

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ



Suhba Seminary

*Transformative education,
inside-out*



INTRODUCTION

The Seminary is the final fusion of the learning, fellowship and experience of the three-year, in-person *Suhba Fellowship Program* in Istanbul, Turkey, and the two-year *Suhba Online* program.

Why the Suhba Seminary?

Because we were created to enjoy an experiential relationship with Allah and His Messenger ﷺ, transform our inner character (*akhlaq*), and live a life of true freedom and noble happiness.





How does the Seminary *realize its vision?*

The Seminary anchors every Muslim in Islam's spiritual and rational legacy and equips them with what they need to safely navigate the challenges of modernity.

Students are transformed inside-out through a unique, carefully designed multi-year curriculum that holistically integrates knowledge (*ilm*), practice (*'amal*), mentorship and fellowship (*suhba*), and applied life-learning. And with Allah is all success.





Who is its founder?

The Seminary is the legacy of Shaykh Mokhtar Maghraoui, a scholar thoroughly versed in both traditional Islamic and secular studies, with a lifetime of experience in learning, practicing, teaching, counseling and mentoring in the Western world.

What does a graduate look like?

A graduate has developed a high *Spirituality Quotient (SQ)*, understands Islam as not *being* but *becoming*, has a refined character (*akhlaq*), practices what he or she knows, and navigates modern life with a rational and spiritual compass with confident certainty (*yaqin*), safety (*'afiya*), insight (*hikma*) and selfless service to others (*khidma*).



Who is a student?

The Seminary was built for every Muslim. Who is a student? You.

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Seminary Components

The Seminary has 4 essential components:

- 1 Sacred Knowledge (*'Ilm*)
- 2 Practice (*'Amal*)
- 3 Mentorship and Fellowship (*Suhba*)
- 4 Applied Learning



Sacred Knowledge (*'Ilm*)

Knowledge Spheres

The Seminary has four knowledge spheres, allowing for flexible, customized study, with a gradation in complexity and specialization.

Core Modules

There are eight **Core Modules** of study:

1. Purification of the Self (*Tazkiya*)
2. Legal Theory and Objectives of the Law (*Usul al-Fiqh and Maqasid*)
3. The Reality of the Messenger ﷺ (*al-Haqiqa al-Muhammadiyah*)
4. Qur'an and Exegesis (*Tafsir*)
5. Theology (*'Aqida*)
6. Prophetic Tradition (*Hadith*)
7. Law (*Fiqh*)
8. History, Politics and Culture

Advanced Electives

Advanced Electives are courses that deepen and enrich the study of the *Core Modules*.

Applied-Learning Seminars

Applied-Learning Seminars are monthly seminars that tackle topical and challenging issues in modern life through the lens and application of Islam's rational and spiritual principles.

Specialized Study (by admission only)

Specialized Study are intensive readings of Arabic texts curated by Shaykh Mokhtar that further deepen and enrich the study of the *Core Modules* and the *Advanced Electives*.



Program Options

Can I really be a student at the Seminary?

You might ask: I want to study at the Seminary but it looks overwhelming.

No, it is not overwhelming. Yes, you can be a student of the Seminary.

The Seminary has been built for everyone. It takes into consideration your other commitments and time constraints.

Here's how: *The three streams of learning.*

The Learning Streams

A student has access to any of the courses and seminars that the Seminary offers. That said, the Seminary has three streams of learning:

1 Self-Paced or Audit

This is the most *flexible* stream. You drop in when you can. There are no prerequisites or evaluations.

You choose which classes you wish to take, live or recorded, from the *Core Courses*, *Advanced Electives*, *Fellowship and Practice (FP) classes* and *Applied-Learning Seminars*.

2 Core Certificate

You attend live or watch the recordings of the *Core Courses* and pass the evaluations. Attendance at the *Fellowship and Practice (FP)* class is strongly recommended but not mandatory. This leads to a Core Certificate with or without distinction, depending on your evaluation results.

3 Honours Certificate

You attend live or watch the recordings of the *Core Courses* and the *Advanced Electives* and pass the evaluations. Attendance at the *Fellowship and Practice (FP)* class is strongly recommended but not mandatory. This leads to an Honours Certificate with or without distinction, depending on your evaluation results.

Build and customize the program that works for you!

The most important thing is that you are nourishing yourself with beneficial knowledge, changing your character and practicing what you know.

***We are one hand and one heart.
Together, we will make it work.***



Learning Arabic

Beginners who wish to learn Arabic will take courses with *Al-Madina Institute's* Arabic program. When students reach an intermediate level, they will qualify for an Arabic tutorial class. When students graduate from the tutorial class, they may then join the *Specialized Study* class. Students may apply for admission directly for the *Specialized Study* class if they have the Arabic prerequisites.



Subjects of Core Courses and Advanced Electives: A Five-year Breakdown

The following are the courses taught over five years in each *Core Course* along with the module's *Advanced Electives*:

1 Tazkiya (Purification of the Self)

Core Courses

YEAR 1

An Introduction to the Science of Purification of the Self

YEAR 2

Studies in the Science of Purification of the Self

YEAR 3

The Spiritual Aphorisms (*Hikam*) of *ibn 'Ata'illah*

YEAR 4

The Heart's Diseases and Cures

YEAR 5

Certainty of Faith (*Yaqin*) / The Graces in Calamity

Advanced Electives

Spiritual Mindfulness (*Muraqaba*)

The Words and Spiritual Poetry of Islam's Scholar-Saints

The Historical Evolution of Islamic Spirituality

The Spirituality of the Earliest Generations (*Salaf*)

Contentious Issues in Islamic Spirituality

2 | Usul al-Fiqh and Maqasid (Legal Theory and the Objectives of the Law)

Core Course

- YEAR 1 An Introduction to *Shari'a* and its Sources + Life Case Studies
- YEAR 2 Linguistic Analysis + Life Case Studies
- YEAR 3 Objectives and Axioms of the Law (*Maqasid/Qawa'id*) + Life Case Studies
- YEAR 4 The Principles of Innovation in Faith (*Bid'a*) + Case Studies
- YEAR 5 The Impact of Differences in Legal Theory on Law

Advanced Electives

- The Etiquettes of Difference (*Adab al-Ikhtilaf*)
- Studies in Applied Legal Theory
- The Issue of Seeking Intercession (*Tawassul*)
- The Schools of Law (*Madhahib*), Independent Juristic Reasoning (*Ijtihad*) and Legal Following (*Taqlid*)
- The Application and the Misapplication of the Objectives of the Law in Modern Times

3 | Al-Haqiqah al-Muhammadiyah (The Reality of the Messenger ﷺ)

Core Course

- YEAR 1 The Exalted Status of the Messenger ﷺ
- YEAR 2 Reflections on the Prophetic Biography of Makka
- YEAR 3 Reflections on the Prophetic Biography of Madina 1
- YEAR 4 Reflections on the Prophetic Biography of Madina 2
- YEAR 5 The Poem of the Scarf (*Burda*)

Advanced Electives

- The Virtues of Sending Salutations upon the Messenger ﷺ
- The Description of the Messenger ﷺ (*Shama'il*)
- The Prophetic Household (*Ahl al-Bayt*) in Text and History + The Status of the Messenger's ﷺ Parents
- Companions of the Messenger ﷺ through the Qur'an, Sunna and History
- Commentary on a Compendium of Salutations Upon the Messenger ﷺ (*Dala'il al-Khayrat*)

4 | Qur'an/Tafsir (Exegesis)

Core Course

- YEAR 1 A Chronological Exegesis of the First Revelations

- YEAR 2 Etiquette with the Qur'an

- YEAR 3 The Linguistic Beauty-Miracle of the Qur'an

- YEAR 4 Science and the Qur'an

- YEAR 5 Spiritual and Rational Principles for Personal Reflection in Reading the Qur'an

Advanced Electives

- The History and Methods of Qur'anic Exegesis (*Tafsir*)

- On the Sciences of the Qur'an (*'Ulum al-Qur'an*)

- On the Historicity of the Qur'anic Text

- On the Grammar (*I'rab*) of the Qur'an

- A Study of the Verses on *Jihad*

5 | 'Aqida (Theology)

Core Course

- YEAR 1 Pillars of *Iman*: The Context of Existence

- YEAR 2 Rational Proofs for the Existence of God 1

- YEAR 3 Rational Proofs for the Existence of God 2

- YEAR 4 Death and the Intermediate Realm (*Barzakh*)

- YEAR 5 *Qada'* and *Qadar*

Advanced Electives

- Commentary on a Classical Work in Theology: *al-Fiqh al-Akbar/al-Tahawiyya*

- The Theology of Understanding the Divine Attributes

- The Early *Fitna* (Trial) in the Time of the Rightly-Guided Caliphs (*al-Khulafa' al-Rashidun*)

- Islam and Evolution

- Issues in Comparative Religion

6 | Hadith (Prophetic Tradition)

Core Course

- YEAR 1 The Status of Hadith in Islam
- YEAR 2 Hadith Terminology (*Mustalah*)
- YEAR 3 On the Science of Hadith Criticism
- YEAR 4 Stories from the Lives of the Early *Muhaddithin*
- YEAR 5 The Compilation of the *Sunan Works* / On the Status of Weak Hadith

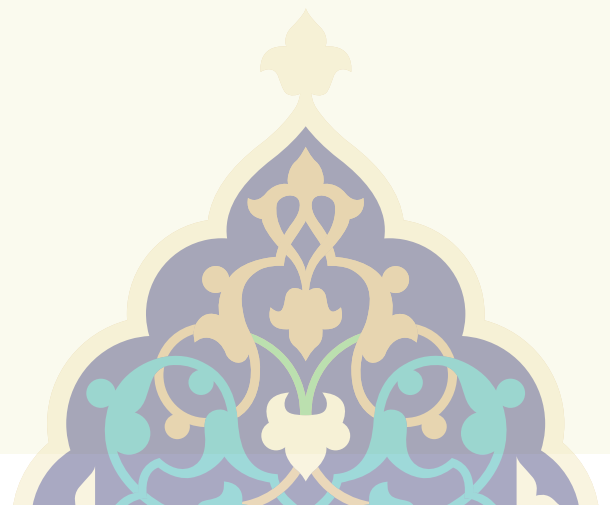
Advanced Electives

- The Historicity of Hadith
- Comparative Methodologies of the *Muhaddithin*
- Hadith and Orientalism
- A Comparison of Islamic and Western Historical Verification Methodologies
- Hadith and Differences in Law

7 | Inner and Outer Fiqh (Law)

Core Course

- YEAR 1 Inner and Outer Fiqh of Worship (*Ibadat*) 1
- YEAR 2 Inner and Outer Fiqh of Worship (*Ibadat*) 2
- YEAR 3 Select Issues in Modern Life
- YEAR 4 Inner and Outer Fiqh of Marriage
- YEAR 5 On the Fiqh of Business Transactions



8 | History, Politics and Culture

Core Course

YEAR 1 History of the *Umma* of Islam: From Early Statehood to Modern Times (1)

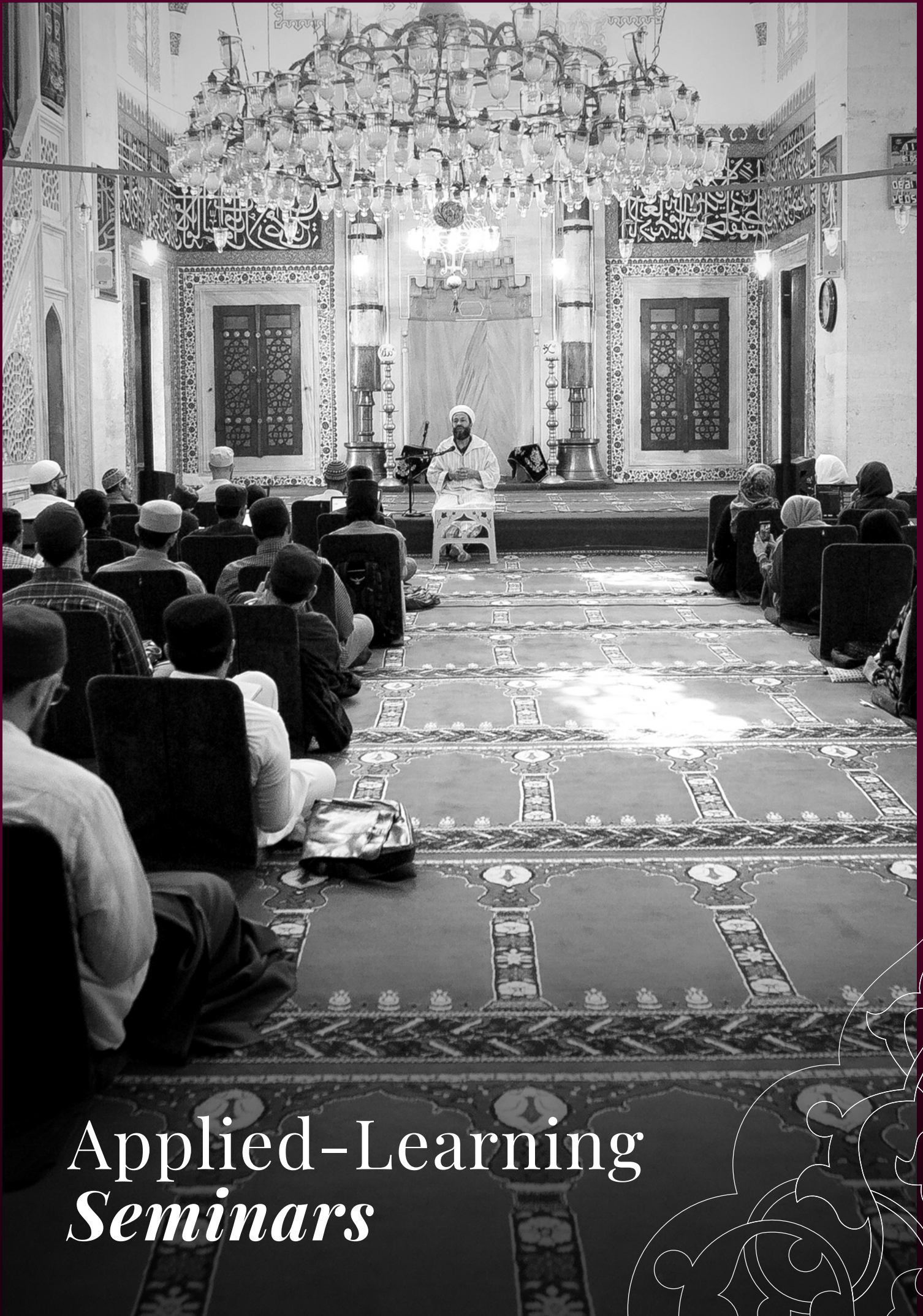
YEAR 2 History of the *Umma* of Islam: From Early Statehood to Modern Times (2)

YEAR 3 On the Historical Development of Islamic Legal Thought

YEAR 4 On Islamic Political Theory

YEAR 5 Islam as a Civilizational World View





Applied-Learning *Seminars*

Applied-Learning Seminars

A critical dimension of the Seminary's educational paradigm is the projection of Islamic knowledge and principles upon life and, in particular, upon the challenges we face in modernity.

Our *Applied-Learning Seminars* feature a growing list of intensive seminars — currently 32 — on topical issues that cover eight broad themes:

1 Growth and Productivity

2 Setting the Record Straight

3 Family and Youth

4 Education and History

5 Society and Technology

6 Art and Aesthetics

7 Activism and Politics

8 Travel and Nature

1

Growth and Productivity

1 Usul for Life: Principles for Daily Life Decisions

The principles of Islamic legal theory and objectives of the law are not meant as theoretical constructs that live in books alone. They are meant to be practiced in my life. In this course, we select key rational principles and learn how to apply them through an interactive study of 12 cases, from art, to marriage, to cell phones, to family feuds (to name a few).

2 Ten Principles for Deeper Daily Contemplation

Contemplation (*l'tibar*) is a powerful remembrance (*dhikr*) and act of worship (*ibada*) that is meant to be a daily feature of my life. But how do I reflect and ponder? What are its principles and practice? In this course, we learn ten key principles that will deepen and naturalize my ability to contemplate.

Applied-Learning Seminars

3 Harvesting the Pearls of the Qur'an

The Qur'an is Allah's personal address to me. Many gems of the Qur'an are accessible to one who approaches the Qur'an with an open heart, a keen desire to extract its pearls and some guidance about where and how to find them. This course will present me with a compass of principles for reading the Qur'an.

4 A Strong Mu'min: The Sunna of Exercise and Nutrition

My body is the vehicle of the soul and a trust from Allah to me. In an age of fast-foods and lazy lifestyles, how can I maintain this trust to truly optimize the development, maintenance and maturation of my soul? This course will teach me how to eat and exercise for the body, mind, heart and soul.

5 Wa al-'Asr: Principles of Time Management

The Qur'an says: *By the passage of time, man is in a state of loss.* Our spiritual teachers note that my life is but a collection of breaths — and when a breath departs, a part of me dies. This course will explore some tried and tested methods of ordering my time to prioritize the good of this world and the infinity of the Next.

6 Emotional Well-Being: Dealing with Sadness and Anxiety

Modern life has seen a marked increase in sadness and anxiety. What does our faith say about sadness and anxiety? How do we understand them in the context of our relationship with the Divine and His creation? Where do we find healing, peace and equilibrium? This course will explore these themes with experts in the field of Islamic psychotherapy.

7 The Grace of Calamity: Finding Sweetness in Difficulty

Life is difficult. We all know this fact and we expect that the next test is around the corner. Yet, we often interact with tribulation in ways that are unhealthy and even extreme. What are the wisdoms behind hardship? Its spiritual secrets? Its hidden paths to Divine nearness and the realization of our deepest potential? This seminar addresses these questions and more.



8 The Perils of New-Age Spirituality

In a world dominated by the religion of hyper-materialism, many of us desperately search for meaning in self-help and new-age spirituality. How helpful are these methods in quenching our spiritual thirst? How pure is its wellspring? This course offers a critical evaluation of modern efforts at self-enlightenment.

9 Responding to Polemics Against the Messenger ﷺ

The polemics against the Messenger ﷺ have never ceased. This course discusses the specious accusations against his august personality ﷺ by dissecting each argument textually, historically and rationally. We see that the claims are threadbare in their rationality and are infused with an irrational animus.

10 The Kharijite Mentality in Text and Context

The *Kharijites* were an extreme sect in Islam. They represented a mentality of thinking about faith and interacting with it. This course will explore the contours of that mentality, why it has always been so devastating to the Muslim *umma* and how we, individually and collectively, can protect ourselves from such a mentality.

11 Perennialism: A Critical Review of its Principles and Thought

Is Islam a way to salvation or the only way? Perennialism interprets Islam as saying that paths to salvation are multiple. Is this claim accurate? This course will review the thought and principles of Perennialism, as well as critically assess — rationally and linguistically — its interpretation of Islamic texts.

12 God Is: Rational and Spiritual Proofs for His Existence

Modern secular materialism has produced the rise of atheism. We are barred more and more from perceiving and experiencing non-material realities. Certainty (*yaqin*), the rarest and most precious of Divine gifts, is now even rarer. Yet, the existence of the Divine is as clear as day. Let us study some of these proofs and, Allah willing, increase our certainty.



13 The Place of the Weak Hadith in Islam

Modern times has seen the rejection of the weak *hadith* by some, with terrible, adverse effects on individual and collective spirituality, law and scholarship. It might come as a surprise to many that classical scholarship never rejected the weak *hadith*. On the contrary, the weak *hadith* was studied and used with incredible rational sophistication. How? This is the topic of this seminar.

14 *Bid'a*: Its Principles and Correct Application

We are in dire need to re-learn the topic of *bid'a*. Its misunderstanding — and the promotion of that misunderstanding — has ravaged the edifice of Islamic scholarship, culture and unity. This seminar attempts to correct the record with a careful, systemic study of the subject through relevant Islamic texts and their understanding and application by the earliest Muslim scholars.

15 Marriage: A Union of Souls

Marriage is not fundamentally a contract of rights and responsibilities. It is a union of souls. The deepest intimacy is spiritual intimacy. What are the elements of this intimacy? How can it be attained? Can couples grow more beautiful to each other through soul-affinity? This seminar explores these topics and more.

16 The Rites of Passage into Manhood and Womanhood

The rites of passage to manhood and womanhood are fast disappearing. What does it mean to be a young man or woman? Is it mere biology? Preference? Orientation? What are the qualities of a man? A woman? This course explores the concept of *futuwwa* (virtuous character) and its inculcation as a critical rite of passage for young hearts.

17 Prophetic Tarbiyya to Raise Young Hearts

Yes, raising children involves trial and error. And, yes, it is an art and partly a science. However, we must know the Islamic principles of nurturing and development — and work within their envelope. What are those principles to nurture body, mind, heart and soul that every parent must know? Let's learn them together.

18 Role Reversal: What Do My Role Models Tell Me About Me?

Social psychology has documented the effects of my role models on me. We live in an age of “influencers,” do we not? But what do my role models teach me about me? Who I am? My inner psychology? The traits within? A great deal. This seminar will present some principles of this self-evaluation and link them to an experiential relationship with the Messenger ﷺ.

19 Not Lost in Translation: Teaching Young Hearts Critical Concepts

Islamic Parenting involves the ability to teach our young hearts — gradually and wisely — important spiritual and rational principles. This requires a lived experience, practice and some Divinely-granted talent. Join us as we listen to a gifted teacher and storyteller with many years of experience as she shares her secrets in the art of conveying important sacred knowledge.

4 Education and History

20 How to Learn and Why Learn: A Framework for True Islamic Education

All learning has a philosophy behind it. And that philosophy is embedded in values. Why do we learn? To what end? With which values? This course explores the philosophical framework for learning in Islam, its purpose and the values that must underlie any education for it to be truly educative and not merely instrumental.

21 The Un-Making of the Muslim World: A Critique by Shaykh Mustafa Sabri

Shaykh Mustafa Sabri, the last Shaykh al-Islam of the Ottoman caliphate, lived through the greatest inflection point in modern Muslim history. This course explores Shaykh Mustafa's profound reflections on the religious, social and political currents of his day that would ultimately shape the Muslim world today.



22 Colonialism and Muslims: Dispelling Our Collective Amnesia

Throughout history, the hostility of some against Islam and Muslims has been grave and unrelenting. Ignorance of our history is not bliss. This seminar examines the contours of that hostile animus, its mechanisms and effects through geographically diverse case studies, such as North Africa, South Africa, Turkey and the Indian subcontinent, among others.

5

Society and Technology

23 Digital Deceptions: Using Technology Purposefully

A Muslim must not be a cheap imitator and accept new technologies without subjecting them first to the filter of Islamic values and principles. But how do we use technology and not be enslaved by its built-in addictive power? This course teaches us how to be intelligent users of modern technology — to draw its benefits and sidestep its harms.

24 Engineering Automaton: Propaganda in Modern Society

We are inundated with obvious and subtle messages by those who seek to shape our ideas, attitudes and choices. With the advent of modern public relations, how free are we? How much of us has been engineered? This course exposes the intents and methods of modern propaganda and sharpens our minds to be on guard.

25 Unravelling the Media Narrative

Does modern media have an inherent bias? What drives it? What are its sources and foundations? And, most importantly, how do we become discerning consumers of information? This seminar will discuss and analyze a number of trenchant critiques of the media through the lens of our rational and spiritual principles, and present practical ways to guard against media manipulation.



6

Art and Aesthetics

26 Where is Islam in Translations of Mawlana Rumi's Poetry?

Mawlana Rumi was an orthodox Muslim scholar and saint. How did he become an icon for a new-age spirituality that has imbued his person and teachings with principles antithetical to Islam itself? This course attempts to answer this question, to vindicate Mawlana Rumi's work, and to introduce us anew to his moving wisdoms.

27 Poetry as Dhikr: Commentaries on Select Qasa'id

In Islam, art is not for art. And artistic expressions are not meant to be expressions of the lower self. Rather, art is Divine remembrance creatively expressed by the artist that points towards an infinity of Beauty and Majesty. This course will explore this theme through the art-form of the Islamic spiritual poem.

28 Appreciating the Genius of Islamic Architecture

The great works of Islamic architecture the world over are masterpieces that express the most beautiful and subtle meanings of God's Unicity, Beauty and Majesty. This course explores how our architecture embodies and manifests the most sublime themes of Islam's spiritual truths, along with a case study of Sinan.



7

Activism and Politics

29 Principled Engagement: Towards an Ethical Activism

What does social and political activism have to do with spirituality? Everything. This course bridges activism and spirituality through a discussion of human psychology and spiritual metaphysics. We see that activism is the realization of human stewardship, and that a true activist must be a sincere seeker of the Divine.

30 Inviting to an Inhabited House: Principles of *Da'wa*

If *da'wa* means to invite — and it does — I cannot invite another to an empty house. I must be what I call to. And how do I do that? And second, *da'wa* has rational rules and principles about attaining benefit and warding off harm. What are they? This course discusses in detail both dimensions of *da'wa*.

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Education and History

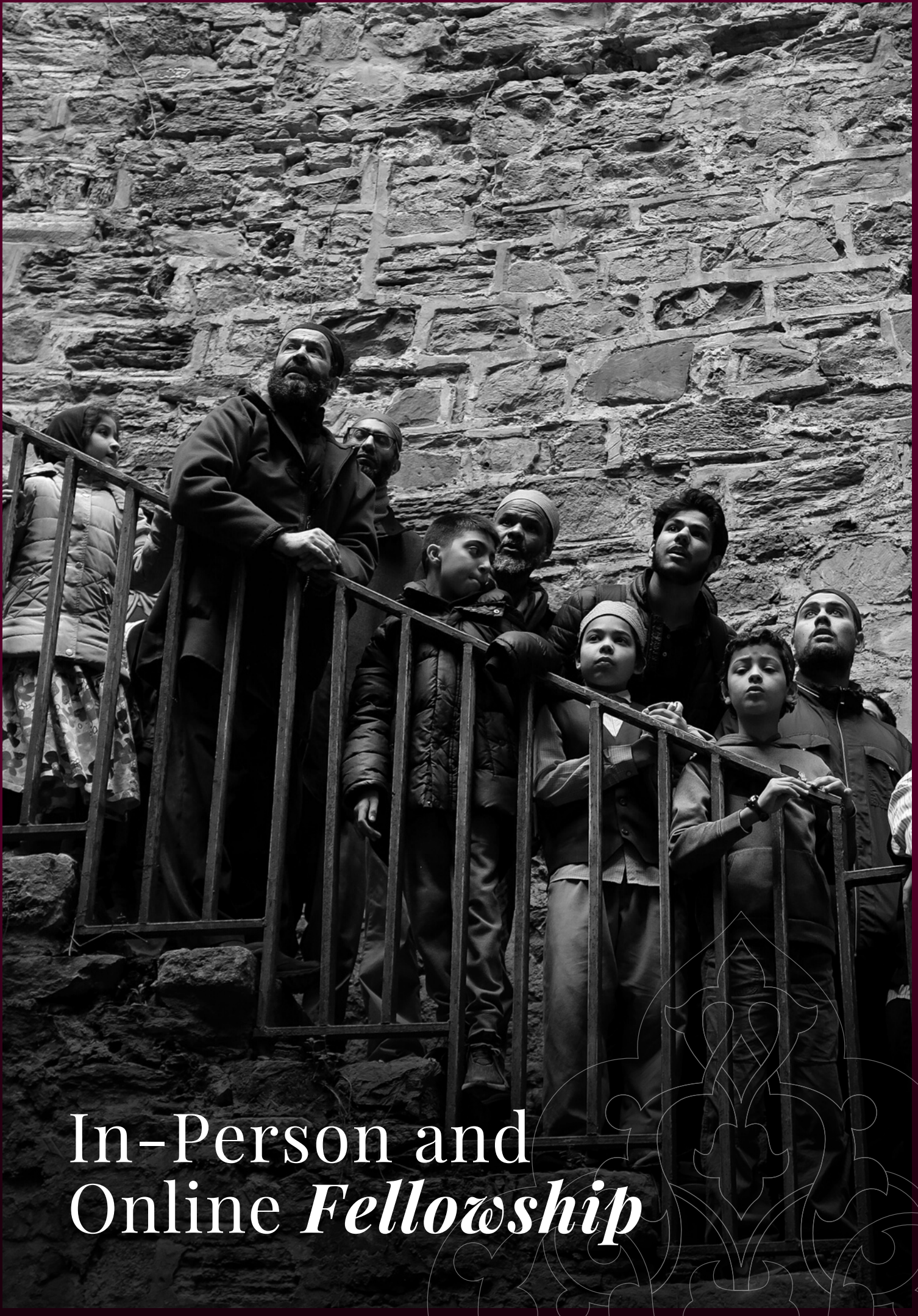
31 Sacred Resonances: Islam, Nature and the Environment

Islam's appreciation of nature and the environment is far more complex, sophisticated and beautiful than any secular, utilitarian conception. This course will root this appreciation in the sacred origin of nature, its inherent Divine Remembrance and the Divine Attributes that shape our relationship with it.

32 Spiritual Wayfaring: Travelogues with Shaykh Mokhtar

What does it mean for a Muslim to go on vacation, relax or tour? This course will answer this question by discussing the travelogues of Shaykh Mokhtar — brief vignettes, both oral and visual, that his students have recorded about their travels with him. Reflections, advices, routines, and much more.





In-Person and
Online *Fellowship*

In-Person and Online *Fellowship*

The intent of fellowship (*suhba*) is to find spiritual solace and strength in one's learning and practice through fellowship with one's teacher and fellow students.

Fellowship is the most fundamental, holistic and effective pedagogy of Islamic learning and practice, and is realized in the Seminary's curriculum through a **blended-fellowship pedagogy** of both online fellowship and in-person fellowship.

In-Person Fellowship

1. In-person attendance in Istanbul for specific Seminary modules and other on-the-ground programs (dependant on space and successful application).
2. An annual summer *Tazkiya* Retreat in Turkey (tentative).
3. An annual 'Umra visitation through Al-Madina Institute (tentative).
4. The annual *Pearls of the Qur'an* conference in the U.S. organized by *Al-Madina Institute*.
5. The annual *Reviving the Islamic Spirit (RIS)* conference in Toronto, along with its knowledge retreat and student reunion.
6. *Retreats and Applied-Learning Seminars* outside of Istanbul taught by some of the Seminary teachers.

Online Fellowship

1. A *Fellowship and Practice (FP)* class to contextualize, personalize and emphasize the practical dimensions of learning.
2. *Learning Resource Materials (LRMs)* which provide a glossary of Arabic terms, summarize the class and offer questions for reflection.
3. *Student Reflections* which are written by students and shared in class.
4. The *Suhba Circle* which provides students with an online, interactive discussion group.
5. A *Suhba Check-In* where students and teachers discuss their growth and concerns
6. *Q&A sessions*.
7. Weekly Friday reflection from Shaykh Mokhtar.





Practice (*Amal*)

Practice ('Amal)

Studying at the Seminary is not about acquiring more information.

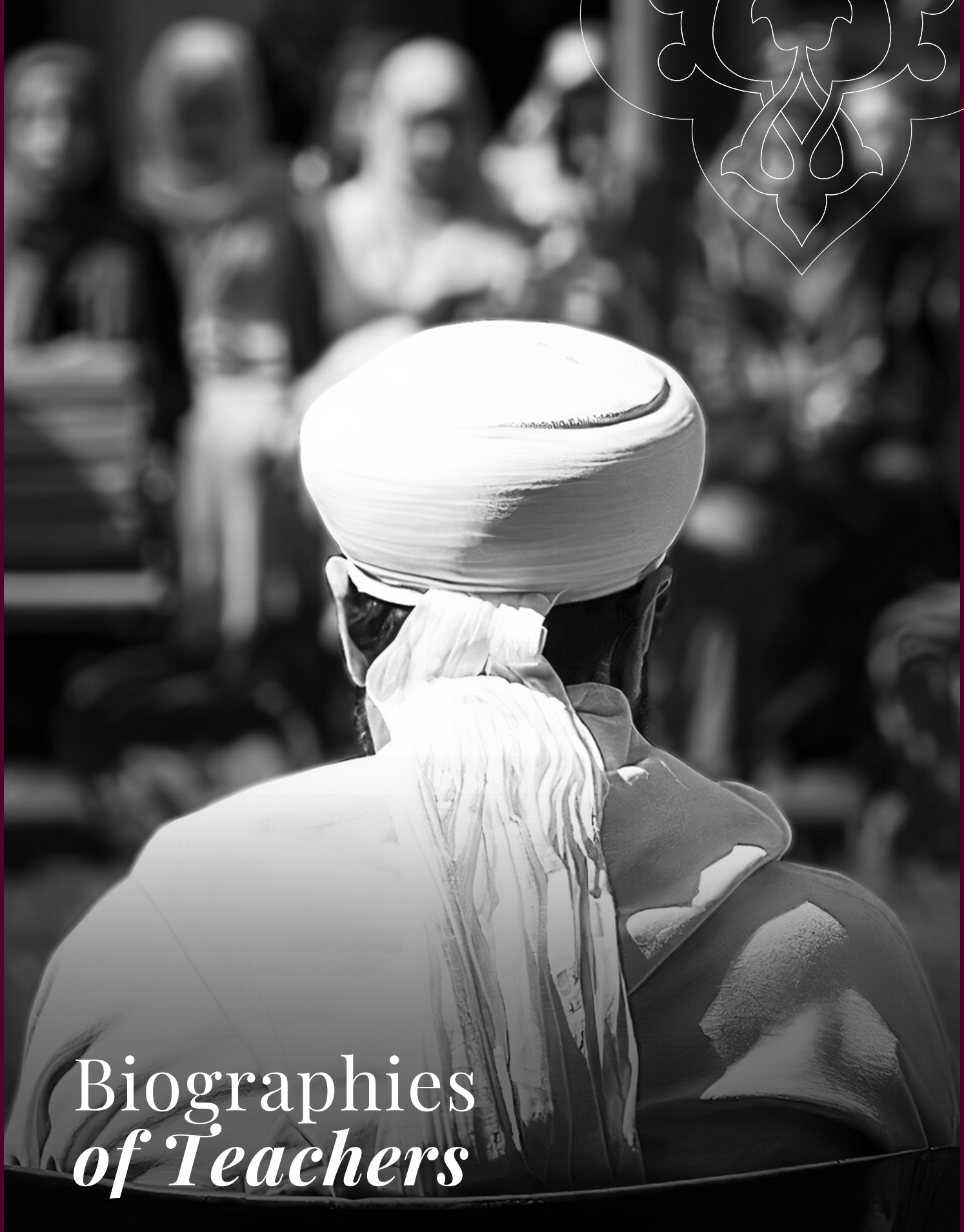
It is about genuine spiritual transformation through learning, internalizing, practicing, and living what we learn.

In the Islamic tradition, knowledge is never intended for its own sake, but to reform and transform our hearts through beautiful character (*akhlaq*) and heartfelt worship (*'ibada*) and thus gain felicity in this world and the Next.

Practice is realized in three ways:

1. The gradual introduction of a comprehensive, daily schedule of worship (*wird*) and devotional remembrances in the *Fellowship and Practice* class.
2. A regular "Sitting Still" session where we learn to still our bodies, minds and souls in remembrance and connect our hearts to our Creator.
3. The *Weekly Remembrance with Shaykh Mokhtar Maghraoui* in which we recite Qur'an, collectively offer salutations upon the Messenger ﷺ and recite a litany of daily remembrances. This weekly communal practice helps establish the essential daily habit of having a personal litany (*wird*).





Biographies
of Teachers

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Biography Background

The biography of any Islamic scholar is at once inclusive and reflective of the biographies of their teachers. The transfer of Islamic knowledge from teacher to student is meant to engender an experiential *tawhīd* (*Divine unicity*) that reforms and transforms the student's character and etiquette (*akhlāq*). In other words, the teacher is the means to illuminate the student's heart (*qalb*) – its faculties of perception, emotion and will – and, consequently, his conduct with Allāh and His creation.

Spiritual mentorship or *ṣuḥba* is the ideal Islamic pedagogy. The necessity of this mentorship, unfortunately almost alien to modern Muslim sensibilities, is a truth that has never, until post-colonial times, required debate or defense. It was an axiomatic truth that each Muslim knew intuitively. The evidence was nothing less than the miraculous transformation of untold numbers of Companions under the guiding hand and heart of our Master Muḥammad ﷺ.

The spiritual inheritance of the Scholar-Saint is a lineage of shared *ṣuḥba*, link-by-link, to the illuminating reality of the Messenger ﷺ. In this spirit, it is only befitting that the biography of Shaykh Mokhtār Maghrāoui begins with his spiritual father and mentor, Shaykh Muḥammad Emin Er (may Allāh bless and sanctify his soul).



Shaykh Muḥammad Emin Er



Shaykh Muḥammad Emin Er¹ was born around the outbreak of World War I, possibly in 1914 and perhaps as early as 1909. The official records of the time are not always accurate, and the exact date of his birth is uncertain. He was born in the late Ottoman era in the village of Külüyan near the town of Çermik, Diyarbakır, in what is today southeastern Turkey.

When Shaykh Muḥammad Emin was a child of three or four, his mother passed away; at the age of ten, his father died, leaving him an orphan. At the time, the Ottoman state extended from North Africa to Yemen, from the Balkans to the frontiers of Persia.

But the coordinated attacks that it faced on multiple fronts led to the depletion of its dwindling financial resources. The economic situation became ruinous, resulting in severe material hardship throughout the country, not least in the impoverished regions of Eastern Anatolia where Shaykh Muḥammad Emin grew up.

Shaykh Muḥammad Emin spent his early life in straitened circumstances, first under the care of his stepmother, and later under the care of his elder brother. High up in the mountains surrounding his village, Shaykh Muḥammad Emin shepherded goats to help support his family.

Throughout these difficulties, Shaykh Muḥammad Emin's singular desire was to learn to read and write. Enjoying neither paper nor pen, he used stones to etch words and sentences on flat rocks while tending goats on the mountainsides. He would shed bitter tears imploring Allāh to help him learn to read the Qur'ān.

He missed no opportunity to seek out those whom he thought could teach him. Shaykh Muḥammad Emin would journey on foot for days at a time to visit knowledgeable people in the vicinity of his village, however briefly. Eventually, he learned to write letters and read books in the Ottoman script. But there was no one at the time to introduce him to the Arabic language and traditional Islamic disciplines, and he sought what knowledge he could from books.

When World War I came to a close, the nascent Turkish Republic abolished the traditional Ottoman script and outlawed all Qur'ānic and Islamic education with harsh, and sometimes mortal, punishment. Families feared teaching the Qur'ān to their children even in the privacy of their own homes.

While the first awakenings of his spiritual quest came to him at a very young age, Shaykh Muḥammad Emin recalled that few opportunities to learn were available:

¹ This is a re-worked biography, with some additions, of Shaykh Muḥammad Emin Er, taken from his work entitled, *The Soul of Islam: Essential Doctrines and Beliefs*, translated by Joseph Walsh. Shifa Publishing, 2008. Pages 13-40.

From my early childhood, I was anxious with respect to death and the life to come, so I would visit certain teachers and inquire with them about all this. I asked them how to prepare myself for the next life. From early childhood I was curious about such things. I kept asking older people why we are so interested in this life and the things of this world, when we are going to die, absolutely, every one of us. So, it became my main goal to seek out a teacher and gain a religious education.

But at that time everything was forbidden in Turkey. Even to read and to learn the Qur'ān was forbidden in those days. It was not easy, like it is today.

Shaykh Muḥammad Emin resolved to seek his religious learning in Syria but he was declined entry. When he returned at the age of twenty-five from his first Ḥajj, he undertook extensive travels in eastern Anatolia and later in Syria to seek out Islamic scholars.

In the years that followed, Shaykh Muḥammad Emin studied Arabic and the rational and Islamic sciences with a number of scholars. He studied morphology (*ṣarf*), syntax (*naḥw*), propositional logic (*manṭiq*), philology (*ʿilm al-waḍʿ*), figurative usage (*istiʿāra*), literary style (*adab*), lexicology (*maʿānī*), rhetoric (*bayān*), refined usage (*badī*), fundamentals of religious belief (*uṣūl al-dīn*), doctrinal philosophy (*kalām*), Qurʾānic exegesis (*tafsīr*), the science of Qurʾānic recitation (*tajwīd*), theoretical jurisprudence (*uṣūl al-fiqh*), the sciences of the prophetic traditions (*uṣūl al-ḥadīth*), jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and the laws of inheritance (*farāʿid*).

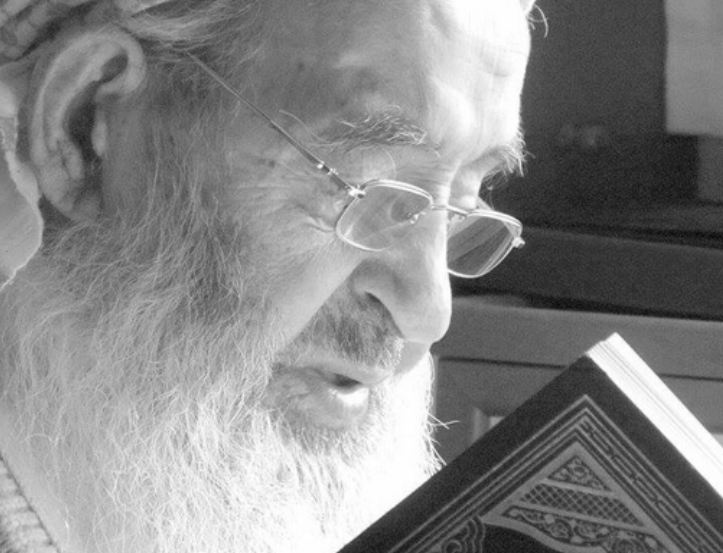
He spent considerable time with Molla Rasul, a classmate of Shaykh Bediüzzaman Saʿid Nursī. In 1951, Shaykh Muḥammad completed the last of his studies with Shaykh Muḥammad Maʿshūq who granted him an *ijāza*, the traditional diploma and authorization to teach, in all of the rational sciences and traditional Islamic disciplines.

Concurrent with his studies in the Islamic sciences, Shaykh Muḥammad Emin devotedly pursued the study and practice of *taṣawwuf*, *tazkiyat al-nafs*, or *iḥsān* – the normative discipline of spiritual purification, which is the essence of Islam. He had a number of spiritual teachers, all from the Naqshbandī order.

Following the death of Shaykh Aḥmad Ghaznawī, whom he met while he was in Syria, he became a student of Shaykh Muḥammad Saʿid Saydā al-Jazarī and remained under his tutelage until he was granted an *ijāza* to guide students of his own.

Shaykh Muḥammad Emin was profoundly affected by Shaykh Saʿid's character (*akhlāq*): his immense kindness and love for all, selfless service towards others, boundless patience, genuine humility, unaffected sincerity, innocent self-effacement, and his continuous forbearance and forgiveness.

Shaykh Muḥammad Emin related that he never heard Shaykh Saʿid utter a harsh or disparaging word against another, nor did he ever defend himself. When he heard of others slandering him, his only response would be: "I have more faults than they know."



Those who had the Divinely-gifted grace to spend time with him attest that he did everything, and lived every moment, with an unmatched poetic, innocent, spiritual elegance. Shaykh Mokhtār testifies:

The most wonderful experience I had in the presence of Shaykh Muhammad Emin was observing his character.

He was beautiful in the way he spoke, ate, smiled, and walked. Everything he did was done with beauty. Allah imbued him with elegant majesty and elegant beauty. I have never encountered anyone as spiritually and morally elegant as him. He was a living friend of Allah.

Once, when he was quite elderly, Shaykh Sa'īd learned that fellow villagers were building a house but did not have enough stone to complete the construction. He went to a ruined house, asked his students to place two stones from it on his back, and carried them to the house being constructed.

Shaykh Sa'īd rode on donkeys, never horses, due to a constant concern to preserve his humility and ward off any ostentation.

Şuḥba with Shaykh Sa'īd was instrumental in shaping Shaykh Muḥammad Emin's scholarship, spirituality, character and pedagogy. Shaykh Muḥammad Emin would later affirm that every spiritual path has its own methods of remembrance (dhikr) and practice, but among all of them, the practice of şuḥba is indispensable and uniquely effective.

Until the last breath of his life – and he lived to be over 100 years old – Shaykh Muḥammad Emin lived the character (*akhlāq*) that he inherited from his teacher: He was in a state of perpetual Divine remembrance (*dhikr*); lived a life of rigorous worship; fasted whenever possible; regularly observed the night vigil prayers (*tahajjud*); he ate, spoke and slept little; counselled all those who sought his advice; magnanimously hosted a steady stream of guests in his modest Ankara apartment; travelled far and wide to join family and fraternal ties; tirelessly taught students, sensitive to each student's needs and aptitude; and continued to write on a variety of subjects.

The source of Shaykh Muḥammad Emin Er's rare majesty and beauty came from his lifelong quest to emulate, to the fullest extent possible, the outer and inner character of Allah's Beloved ﷺ. Dr. Recep Şentürk – one of Shaykh Muḥammad Emin's closest and most beloved students, who himself received an ijāza to guide seekers to Allāh – remembers Shaykh Muḥammad Emin's parting advice to him on his death bed before he passed away:

The summative advice of my life is this: Let us be wise, follow the Messenger of Allah, our Master Muḥammad ﷺ and enter the Paradise of our Lord. Let us not be foolish, disobey him ﷺ, squander this incomparable grace, and instead enter the Hellfire.

May Allah sanctify the soul of Shaykh Muḥammad Emin Er and benefit us by him. Āmin.



Shaykh Mokhtār Maghrāoui

Shaykh Mokhtār Maghrāoui was born in 1955, in the outskirts of what is now the current province of Ghriss, Algeria. He comes from the lineage of the children of the famous saintly scholar Shaykh Muḥammad ibn ‘Umar al-Huwārī, who traces his lineage to our Master Muḥammad through his grandson, Ḥasan (May Allāh be pleased with him), through his grandson, Idrīs (May Allāh be pleased with him).

Shaykh Mokhtār's childhood and youth were spent with his family and siblings in Algeria. The stories he recounts of his parents tell of their traditional Islamic character and piety. He remembers that his late father (may Allāh be pleased with him) could recite the entire Qur’ān from memory like others recite *Sūrat Al-Fātiḥa*. His mother's most fervent desire is to live and die in steadfast adherence (*thabāt*) to Allāh's obedience. She constantly implores all to please remember her request in their supplication – may Allāh grant her the steadfastness (*thabāt*) she seeks. Amīn.

An exemplary student, Shaykh Mokhtār was granted a scholarship to study in Germany and then the United States, where he obtained an MA in physics and a PhD in Electrical Engineering from Syracuse University.

As a graduate student and thereafter, he lectured at Union College, St. Rose College, and Syracuse University in the fields of engineering, math, physics and religion. While reading about the sacred sciences during his undergraduate studies, he was profoundly affected by the consistence, coherence and clarity of Islamic legal theory (*uṣūl al-fiqh*) and jurisprudence (*fiqh*). He began to immerse himself in the study of Islam and its rational sciences.

By Allāh's grace, his intellectual discovery of Islam's sacred sciences altered the course of his life. Shaykh Mokhtār implored Allāh to open for him the pathways of beneficial knowledge; and he devoted all his available time and energy to its pursuit. He read as widely and deeply as he could.

Whenever possible, he sought the counsel and companionship of scholars in their fields.

The late ḥadīth scholar Shaykh Mustafā al-A'zamī (may Allāh be pleased with him) was one of his teachers at whose hands Shaykh Mokhtār delved deeply into the science and critique of prophetic traditions (*ḥadīth*). Shaykh Mustafā loved Shaykh Mokhtār as his son, valued and sought his scholarly opinion on his work, and bequeathed to Shaykh Mokhtār his library.

Shaykh Mokhtār first met Shaykh Muḥammad Emin Er on one of Shaykh Muḥammad Emin's many journeys to the United States to visit his students. As time passed and their encounters became more frequent, Shaykh Mokhtār gained deeper insights into Shaykh Muḥammad Emin's character and etiquette (*akhlāq and adab*).

His heart began to witness more and more of Shaykh Muḥammad Emin's rare beauty, and he acquired an indescribable love and reverence for him that, to this very day, he finds emotionally and spiritually overwhelming.

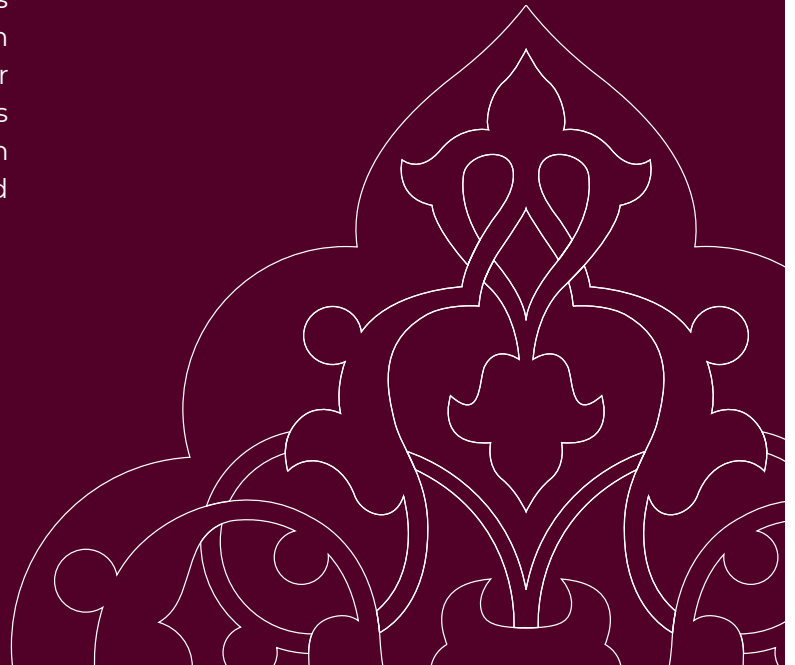
"He was Allāh's gift to me," Shaykh Mokhtār once stated.

The *ṣuḥba* between them continued for many years. Those who knew Shaykh Muḥammad Emin and attended his gatherings narrate that Shaykh Muḥammad Emin had an intense love for Shaykh Mokhtār. A scholar who was present relates: "Shaykh Muḥammad Emin would seek Shaykh Mokhtār with ardor and longing, like a mother for her child."

In the sacred sanctuary of Makkah during Ḥajj in 2006, Shaykh Muḥammad Emin granted Shaykh Mokhtār an *ijāzah* (a traditional diploma and authorization to teach) in *taṣawwuf* and licenced him with spiritual authority to guide seekers to Allāh. In 2010, Shaykh Muḥammad Emin conferred upon him an *ijāza* of sacred knowledge.

On one occasion, Shaykh Muḥammad Emin said: "Mokhtār is God-conscious, a scholar (*'ālim*)." When North American students would approach Shaykh Muḥammad Emin to entreat him to take them as his students, he would answer: "Why are you coming to me? You have Mokhtār with you."

Shaykh Mokhtār has taught and offered spiritual guidance in the United States for decades. He was the Imām and Scholar-in-Residence in Albany and Troy, New York; Boca Raton, Florida; and Plano, Texas. For many years, he served as a member of the Fiqh Council of North America. Muslims across the United States and Canada have experienced and benefited from his retreats, seminars and lectures.





The distinctiveness of Shaykh Mokhtār's teaching and spiritual guidance lies in its unity of purpose. Every field of knowledge – whether theoretical, legal, historical, exegetical or spiritual – must serve the twin, inseparable constants of our faith: experiential (and not merely intellectual or academic) *tawḥīd* (Divine unicity); and beautiful, refined character (*akhlāq*). This is the Prophetic legacy.

The essential means to realizing these twin constants is through the purification of our lower selves, or *tazkiyat al-nafs*. The heart is the seat of our normative and rational perception, emotional experience and will. Its purification – and only its purification – will ensure correct thought, feeling, will and consequently, conduct. Without learning to live every aspect of our lives within an envelope of inner purification, our individual and collective reform will flounder and be futile. Only in reclaiming this lost legacy will Islam's exoteric and esoteric, material and spiritual, rational and supra-rational, praxis and practice be reconciled, harmonized and unified. *Islām*, *Imān* and *Iḥsān*. This is the Prophetic pedagogy.

Since 2017, Shaykh Mokhtār was the teacher and spiritual mentor of the *Ṣuḥba* Program that the Institute ran in Istanbul, Turkey. Under his guidance, students and their families in the *Ṣuḥba* Program underwent a year-long, intensive study along with spiritual practice. Participants studied four foundational subjects that provided the unified intellectual and spiritual bedrock of their path to seeking Divine nearness; and they coupled their studies with spiritual practice and character refinement through spiritual mentorship in a real-life environment.

And to Allāh belongs all success.



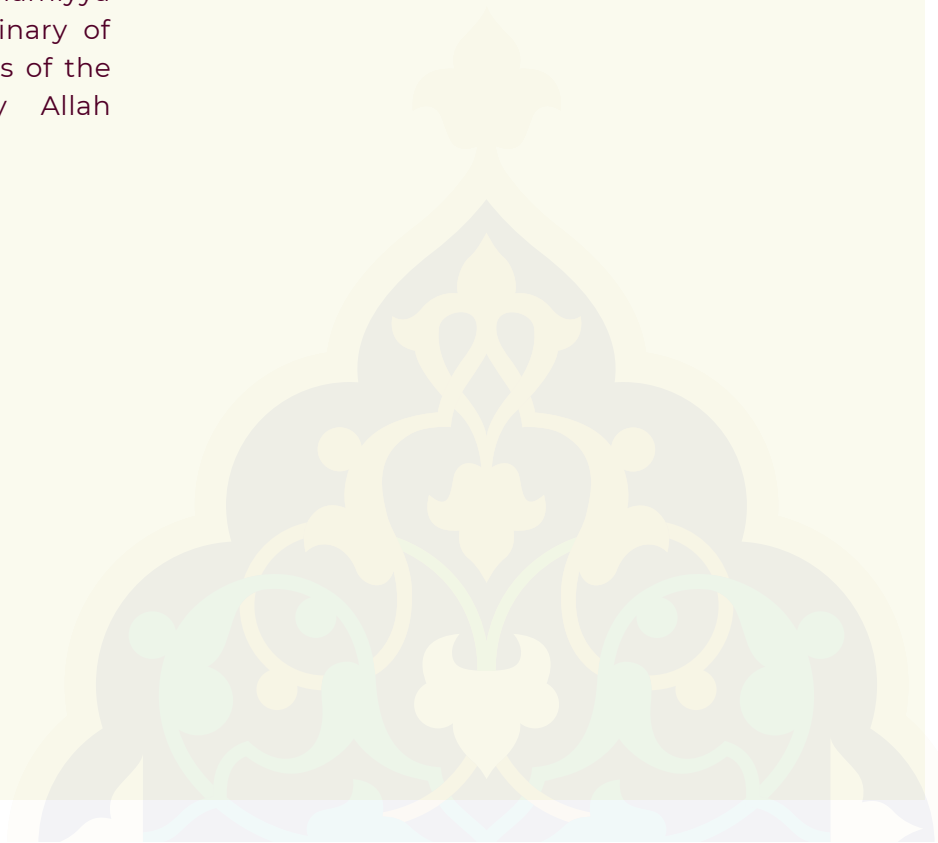
Shaykh Riad Saloojee

Shaykh Riad studied political science and law in Canada, and is a lawyer by profession. For many years, he was the Executive Director of a national Canadian Muslim advocacy organization, and has worked in the fields of media, human rights and politics. He has written extensively in newspapers across Canada on a variety of religious, social and political issues.

He then traveled to Cape Town, South Africa, and studied the Islamic sciences at Dar al-'Uloom al-'Arabiyya al-Islamiyya (DUAL), a well-known Islamic seminary of higher learning, under the auspices of the late Shaykh Taha Karan (may Allah envelope him in His Loving-mercy).

After graduation, he taught a variety of subjects at the seminary, including Islamic legal theory (*usul al-fiqh*), the higher objectives of the law (*maqasid al-shari'a*), law (*fiqh*), Prophetic traditions (*hadith*), and theology (*'aqida*). He has also translated a number of Arabic works into English.

His teachers include Shaykh Muhammad Emin Er (may Allah envelope him in His Loving-mercy), Shaykh Mokhtar Maghraoui, and Shaykh Taha Karaan (may Allah envelope him in His Loving-mercy).





Dr. Amir Abdelzaher

Dr. Amir obtained his Ph.D from the University of Miami, taught at several universities, and was a teacher and Director of Planning at the Islamic School of Miami. He has been studying the Islamic sciences with Shaykh Mokhtar for nearly two decades. In particular, he is passionate about the study of the Qur'an, its interpretations and its sciences.



Sidi Naeem Saloojee

Sidi Naeem Saloojee left his position as CEO of a start-up company in artificial intelligence to join the Suhba Fellowship Program in Istanbul with his family. Before that, he was the Director of Operations for a successful national Islamic advocacy organization. He has been studying the Islamic sciences with Shaykh Mokhtar for over two decades. The sciences that appeal most to him are theology and the Prophetic biography.



Sidi Moutasem Atiya

Sidi Moutasem Atiya has devoted his entire life to Islamic activism, organization and education, and has spent time and studied Islamic sacred knowledge with many of this century's luminary scholars. He is the founder of Al-Madina Institute whose goal, as he says, is "to forge a truly global, spiritual community, and to bring individuals and families together to live the spiritual reality of Islam in a modern context."



Dr. Ali Hazratji

Dr. Ali, a neurologist by profession, was born in India to a respected family whose lineage reaches to Rasulullah ﷺ. Since his early years, he has been an avid student of sacred knowledge and studied with various teachers, including Shaykh Mokhtar, with whom he has enjoyed an intimate companionship for close to two decades. Dr. Ali has traveled the world extensively in the service of da'wa.



Sidi Samer Amous

Samer Amous has a degree in business, and was one of the most gifted graduates of the Suhba Fellowship Program in Istanbul. He remained in Istanbul after the program, and studied the Islamic sciences with Dr. Hamza el-Bakri, Dr. Ahmed Snober, and Shaykh Amjad Rashid. He currently lives in Istanbul, where he is continuing his studies under the mentorship of Shaykh Mokhtar Maghraoui.



Sidi Salman Khan

Sidi Salman Khan is the Director of Operations of the Suhba Seminary. He has studied with Shaykh Mokhtar for over two decades, and graduated from an Islamic seminary in Cape Town, South Africa, where he studied full-time for four years. He has a dedicated interest in the cross-over between Islamic spirituality and management and planning.



Dr. Zulekha Jalal

Dr. Zulekha lives with her family in the United States where she practices pediatric medicine. She is a lifelong student of Islamic sacred knowledge, has been a student of Shaykh Mokhtar Maghraoui for two decades, and continues to study under his mentorship. Dr. Zulekha is a spiritual mentor and advisor to the sister students in the Seminary.



Sayyida Kamrun Nahar

Sayyida Kamrun was a top-student at an Islamic seminary in Cape Town, South Africa, where she studied full-time for four years. She also has a degree in early childhood education. During her time in South Africa, she worked extensively with women and youth. She currently lives in Istanbul, where she is continuing her studies under the mentorship of Shaykh Mokhtar Maghraoui.



Sidi Abdul-Basit Khan

Sidi Abdul-Basit is a prominent lawyer with his own private practice in Canada. For many years, he was a dedicated social and political activist, and the chair of the board of a national Muslim advocacy organization. He lives with his family in Toronto where he continues his mentorship and studies under Shaykh Mokhtar Maghraoui.



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