



Revelation: The Story of Muhammad

Meraj Mohiuddin, Sherman A. Jackson (Foreword)

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Revelation: The Story of Muhammad Details

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From Reader Review Revelation: The Story of Muhammad for online ebook

Anees says

Such a beautiful piece of work by Dr. Mohiuddin. I took my time to read this Seerah of the Prophet (saw) - paused my reading, to listen to the Surahs that were listed in the margins that were relevant to the text on the page, which enhanced the experience so much more. I have read Armstrong's and Lings' works, which were lovely in their own right of course, but the way this textbook is constructed just takes things to an entirely new level for the student of Seerah, which every Muslim should be in my opinion. Of course, it's a great learning tool for anyone looking to get a better understanding of the Prophet's life. I hope that one day, it is used in Islam classes at the university level and that an even broader audience is exposed to it just for the sake of learning and understanding, which is only becoming more important in these times of false, distorted information and yes, ignorance and fear. I know I will definitely have to go back and re-read parts and spend more time making connections, solidifying the roles in my memory, of so many more individuals that are so clearly talked about and defined in the light of the early days of Islam and the Prophet's life.

For my fellow Muslims, this HAS to be in your home library. No excuses. :)

Sue Labadi says

Beyond deserving of many accolades, this work truly delivered the "missing link" that makes Revelation relevant for readers today. It succinctly makes the case for how the pre-Islamic people of Mecca lived with the issues we face today; namely, greed, materialism, geographic pride, racial and socio-economic prejudice, selfish indulgence at the expense of the underprivileged, and misogyny. Not to mention empowering false idols of various sorts, we haven't changed much as a species.

Islam was delivered to humankind as a means to be freed from these base shackles and find liberty in virtue and compassionate actions. The struggles of Muhammad (PBUH) and his companions is well documented through numerous credible references, graphics, sidebar notes, and a glossary to help make the 23 years of revelation easy to understand.

A great addition to my library.

Hamza says

After a long period lasting more than two months, I've finally finished this book. In my defense, I almost always take a while to read books of Sirah, since I like to go back and reread a lot of things to make sure I understood them correctly before moving on.

This is definitely one of the better Sirah books I've read. The author himself, a medical doctor by trade, makes no pretensions about being a scholar, and therefore is very willing to defer to scholars both Islamic and academic. The knowledge he does possess shows in the layout of the book. It's purposely laid out like a textbook to facilitate ease that one wouldn't necessarily find in a book that was translated from Arabic, since

that style can be quite different. The diagrams, side notes, and cited explanations from other sources all give this book an air of authenticity.

The unique division of the book into "Qur'anic Years" really helps to remember approximately when an event happened throughout the Prophet's ? time on this Earth from the start of Qur'anic revelation when he ? was 40 until his ? passage from this life at age 62. The literally trademarked, roughly Q-shaped diagram, along with its accompanying mnemonic devices, further help to jog one's memory on roughly when an event happened. (This probably sounds confusing, but it'll make sense if you read the book.)

The book is not without its flaws, of course. The biggest one to me would be the use of the Yahiya Emerick translation for all Qur'anic ayat. His translation was made more "slangy" so that kids would understand it, and I really think this brings down the overall impact of the translation of the Majestic Book's verses. It's as if someone took a better translation and just changed some of the words to contractions, plus added way more information in the brackets than is actually in the original text itself - at least, way more than the average reader can interpret even when reading the original Arabic. I get why this translation was used - it's fairly simple - but I think any number of more "formal" translations would've done the Book (and this book) a better service.

With all that said, the book is really great overall. I recommend it to any Muslim who reads English, and also to any English-reading non-Muslim willing to read such a massive - and expensive - tome. If you have any interest in the life of the Prophet ?, you'll be glad you didn't miss this one.

Hina S says

Last book I finished reading before I left for hajj on 9/1/16.

Tamara says

An innovative look at prophetic history through the eye of revelation. Read with an instructor in order to discuss material in yellow boxes, and to understand the sequence of events in the hijri calendar (the book follows the years after revelation).

Tuscany Bernier says

This book revolutionized how I learned the Seerah. While I will forever appreciate the classics such as The Sealed Nectar, this book came as welcome add-on to the Seerah experience.

The book isn't perfect so it's best to go over it with a knowledgeable person, but overall, it's quite good. The numerous charts and visual aids make this purchase unique as well as the understandings from both traditional Islamic scholars and secular scholars that are present.

Ideal Muslim Man Blog says

Having heard the author speak about this book during ISNA's annual convention, I was really looking forward to reading it. There have been very few original seerah books written in English and with the rave reviews this book had received, I fully expected it to set a new standard for English seerah works.

I was disappointed.

On the first page of the preface, the author states, "I am neither an Islamic scholar nor an amateur historian". Indeed, the rest of the book bears ample testimony to this fact.

My misgivings about the book began right with the introduction, where the author lists the seerah books he went through in order to compose this work. Here is the list:

Safi ur Rahman Mubarakpuri

Martin Lings

Montgomery Watt

Karen Armstrong

Tariq Ramadan

Reza Aslan (!)

Adil Salahi

Hamza Yusuf (audio series)

As a student of history, I have strong reservations about using Watt, Aslan, and Armstrong when writing a seerah book. It's clear the author does not have a solid grounding in historiography, as these would not be the first books to reference when writing a seerah book. What I found especially concerning is that the author mentioned that he thought he had studied all the best modern seerah commentaries and then was introduced to Adil Salahi's book via a young Texan imam. This is akin to saying someone had read all the best modern Qur'an translations and was then introduced to Muhammad Asad's translation. It really shakes confidence in the author's research when he misses one of the heavy hitters in modern seerah literature and then only stumbles upon it via a recommendation from an imam. To make matters worse, the author states that the main benefit he derived from Salahi's book was his discussion of the age of Aisha and the execution of Banu Quraydha....the two parts where Salahi's otherwise excellent seerah is marred by revisionism.

With the exception of Watt's book, which I've only skimmed, I've read all the seerah he references above. More than anything, I was astounded by which books he did not use. I mean, English seerah books any one writing seerah should have read and consulted. Ibn Kathir's The Life of Prophet Muhammad. Abul Hasan an-Nadwi's Prophet of Mercy. Muhammad Hamidullah's The Life & Work of the Prophet of Islam. Ali Sallabi's The Noble Life of the Prophet. Ibn al-Qayyim's Provisions for the Hereafter. Muhammad Ghazali's Fiqh as-Seerah.

Putting my ample reservations aside, I began reading the actual book, hoping the remainder would prove my initial hesitation wrong. On the contrary, the further I read into the book, the more I wondered how anyone with knowledge of seerah could endorse it.

The book has three main sources of content. One is the author's writing. The second is voluminous quotes from the author's references. The third is figures and charts designed by the author. I'll address these one by one.

As far as the author's written text goes, it is mediocre at best. To be more honest, it falls flat. Prose is simple and the text is light on details and heavy on quotations. The entire story of the new qiblah is covered in two paragraphs written by the author. The book looks deceptively large. If appendices and quotations were to be removed and the huge margins reduced, this book would be slightly over a hundred pages longs. In short, this is not a book to read if you want a detailed book of seerah or a book which goes any deeper than a bird's eye view. It reads more like an expanded outline than a well written book.

Perhaps the worst part of the book, however, is the heavy reliance on quotes from his references. In line with the rest of the text, the author poses questions and then answers them with an excerpt from one of the books he consulted. These are blocked off in a yellow background so as to distinguish themselves from the author's text. It is within these quotes that absolutely ludicrous statements are made. Among such statements:

Muhammad was not yet establishing a new religion; he was calling for a sweeping social reform. He was not yet preaching monotheism; he was demanding economic justice.

And

In his desire to avoid a serious dispute, Muhammad did not, at this stage, emphasize the monotheistic content of his message. Like the hanifs, he was convinced that Allah was the only God, but he did not at first condemn the worship of the stone idols round the Kabah or the cult of the three gharaniq. Like most of the great religious sages, he was not much interested in orthodoxy. Metaphysical speculation tended to make people quarrelsome and could be divisive. It was more important to practice the "works of justice" than to insist on a theological position that would offend many of the people he was trying to win over.

And

It is contrary to our preconceived ideas of Islam that this theme of God's goodness and power should be so prominent in the early passages. The preconceptions rest on the later developments of Islamic dogma, when the fact that God is unique was emphasized and idols were declared to be nothing. In other words Muhammad's original message was not a criticism of paganism. It appears to be directed to people who already had a vague belief in God, and to aim at making this belief of theirs more precise by calling attention to particular events and natural processes in which God's agency was to be seen. The vague monotheism accepted by thoughtful Meccans of the day, and presumably at first by Muhammad, allowed them to regard the Lord of the Ka'bah (the shrine of Mecca) as identical with God.

And

That Muhammad came to Yathrib as little more than the Hakam in the quarrel between Aws and Khazraj is certain....His movement represented the tiniest fraction of Yathrib's population.

And

Muslims had been driven out of Mecca because of religious intolerance, so they must avoid all exclusivity....It was idolatry to take pride in belonging to a particular religious tradition rather than concentrating upon Allah himself.

These quotes are absolutely absurd and bear no resemblance to historical reality. For someone who has studied seerah, this is obvious and needs to explanation. For those who are unfamiliar with seerah, i.e. the audience this book is aimed for, this book is great for confusion and distortion of the seerah. Tawheed was

never an ancillary part of Islam. Whatever economic changes that came as part of Islam have always been secondary to the doctrine of monotheism preached by the Prophet (saws) and the sahabah.

These quotes seemed designed to fit the narrative of “God doesn’t care about your belief, just that you’re a ‘good’ person.” And having a good economy where poor people aren’t exploited becomes the prime purpose of any religious movement because that is what God cares about, not worshipping Him. Social justice is undoubtedly a part of Islam, but to state that the original message of Islam was not about criticism of shirk but rather a demand for economic justice is pure, unadulterated, ignorance. To state that it is “idolatry to take pride in belong to a particular religious tradition” is beyond nonsensical.

In addition, within these blocked off quotes, I found one which referenced Dr. Tariq Ramadan and made a similarly ridiculous sounding claim. Having read Dr. Ramadan’s book and not recalling such a quote, I checked the citation and looked up the relevant page in my copy of In the Footsteps of the Prophet. It was nowhere to be found.

While I was not reading the book with an eye to fact check, I did find a glaring error in the story of Hatib ibn Abi Balt’ah (referred as Hatib ibn ‘Amr in the book). He is described as the brother of a Qurashi clan chief! For those who are aware of the incident, Hatib’s entire motive for betrayal was because he had no blood ties with the Quraish and was afraid for his family’s safety.

The one redeeming quality (the only redeeming quality) of this book is the third source of content, the multiple figures and charts. Without a doubt, these are unprecedented in any seerah book I’ve read and give a nice visual supplement to seerah study. There is an appendix which may be useful for some people but in the era of smartphones and Google, such an appendix is perhaps a bit superfluous.

Perhaps one of the most disappointing aspects of this book is the absolute lack of critical thinking and analysis. The book reads as if a person who knows only rote memorization was asked to regurgitate facts. Stringing together multiple quotations is not critical analysis or higher level thinking. Academic rigor consists of interacting with difference sources. Analyzing them, critiquing them, synthesizing them, and then forming your own conclusions. In this book, quotations abound. Interaction, not so much.

I do commend the author for his work in making so many well designed figures and hope that in future editions of this book, he removes the many factually incorrect quotes that exist in the book.

In conclusion, this is not a seerah book I would recommend. It is overpriced, light on content, and heavy on errors. The sole reason to buy this book should be its charts and figures, perhaps as an adjunct resource to use while teaching seerah from a more reliable work.

Iman Ben chaibah says

Unlike any biography on the prophet I’ve ever read! Perfect in every way, from a gripping story telling style, to modernized graphs and illustrations that makes the point clear, and constant reminders and connections between the names that can sometimes get confusing, and multiple references a support explaining the differences between them and leaving it up to the reader’s intelligence to infer what he wants. It’s just perfect in every way! I highly recommend it!
