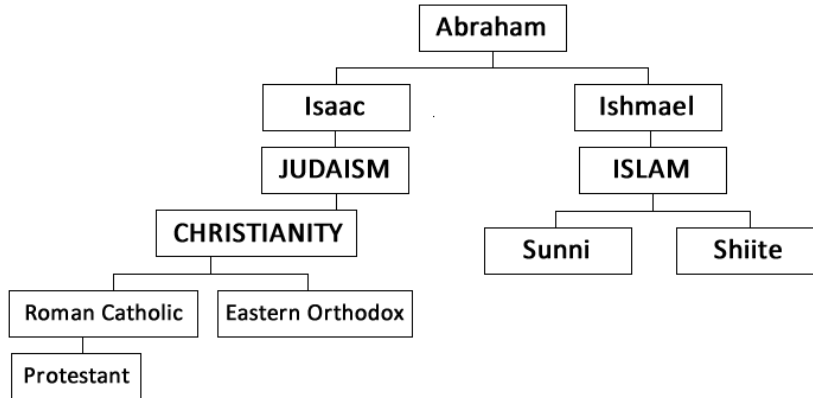


# Middle East 101

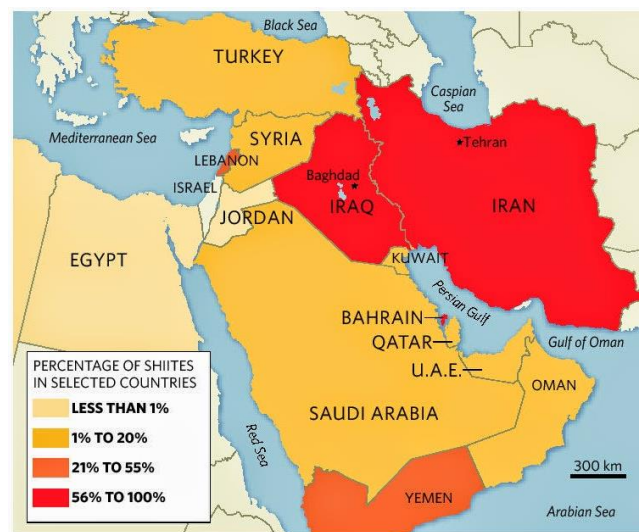


## The Muslim vs Judaism / Christianity Conflict

*".. for through Isaac shall your offspring be named. And I will make a nation of the son of the slave woman also ..."* Gen 21:12-13

The divide between Isaac and Ishmael is the root of the conflict between Muslims and Jews / Christians. Radical Islamic terrorist groups such as ISIS, Al-Qaeda, Hamas and Hezbollah are specifically targeting Jews and Christians considering them infidels. In Syria, the Christian population has fallen nearly two-thirds since civil war started in 2011. In Iraq, the Christian population has fallen from around 1.5 million in 2003 to below 200,000 in 2015 most becoming refugees in other countries. The resulting refugee crisis is a unique opportunity for the Body of Christ to minister to these persecuted people.

## Sunnis and Shiites: Two forms of Islam



## Sunni vs Shiite Conflict

**Origin of the schism:** After Muhammad's death in 632, a disagreement arose over who should succeed him as leader of Islam; two main factions emerged, creating a rift that remains almost 14 centuries later.

**Shiites** (Shi'a means "Party of Ali") believe that Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law, Ali, was his rightful successor, and that Ali's descendants are the true leaders of Islam.

**Sunnis** (Sunnah means "well-trodden path") believe that Muhammad's most pious companions were his rightful successors, and leaders of Islam may be chosen by consensus.

### Other differences

- Shiite clerics generally have more authority among their followers than Sunni clerics do among theirs.
- Shiites reject the idea of predestination (that Allah has decided who is saved), which Sunnis accept.
- Shiites allow temporary marriages and use different inheritance laws.
- Shiites do not permit building and visiting shrines, Sunnis do.
- Shiite holy places are Kufa / Karbala, Sunnis Mecca / Medina.
- Shiites believe revelation continues, while Sunnis believe revelation ended with Muhammad.

Country	Population	% Shiite	% Sunni
Bahrain	1,347,000	50%	20%
Egypt	88,487,000	1%	90%
Iran	81,824,000	93%	6%
Iraq	37,056,000	64%	35%
Jordan	8,118,000	3%	94%
Lebanon	6,185,000	27%	27%
Saudi Arabia	27,752,000	11%	82%
Syria	16,300,000	13%	74%
Turkey	79,414,000	10%	89%
UAE	5,780,000	11%	65%
Yemen	26,737,000	35%	64%

Sources: CIA World Factbook 2015, Operation World 2010

## Observations

1. Globally Muslims are 85% Sunni and 15% Shiite.
2. Most Shiite are in Iran and Iraq putting them in conflict with predominantly Sunni Syria, Turkey, Egypt and Saudi Arabia.
3. ISIS is a Sunni faction taking over Shiite territory in Iraq and Syria. Kurds, Iranian Shiites and others are fighting Sunni ISIS.
4. Bashar al-Assad, current president of Syria, is an Alawite, a minority sect of Shi'a. His Ba'ath government seeks to control / oppress the Sunni majority of Syria.