

Islam and Muslims

By definition 'Islam' (an Arabic word) literally means 'surrender' or 'submission'. Islam is not named after a tribe of people or an individual nor is it a name chosen by a human being. The followers of Islam, called 'Muslims', believe that it was divinely revealed by God (in Arabic, Allah). Islam represents a total system of living. A Muslim is supposed to live in peace and harmony with other people and the environment; hence, a Muslim is anyone whose obedience, allegiance and loyalty are only to God, the Lord of the Universe.

The language of the Qur'an (divine revelation) is Arabic. Muslims all over the world try to learn Arabic so that they may be able to read the Qur'an and understand its meaning. Salah (prayer) is performed five times a day in Arabic. However, Supplication to God may be said in any language.

Allah the One and Only God

'Allah' is the Arabic name of the One and Only God. Allah has many beautiful names and attributes, such as; The Gracious, The Merciful, The Beneficent, The Creator, The All-wise, The All-knowing and The Lord of the Universe. He is the Creator of all beings and the God for the Christians, the Jews, the Muslims, the Buddhists, the Hindus, the Atheists, and others. Muslims put their trust in Him and they seek His help and His guidance.

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him)

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is the very last Prophet and the final Messenger of Allah to be sent to mankind. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was born in 570 C.E. in Makkah, Arabia. He was entrusted by Allah with the *Message of Islam* when he was forty years old. The revelation that he received is called the Qur'an, while the message is called Islam.

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was also sent to inform us about the true mission of previous Messengers such as Jesus, Moses and Abraham as well as all of the other Prophets (peace be upon them all). Hence, his eternal message is relevant for the Christians and the Jews and for all of mankind.

Source of Islam

The legal sources of Islam are the Qur'an and the *Hadith*. The Qur'an is the speech of Allah; its authenticity, originality and totality are intact. Hadith are reports of the sayings, deeds and approvals of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). The Prophet's sayings and deeds are called *Sunnah*. The *Seerah* is the biography of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) written by his followers. Hence, it is the life history of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), which provides examples of daily living for Muslims.



Basic Beliefs

Oneness of God

Allah is The One and Only Supreme Being. He has no partners, parents or children and no one is associated with Him.

Oneness of mankind

People are created equal in front of Allah. There is no superiority of one race over another. Allah has made us all of different colours, races and languages so that we may recognise one another. No one can claim that they are better than someone else. It is only Allah Who knows who is better based on our piety and righteousness.

Oneness of Allah's Message

Muslims believe that Allah has sent different Messengers throughout the history of mankind. All came with the same teachings, i.e. to worship Allah alone. Muslims believe in the Prophets Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad (peace be upon them all). The prophets in Judaism and Christianity are indeed all 'Prophets of Islam'.

Angels and the Day of Judgement

Muslims believe that there are unseen beings such as angels created by Allah in the universe for special missions. Muslims also believe that there will be a Day of Judgement when all people of the world throughout the history of mankind until the last day of life on Earth, will be brought to account for their actions.

Innocence of Man and Birth

In Islam people are born free of sin. It is only after they reach the age of puberty and commit sins that they will be accountable for their mistakes. No one is responsible for or can take the responsibility for the sins of others. However, the door of forgiveness through sincere repentance is always open to everyone.

State and Religion

Muslims believe that Islam is a total and a complete way of life. As such, the teachings of Islam do not separate religion from politics.



As a matter of fact in Islam, state and religion act as one under the obedience of Allah in order to establish complete justice. Hence, economic and social transactions, as well as educational and political systems are also part of the teachings of Islam and are beautifully explained and clearly laid down in *Shariah* (Islamic law).

Practice of Islam

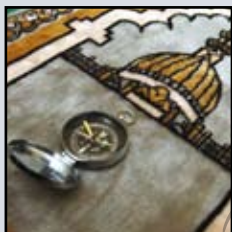
In Islam there are five pillars, namely:

Shahada (Declaration)

The verbal commitment and pledge that there is only One God worthy of worship and that Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is the Messenger of God, is considered to be the declaration of faith in Islam.

Salah (Prayers)

Muslim perform five compulsory prayers a day. Salah is a direct link between the worshipper and Allah. There are no intermediaries between Allah and the worshipper.

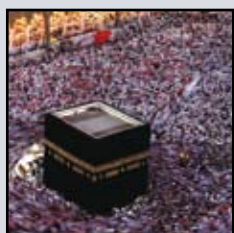


Saum (Fasting)

Every year during the entire month of Ramadan, all Muslims fast from dawn until sunset, abstaining from food, drink and sexual relations.

Zakah (Charity)

This is an annual payment of a specified percentage of a Muslim's property which is distributed among the poor or other rightful beneficiaries.



Hajj (Pilgrimage)

The performance of pilgrimage to Makkah is required once in a life time if means are available. Hajj is partly in memory of the trials and tribulations of Prophet Abraham, his wife Hagar and their eldest son Prophet Ishmael (peace be upon them all).

Contributions to Science

The Muslims of the early period of the Islamic era were pioneers in, for example, medicine, chemistry, physics, geography, navigation, poetry, mathematics, algebra, logarithms, calculus as well as numerous other areas. This richly endowed knowledge was transmitted to Dark Age Europe from Muslim Spain and provided an enormous contribution to the *Renaissance* as well as world civilisation in general.

Jews and Christians

Muslims are required to respect all those who are faithful and God conscious people, namely those who have received His Messages in the past. Jews and Christians are referred to as 'People of the Book'. Muslims are asked to call upon the 'People of the Book' for common terms, namely to worship One God, and to work together for the solutions of the many problems in society. History shows that Jews and Christians have lived peacefully with Muslims and have made significant contributions to the development of civilisation throughout the centuries in the Middle East, Asia and Africa. Throughout the Muslim world, synagogues, churches and schools were built within the Muslim neighbourhoods. These places were protected by Muslims even during the contemporary crises in the Middle East. This remains undisputed due to the number of churches and synagogues still present in the Muslim lands.

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