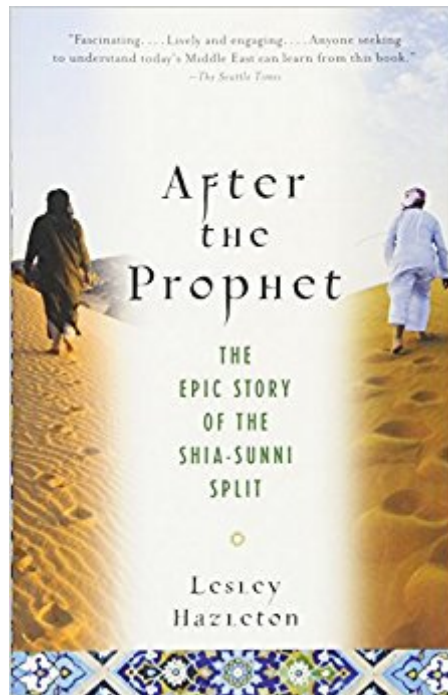


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# After The Prophet: The Epic Story Of The Shia-Sunni Split In Islam



## Synopsis

In this gripping narrative history, Lesley Hazleton tells the tragic story at the heart of the ongoing rivalry between the Sunni and Shia branches of Islam, a rift that dominates the news now more than ever. Even as Muhammad lay dying, the battle over who would take control of the new Islamic nation had begun, beginning a succession crisis marked by power grabs, assassination, political intrigue, and passionate faith. Soon Islam was embroiled in civil war, pitting its founder's controversial wife Aisha against his son-in-law Ali, and shattering Muhammad's ideal of unity. Combining meticulous research with compelling storytelling, *After the Prophet* explores the volatile intersection of religion and politics, psychology and culture, and history and current events. It is an indispensable guide to the depth and power of the Shia-Sunni split.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

**Book Description** Narrative history at its most compelling, *After the Prophet* relates the dramatic tragic story at the heart of the ongoing rivalry between Shia and Sunni Islam. Even as Muhammad lay dying, the battle over his successor had begun. Pitting the family of his favorite wife, the controversial Aisha, against supporters of his son-in-law, the philosopher-warrior Ali, the struggle would reach its breaking point fifty years later in Iraq, when soldiers of the first Sunni dynasty massacred seventy-two warriors led by Muhammad's grandson Hussein at Karbala. Hussein's agonizing ordeal at Karbala was soon to become the Passion story at the core of Shia Islam. Hazleton's vivid, gripping prose provides extraordinary insight into the origins of the world's most volatile blend of politics and religion. Balancing past and present, she shows how these

seventh-century events are as alive in Middle Eastern hearts and minds today as though they had just happened, shaping modern headlines from Iran's Islamic Revolution to the civil war in Iraq. After the Prophet is narrative nonfiction at its finest, and an emotional and political revelation for Western readers.

Starred Review. Much American foreign policy has been shaped by the centuries-old disagreement between Islam's two main factions, and yet Americans in general, and our politicians in particular, often can't tell Sunnis from Shi'ites. With the publication of this outstanding book, we no longer have any excuse. Hazleton (Jezebel) ties today's events to their ancient roots, resurrecting seventh century Arabia with reverence and vivid immediacy. Here are rich recreations of the lives of the Prophet Muhammad and his beloved wife Aisha; here are often overlooked details (why is green the color of Islam? why do some Muslim women veil?) filling in the contours of the narrative. The battle to name Muhammad's successor is gripping—but it is Hazleton's ability to link the past and present that distinguishes this book: the main issue is again what it was in the seventh century—who should lead Islam?—played out on an international level. Where Ali once struggled against Muawiya, Shia Iran and Sunni Saudi Arabia today vie with each other for influence. Anyone with an interest in the Middle East, U.S.-international relations or a profound story masterfully told will be well served by this exceptional book. (Sept.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This is a highly engrossing book that is highly relevant to today's world. The author is a journalist and as such writes in a highly readable style. The book reads more like a novel, rather than a textbook, but nonetheless covers the subject based on numerous sources, some of which go back to the 9th century. I highly recommend this book to anyone interested in the history of Islam and to all those interesting in understanding the roots of today's Muslim fanaticism. This book details the death of the prophet Mohammed and his initial successors, particularly that of his cousin and adopted son Ali. Ali, initially passed over for the leadership of Islam, eventually became its leader. However, the struggle for the leadership of Islam and Ali's assassination set the stage for the eventual struggle between the Shia (followers of Ali) and the Sunni who believed that the leadership of Islam should not be through Mohammad's kin. Ali's son Hussein (also Mohammad's grandson because Ali married one of Mohammad's

daughters) was likewise killed by the Sunni leadership, creating the basis for Shia martyrdom. The events surrounding the deaths of Ali and Hussein and the nature of how and why they died are highly relevant to today's world as they created the basis both the Sunni fanaticism of groups like Al Qaida, and Shia fanaticism. The author is clear in explaining these connections, making this book important for understand the modern world.

Lesley Hazleton is truly a master of language, spoken and written. Just like *The First Muslim: The Story of Muhammad*, Hazleton takes on a surprising, exciting, and even sacred journey that explores the politics and divinity of faith and religion by telling a truly "epic" story of this major religion's early days. I loved this book as well as all of her writing. *The First Muslim: The Story of Muhammad*

I hope this is required reading for every American diplomat and official and military officer with some degree of responsibility for dealing with Muslims. I have read a lot about Muslims and Middle eastern governments and yet i never really had the whole story on this Shia vs Sunni issue. Hazleton's book gives us all the details of history and lets us in on how the middle east and Islam was formed and why the history of that region is so alive today! This is one of those history books that is actually a page turner. I could not put it down.

Very well-written and overall historically accurate description of the Sunni-Shia split. Reads like a novel and doesn't take sides. One of the best and most readable books I've read on this topic.

I just finished reading Lesley Hazleton's book *After The Prophet* and I am delighted. Most writers describing historic events do so in a very dry, sterile manner that is exhausting for the poor reader. Hazleton manages to go over the same material that has been endlessly researched and re-written and puts down her version that draws the reader directly into the story. She breathes life into her story, puts expressions and thoughts into the personalities . She analyses personalities and inter-relationships and even as she deals only with facts...the same facts as most other historians, she makes hers come to life such the readers feels emotions and get involved in the story while reading facts. This book is about the period after the prophet Mohammed and the machinations that followed over the next several decades. Hazleton spares no one in her analyses of what might reasonably have gone through their minds, she stays faithful to the matters of historic record while conjecturing what people may have been planning as evidenced by their past and later actions. She

deals with the fracturing relationships after the death of the prophet and how they degenerated into what we know today, as "The Shia-Sunni Divide". In my opinion, this book is a "must read" for any non-Muslim in order to even begin to understand how Shia and Sunni relate with one another; this is a book the policy-makers in the halls of Washington, should read before they deal with anything further, regarding Iran or the Middle East. Most Muslims go through life knowing only what their peers and their faith-leaders tell them about the "other" sect. Sunnis believe in a whole lot of mythology about the Shia, that stirs up suspicions and antipathy towards the Shia. Shia, on the other hand, have little ability to help inform their Sunni brethren, about the origins and distinctions of the Shia sect. Would that this book were read by members of both sects! My congratulations to Hazleton for another excellent work, it is a real contribution to human understanding.

In this wonderfully written book where Lesley Hazleton stays true to actual history, while making the 1400 year old events read like a novel. These were extraordinary people in extraordinary times. However, in her careful touch, every character comes alive with all their complexities of human emotions--generosities and jealousies, loyalty and ambition, humility and ego. While many of the character traits are universal and easy to relate to, the author provides backgrounds of the culture that are foreign to "western" or "modern" ones, making it easier to look at from the perspectives of the 7th century Arab culture. There are no doubt hundreds of books written on the subject, many written from a sectarian point of view, while a few scholarly books from a more neutral outlook (such as of Wilfred Madelung). This is one of the most accessible and easy to read addition to the latter collection of books.

Highly recommend if you are curious about the history of Sunni and Shia Islam. Very informative history of Muhammad and how the two major sects of Islam came to be. I like that it's a narrative and you don't feel like you're reading a history book.

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