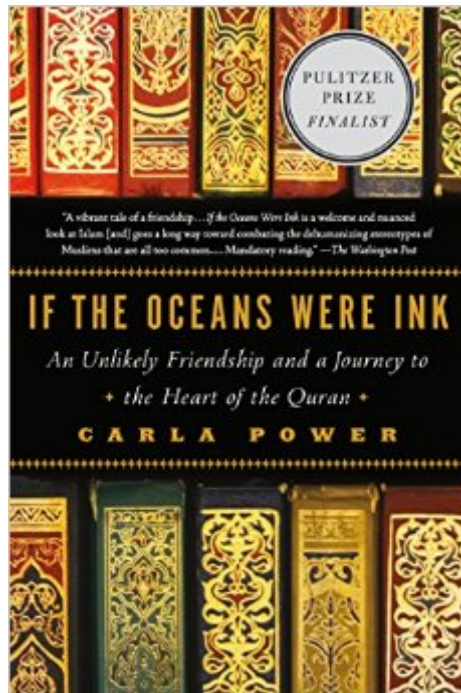


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# If The Oceans Were Ink: An Unlikely Friendship And A Journey To The Heart Of The Quran



## Synopsis

PULITZER PRIZE FINALIST • NATIONAL BOOK AWARD FINALIST • Named A Best Book of the Year by The Washington Post and The Denver Post • Praised by Fareed Zakaria as "intelligent, compassionate, and revealing," a powerful journey to help bridge one of the greatest divides shaping our world today. *If the Oceans Were Ink* is Carla Power's eye-opening story of how she and her longtime friend Sheikh Mohammad Akram Nadwi found a way to confront ugly stereotypes and persistent misperceptions that were cleaving their communities. Their friendship-between a secular American and a madrasa-trained sheikh-had always seemed unlikely, but now they were frustrated and bewildered by the battles being fought in their names. Both knew that a close look at the Quran would reveal a faith that preached peace and not mass murder; respect for women and not oppression. And so they embarked on a yearlong journey through the controversial text. A journalist who grew up in the Midwest and the Middle East, Power offers her unique vantage point on the Quran's most provocative verses as she debates with Akram at cafes, family gatherings, and packed lecture halls, conversations filled with both good humor and powerful insights. Their story takes them to madrasas in India and pilgrimage sites in Mecca, as they encounter politicians and jihadis, feminist activists and conservative scholars. Armed with a new understanding of each other's worldviews, Power and Akram offer eye-opening perspectives, destroy long-held myths, and reveal startling connections between worlds that have seemed hopelessly divided for far too long. Praise for *If the Oceans Were Ink* "A vibrant tale of a friendship.... *If the Oceans Were Ink* is a welcome and nuanced look at Islam [and] goes a long way toward combating the dehumanizing stereotypes of Muslims that are all too common |. *If the Oceans Were Ink* should be mandatory reading for the 52 percent of Americans who admit to not knowing enough about Muslims." • *The Washington Post* "Journalist Power writes about her year studying the Quran with a Muslim scholar she befriended while working at a think tank in London. For some, this will be a strong introduction to Islam. To others, it's fodder for discussion on the Sheikh's views, how Westerners (such as Power) interpret those views and the interplay of culture and religion." • *The Denver Post* "For all those who wonder what Islam says about war and peace, men and women, Jews and gentiles, this is the book to read. It is a conversation among well-meaning friends" • "intelligent, compassionate, and revealing" • "the kind that needs to be taking place around the world." • Fareed Zakaria, author of *The Post-American World*

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Carla Power's unlikely friendship with Mohammad Akram Nadwi, a madrasa-trained Sheikh has spawned a book that has many answers, but also leaves many questions, and begs for a sequel. The premise is simple-Power and Nadwi have been friends, and neither like the perception that the Islamic religion has been shown by the press and by popular thought (all are fundamentals, all oppress women and children, they must study Islamic studies before all else in education, etc.). The result is a book that is very easy to read, but the concepts beg at times for more interpretation and for more study. Powers dives into questions a lot of people have about the Islamic faith, but are afraid or unable to ask. What does the Koran say about how education and women, compared to popular Islamic thought on how women are treated and what the education of a moderate is really like? Her writing style is easy to follow and covered many fascinating trains of thought. All Islamics are not Isis or part of the Taliban. They are moderates, but the Muslims that get the most attention are the terrorists. The parallelisms between fundamental Christianity, Judaism and the Islamic faith are many, much to my surprise. They all have similar concepts concerning nonbelievers (other religions are not the true one) and have a history of not treating women well and not having sex outside of marriage. But the author emphasizes concerning terrorists acts and what the Koran says is very different. The beliefs of certain Islamics, such as killing people who do not convert or who are other religions, is discussed (and that part of the book is scary). I had difficulty with many concepts.

This book is a perfect book for Ramadan reading, written by Carla Power, a secular Jewish journalist whom has 20 years+ unique friendship with a renowned Muslim scholar in Britain, Sheikh Mohammed Akram Nadwi. It is an enlightening book, written with the mission to 1. Debunk the

[negative] myths and stereotypes surrounding Islam and Muslims 2. To differentiate between local customs (like burqa-wearing Taliban) and the religion 3. And more centrally for the book, to interpret the verses in the Holy Quran and show, for instance, why the so-called "verse of the sword" that Osama Bin Laden used to justify his actions was being misinterpreted. It is a personal book, built around the personae of the Sheikh, following his amazing journey from a simple madrassa student in his village in India, to researcher in Oxford University, and to world renowned expert on Hadith. It is also a personal book for the author, where she can relate a lot of major historical events with her own story - from her childhood in Tehran, Delhi, Kabul, Cairo, to her work in an Islamic Think Tank and as a journalist covering the Middle East. It is also a beautifully written book, with the highest respect dedicated to Islam and the Holy Quran. The title of the book itself is a testament to this, which is a poetic reference from a Quran verse: Say, even if the ocean were ink For (writing) the words of my Lord, The ocean would be exhausted Before the words of my Lord were exhausted, Even if We were to add another ocean to it. (Al Kahf 18:109) Reza Aslan's No God But God was enlightening, so did Karen Armstrong's Islam: a short story.

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