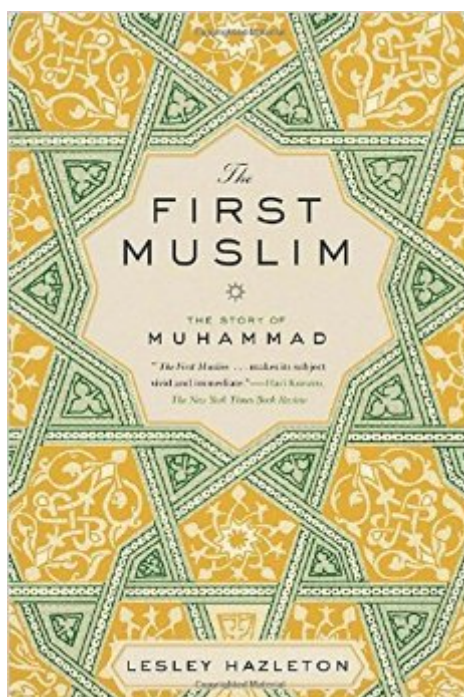


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The First Muslim: The Story Of Muhammad



Synopsis

The extraordinary life of the man who founded Islam, and the world he inhabited and remade. Lesley Hazleton's new book, *Agnostic: A Spirited Manifesto*, is out now from Riverhead Books. Muhammad's was a life of almost unparalleled historical importance; yet for all the iconic power of his name, the intensely dramatic story of the prophet of Islam is not well known. In *The First Muslim*, Lesley Hazleton brings him vibrantly to life. Drawing on early eyewitness sources and on history, politics, religion, and psychology, she renders him as a man in full, in all his complexity and vitality. Hazleton's account follows the arc of Muhammad's rise from powerlessness to power, from anonymity to renown, from insignificance to lasting significance. How did a child shunted to the margins end up revolutionizing his world? How did a merchant come to challenge the established order with a new vision of social justice? How did the pariah hounded out of Mecca turn exile into a new and victorious beginning? How did the outsider become the ultimate insider? Impeccably researched and thrillingly readable, Hazleton's narrative creates vivid insight into a man navigating between idealism and pragmatism, faith and politics, nonviolence and violence, rejection and acclaim. *The First Muslim* illuminates not only an immensely significant figure but his lastingly relevant legacy.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Lesley Hazleton, a self-professed agnostic Jew with an interest in the Abrahamic faiths (think a less spiritually-inclined Karen Armstrong with more focus on politics than piety), presents the most refreshing and possibly important take on Muhammad I have read to date. Quoting a British

historian that to write well about an historical figure requires both empathy and imagination, Hazleton acknowledges reconstructing the life of a religious figure says as much about Muhammad as it does the author. Writers, historians, and theologians constantly create narratives (consciously or subconsciously) that strive to be informative and relevant to particular audiences and this book was no different. By stripping Muhammad of the "purity of perfection" his followers have caged him in, Hazleton shows how we can better appreciate his value as arguably the most human and realistic of all the major religious figures. And what a story! Hazleton fully appreciates this is a riveting story of the meek overcoming the mighty, social justice overcoming tyranny, with drama and action to boot. Some details, particularly in Medina, I had never read before in such detail such as political relationships with Ibn Ubayy, the particular origin of the term "hypocrites" (munaafiq) and, during the siege of Medina, the triple cross Muhammad put into motion, a truly brilliant war tactic. Muhammad as a politician and warrior may cut a different figure than Muhammad the preacher, but he is no less a fascinating figure. Hazleton avoids the dichotomy some historians (and even devoted Muslims) fall for, how a more docile preacher Muhammad at Mecca can be reconciled with political and military leader Muhammad at Medina.

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