

SLB-006

Spiritual Life Basics

Lesson 6

The Necessity of a Spiritual Life:
The Times in Which We Live

The Difference Between Sunni and Shiite

- Islam does not have nearly as many sects and divisions as does Christianity, but there are a few and it is worth knowing something about them. The two biggest are the Sunnis and the Shi'ites, with the Sunnis being the largest of all and representing the vast majority of Muslims. Shi'ites are a minority everywhere except Iran.

The Difference Between Sunni and Shiite

- After them, the two most influential sects are the Sufis and the Wahhabis. The Sufis represent a mystical tradition in Islam, whereas the Wahhabis are a strict traditionalist tradition which is dominant on the Arabian peninsula, but has little support elsewhere.
- Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab could be considered the first modern Islamic fundamentalist. He made the central point of his reform movement the idea that absolutely every idea added to Islam after the third century of the Muslim era was false and should be eliminated.

The Difference Between Sunni and Shiite

- Unlike churches, mosques are not denominational.
- Despite the differences among Muslims, traditional Friday prayer services are largely similar and Muslims of any background are welcome to attend services at any mosque.

The Difference Between Sunni and Shiite

- In Iraq, 80 percent of the country is populated by Muslims, with 60 percent of these being Shiites, according to the World Almanac and Book of Facts. However, with Sunni Muslim Saddam Hussein as head of state, the Shiite population was largely ignored, and at times repressed, for over a decade. With U.S. occupation of Iraq, things are looking different for the Shiites.

The Difference Between Sunni and Shiite

- The division between Shiite and Sunni Muslims occurred more than 1,000 years ago during the formations of an Islamic nation. According to encyclopedia.com, Sunnis worship the first four caliphs (spiritual heads of state) as Muhammad's successors, but the Shiites only recognize the fourth, Ali, because he is an alleged descendent of Muhammad.

The Difference Between Sunni and Shiite

- Shiites and Sunnis do maintain many of the same Muslim practices such as fasting, praying five times a day, and making a “haj” to the holy land, Mecca. “This basic political split is what divides them,” said Armouche. “But, it’s only political, and in all other ways Sunni and Shiite are very similar.”

The Difference Between Sunni and Shiite

- Worldwide there are roughly one billion Muslims, according to the World Almanac and Book of Facts. Of these, 90 percent are Sunni, thereby creating an unusual situation in Iraq with its Shiite Muslim majority.

The Difference Between Sunni and Shiite

- Both Sunni and Shia Muslims share the most fundamental Islamic beliefs and articles of faith. The differences between these two main sub-groups within Islam initially stemmed not from spiritual differences, but political ones. Over the centuries, however, these political differences have spawned a number of varying practices and positions which have come to carry a spiritual significance.

The Difference Between Sunni and Shiite

- The division between Shia and Sunni dates back to the death of the Prophet Muhammad, and the question of who was to take over the leadership of the Muslim nation. Sunni Muslims agree with the position taken by many of the Prophet's companions, that the new leader should be elected from among those capable of the job. This is what was done, and the Prophet Muhammad's close friend and advisor, Abu Bakr, became the first Caliph of the Islamic nation.
- The word "Sunni" in Arabic comes from a word meaning "one who follows the traditions of the Prophet."

The Difference Between Sunni and Shiite

- The Shia Muslims believe that following the Prophet Muhammad's death, leadership should have passed directly to his cousin/son-in-law, Ali. Throughout history, Shia Muslims have not recognized the authority of elected Muslim leaders, choosing instead to follow a line of Imams which they believe have been appointed by the Prophet Muhammad or God Himself. The word "Shia" in Arabic means a group or supportive party of people. The commonly-known term is shortened from the historical "Shia-t-Ali," or "the Party of Ali." They are also known as followers of "Ahl-al-Bayt" or "People of the Household" (of the Prophet).

The Difference Between Sunni and Shiite

- From this initial question of political leadership, some aspects of spiritual life have been affected and now differ between the two groups of Muslims.
- Shia Muslims believe that the Imam is sinless by nature, and that his authority is infallible as it comes directly from God. Therefore, Shia Muslims often venerate the Imams as saints and perform pilgrimages to their tombs and shrines in the hopes of divine intercession.

The Difference Between Sunni and Shiite

- Sunni Muslims counter that there is no basis in Islam for a hereditary privileged class of spiritual leaders, and certainly no basis for the veneration or intercession of saints. Sunni Muslims contend that leadership of the community is not a birthright, but a trust that is earned and which may be given or taken away by the people themselves.
- Sunnis are Muslims who are considered the more "orthodox" believers. Sunnis follow all of the most traditional beliefs and actions.

The Difference Between Sunni and Shiite

- Shia Muslims also feel animosity towards some of the companions of the Prophet Muhammad, based on their positions and actions during the early years of discord about leadership in the community. Many of these companions (Abu Bakr, Umar, Aisha, etc.) have narrated traditions about the Prophet's life and spiritual practice. Shia Muslims reject these traditions (hadith) and do not base any of their religious practices on the testimony of these individuals. This naturally gives rise to some differences in religious practice between the two groups. These differences touch all detailed aspects of religious life: prayer, fasting, pilgrimage, etc.

The Difference Between Sunni and Shiite

- Sunni Muslims make up the majority (85%) of Muslims all over the world. Significant populations of Shia Muslims can be found in Iran and Iraq, and large minority communities in Yemen, Bahrain, Syria, and Lebanon.
- It is important to remember that despite all of these differences in opinion and practice, Shia and Sunni Muslims share the main articles of Islamic belief and are considered by most to be brethren in faith. In fact, most Muslims do not distinguish themselves by claiming membership in any particular group, but prefer to call themselves simply, "Muslims."

Fitzgerald: Time to get an education

- And this is why all that advice from various "counter-insurgency experts" -- including the Australian army man who so impressed James Fallows (who consulted "sixty experts" to find out what he thinks he knows about how to deal with the Jihad) and Francis Daly, a "counter-insurgency expert" (from campaigns against non-Muslims, some 40 years ago) who, writing in the New Duranty Times, does not mention Islam at all.

Fitzgerald: Time to get an education

- In his Op/Ed piece, Daly appears not to have any idea that the belief-system of Islam not only matters, but is indispensable for understanding what these so-called "insurgencies" in Iraq or elsewhere are all about. They are about power, about power within the Camp of Islam, where ethnic and sectarian and economic differences do divide. And they are about all Muslims within the Camp of Islam against the entire Camp, as they see it, of Non-Muslims. Not to be assuaged by the hearts-and-minds of lavishing economic development on anyone.

Fitzgerald: Time to get an education

- Indeed, the plutocrats of Saudi Arabia and the Gulf sheikhdoms have used much of their wealth to pursue and promote the Jihad. The better off Muslim states are, the more disguised Jizyah they receive in the form of foreign aid, and the more flows that manna from Allah known as oil revenues, the more powerful the forces of Jihad become. Prior to 1973, the doctrine and duty of Jihad existed, as it had existed and had been acted upon by Muslims for 1350 years. But it had fallen into seeming desuetude only because, in the past hundred years, the Western world had not only been more powerful but was seen to be obviously so.

Fitzgerald: Time to get an education

- What changed everything was the OPEC oil money -- some ten trillion dollars since 1973 -- and the millions of Muslims permitted to live behind enemy lines, in Infidel nation-states. In those states they can and do cause all kinds of trouble. They interfere with how those states preserve their political and legal and social institutions, and with how they attempt to exercise their own foreign policy: the French government is backing out of Lebanon because it is terrified of the reaction of the Muslims within France, though no one has yet noted this.

Fitzgerald: Time to get an education

- Any "counter-insurgency" class in the American military, or in any Infidel military, that does not deal with Islam, with what is contained in the texts -- Qur'an, Hadith, and the biography of Muhammad the Perfect Man – is useless. Any course that presumes to pretend that an "insurgency" in a Muslim country is just like an insurgency by those Communists in postwar Greece or Malaya, or by those Mau Mau in Kenya, and can be dealt with using the same "hearts-and-minds" strategy supplementing military campaigns, will be false, will be missing the essential significance of Islam. It will be, in short, worthless.

Fitzgerald: Time to get an education

- These features include not owning up to the contents of Islam, but offering that sly blend of taqiyya and tu-quoque argumentation that we are all so familiar with. In other words, many lax or unobservant Muslims, as long as they continue to identify themselves as Muslims and hence, as members of the umma, will continue to defend Islam and to support it by protecting it from inquiring Infidels -- and in other, more dangerous ways as well.

Fitzgerald: Time to get an education

- We Infidels simply have to rely on the historical evidence, on the evidence of our senses, and on the evidence of those Infidels who grew up in Muslim-dominated societies (Copts from Egypt, Maronites and other Christians from Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Hindus and Chinese from Malaysia or Indonesia), or from societies where there is a Muslim population large enough to support activities threatening to the larger non-Muslim society (as in India).

Fitzgerald: Time to get an education

- Finally, and perhaps most usefully, we must rely on the evidence provided by the "defectors" from Islam, such as Ayaan Hirsi Ali, Ibn Warraq, Ali Sina, Irfan Khawaja, Azam Kamguian, Walid Shoebat, Nonie Darwish, and tens or hundreds of thousands of others, whose names are not household words, but whose private testimony is devastating.

Fitzgerald: Time to get an education

- Whatever "techniques of counter-insurgency" may work against those who are fighting for Communism and economic "justice" has no relevance at all to the problem of fighting the belief-system of Islam. That this has escaped so many of these counter-insurgency experts is not surprising.

Fitzgerald: Time to get an education

- In the same way, those in the "spreading democracy" business -- who get government and foundation money, of course -- will be the last ones to admit that the "all people want freedom" business is silly, dangerous, and fails to consider the nature of Islamic religio-political theory on the basis for any ruler's legitimacy. And those who are in the "moderate Muslims are the answer" racket, also to obtain still more, ever more, government and foundation grants and the contributions of individuals, will not admit just how shaky, mutable, and unhelpful to Infidels reliance on that concept of "moderate Muslims" is.

Fitzgerald: Time to get an education

- They will never admit that the supposed usefulness of "moderate Muslims" against the immoderate ones is no substitute for the real divisions within Islam -- sectarian, ethnic and economic -- that have been written about here at Jihad Watch some 500 times. But of course, others have a market niche to protect. If the money rolls in to support the idea of encouraging "moderate Muslims" and only worrying about those "Islamists," then "Moderate Muslims" (the "answer") versus "Islamists" will be the theme, as it will be the content of course, of the next grant application.

Fitzgerald: Time to get an education

- And finally, the experts in "counter-insurgency" whose discussions of "Islamic insurgency" or "Shi'a insurgency" or "Sunni insurgency" always focusses on that noun, that so-easy-to-deal-with noun, and never on those difficult, but far more freighted with significance, adjectives -- "Islamic," "Sunni" and "Shi'a."
- It's time they all gave themselves an education in the doctrine, and practice, of Islam.

Fitzgerald: Time to get an education

- Once they see the world through the prism of Islam, once they understand the uncompromising division of that world between Believer and Infidel, Dar al-Islam and Dar al-Harb, they will think anew about "insurgency" and about what the war aims of Infidels should always be. "Freedom" and "democracy" are both flatly contradicted by both the letter and spirit of Islam.

Fitzgerald: Time to get an education

- According to the tenets of Islam, reinforced by the attitudes and atmospherics to which those tenets give rise in any society suffused with Islam, political and all other forms of legitimacy are conferred not by the expressed will of mere men, but by the revealed will of Allah in the Qur'an (as glossed usefully in the Hadith), and expressed most closely in the Holy Law of Islam, or Shari'a.

Fitzgerald: Time to get an education

- "Freedom" in the Western sense is allowing mere men to dictate what should be on earth, and that, in Islam, makes no sense.
- The Administration has been incoherent in its understanding of both Islam -- no one appears to have thought the main task, after 9/11/2001, was to undergo real study of Islam, -- and words such as "freedom" and "democracy" were used without any study of whether or not, in the history of Islam, these words had ever meant anything, or what, if used today, they could possibly mean.

Fitzgerald: Time to get an education

- The American government, instead of taking as its goal the weakening of the Camp of Islam, continues to squander resources attempting to create a unified Iraqi nation-state that will be impossible of attainment, and that, were it to be attained, could not possibly be an "ally" of the United States, but would inevitably revert to Islam, to the Arab League, to the Organization of Islamic Countries, and the best chance offered up to the Infidels in a very long time, for exploiting both sectarian (Sunni-Shi'a) and ethnic (Arab-Kurd) divisions within Islam, would have been lost, in what would then be one of the most colossal failures of foreign policy in American history.

The Humorous Side of Jihad

- From the TimesOnline, with thanks to DFS:
- A MUSLIM student told a terror trial yesterday that he filmed a video of British landmarks that prosecutors claim was a visual guide for terrorists.
- The locations in the film include Hyde Park, Big Ben, Parliament Square, the London Eye, Edgware Road Tube station and the Hilton Hotel in Park Lane, Woolwich Crown Court heard.

The Humorous Side of Jihad

- Rauf Abdullah Mohammad, 26, an Iraqi minicab driver, is charged with making a video likely to be useful to a person committing or preparing an act of terrorism contrary to the Terrorism Act 2000.
- The prosecution claims that Mr Mohammad drove around London making a film showing “high-profile targets” to help Islamic terrorists to plan and carry out an attack on the capital.

The Humorous Side of Jihad

- His friend, Maz Ibrahim, 25, a British Sudanese, yesterday gave evidence for the defence, saying that he was the unseen man holding a camcorder whose voice was recorded in Arabic saying: “Rauf is planning a bombing operation.”
- Oh man, this is side-splitting stuff. Has anyone contacted Leno?

The Humorous Side of Jihad

- In the background of the video can be heard religious chants, sounds of machineguns and a missile exploding, and poems about martyrdom, killing and being killed in the name of Allah.
- Religious chants? Killing and being killed in the name of Allah? Rauf, you hockey puck! You kidder, you! Everybody knows Islam is a religion of peace!
- In fact, Paradise is guaranteed in the Qur'an to those who "kill and are killed" for Allah -- see sura 9:111

The Humorous Side of Jihad

- Mr Mohammad, from Forest Gate, East London, can allegedly be heard on the video discussing his hopes for the killing of Tony Blair, President Bush, Silvio Berlusconi and Donald Rumsfeld.
- Stop it, Rauf! You're killing me! This is the funniest stuff I've heard since The Day the Clown Cried!
- The true interpretation of the hour-long video, extracts from which have been shown several times to the jury, is central to the arguments at Woolwich Crown Court.

The Humorous Side of Jihad

- Mr Ibrahim, of Southwark, southeast London, told the jury that the video, which was made around September 2003, was no more than a tourist souvenir for overseas relatives and that the terrorism chat was just an example of the companions' ironic sense of humour. He said that his friend had wanted to make a tape to send back to relatives and suggested going to famous places in London.

The Humorous Side of Jihad

- Isn't it funny how, when it comes to jihad terrorism, there is always a "true interpretation" that contradicts what you see in front of your eyes? The Qur'an doesn't mean "slay the unbelievers" (9:5) or beat your wife (4:34), and this fellow wasn't planning a terror operation, he was just kidding around. Tell me another, Rauf.

The Humorous Side of Jihad

- Lawrence McNulty, for the defence, took Mr Ibrahim step-by-step through the tape. It begins with a busker in a subway near Marble Arch. The camcorder holder climbs steps to emerge into Hyde Park. He zooms in to a road sign.
- “I just like details of things,” Mr Ibrahim said.
- Ah. Jokes with details. The best kind.

The Humorous Side of Jihad

- The film has a number of shots of police officers. Mr Ibrahim explained that he wanted to show how helpful British constables could be, for example giving people directions.
- “There’s a huge difference between the police in the UK and the police back home,” he said. “Back home for no reason they just do anything to you.”

The Humorous Side of Jihad

- After a long passage showing people at Speakers' Corner, Mr Mohammad is filmed heading for his car. Mr Ibrahim gets into the passenger seat.
- The car stereo plays Islamic chants and the video pans upwards to Paddington Green police station. The men can be heard speaking.
- "I was teasing him," Mr Ibrahim said. "I said he was planning a bombing operation. I used to always like to tease him, calling him a terrorist. I used to make jokes like that. It's just a bit of a stereotype that people have against certain individuals. It was just a joke because people say that people with long beards are terrorists."

The Humorous Side of Jihad

- Next, Mr Mohammad is heard on the video discussing killing the Prime Minister and Western leaders. Mr Ibrahim said that he did not think that his friend had been at all serious about killing Mr Blair.
- As the film pans to show pretty women, Mr Mohammad is heard to make a remark. Mr Ibrahim said: “He was teasing me about filming the girls. He doesn’t really look at girls. It doesn’t mean he doesn’t have interest in women, obviously.”
- Obviously -- a funny word to be using amid all this fog of misdirection.

WWJS

- “There's no doubt that this administration has made a radical and unpressured departure from the basic policies of all previous administrations including those of both Republican and Democratic presidents... Under all of its predecessors there was a commitment to peace instead of preemptive war. Our country always had a policy of not going to war unless our own security was directly threatened and now we have a new policy of going to war on a preemptive basis.”

Jimmy Carter