread Islam.

## 632 - 732, Conquest



For one hundred years Islam spread rapidly by conquest. Political domination was achieved throughout the Middle East, across North Africa, and into Spain. Major centers of cultural Christianity like Antioch, Alexandria, Jerusalem, and Carthage fell.

Rival Byzantine and Persian Empires being racked internally with bloody sectarian feuds gave way rapidly to the new overlords who could arbitrate denominational feuds impartially. Europe's poorly civilized tribes were in their Dark Ages. As centers of Christian faith and learning, only Rome and Constantinople remained.

## 732 - 1250, Stagnation



Charles Martel, general of the Franks, stopped advancing Muslims in France in 732. Geographical expansion stagnated. Some regions broke away from central rule. Political power migrated from Arabia to Egypt, Bagdad, Persia, and eventually Turkey.

In the East, Mongols spread destruction among Islamicized areas of Central Asia, driving more Turks into Byzantine Asia Minor. From the west, Muslims began battling Crusaders of the ascending Roman Catholic Holy Roman Empire who captured Jerusalem and significant parts of Palestine.

## 1250 - 1700, Resurgence



Ottoman Turks built the largest empire of their day. Crusader Antioch fell in 1268. The last Crusader stronghold at Acre, Syria fell in 1291. Constantinople fell in 1453, and the Byzantine Empire was destroyed. Islam entered the Balkans, setting the stage for World War One and today's Kosovo and Bosnian crisis. Ottoman conquest of Europe was halted at Vienna in 1683. Traders spread Islam deep into South and Southeast Asia.

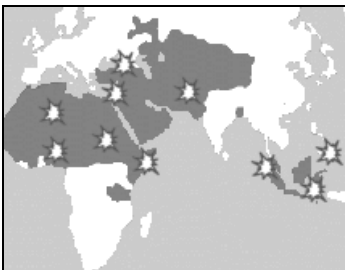
Muslim monopoly over the spice trade led Columbus to seek alternate routes in 1492, the same year that Muslim Moors were driven from Spain and Portugal, setting the stage for these and other future rival Western European powers.

## 1700 - 1979, Decline



Allied with Germany in WWI, the Ottoman Empire officially ended in 1922 after a long decline. Militarily and economically successful western powers now dominate the entire Muslim world, managing political borders and dictating international relations. In 1923, under Ataturk, even Turkey had to give up the ideal of the Islamic state in order to compete with the European powers. Muslims blame the "Christian" West for their disunity, instability, and relative weakness. Wealth from oil, exploding populations, and intense resentment are fueling the missionary and political activity of Muslim fundamentalism. Entrenched feelings of inferiority and desperation are creating unprecedented opportunities for the gospel among a booming and rapidly emigrating population.

## 1979 - Present, Crisis



Since the Shah of Iran was deposed (1979), fundamentalist Muslims have been struggling (*jihad*) with some success to reunite "church" and state under Shari'a law. Terrorists are the new crusaders seeking to liberate Muslim "holy lands" from foreign ideas and influence.

From Algeria to the Philippines and from Chechnya to the Sudan, fundamentalist minorities are fighting secular governments and their own moderate brethren. What is Islam's destiny? Will Shari'a come to dominate courts, governments, science and technology, and international relations of the civilized world once again? Will Islam peacefully accommodate secularism and church-state separation as so many politicians claim it has done? Will Islam return us to the stone age, or will it slowly fade away?

## Feature

# New Paradigm for Outreach to Middle Eastern Cultures: Gospel Restores Honor to the Dishonored

by Bruce Sidebotham

In Indonesia, our Muslim housekeeper told us that when she was a little girl she had a friend who used to feel her mother's hair in the morning to see if it was damp. Her friend did this so that she could tell if her mother had been messing around with other men.

According to Islam, sex makes one unclean.

Ones prayers will not be heard again until after a complete bath. When asked why her friend's mother would care about ceremonial purity if she were already committing adultery, our helper said no one would consider not bathing after having sex. Such uncleanness was a curse. Everything touched would be cursed. Curiously, adultery did not have the same result. In other words, the consequences of uncleanness were more feared than the results of sin!

Suddenly a lot of things made sense. I had always wondered why even nominal Muslims make such a big thing out of not eating pork and not getting licked by dogs when sins like lusting after women are treated so superficially. Even the 911 terrorists frequented striptease joints.

Under this perspective, the greatest felt need is not salvation from sin but deliverance from defilement. Every element of a devout Muslim's life is ordered by this insecurity; the direction to face when falling asleep, the Arabic words with which to preface a task, speech, or greeting, and even the way to blow one's nose or wipe one's bottom. Because eating pork introduces the worst possible defilement and because ones ceremonial purity outweighs ones moral purity, the pork eater (George W. Bush) is more despicable than the murderer (Osama Bin Laden).

Defilements come in various levels. Each defilement has an appropriately matched ritual for cleansing. Burping and passing gas represents one level of defilement. Touching ones private parts comprises another. Touching semen, urine, feces, or menstrual flow is serious;

serious enough that a woman's prayers will not be heard during her period.

How does the gospel apply under these circumstances? Does the Bible teach about defilement? Does the gospel address defilement as well as sin? Is defilement an integral part of man's sinfulness? Is

shame related to defilement the way guilt is related to sin? Does Christ save us from both? Is the apparent lack of theological attention to this area related to Christianity's weakness in non-Western cultures which are more shame than guilt oriented? In cultures where defilement looms larger than depravity, are our gospel presentations relevant? Do we disciple converts into healthy and life changing maturity or are many still wrestling with unaddressed and misunderstood insecurities?

In Indonesia a friend asked me why Christians insist that Jesus is God and that he was crucified. Instead of trying to convince my friend that all have sinned and that all sin must be punished by death, I noted what he already knew, that all flesh is defiled and from before birth contains the very substances from which we need to be cleansed. I expressed my opinion on the futility of ceremonial rituals for making us clean enough for heaven, because dirt cannot make itself clean any better than darkness can make itself light. I said that just as a candle drives darkness from a room by entering it, God drives defilement from human flesh by becoming it. In other words, the very thing that Muslims object to most in Christianity, syirik--the identification of God with his creation, is the solution to man's most basic problem as perceived by most Muslims.

Muslims cover their heads and bare their feet for prayer and worship.

I should have also shown how the nature of Jesus' miracles – healing blindness with his spit and leprosy with his touch – proves that he had to be God. No mere prophet could touch a leper without being contaminated, and while a prophet's grave might be holy his spit remains foul like everyone else's.

I did point out that by embracing death itself Jesus destroyed it. I concluded that our only hope for heaven lay in appropriating Jesus' undefiled life and victory over death for ourselves by faith as is symbolized in baptism and communion.

When Adam and Eve sinned, they felt shame before guilt. Before the fall "The man and his wife were both naked and they felt no shame" (Genesis 2:25). After the fall, "The eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves" (Genesis 3:7). But even with the fig leaves on, they were still naked. "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid" (Genesis 3:10). Interestingly and perhaps symbolically, God himself covered Adam and Eve's nakedness. "The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them" (Genesis 3:21).

This progression is noteworthy. Adam and Eve hid after they sinned because they were afraid. They were afraid because they were naked. Shame over nakedness preceded fear, alienation, and separation. Guilt feelings were curiously avoided with

some profound excuses. "The devil," for Eve, and "the woman," for Adam, "made me do it" (Genesis 3:12-13).

If the immediate consequence of sin was death, ("For when you eat of it you will surely die" Genesis 2:17.), then this "death" must be more than just the end of physical life.

The Old Testament contains many images indicating that defilement