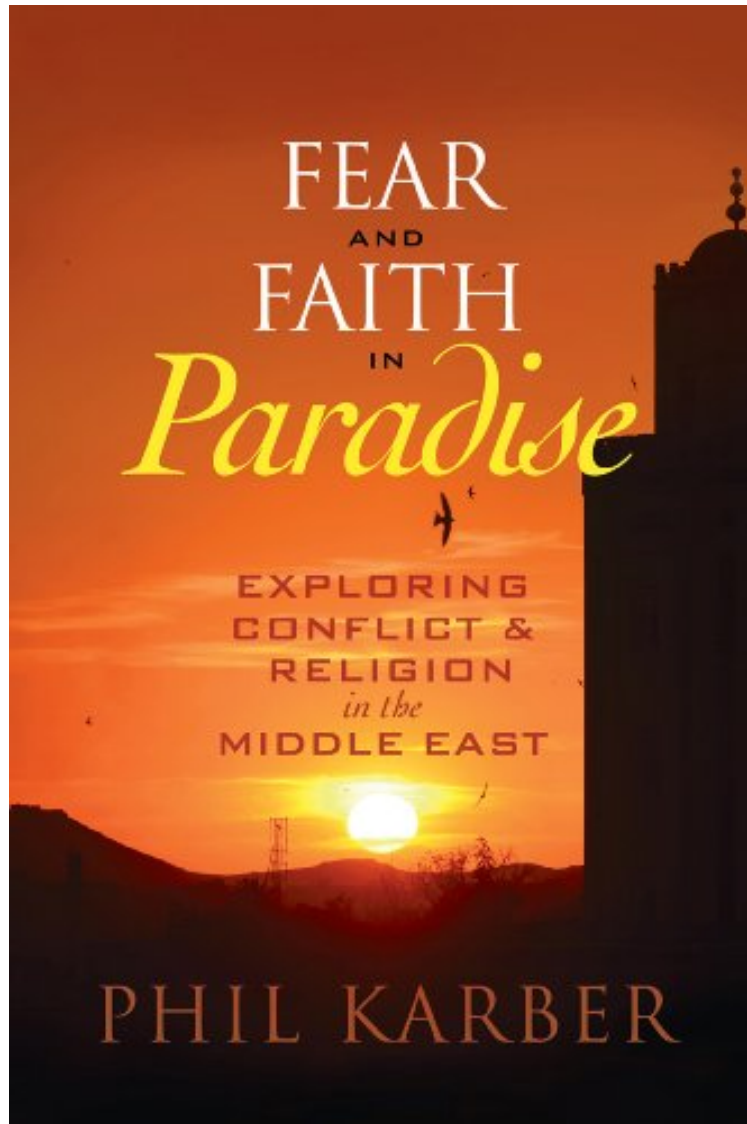


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Fear and Faith in Paradise: Exploring Conflict and Religion in the Middle East

Phil Karber

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Phil Karber : Fear and Faith in Paradise: Exploring Conflict and Religion in the Middle East before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Fear and Faith in Paradise: Exploring Conflict and Religion in the Middle East:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. New Perspectives on the Middle East and Attitudes on the U.S.By Mike BouldenThere is no shortage of books on the Middle East. Reporters, diplomats, soldiers. politicians and other

experts provide their own special takes on what is happening there and why. Phil Karber's *Fear and Faith in Paradise* gives the reader insights that are not available in any other book. *Fear and Faith* is the story of his recent travels in Syria, Lebanon, Tehran, Turkey, Morocco and Tunisia at the time of the emergence of the Arab Spring. In it you will meet Walid, the fixer at the Baron Hotel in Aleppo, and his son Mohammed, Karber's driver in his trek across Syria; Abdullah, the manager of the guest house in Hama; Abdul and his Pontiac Eight racing 90-miles an hour on the Damascus Highway; Ghousson Arnuk, a volunteer with the Syrian Red Crescent and Hani, another volunteer, at a refugee center in Damascus; David Holdridge, director of Mercy Corps Middle East in Beirut, and his wife Annie; Farid Chrabieh, Karber's dragoman on a tour along the Lebanon coast and through the Qadish Valley; Mira Mahdavi, a very independent Iranian woman and Karber's guide through Iran; Sayyid Jousiane, an instructor at an Islamic Shiite seminary; and Idder Mournier, an aspiring politician in Marrakech, to name a few. In all of his encounters, Karber lets the people he meets speak for themselves, without embellishment or explanation, and lets the readers listen and form their own opinions. *Fear and Faith* is a tableau of the Middle East and its people, rich in detail and full of historical facts. The author is a seasoned traveller and not a tourist. The places he visits are not resorts. In *Fear and Faith*, Karber lets us meet the people who are living through the change and turmoil in the region. He humanizes the communities that he visits and what emerges from this book is a picture of the Middle East that is different from what we see in most media. It is a region filled with "people like us" with perceptions and misconceptions about the U.S. and the West informed by their experiences against the backdrop of revolution, civil war, and uncertainty. Read this book if you want to know what the people of the Middle East think of Americans. You will learn something new. It will give you hope.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Wide and deep
By BeeBishopReading *Fear and Faith* has made me a much smarter consumer of daily news from the Middle East and North Africa. Karber travels light, packing a reliable moral compass, an exuberant and extroverted personality, insatiable curiosity, and modest but steadfast courage. Thanks to Karber's fearless pursuit of insight into the complicated situations throughout the region, my grasp of the multifaceted religious, ethnic, geographic and historical factors shaping conflicts there has increased tenfold (and left me wanting to know more). He delights his readers with lyrical descriptions of medinas, mosques, monuments, and mountains. He lets us eavesdrop on illuminating conversations with taxi drivers, guesthouse hosts, international aid workers, displaced persons, and random strangers on trains and busses, giving us real stories of real people in real time. He shares his extensive research on the convoluted history of cities, sects, and situations. In sum, he breaks down the faceless monolith of the Muslim world from Tunisia to Turkey (as presented by so much of our media) and gives us instead a tour both wide and deep in a region of profound significance to our modern world. I recommend that you make yourself a pot of mint tea and settle down for an amazing and unique trip with Karber as your guide and driver.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Best Travelogue I've Read!
By Avid Traveler
Karber's Fear and Faith in Paradise is the best travelogue I have read. As an avid traveler, I try to read others' accounts of a place before I do my own exploring. Though I have not yet planned my trip to the Middle East, I am so excited to have just finished *Fear and Faith*. In some ways, I feel like I have been there after reading the book. Not only does Karber do an amazing job of explaining life as an outsider, and about his perceptions looking in, but he also provides a great deal of historical context that educates the reader as they take the journey with him. I encourage everyone to indulge in Karber's fresh perspective, which deviates from what we read in the news media. Can't wait to hear what others think of the book!

From life along the Tigris River in the 1970s to the ongoing Arab Spring uprisings, Phil Karber has witnessed decades of change throughout the Middle East. *Fear and Faith in Paradise* draws on his wealth of experience to sketch a timely and compelling portrait of the region throughout history. Going beyond the endless images of terrorism and war, he challenges pervasive stereotypes of Muslims and delves into the living history and cultures of Arabs, Turks, Kurds, Persians, Jews, Tunisians, Moroccans, Armenians, and others. Seamlessly moving between past and present, Karber skillfully develops two overarching themes: How America's footprint can be shifted from a military to a humanitarian emphasis and how fear is used as a cudgel by today's monotheistic leaders to sacrifice the faithful. Whether Christian, Muslim, or Jewish, they all invoke their own vision of paradise, often as incentive, in hopeless conflicts that seem doomed to be repeated. Karber's down-to-earth writing vividly conveys the region's charm and beauty against a backdrop of power struggles among competing faiths, nationalisms, and outside forces.

Counter to the homogeneous portrayal of the Middle East and North Africa in American media, Karber reveals the kaleidoscope of cultures, ethnic identities, and belief systems that comprise the region. Beginning in 2006 in Syria and concluding in 2011 in Tunisia, Karber traveled through the Middle East, witnessing critical periods of humanitarian distress and political foment from the 2006 Lebanon War to the postwar development of Kurdistan to the birth of Arab Spring. He shows genuine enthusiasm and curiosity for the people and places he visits as well as an understanding of, and sensitivity to, the diverse cultures of the region. Throughout his travels, Karber engaged locals in discussions on their perceptions of the U.S. and on the political climate in their own country. He couches these conversations in the wider history of the region, weaving in historical events dating back to BCE. A fascinating travel memoir and a

revealing look at the devastating toll that war has taken on the Middle East. (Booklist) Karber, a travel writer whose previous books have explored Africa and Indochina, now turns his focus to the Middle East and parts of Muslim North Africa, chronicling for the reader his travels through Syria, Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Morocco, and Tunisia, where he attempts to understand the history and the culture of the region as a lens through which to view the turbulent political climate of the past decade. Karber is intrepid and inquisitive, with a lyrical prose style and a commendable eye for detail, and he has done copious background research, which makes the book rich with historical context. . . . The book is well worth reading, since it offers a fascinating glimpse into some underexplored countries and adds valuable color and context to the headlines. (Publishers Weekly) It will be a huge mistake if Karber's *Fear and Faith in Paradise* gets labeled merely a travel book. While his vivid and entertaining descriptions of his travels among the people of the Middle East, North Africa, and beyond paint for us a clear understanding of their communities, cultures, politics (or lack thereof), and beliefs, the book's real strength is the insight it provides into the lack of understanding and trust our leaders and we, as Americans, have of the Muslim world and theirs of the United States. In this turbulent and uncertain Arab Spring and post-9/11 era, it is a must read for our leaders and policy makers and all of us who put them in power. (John Lancaster, board of directors of the United States Institute of Peace) Phil Karber is part scholar, part seeker and full-on adventurer, a boots-on-the-ground writer who has regularly been drawn to some of the world's most complex and turbulent places. He began exploring North Africa and the Middle East years ago sleeping rough, eating local, hitching rides. And now, with *Fear and Faith in Paradise*, he has delivered a riveting, poignant and up-to-the-minute account of the region, from its history, peoples and cultures to its modern politics and recent upheavals. This book is a guide, a compass, a marvel. (Mark McDonald, foreign correspondent for the International Herald Tribune and New York Times) *Fear and Faith in Paradise* comes to us from Phil Karber as everyman . . . on the road. Not a historian, nor a development worker. Not a sociologue, nor a novelist. But rather, he invites, 'Come with me, America, and sit by my side,' as this incorrigible native son moves among foreign people. (David Holdridge, founder and president, Bridging the Divide) About the Author Phil Karber is an award-winning travel writer. He is the author of *The Indochina Chronicles: Travels in Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam* and *Yak Pizza to Go: Travels in an Age of Vanishing Cultures and Extinctions*. Since the mid-nineties he has called home Nairobi, Kenya; Hanoi, Vietnam; Bangkok, Thailand; and East London, South Africa. He currently lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Visit the author on his website [here](#).