



5 Starter Facts About Twelver Islam

1. Twelver is the most prevalent form of Shiism today, making up approximately 80% of all Shiites. It is Iran's official religion.
2. Twelvers accept a line of twelve infallible imams descended from Ali and believe them to have been divinely appointed from birth. The twelve imams are viewed as harbors of the faith and as the designated interpreters of law and theology.
3. Twelvers believe the twelfth and last of these imams "disappeared" in the late 9th century. This "hidden imam" is expected to return to establish global justice. Following the disappearance, a quietism trend emerged among Twelvers who chose to withdraw from politics and await his arrival before the Day of Judgment.
4. In the twentieth century, changes in the political landscape of the Middle East led to a new competing "activist" trend among Twelver groups in Iran and Lebanon, typified by the late Iranian religious leader Ayatollah Khomeini.
5. Twelvers make up significant minorities– and often the poorest communities– in Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and Afghanistan, where oppression and violence have been on the rise against Shiites. Despite being a majority in Azerbaijan, Bahrain, and Iraq, Twelvers also face oppression in those countries.

These five points are not meant to be comprehensive or authoritative. We hope they encourage you to explore this spirituality more deeply and seek out members of this community to learn about their beliefs in action. In understanding our differences we will better understand our common humanity.

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