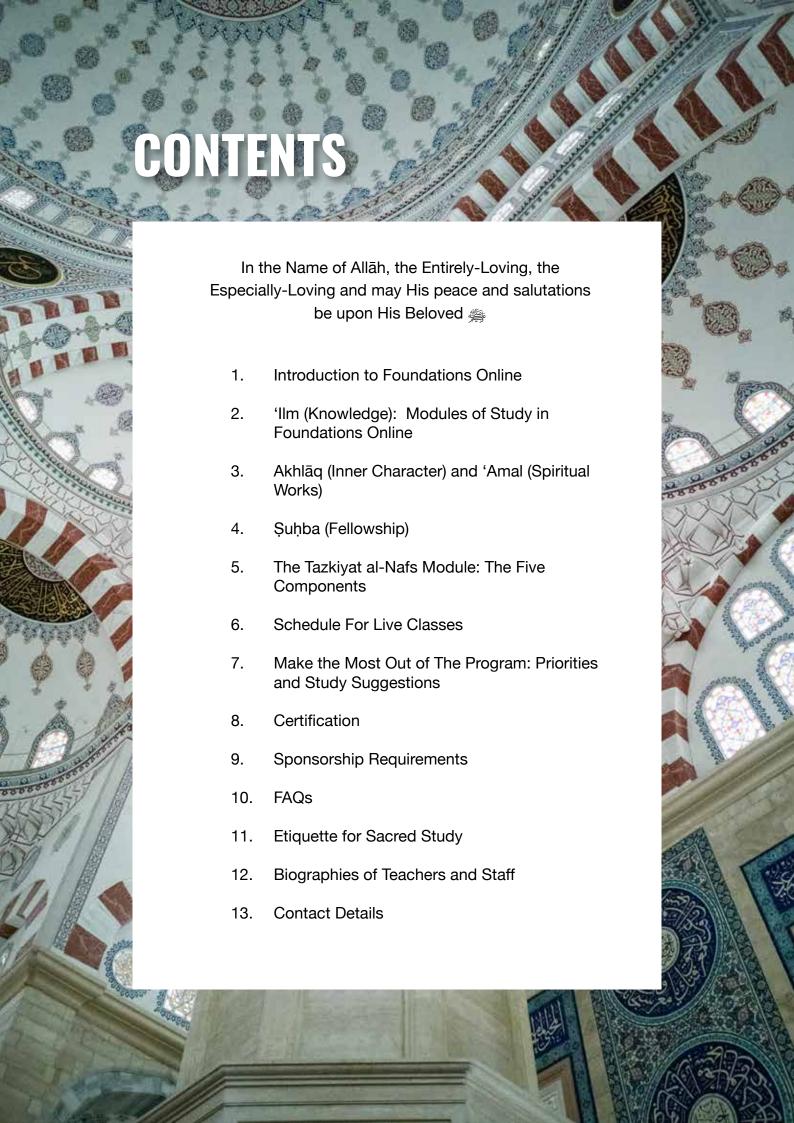


FOUNDATIONS ONLINE GUIDEBOOK

Tazkiyat al-Nafs Module 2020-2021





INTRODUCTION TO FOUNDATIONS ONLINE

FOUNDATIONS ONLINE

Foundations Online is an online Islamic curriculum of study, practice and fellowship designed and taught by Shaykh Mokhtār Maghrāoui.

The curriculum is the core of Al-Madina Institute's intensive, one-year Şuḥba Fellowship Program in Istanbul, which has been attended by over 300 students from all over the world.

THE INTENT

The intent of Foundations Online is that Islamic knowledge should lead to an experiential tawhīd (Divine unicity) and transform the student's akhlāq (inner character) and conduct.

THE CURRICULUM

The curriculum is comprised of three essential, interrelated components: 'Ilm (Islamic Knowledge), akhlāq and 'amal (character refinement and spiritual practice), and ṣuḥba (fellowship).





'ILM (KNOWLEDGE)

MODULES OF STUDY IN FOUNDATIONS

There are four core modules of study, each about 60 hours, taught primarily by Shaykh Mokhtār:

1. THE HEART:

The Science of the Purification of the Heart (Tazkiyat al-Nafs)

2. THE MIND:

Legal Theory (Uṣūl al-Fiqh), Legal Maxims (al-Qawā'id al-Fiqhīyya) and the Higher Objectives of the Law (Maqāṣid al-Sharī'a)

3. THE GUIDE:

The Reality of the Messenger ﷺ and the Meccan Period

4. THE BOOK:

A Chronological Exegesis (Tafsīr) of the Meccan Period

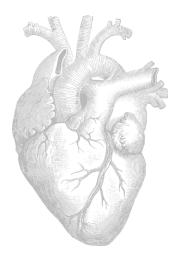
1. THE HEART:

The Science of the Purification of the Heart (Tazkiyat al-Nafs)

The spiritual heart (qalb) is the subtle, Divine creation that is the seat of all cognition, emotion and will. It is our greatest and most precious gift, by which we know Allāh, experience Him and seek Him.

Drawing from the rich legacy and practice of Islamic spirituality (Tazkiyat al-Nafs) from the Messenger , the Companions (Allāh be pleased with them) and the early and later generation of Scholar-Saints (Allāh sanctify their souls), this module discusses the essential principles and practices of the science.

Topics include the Islamic psychology of the self; the attainment of khilāfa (vicegerency) in the realization of the Divine Names and Attributes at the human level; the destructive vices and salvific virtues (akhlāq) of the heart; inner dimensions of worship; and a practical, holistic model of the essentials of Islamic spirituality such as 'ilm (knowledge), tawba (repentance), mujāhada (personal striving), dhikr (Divine remembrance), murāqaba (Divine mindfulness), du'ā' (supplication) and khalwa (spiritual seclusion), among others, with an in-depth discussion of each.



2. THE MIND:

Legal Theory (Uṣūl al-Fiqh), Legal Maxims (al-Qawā'id al-Fiqhīyya) and the Higher Objectives of the Law (Maqāṣid al-Sharī'a)

The Islamic principles of textual interpretation (Uṣūl al-Fiqh), the legal guidelines (al-Qawāʻid al-Fiqhīyya) induced from the corpus of jurisprudence, and the universal objectives in the attainment of human welfare through the promotion and preservation of faith, life, intellect, honour and wealth (Maqāṣid al-Sharīʻa) are anchored in a historically unmatched method of rational analysis and synthesis.

For our spiritual journey to the Divine to be deeply rooted and fruitful in the modern age, we must gain an appreciation of the importance of these noble sciences, their aims and purposes, their basic concepts, and a general understanding of their application to specific cases. This module will give us an introductory grounding in these sciences while illustrating their key theoretical concepts through a critical analysis of contemporary issues.

The concept and application of bid'a will be studied thoroughly, together with many misunderstood jurisprudential issues that arise from its incorrect conceptualization and application. Topics in Maqāṣid al-Sharī'a (Higher Objectives of the Law) and al-Qawā'id al-Fiqhīyya (Legal Maxims) include discussions and case studies of key principles and axioms that assist in rational and spiritually-sensitive decision making in personal and collective life.



3. THE GUIDE:

The Reality of the Messenger and the Meccan Period

Our Master Muḥammad is the Beloved of Allāh and the most perfect created expression of His Names and Attributes. He is the door to experiential tawhīd (Divine unicity) and to refined, exalted character (akhlāq).

Conventional studies of the Prophetic Biography (Sīra) typically treat his life as a chronology of events, crises or military engagements with scant attention paid to his reality. This module will first introduce us to his reality and special station with Allāh, and then proceed to examine the Prophetic Biography in Mecca in the context of that reality. We will begin to see that each event in his biography gifts us with an experiential realization of Allāh's Names and Attributes and provides us with precious, personal lessons for refinement of our own character (akhlāq).

This new perspective on the Messenger will grant us a fuller appreciation of the sublime majesty and beauty of his character ; change the way in which we relate to his words, deeds and life ; and truly make him the emulative archetype for our hearts, minds and bodies throughout our lives. And with Allāh is all success.



4. THE BOOK:

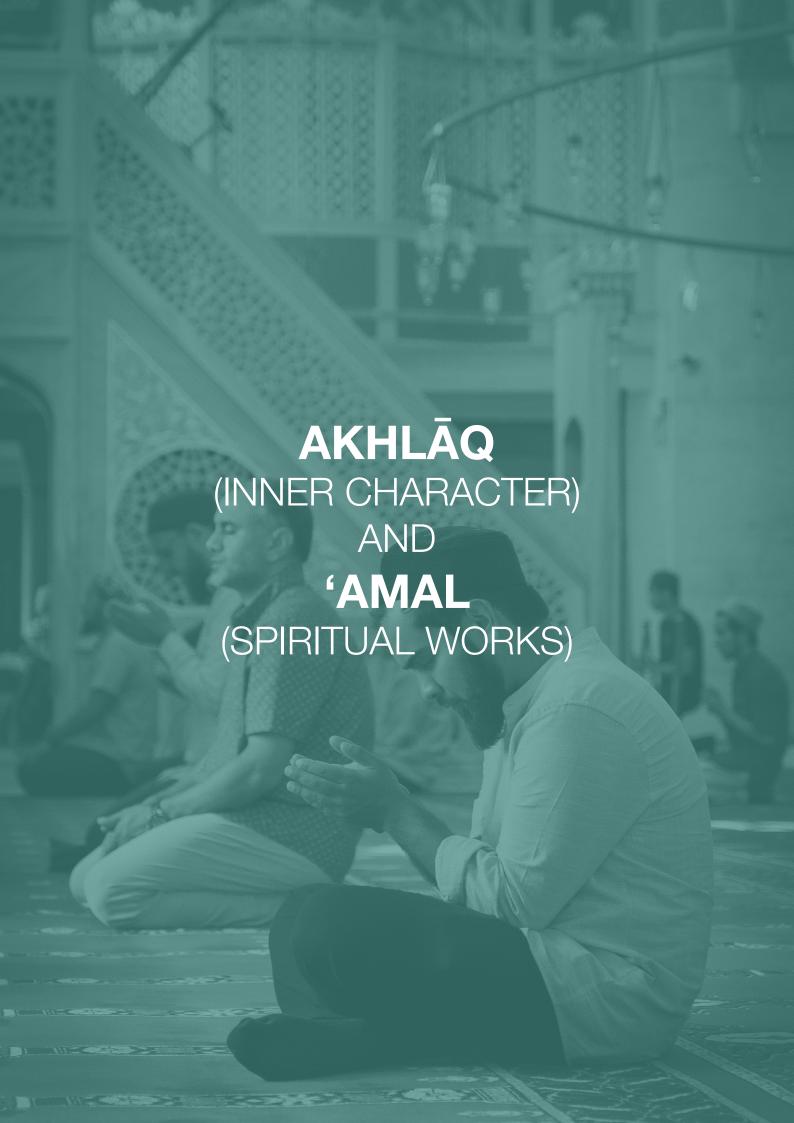
A Chronological Exegesis (Tafsīr) of the Meccan Period

The Qur'ān is Allāh's eternal speech to us, our most direct experience of His Names and Attributes, and the cure and remedy for all our spiritual ailments.

This module of Qur'ānic Exegesis (Tafsīr) studies the chronological revelation of the Qur'ān in Mecca as it addresses the personal and collective challenges of the first believers and provides them with spiritual strength and inner composure. In the Divine plan, there is no Medina without Mecca. So, too, in our lives: We must first establish ourselves in the foundational meanings of the Meccan revelation before we can hope to build the edifice of our Medina.

The Meccan Qur'ān unfolds with profound, transformative spiritual meanings that develop an experiential awareness of Allāh's Names and Attributes together with the akhlāq (inner character) essential for individual and collective growth. As we internalize and actualize these meanings, we will build an emotional, personal connection to the words of the Qur'ān and feel that it is revealed for us, and to us, in real-time and real-life. And with Allāh is all success.





AKHLĀQ AND 'AMAL

Foundations Online is not about gaining information. It is about genuine spiritual transformation through internalizing, practicing and living what we learn.

In our Islamic tradition, knowledge is never intended for its own sake, but to reform and transform our hearts through beautiful akhlāq and heartfelt 'ibāda (worship). The emphasis on akhlāq and 'amal is as important as the acquisition of knowledge – in some cases, more important.

THE CURRICULUM OF AKHLĀQ AND 'AMAL

The Foundations Online curriculum contains practical written and audio resources for turning knowledge into transformative action. These will be introduced gradually over the course of the year, for those who wish to use them.

They include a daily schedule of 'ibāda with recommended priorities, as well as devotional remembrances (adhkār) after ṣalāh, in the morning and evening, before sleeping and after waking, and on various occasions.

Supplemental lectures and seminars will also be made available when necessary on topics such as salāh, (fasting), dhikr (Divine sawm remembrance), du'ā' (supplication), khalwa (spiritual seclusion), mujāhada (spiritual struggle), murāgaba (Divine mindfulness), of diseases the heart. sida (truthfulness), tawakkul (reliance), sabr (patience), and the grace of calamity.





ŞUḤBA (FELLOWSHIP)

The intent of sunba is to find spiritual solace and strength in one's learning, understanding and practice through fellowship with one's teacher and fellow students.

ONLINE ŞUḤBA

While online sunba can never replace in-person sunba, Foundations Online currently provides five avenues to maintain the ties of fellowship:

1. The One-Hour Weekly Review, Practice and Fellowship (RPF) Class:

The weekly Review, Practice and Fellowship (RPF) class with Shaykh Riad is an opportunity for students to learn through interaction, reflection and discussion.

2 Şuḥba Circle:

The Şuḥba Circle is an online community where students will be able to post their brief reflections and read the reflections of their companions.

3. The Family Remembrance Program:

Al-Madina Institute's Family Remembrance Program is a wonderful avenue for families to gather and recite some Qur'ān, remember Allāh and His Beloved , listen to beautiful renderings of spiritual songs (along with their translation and a brief commentary), learn core Islamic concepts essential for individual and family spiritual growth, and share reflections and experiences.

4. Jumu'a Mubārak:

Every Friday, students will receive a written reminder discussing an inner meaning of the blessed day of Friday, and how we can live that meaning to improve the spiritual quality of our week.

5. Spirited Reflections:

From time to time, students will receive a written reflection connecting the material taught in Foundations Online to their daily lives.

THE FIVE COMPONENTS

THE TAZKIYAT AL-NAFS MODULE THE FIVE COMPONENTS

Foundations Online will begin with the first module, Tazkiyat Completion of the al-Nafs. and its module all of will take components approximately one year, inshā'Allāh.

WHAT ARE THE CORE STUDY COMPONENTS?

There are five core study components:

- 1. Students will listen to either an hour or two hour recorded lecture of Shaykh Mokhtār every week.
- 2. Students will receive a Lecture Resource Materials (LRM) document after every recorded lecture. The LRM document will contain the following:
 - a. A brief overview of the week's lecture
 - b. The lecture's key themes
 - c. A glossary of Arabic words used in the lecture along with their translations
 - d. The primary texts used in the lecture along with their translations
 - e. A point-form summary takeaway of the lecture
 - f. Questions to guide the student in writing a summary-reflection
- 3. Students should submit a weekly half-a-page reflective-summary of the recorded lecture.
- 4. Students should participate in a Ṣuḥba Circle -- a virtual spiritual community where they are able to post very brief reflections and read the reflections of their companions.
- 5. Students will attend a one-hour Review, Practice and Fellowship (RPF) class with Shaykh Riad Saloojee. The class will explore the real-life, personal, gradual, and progressive practice of what is learned.

THE TAZKIYAT AL-NAFS MODULE THE FIVE COMPONENTS

MODULE DURATION

The Tazkiyat al-Nafs module is intended to be a year-long program. It will consist of approximately 10 months of official class + 2 months of supplemental, spiritual material, with breaks included.

WEEKLY COMMITMENT

Students should expect the following weekly time commitments:

- 1. Listen to Shaykh Mokhtār's one-two hour recorded lecture (with pauses, if needed) (2 hrs.)
- 2. Review the Lecture Resource Materials (LRM) (30 min)
- 3. Write and submit the weekly reflective-summary (30 min)
- 4. Whatever time students wish to spend posting and reading reflections in the Ṣuḥba Circle community.
- 5. Attend the Review, Practice and Fellowship (RPF) class with Shaykh Riad 1 hr.)

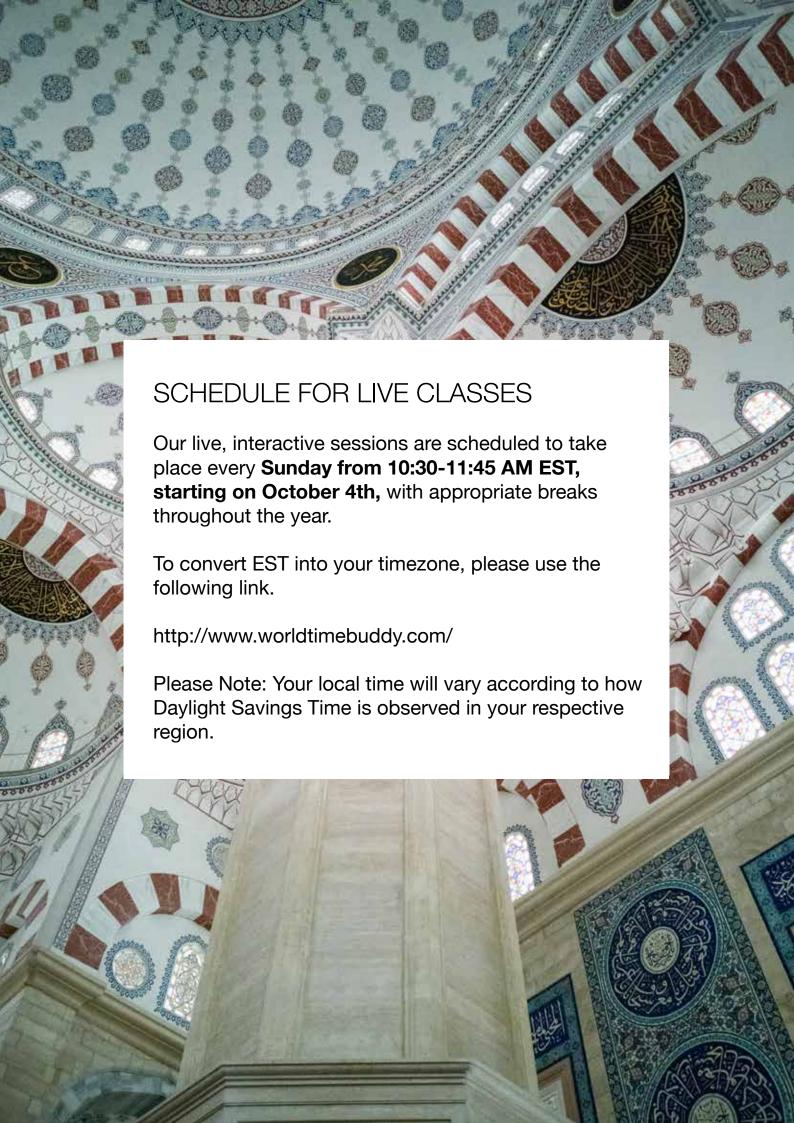
The expected weekly time commitment is about four hours. For the study priorities and recommendations, please see the section in this on Make the Most Out of the Program: Study Suggestions.

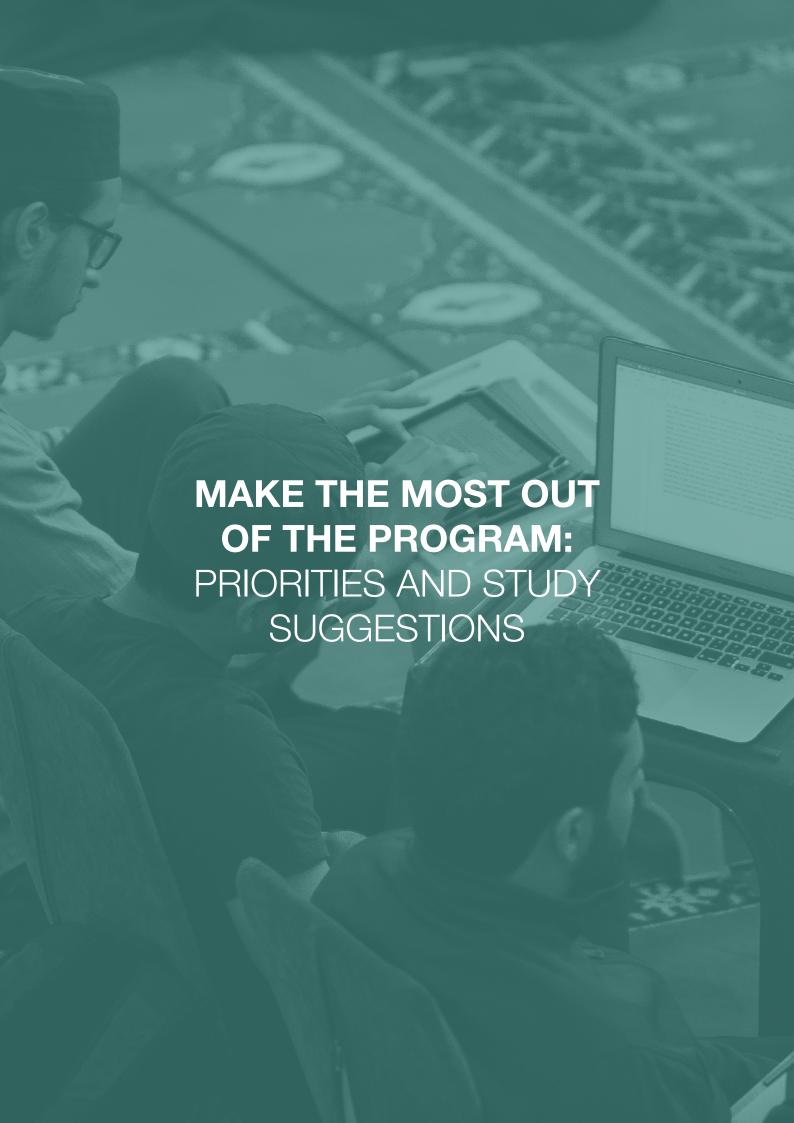
STUDENT Q&A

Time permitting, the Review, Practice and Fellowship (RPF) class will offer an opportunity for students to ask their questions. Some Review, Practice and Fellowship classes may be dedicated solely to answering questions.

Students may also submit their questions during the year through the Foundations Online educational platform. These questions may either be answered at the Review, Practice and Fellowship class, through email, or through a voice message.

SCHEDULE FOR LIVE CLASSES





MAKE THE MOST OUT OF THE PROGRAM

Foundations Online, as emphasized in the program's objectives and descriptions, is devoted to the learning of beneficial knowledge.

Beneficial knowledge is knowledge that transforms the way we perceive, reason, feel and act. It leads to an experiential relationship with Allāh and His Messenger and refines our character and conduct. Knowledge that does not produce this change is not beneficial; it is only information or data.

For this reason, Foundations Online incorporates an integrated approach to Islamic learning through three parallel streams: Sacred knowledge ('Ilm), spiritual practice (akhlāq and 'amal) and fellowship (ṣuḥba).

Each stream is important in the transformation of the individual. Each stream is represented through the five components of each module:

- 1. The weekly lecture by Shaykh Mokhtār
- 2. The Lecture Resource Materials (LRM) for the lecture
- 3. The reflective-summary of the lecture
- 4. The Şuḥba Circle community
- 5. The weekly Review, Practice and Fellowship (RPF) class with Shaykh Riad



COMPONENT PRIORITIES

Ideally, a student will complete all five components. At times, a student may be unable to complete all five components. A general order of priority is as follows:

- The weekly lecture by Shaykh Mokhtār (Essential)
- The weekly Review, Practice and Fellowship (RPF) class with Shaykh Riad (Essential)
- 3. The reflective-summary of the lecture (Strongly recommended but mandatory for sponsorship students)
- The Lecture Resource
 Materials (LRM) for the lecture
 (Recommended)
- 5. The Ṣuḥba Circle community (Optional and beneficial).



THE LECTURES

The lectures by Shaykh Mokhtār are the foundations of Foundations Online. The serious student must strive for a strong intellectual and experiential grasp of the knowledge in the lectures, which, in turn, provide the bedrock for practice and action and, inshā'Allāh, spiritual transformation.

Here are five key recommendations:

- 1. Be consistent. Schedule the class into your weekly routine for a steady diet of beneficial 'ilm.
- 2. Take your time when listening. You may want to listen to the lecture more than once. Take notes, if possible.
- 3. Don't skip steps. The knowledge is cumulative. Listen to the classes in order.
- 4. Try to listen as attentively as you can. Listen with your heart and mind.
- 5. Make plentiful du'ā' (supplication), asking Allāh to open the hearing channels of your heart and transform what you learn into action.



THE LECTURE RESOURCE MATERIALS (LRM)

Foundations Online is committed to assisting each student draw the most benefit from Shaykh Mokhtār's lectures. The Lecture Resource Materials (LRM) are an essential means to realize this.

For each lecture, a student will be provided with an overview, the key themes, a glossary of Arabic terminology, a translation of texts used, a point-form summary, questions to guide the summary-reflections, and questions to guide participation in the Review, Practice and Fellowship class.

Here are four key recommendations:

- 1. Take 15 to 30 minutes to read through the Lecture Resource Materials (LRM) after the lecture.
- 2. Highlight, italicize or underline concepts that you feel you missed.
- 3. Highlight, italicize or underline concepts that impact you intellectually or spiritually.
- 4. Read the questions for personal reflection before you write and submit your reflective-summary.

THE REFLECTIVE SUMMARY

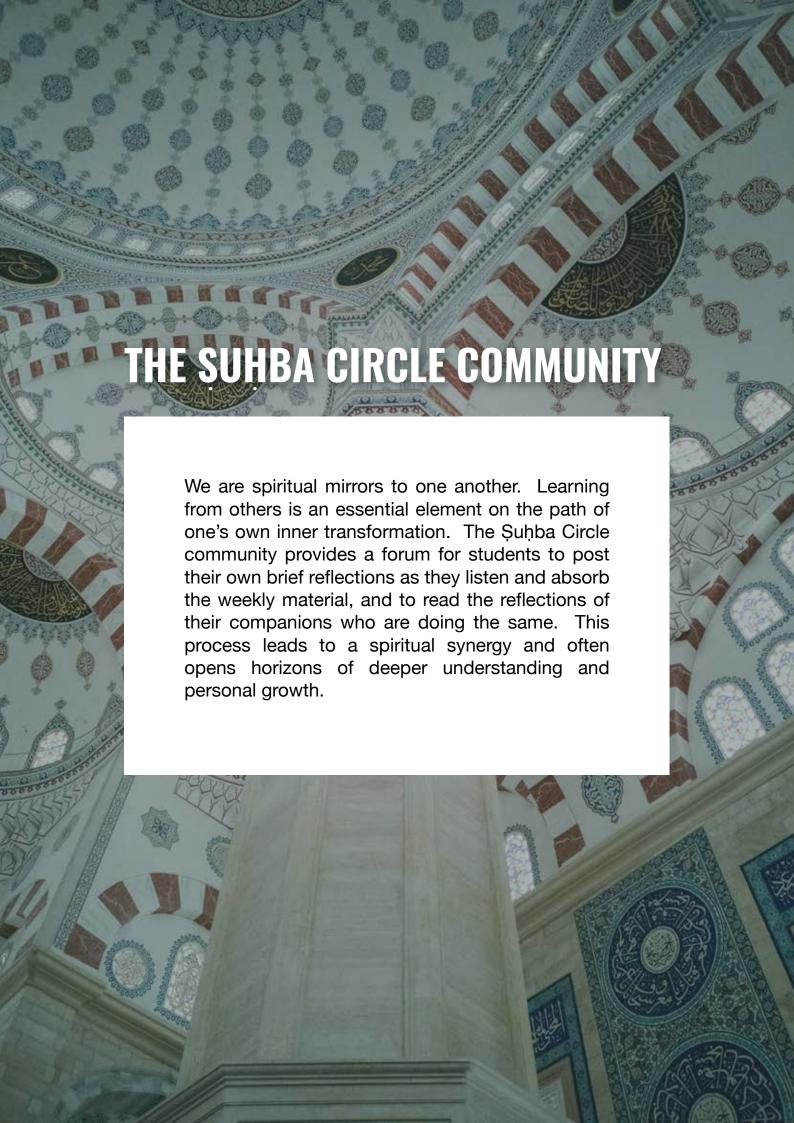
A reflective-summary is an excellent way to organize, synthesize, analyze, and reflect upon the knowledge in the lecture. When shared, they are also profound ways to learn from one another – which is an essential dimension of fellowship.

Reflective-summaries are submitted on our educational platform. Instructors will try their best to read the summary-reflections and present excerpts in the Review, Practice and Fellowship (RPF) class.

Here are three key recommendations:

- After you have listened to the lecture and reviewed your notes, write down the main ideas that you took from the lecture and connect those ideas to your own personal journey.
- 2. Try to write and submit a brief summary-reflection after each lecture. Half a page to a page is sufficient.
- A summary-reflection is not a straight summary of the lecture. It
 is your personal interaction with the core knowledge concepts
 in the lecture.





THE REVIEW, PRACTICE AND FELLOWSHIP (RPF) CLASS

The weekly Review, Practice and Fellowship (RPF) class with Shaykh Riad will have multiple aims throughout the module: to emphasize the practical dimension of practicing what is learned; to focus attention on core concepts; to discuss case studies; to make cross-connections between the knowledge to see the big picture; to encourage and share personal and group reflection and introspection; and to intermittently review the material.

Here are five key recommendations:

- 1. The Review, Practice and Fellowship (RPF) class is a supplement to Shaykh Mokhtār's lecture. Listen to the lecture before you come to class.
- 2. Be consistent for class. Schedule it into your weekly routine.
- Reflect on any questions assigned as prior homework for the class. These will help focus your mind and heart on key concepts for practice.
- 4. If possible, complete your summary-reflection of the lecture material.
- 5. Make plentiful du'ā' (supplication), asking Allāh to open the hearing channels of your heart and transform what you learn into action.

CERTIFICATION

SCHOLARSHIP REQUIREMENTS

Foundations Online will be offering a certificate for successful completion of each module and the program as a whole. Details will be made available later.



At a minimum, any student who applies for a scholarship must satisfy the following criteria:

- 1. Sponsorship students must listen to all pre-recorded lectures and attend the weekly live Review, Practice and Fellowship class. If you are unable to attend, students must inform the Foundations Online teaching assistant of the reason before the live class, if possible, as well as listen to the recording before the next live class
- 2. Sponsorship students must submit all weekly reflections before the live class (ideally, a day or so before the live class) and meet all reflection requirement criteria
- 3. Sponsorship students should participate in the "Şuḥba Circle". They must post to the "Şuḥba Circle" once a week, at a minimum

Failure to abide by the above sponsorship rules can result in your sponsorship being rescinded.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

FAQS FOR THE TAZKIYAT AL-NAFS MODULE

Why Were The Modules Chosen?

The module subjects provide essential and relevant Islamic knowledge that addresses the needs of both the mind and the soul provides the foundations and necessary to a life of intellectual certitude, spiritual transformation and striving for nearness to the Divine.

Why Does Foundations Online Not Use A Text-Based Study?

Each module contains a summary of decades of study of countless classical and modern texts. The intent of Foundations Online is not to restrict the student to one text but to acquire essential knowledge necessary for spiritual development and growth in a modern context.

Is The Tazkiya Module, And The Program In General, Taught Through A Particular Ṭarīqa?

Shaykh Mokhtār does not call towards, teach, or emphasize a particular ṭarīqa. He focuses on the principles and practices of the science of tazkiya that are taught by the traditional scholars and masters in the field.

Is There A Study of The Inner Dimensions of Figh?

Many of the inner dimensions of worship are addressed in the module of Tazkiyat al-Nafs. Some supplemental resources are also available on the website.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What If I Already Have Devotional Remembrances Assigned To Me By A Spiritual Teacher?

The devotional remembrances included in the curriculum are for those who wish to use them and are not following anything prescribed to them by their spiritual guides. Please consult your spiritual teacher if you wish to make any changes.

When Can I Apply For A Scholarship?

Students may apply for scholarships until October 15th. Details will be made available later. For basic scholarship requirements, please see Scholarship in the Foundations Online Guidebook.

FAQS FOR FOUNDATIONS ONLINE

How Long Does It Take To Complete Foundations Online?

The full Foundations Online program is meant to be four modules, each with one module of supplemental, spiritual material. This would make each module approximately 10 months of official class + 2 months of supplemental spiritual material (breaks included), and the full course being four years total.

Do I Have To Enroll In All Four Modules of Foundations Online?

No, you may enroll in one, some or all of the modules. However, if you are a non-alumni of the Şuḥba Program in Istanbul, the Tazkiyat al-Nafs module is a prerequisite for all the other modules.

Alumni of the Şuḥba Program in Istanbul may enroll in any of the modules without having to repeat the Tazkiyat al-Nafs module.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Why Is Usul al-Figh Taught?

A basic study of uṣūl al-fiqh is necessary in modern times to regain an appreciation for our intellectual and spiritual scholarly heritage, acquire certainty in the rational foundations of our faith, and provide us with basic tools to understand a number of critical and misunderstood issues, such as bid'a.

Why Is Figh Not Taught?

Foundations Online focuses on foundational areas of study that are either generally neglected or not taught within a holistic intellectual, spiritual and practical paradigm. The study of essential figh is readily accessible through a variety of different avenues.

Does The Program Teach A Particular Madhhab?

Foundations Online does not teach figh. The uṣūl al-figh module does not focus on the principles of any one school.

Why Is 'Aqīda Not Taught?

'Aqīda is not addressed as an independent, theoretical subject of study, but many principles in 'aqīda are included in the modules through a pedagogy that emphasizes their practical and experiential application.

Why Is The Prophetic Biography in Medina Not Studied?

An intensive study of the Prophetic Biography in Mecca is essential to providing both the foundation necessary for spiritual growth as well as to understand the Medinan phase. We hope to add the study of the Medinan phase of the Prophetic Biography in the near future, inshā'Allāh (God willing).

ETIQUETTE FOR SACRED STUDY

The two most essential aims of Foundations Online are to transform both our experience of Allāh's unicity (tawḥīd) and our character and etiquette (akhlāq and adab).

Our study of sacred knowledge is meant to assist us in both endeavors. A beautiful saying reads: "Good etiquette (adab) secures a good share of knowledge; bad etiquette (adab) secures a bad share." Without character and etiquette (akhlāq and adab), the knowledge we obtain will be barren and fruitless.

In this spirit, the following etiquettes of sacred study are noteworthy:

1. As a general principle, a student of sacred knowledge is studying the noblest and most exalted knowledge that draws him or her closer to the Divine, the Infinite in Majesty and Beauty. Our pursuit of sacred knowledge, in all its dimensions, must be worthy of Allāh's Majesty and Beauty.



ETIQUETTE FOR SACRED STUDY

- 2. Try to listen to the recorded lecture in a state of minor ritual purification (wuḍū') with as much focus of your mind and heart.
- Be punctual and do not be late for the class. Students should be online at least five minutes before the Review, Practice and Fellowship class.
- As you participate in the live Review, Practice and Fellowship class, try to conduct yourself in behavior as you would in real-life.
 Try not to drink, eat, or check your cellphone during classes.
- 5. Character and etiquette (akhlāq and adab) with your teachers is a training ground for character and etiquette with Allāh and His Messenger ...
- 6. Please include your first and last name during the online Review, Practice and Fellowship class.
- 7. Please be patient in receiving answers to your questions.

 Questions may be answered in class, through email or voice messages, and certain questions may be deferred at the instructor's discretion and answered later in the course.



BIOGRAPHIES OF TEACHERS AND STAFF

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 defence. It was an axiomatic truth that each Muslim knew intuitively. The evidence is nothing less than the miraculous transformation of untold numbers of Companions under the guiding hand and heart of our Master Muḥammad .

The spiritual inheritance of the Scholar-Saint is a lineage of shared suhba, link-by-link, to the illuminating reality of the Messenger . 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).



BIOGRAPHIES OF TEACHERS



SHAYKH MUḤAMMAD EMIN ER

Shaykh Muḥammad Emin Er^[1] 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 ruinous. became resultina in material severe hardship throughout the country, not least in the impoverished regions of Eastern Anatolia where Shaykh Muhammad Emin grew up.

Shaykh Muḥammad Emin spent his early life in straightened circumstances, first under the care of his stepmother, and later under the care of his elder brother. up in Hiah the mountains surrounding his village, Shaykh Emin Muhammad 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 Muhammad Emin would journey on foot for at time to visit days a 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:

"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 Muhammad Emin studied Arabic rational and the and Islamic with sciences number а scholars. He studied morphology (sarf), syntax (nahw), propositional (mantig), philology logic al-wad'), figurative usage (isti'āra), literary style (adab), lexicology (ma'ānī), rhetoric (bayān), refined usage (badī'), fundamentals of religious belief (uṣūl al-din), philosophy doctrinal (kalām), Qur'ānic exegesis (tafsīr), the science of Qur'ānic recitation (tajwīd), theoretical jurisprudence (uṣūl al-fiqh), the sciences of the prophetic traditions (uṣūl al-ḥadīth), jurisprudence (fiqh) and the laws of inheritance (farā'iḍ).

He spent considerable time with Molla Rasūl, a classmate of Shaykh Bediüzzaman Sa'īd Nursī. Shaykh Muhammad 1951. completed the last of his studies with Shaykh Muḥammad Ma'shūq who granted him an ijāza - the traditional diploma and authorization to teach - in all of rational sciences the and traditional Islamic disciplines.

Concurrent with his studies in the Islamic sciences. Shaykh devotedly Muhammad Emin pursued the study and practice of taşawwuf, tazkiyat al-nafs, iḥsān - the normative discipline of spiritual purification, which is the essence of Islam. He had a number of spiritual teachers, all Nagshbandī order. from the Following the death of Shaykh Ahmad Ghaznawī, whom he met while he was in Syria, he became a student of Shaykh Muḥammad Saʻīd 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 Sa'īd's character (akhlāq): his



immense kindness and love for selfless service towards all. others, boundless patience. humility, unaffected genuine sincerity, innocent self-effacement. and his continuous forbearance and forgiveness.

Shaykh Muḥammad Emin related that he never heard Shaykh Saʻīd 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."

Once, when he was auite elderly, Shaykh Sa'īd learned fellow that villagers were building a house but did not have enough stone to complete the construction. He went to a asked house. ruined 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 Muhammad Emin would later affirm that every spiritual path has its own methods remembrance (dhikr) of practice, but among all of them, the practice of suhba indispensable and uniquely effective.

Until the last breath of his life - and he lived to be over 100 years old -Shaykh Muhammad 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); 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 tirelessly taught fraternal ties: sensitive students. to each student's needs and aptitude; and continued to write on a variety of subjects.

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:

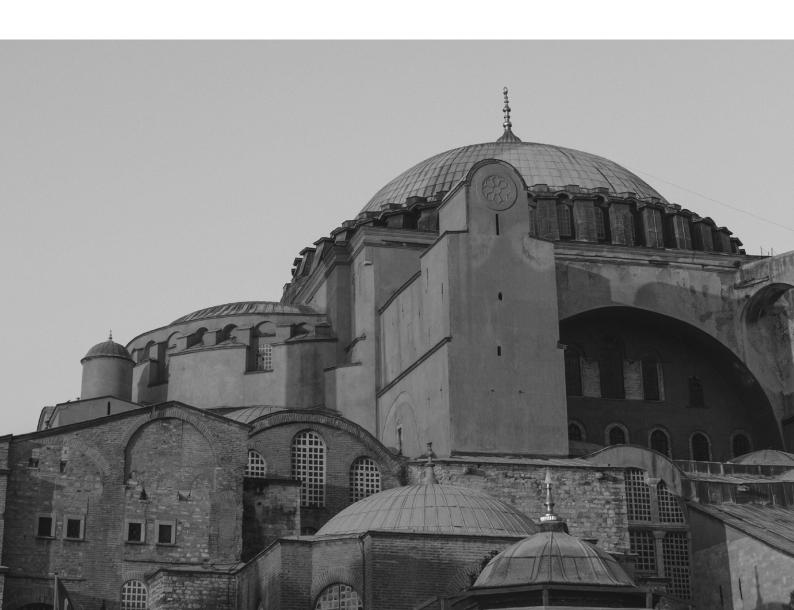
"The most wonderful experience I had in the presence of Shavkh Muhammad Emin observing his character. He was beautiful in the way he smiled. spoke. ate. and walked. Everything he did was with beauty. Allāh done him with elegant imbued majesty and elegant beauty. I never encountered have spiritually as and anyone morally elegant as him. He was a living friend of Allāh"



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 Allāh's Beloved . 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 deathbed before he passed away:

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

May Allāh sanctify the soul of Shaykh Muḥammad Emin Er and benefit us by him. Āmīn.



BIOGRAPHIES OF TEACHERS



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. 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'an from memory like others recite Sūrat al-Fātiha. His mother's most fervent desire is to live and die in steadfast adherence (thabat) to Allāh's obedience. She constantly implores all to please remember her request in their supplication -Allāh grant her the may steadfastness (thabāt) she seeks. Āmīn.

An exemplary student, Shaykh Mokhtār granted was 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. graduate student and thereafter, he lectured at Union College, St. College, and Syracuse Rose 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 his grace, intellectual discovery of Islam's sacred sciences altered the course of his life. Shaykh Mokhtār implored Allāh 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 hadīth scholar Shaykh Musṭafā 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 Musṭafā 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 Muhammad Emin Er on one of Shaykh Muhammad Emin's many journeys to the United States to visit his students. As time passed and their encounters became more frequent, Shaykh Mokhtār gained insights deeper into Shaykh Muhammad Emin's character and etiquette (akhlāq). His heart began to witness more and more of Shaykh Muhammad Emin's rare beauty, and he acquired 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 suhba between them continued for many years. Those who knew Shaykh Muhammad Emin and attended his gatherings narrate that Shaykh Muhammad Emin had an intense love for Shaykh Mokhtār. A scholar who present relates: "Shavkh was Muhammad Emin would seek Shaykh Mokhtār with ardour and longing, like a mother for her child."

In the sacred sanctuary of Mecca during Ḥajj in 2006, Shaykh Muḥammad Emin granted Shaykh Mokhtār an ijāza -- 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 also conferred upon him an ijāza of sacred knowledge.

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

Shaykh Mokhtar has taught and offered spiritual guidance in the United States for decades. He Imām the and was Scholar-in-Residence in Albany and Troy, New York; Boca Raton, Florida; and Plano, Texas. many years, he served as member of the Figh 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 quidance lies in its unity purpose. Every field of knowledge - whether theoretical, historical, exegetical spiritual - must serve the twin, inseparable constants of our faith: experiential (and not merely intellectual or academic) tawhīd (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 emotional perception, will. experience and 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, theory and praxis be reconciled. harmonized and unified. Islām. Imān and Ihsān. This is the Prophetic pedagogy.

Since 2009, Shaykh Mokhtār has been the Senior Scholar at Al-Madina Institute (almadinainstitute.org) and is currently the teacher and spiritual mentor of the ongoing Suhba Program that the Institute runs in Istanbul. Under his guidance, Turkev. students and their families in



the Şuḥba Program undergo a year-long, intensive study along with spiritual practice. Participants study four foundational subjects that provide the unified intellectual and spiritual bedrock of their path to seeking Divine nearness; and they couple their studies with spiritual practice and character through refinement spiritual mentorship real-life in а environment. And to Allāh belongs all success.

^[1]This is a re-worked biography 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.

BIOGRAPHIES OF TEACHERS



SHAYKH RIAD SALOOJEE (INSTRUCTOR)

Shaykh Riad Saloojee is a lawyer by training and has worked in the fields of media and political activism. He studied the Islamic at Dār sciences al-'Ulūm al-'Arabīyya al-Islāmīyya (DUAI), a well-known Islamic seminary of higher learning in Cape Town, South Africa, where he also taught for a number of years after graduation. His teachers include Shaykh Muhammad Emin Er (May Allāh sanctify his soul), Shaykh Mokhtār Maghrāoui, Shaykh Tāha Karaan, Shaykh Muaadth Allie and Shaykh Abdurragman Khan, among others.

USTĀDH SAID ELKATTA (TEACHING ASSISTANT)

Elkatta graduated Ustādh Said from University the of Massachusetts Amherst Business Administration. While in the United States, he studied with Shaykh Yasir Fahmy, worked for The Boston Islamic Seminary, and active volunteer with was an Muslim community and youth organizations. For the past three years, he has been a dedicated and exemplary student in the Fellowship Suhba Program Istanbul, completed introductory studies of various Islamic sciences in the program's 'Ulūm & Qur'ān Streams, and has also worked as a research assistant for the teachers in the program.



BIOGRAPHIES OF TEACHERS



USTĀDH NAEEM SALOOJEE (DIRECTOR OF PROGRAMMING)

Ustādh Naeem Saloojee is the Director of Programming for the Al-Madina Institute's family and adult programming. He 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 organization. His advocacy special interest Islamic in educational programming is to find ways to bridge, project and translate the rich, spiritual and rational of legacy Islamic teachings in ways that are contextual practical, and applicable for modern Muslims.

USTĀDH SALMAN KHAN (DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS AND STUDENT AFFAIRS)

Ustādh Salman Khan is the Director of **Operations** and Student Affairs for the Şuḥba Fellowship Program in Istanbul, a role that he continues to play in the Institute's family and adult programming. He graduated from Dār al-Na'īm, a well-known Islamic seminary in Cape Town, South Africa, where he studied full-time for four years; and he also has degrees in both electrical engineering as well as education. He strives to imbue every field of his work - program delivery and operations, logistics, or student affairs - with the best of Islam's spiritual and rational principles.



