

The Path to Paradise

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THE PATH TO PARADISE

The Inner World of Suicide Bombers
and Their Dispatchers

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Suicide bombers are often compared to smart bombs. From the point of view of their dispatchers, they are highly effective, inexpensive forms of weaponry, and there is no need to invest in their technological development. Suicide bombers are in fact smarter than smart bombs because they can choose their own target--and they can react to circumstances on the ground, changing their target, or their timing, in an instant, to ensure the maximum damage, destruction, and death. Of course, unlike smart bombs, suicide bombers think and feel, they have histories, stories, beliefs, desires--in short, they have an inner world. Exploring the inner world of suicide bombers has been the focus of Anat Berko's research for years. She has worked to understand the thought processes of a people who can choose to place explosives on their bodies and kill themselves, taking as many other people with them as they can. Do male bombers really believe that death will transport them to a paradise where they will be greeted by virgins? Are they victims of unbearable pressure to commit this act of terror? What are female bombers promised in the hereafter? Is there something that links all suicide bombers? Berko also explores the world of those who drop the smart bomb--the dispatchers: who are these people who persuade others to go calmly to their horrific deaths?

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