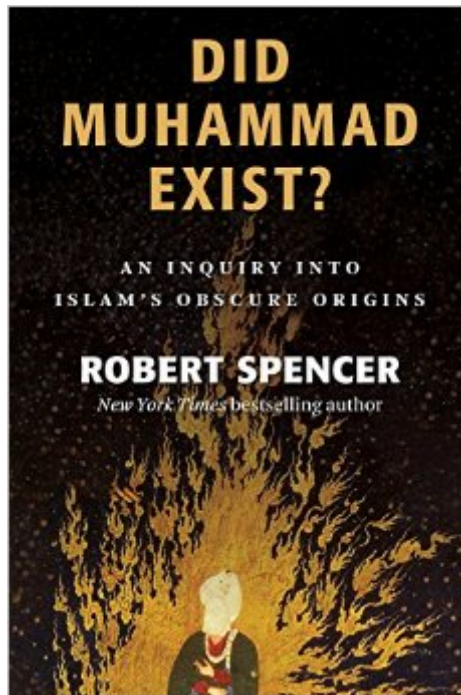


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Did Muhammad Exist?: An Inquiry Into Islam's Obscure Origins



Synopsis

Everything you thought you knew about Islam is about to change. This stunning book uncovers provocative evidence that forces us to ask: Did Muhammad, Islam's founding prophet, even exist? It is a question that few have thought or dared to ask. But the widely accepted story of Islam's origins begins to crumble on close examination. In *Did Muhammad Exist?* bestselling author Robert Spencer brings to early Islam the same level of probing historical criticism scholars have long applied to Christianity and Judaism. Meticulously examining historical records, archaeological findings, and pioneering new scholarship, Spencer challenges the most fundamental assumptions about Islam's origins, raising questions with profound implications for our world today.

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Customer Reviews

I just finished reading "Did Muhammad Exist?" and found it very enlightening. He brings together a lot of the research that has been done on "The Qur'an" and the prophet by others and makes it intelligible to the average person. His book is in no way a complete survey of all the material available on the subject but he does explain what we do know about the prophet and what we don't know. He does the same for "The Qur'an" and the hadiths. Additionally, he puts Islam into an historical context. This is the same kind of research that had previously been done on Jesus, David and others mentioned in the Bible. For too long Islam has been off limits and one wonders what is being hidden? At the end of the book, Robert Spencer tells us that historical investigators have a responsibility to delve further into Islam's origins. I couldn't agree more.

I read this book in manuscript, and found it intellectually provocative, scrupulously evidence-based, and gracefully written. The thesis it explores is one that has been too little considered by English-language scholars: What are the reliable historical grounds for crediting the canonical narrative of the origin of Islam? For centuries, Christians and Jews have seen their respective sacred scriptures subjected to deconstruction and skepticism, while Islam received almost a "free pass." Not every skeptical treatment of scriptures has been disinterested or honest, of course. Scholars are human beings, and they have their own motives. Indeed, the analysis of Jewish/Christian scriptures by men like Hobbes and Locke was strongly motivated by their irreligious agendas. Readers of Spencer's other books will know in advance what his stance is: He worries about the political aspirations of those Muslims who are religiously intolerant, and calls on Muslims to embrace religious pluralism--while candidly acknowledging the problems this would pose for orthodox Muslims. For this, he is falsely labeled a bigot or even a "racist" (as if Islam, a world religion, were some ethnic cult). In this new book, Spencer examines the almost shocking thesis: What Islamic revelation was an afterthought, a narrative created AFTER the Arab conquests of the Near East, to give the new ruling elite an ideological pretext for power. Historians will have to continue conducting research, under adverse conditions (Saudi Arabia, for instance, does not welcome infidel archaeologists) to see how much merit there is in this thesis. But the book is certainly well worth reading.

Muhammad was a warlord. Or was he? Since evidence for the mere existence of Muhammad is based upon written records which date to 150 years after Muhammad's death, then it seems to me his very existence should be investigated. I have read everything Mr Spencer has written, and I have yet to find even a single word that strays from the pursuit of truth. Hate is not what this book is about. Truth is the subject of this book; a rare commodity in today's world.

I reviewed Mr. Spencer's book for Rule of Reason and Family Security Matters. As he writes in "Did Muhammad Exist?" Islam was a "cobbled" together ideology that was intended to anchor the Arab Empire of the late 7th and early 8th centuries to some kind of moral sanction. The Koran, purportedly the "Word of Allah," is little more than the word of whoever was striving to retain his political power at the moment. The same goes for its companion document, the Hadith. As Spencer relates and demonstrates throughout his book, Islam was less an expression of religious faith than an excuse to retain and expand political power. The joke is on all Muslims, "moderate" or "extreme,"

if they wish to face the truth (and most don't wish to). Spencer's book, which cites the work of a small band of other Islam scholars who questioned the veracity and substance of Islam, is an invaluable contribution to the corpus of Islamic studies - but not likely to be included in any such studies funded by the Saudis in American universities. Well, that's their loss. Mr. Spencer is also to be commended for braving the ire of Islamists here and abroad for his steadfast commitment to the truth about Islam.

This is one of the best books about Muhammad and Islam I have read. It is balanced, nuanced and scrupulous in its treatment of the topic. I think Mr. Spencer would welcome a response by Muslim leaders, scholars and teachers. His 'The Truth About Muhammad' elicited 'The Lies About Muhammad' which is a poorly written and reasoned response from someone, I believe, is unaccustomed to defending his faith on an intellectual level in spite of his academic position. I sincerely hope Muslims will read this book and answer it in a way non-Muslims can respect and understand.

The cause of supremacism, intolerance and violence within Islam and toward other religions is fixed within most people's minds as being from Islam's founding documents, Quran, Haddiths, Sira. Until now the debate that led us toward this realization has been benchmarked from One Story, Islam's own version. Whether one has been against or for Islam for whatever reason the debate has been based on this Story. Everyone, to some degree, assumed the Story was historical that Muhammad by means of supernatural, i.e. angel/demon or natural, i.e. mental disorder or tradition procured a book that inspired the Arabs to spread the new religion throughout the world. From the historical and archaeological evidence presented, in my own mind I am now convinced the Story is FICTITIOUS. The ground work for future inquiry as to how Islam actually came to be has been laid. Read the book.

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