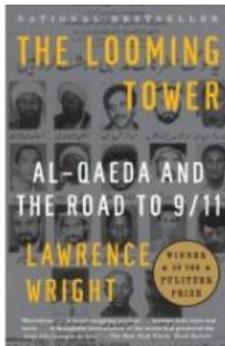


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## “The Winds of Faith” and *The Looming Tower*

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The emergence of Al-Qaeda and other Islamic terror organizations is a story that demands far greater attention than most Americans have yet invested. Given the importance of this story — not only for understanding 9/11, but for understanding the present — this is a matter that demands a substantial education on the part of the American public.

Lawrence Wright, a writer for the *New Yorker* magazine, has written what I consider to be the definitive work on this narrative. The book is riveting and authoritative — as indicated by the Pulitzer Prize it both deserved and received. In *The Looming Tower*, Wright tells the story with a style and energy that makes the book hard to put down.

Consider this explanation of the allure of martyrdom to young men:

*Martyrdom promised such young men an ideal alternative to a life that was so sparing in its rewards. A glorious death beckoned to the sinner, who would be forgiven, it is said, with the first spurt of blood, and he would behold his place in Paradise even before his death. Seventy members of his household might be spared the fires of hell because of his sacrifice. The martyr who is poor will be crowned in heaven with a jewel more valuable than the earth itself. And for those young men who came from cultures where women are shuttered away and rendered unattainable for someone without prospects, martyrdom offered the conjugal pleasures of seventy-two virgins—“the dark-eyed houris,” as the Quran describes them, “chaste as hidden pearls.” They awaited the martyr with feasts of meat and fruit and cups of the purest wine.*

And this section dealing with the aftermath of 9/11 within Al Qaeda’s leadership:

*While they waited for the mujahideen to rise up across Muslim lands and rush to Afghanistan, bin Laden and Zawahiri gloated over the success of the operation. “there is America, hit by God in one of its softest spots,” bin Laden boasted in a prerecorded videotape on al-Jazeera on October 7, the day after American and British bombers launched their first attacks on Taliban positions. “Its greatest buildings were destroyed, thank God for that. There is America, full of fear from its north to its south, from its west to its east. Thank God for that.” Then he issues his call. “These events have divided the whole world into two sides—the side of believers and the side of infidels. May God keep you away from them. Every Muslim has to rush to make his religion victorious. The winds of faith have come.”*

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