



# Turning Points in Middle Eastern History

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## Turning Points in Middle Eastern History The Great Courses

The Middle East is a critically important area of our world. And, with its current prominence in international affairs, media images of the Middle East reach us on a daily basis. Much media coverage, however, is incomplete at best, failing to take account of either the complexities or the historical background of this pivotal region. For most of us, the real story of the Middle East remains untold. What made this crucial geopolitical area what it is today? In coming to terms with the present and future of the Middle East, an understanding of its history is not only highly valuable but essential.

Now, the 36 lectures of *Turning Points in Middle Eastern History* unfurl a breathtaking panorama of history, exploring a 1,300-year window from the rise of the warrior prophet Muhammad to the fall of the Ottoman Empire after World War I. Each lecture focuses on a specific moment that changed the direction of events or the narrative of history.

You'll witness the Battle of Karbala, where Muhammad's heirs - the Sunni and Shia - split once and for all. You'll discover the wonders of the Islamic Golden Age and marvel at the superlative advances in astronomy, mathematics, medicine, and literature - and the preservation of classical Greek and Roman wisdom - that unfolded in global centers of learning such as Baghdad, Cairo, and Cordoba. You'll follow the empire building of the Persian Safavids, the Egyptian Mamluks, and the Ottomans, among others.

The breakup of the Ottoman Empire yielded most of the modern states of the Middle East. The far-reaching impacts of its rise and fall, plus the long-lasting influence of the 18th-century Saud-Wahhab Pact between a desert ruler and a religious reformer, creating today's Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, are two more expressions of how the past suffuses the present. The stories you'll discover here are as dazzling as anything in the *Arabian Nights* and are all the more astonishing for being true.

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