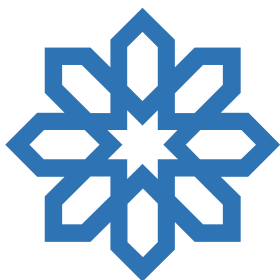
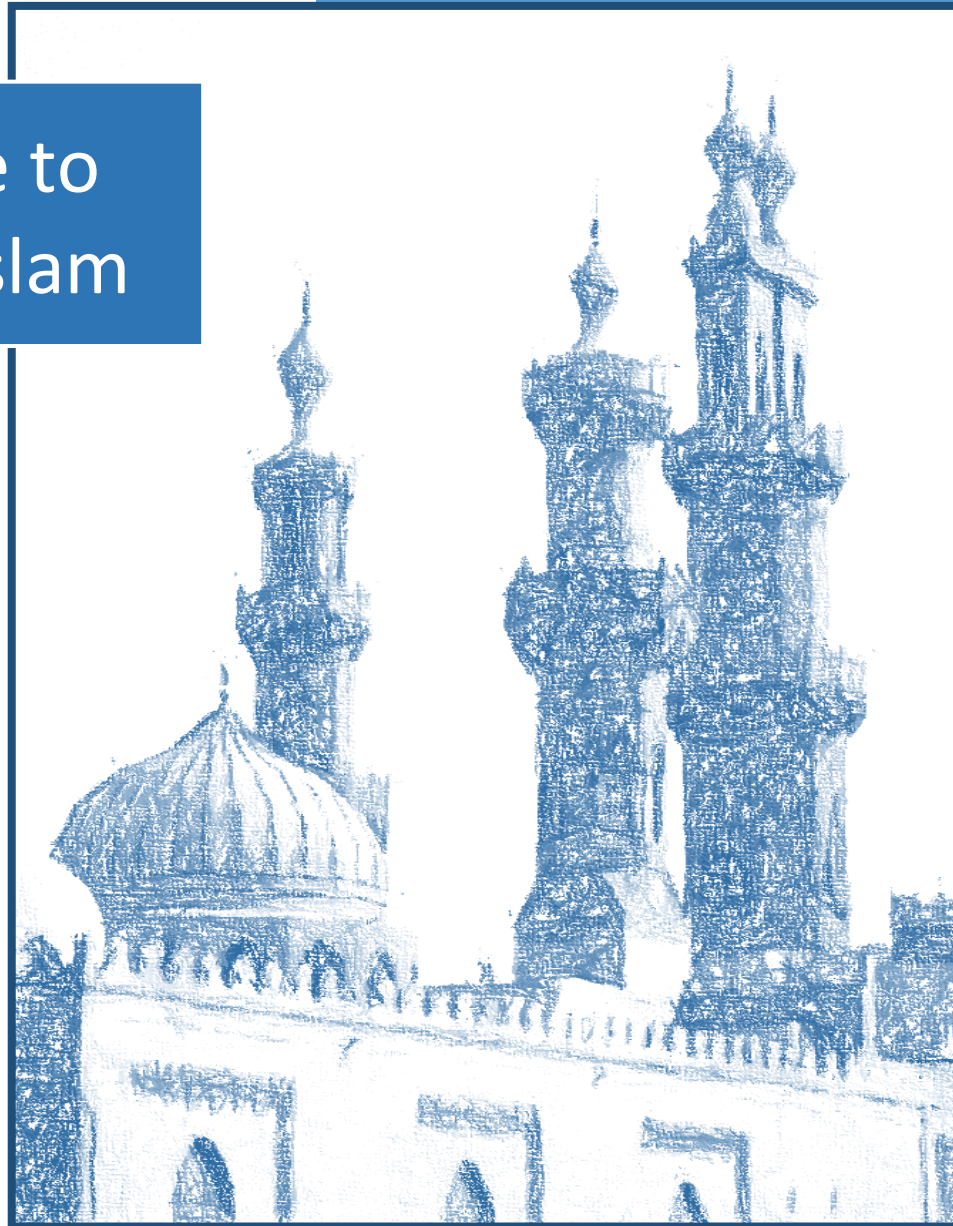


Your Easy Guide to Understanding Islam





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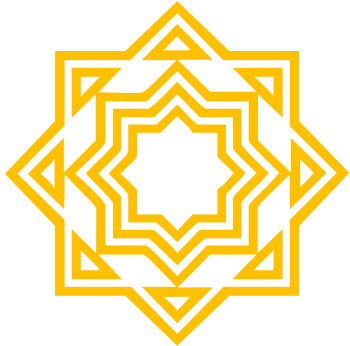


What Is Islam?

Islam (lit. voluntary surrender or submission) means to fully submit to the Will and Law of God. It has the same root (S-L-M) as the Arabic words *Salam* (peace) and *Salamah* (safety, security). As is clear from the connection between the words, only by submitting to one's Creator and living according to His Divinely revealed Law can a human attain true peace.

Attitude to life: The word Islam is, therefore, descriptive of a state of mind and an attitude to life, not a name that derives from a specific man or nation. It is a whole way of living, thinking, and acting that God ordained for mankind, described with the Qur'anic precept of: *﴿It is You (alone) we worship, and You (alone) we ask for help.﴾* [QU'RAN 1: 5]

Innate religion: Islam is also defined as the religion of *Fitrah* (the natural inborn need for and awareness of God). According to Islam, every human is born with an innate knowledge of God and a natural inclination to believe in His Absolute Oneness.



One God with no mediator:

Islam is strictly monotheistic; there is only one God and no mediator between God and mankind. It is strictly anti-discriminatory; humanity has one origin, Adam (peace be upon him), and God created Adam from dust.

One religion: Islam introduces itself not as a new religion, but as a continuation of the same message of pure monotheism revealed by God to all of His prophets beginning with Adam and including Abraham, Moses, David, Jesus, and ending with Muhammad (peace be upon them all).

The antithesis of Islam: *Shirk* (or associating others with God in His Divinity or worship) is the main invalidator of Islam and the only unforgivable sin in Islam.



Who Are the Muslims?

One who has surrendered to God: Any human being who submits to the Will and Law of God out of love and free choice, and rejects any partners or intermediaries between them and God, is called a Muslim (lit. one who surrenders or submits to God).

All prophets were Muslims: It is in the sense of submitting oneself only to God and taking Him as one's sole Lord that the Qur'an calls Abraham and all prophets of God "Muslims" and designates their religion by one and the same name: Islam.

Follower of all prophets: Hence, Muslims are not only followers of Muhammad; they also follow and honor Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and the rest of the messengers of God (peace of God be upon them all).

Islam cannot be forced: A person cannot be a Muslim by force. To be a true Muslim, one must choose Islam and be fully convinced of it.

Number of Muslims worldwide: There are approximately 1.6 billion Muslims, constituting 23% of the world's population, making Islam the world's second-largest religion. Of these, less than 20% are Arab. In fact, the five countries with the largest numbers of Muslims worldwide are all non-Arab countries.

Any person can be a Muslim:

Islam therefore unites people of different colors, classes, and nationalities into one brotherhood. The Qur'an says: *﴿Indeed the believers are but brothers.﴾* [QU'RAN 49: 10]





Who Is Allah?



Allah is the name of the One True God and can never be used to designate any other being. It is absolutely unique to the Creator of the heavens and the earth, the Lord of all mankind, and the God Who was worshipped by Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad (peace be upon them all).

Meaning of the Name Allah: In Arabic, it means ‘the One exclusively worthy of deification and worship.’ It is inclusive of all God’s other Divine Names and Attributes of absolute perfection and has primacy over all His other titles (e.g., the Maker, the Almighty, and the All-Merciful).

Singularity of the name: Allah has no plural or gender, as opposed to the word ‘god’, which has a plural form (gods) and a feminine form (goddess). This gives it more accuracy in conveying the true nature of the Supreme Creator than the term God, even if a capital G is used. Arab Christians and Jews use the word “Allah” for God.



Allah according to the Qur'an: Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was asked to define God, and the answer was the revelation of a short chapter of the Qur'an, considered the essence of the Islamic creed: ﴿Say (O Muhammad): He is Allah, the One God, the Self-Sufficient Master. He does not beget nor is He begotten, and there is nothing equal or comparable to Him.﴾
[QU'RAN 112: 1-4]



99 Names of Allah:

In the Holy Qur'an, Allah described Himself with 99 Names or Attributes. These are called *Al-Asma' Ul-Husna* or The Magnificent Names (of Allah), by which Allah can be known, worshipped, praised, approached, and asked for help. They include attributes such as "The Loving", "The Most Merciful", "The All-Knower", "The Forgiver", "The Protector", "The Generous," "The Provider", "The Patient", "The Subduer", "The Judge", "The Just", and the "The All-Wise."



What Do Muslims Believe?

Muslims hold the following six major beliefs, known as the Six Articles of Belief, which represent the inward application of faith or the deeds of the heart:



1. Belief in Allah:

- **Definition of God:** Muslims believe in One Supreme, Eternal, All-Knowing, and Almighty God Who has no wife, son, partner, or equal. He is the Creator and Sustainer of everything. He is infinitely Great and Gracious, and is incomparable to any of His creations. He is beyond the power of human imagination and should never be drawn or depicted.
- **The worship of God alone:** The belief in the Oneness of God and the worship of God alone is the foundation of the religion of Islam. Islam teaches that God alone gives life, causes death, brings good, removes distress, answers supplications, and forgives sins; therefore, no one has the right to be worshipped except Him alone.



2. Belief in Angels

- **Belief in the Unseen:** Muslims believe in the existence of the unseen world and the invisible realm of heaven of which angels are a part. Angels, according to the main sources of Islam, the Qur'an and Sunnah (teachings of Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him), are genderless creatures made of light.
- **The nature of angels:** In contrast to human beings, angels do not have needs, desires, or free will. They are honorable servants of God, dedicated to perpetual worship of Him. They obey every Command of God and do not have the ability to disobey Him. Each angel is charged with a specific duty.



3. Belief in all Divine Books:

- **Permanence of the message of Islam:** Muslims believe in the oneness and continuity of divine guidance throughout human history; therefore, they believe in all the revelations that God sent down to humanity. These revelations include the Scrolls given to Abraham, the Torah given to Moses, the Psalms given to David, the Gospels given to Jesus, and, finally, the Qur'an given to Muhammad (peace be upon them all).
- **Basic content of the Divine Books:** Islam instructs that all the divine books come from the same source (God), contain the same message (worship of God alone), and

essentially enjoin the same duties and prohibit the same sins.

- **The Qur'an versus previous scriptures:** Islam states that although scriptures prior to the Qur'an were once authentic, over time they have been lost, altered, concealed, or corrupted. Only God's Final Revelation, the Qur'an, has been preserved in its original form and provides authentic knowledge about God. It confirms any truths that remained and corrects any distortions that were made in previous scriptures.



4. Belief in

Messengers:

- **Messengers:** Muslims believe that from the beginning of humanity God sent a long line of prophets and messengers to convey His Message of Islam to mankind. Belief in them all, equally and without distinction, is an integral component of Islamic faith.
- **The nature of the messengers:** All messengers were mortal human beings supported by miracles from God that proved their prophethood. They were not gods, or sons, or partners of God; they were the best human beings ever, spiritually, morally, intellectually, and physically.
- **Mission:** Messengers were sent in succession and worked as one unified whole throughout time. Each preached the Oneness of God and the worship of Him alone, advocated the obedience of His Laws of right and wrong, confirmed

previous prophets and scriptures, and spoke of a coming Prophet.

- **Muhammad:** The final and complete revelation of Islamic faith was made through Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). He is declared in the Holy Book of Islam, the Qur'an, as humanity's most perfect man and the last and universal Prophet whose life, teachings, and spirituality, along with the Qur'an, provide the final and eternal guidance to all humanity – Arabs and non-Arabs alike.



5. Belief in the Last Day:

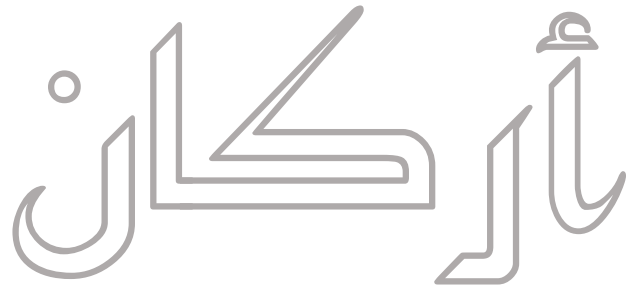
- **This life and the life to come:** Muslims believe that one's life does not end on earth; rather, it is followed by the eternal life of the hereafter, which is the true life. According to Islam, the present life of this world is temporal. It was designed as a test of belief in and obedience to God, the outcome of which shall determine the location of a person's next life (Paradise or Hell).
- **Accountability and the Day of Judgement:** Islam instructs that all humans who have lived on earth are accountable for their beliefs and willful actions. Everything one does, says, or intends in this world is accurately recorded by angels. These records of deeds shall be presented on the Day of Judgment, when the whole universe shall be destroyed, and the dead shall be resurrected in both body and soul to be judged by God.
- **Requital is definite:** For Muslims, the certainty of this day gives substance and meaning to their lives. It also fills them

with peace, as nothing good shall pass without reward and nothing evil shall pass unpunished.



6. Belief in Predestination:

- **Nothing is haphazard:** Muslims believe that everything happens in this universe by the Will and Decree of God. Whatever befalls a person, be it good or bad, could not have bypassed them, and that which bypasses them could not have befallen them. This is inclusive of every aspect of life beyond free will choices, i.e., circumstances which a person does nothing to acquire or cause.
- **Satisfaction with one's portion:** It is by means of belief in and acceptance of destiny that Muslims are able to find peace of mind and contentment in this life – provided they have done all that can possibly be done in a given situation. This concept is based on several teachings by Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), one of which says: *“From the happiness of the son of Adam is his acceptance of what God has decreed for him, and from the misery of the son of Adam is his discontent with what God has decreed for him.”*



What are the Five Pillars of Islam?

Just as pillars uphold a building, Islam requires its followers to uphold their religion by practicing five basic acts of worship known as the Five Pillars of Islam, which represent the outward application of faith or the deeds of the senses. In order, they are:

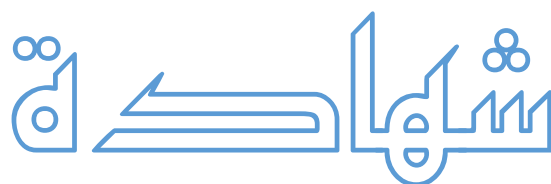


First Pillar: Testimony of Faith (*Shahada*)

The Testimony of Faith is saying with conviction: “I testify that there is no god except Allah, and I testify that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.” One becomes a Muslim simply by making this Declaration of Faith.

The first part of the Declaration of Faith negates all false gods and affirms that there is only one true God worthy of worship – Allah. All acts of worship, such as prayer, supplication, sacrifice, fasting, charity, vows, reliance, hope, and fear must be directed to Allah alone without intermediators. Any act of worship directed to Allah along with or through something else is counted as *Shirk* (joining others as gods with Allah).

The second part establishes the way in which Muslims must follow the path to God. By accepting that Muhammad (peace be upon him) is God’s Messenger, Muslims are pledging themselves to believe in what he said, obey what he commanded, avoid what he prohibited, and worship God according to his teachings.





Second Pillar: Prayer (*Salah*)

Salah is the daily obligation of offering five prayers in the direction of the Ka`bah (God's first House of worship) in Makkah.

Salah establishes and constantly renews the connection with God and keep Muslims focused on the real purpose of life according to Islam, which is the relationship with one's Creator. The five prayers are spaced throughout the day at set times: dawn, midday, afternoon, sunset, and evening, which makes life and its activities revolve around seeking and remembering God.

Each prayer takes five to ten minutes to perform and consists of a repeated series of humble postures of standing, bowing, prostrating, and sitting accompanied by glorifications, recitations from the Qur'an, and supplications.

Ablution is required before prayer, as well as cleanliness of clothes and location. A Muslim may pray individually or congregationally, at home, at work, or in any clean place, but congregationally in a mosque is preferred.

Each prayer is announced from the mosques by a call to prayer, known as the Azan, which consists of the following words: "Allah is Greater (more important than anything else). I testify that there is no god but Allah. I testify that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah. Come to prayer. Come to success."





Third Pillar: Obligatory Charity (*Zakah*)

Zakah is the annual obligation of financially able Muslims to give a specific portion of their surplus wealth (2.5% of one year's total cumulative wealth) to certain classes of needy people.

Zakah literally means purification and growth. It signifies to Muslims the growth of their wealth through giving part of it away and the elevation and purification of their souls from possessiveness, greed, and selfishness.

In order to be liable to pay *Zakah*, a Muslim must (1) possess an amount of wealth that is equal to or exceeds the *Nisab* (minimum amount on which *Zakah* is due) (2) possess it for one lunar year without needing it. With these two conditions met, 2.5 percent of the total wealth should be paid for the upkeep of the poor and needy.

Zakah is designed so that, when paid in due time and amount to its deserving recipients in a given community, it will eliminate poverty and promote solidarity.





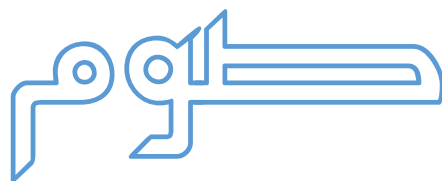
Fourth Pillar: Fasting Ramadan (*Sawm*)

Sawm is the annual obligation of every physically able adult Muslim to abstain from eating, drinking, and having sexual relations with one's spouse from sunrise to sunset. This abstention also entails forbearance from obscene language and any offensive behavior.

Exempted from *Sawm* are people who are sick, elderly, or on a journey, and women who are pregnant, nursing, or menstruating.

During Ramadan Muslims are encouraged to show greater generosity and increase their good deeds. Every day special supererogatory night prayers are held congregationally in mosques after *Iftar* (breaking the Fast), during which a portion of the Qur'an is read on successive evenings so that by the end of the month the entire Qur'an has been completely recited.

When practiced sincerely, *Sawm* uplifts the spirituality and morality of Muslims and strengthens their willpower and perseverance. Muslims also gain sympathy for hungry and needy people and a better appreciation of God's Blessings.





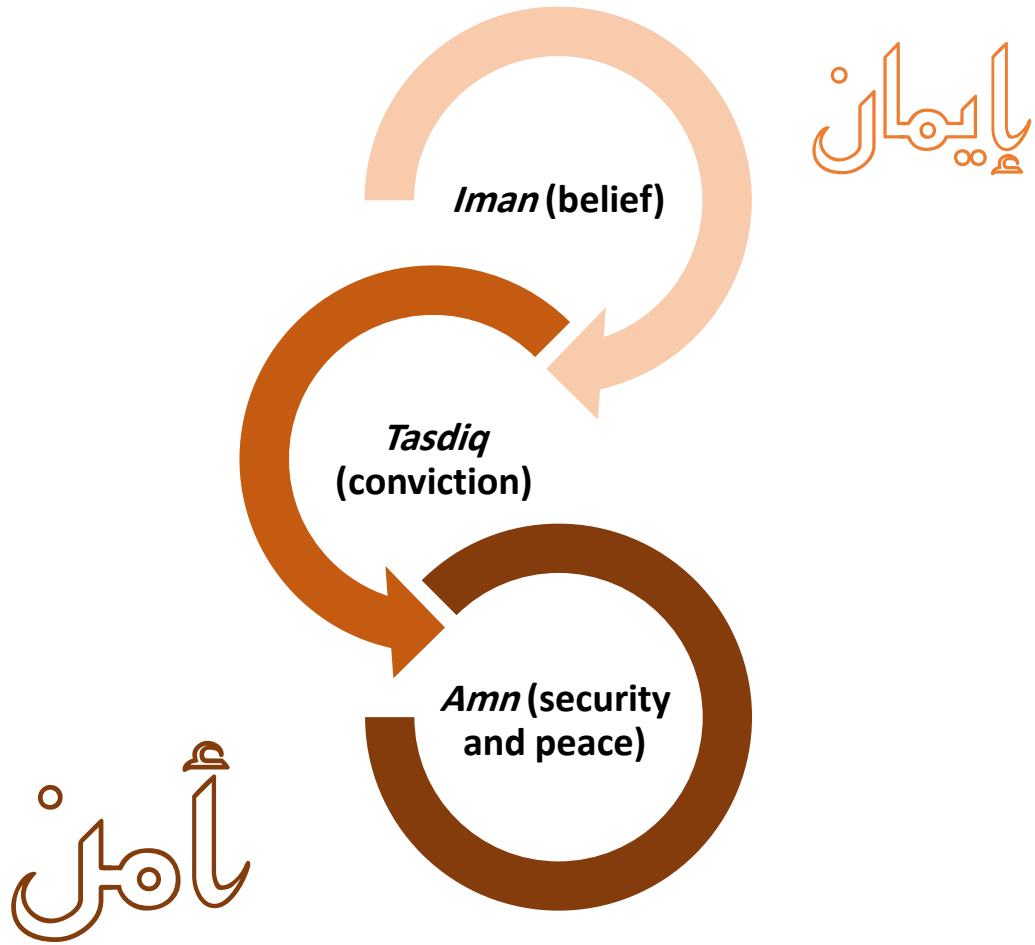
Fifth Pillar: Pilgrimage to Makkah (Hajj)

Hajj is the once-in-a-lifetime obligation of every physically and financially able Muslim to go on a journey solely for God and to visit His Sacred House in Makkah. The process involves the sacrifice of time, money, and comforts all for God's Sake.

Hajj takes place during the first days of the lunar month of Dhul-Hijjah. The rituals of Hajj center on complete submission and devotion to God. As the pilgrims approach Makkah, they enter into a state of consecration known as *Ihram* during which they divest themselves temporarily of all marks of status and worldly distinction to assume the humble dress and condition of a pilgrim wholly devoted to God.

Of all the rituals of Islam, Hajj is the most representative of the concept of unity and equality of mankind. Hajj brings together people of different nationalities, cultures, and social backgrounds from all over the world to worship God as one massive unit. Hajj is considered the largest annual religious gathering in the world.





Iman, the Arabic word for belief, has two overlapping meanings: *Amn* (peace and security) and *Tasdiq* (conviction). Accordingly, belief in Islam is not blind faith. It must come through knowledge that results in full mental acceptance and satisfaction, which eventually brings about inner contentment and peace.

تتأكد يق

القرآن



The Holy Qur'an

Muslims believe that the Qur'an is the final, literal Word of God, which He revealed directly to Prophet Muhammad through the Archangel Gabriel over a period of twenty-three years. It is divided into thirty equal Juz', or parts, and consists of 114 Surahs, or chapters, varying in length from 3 to 286 verses. The Qur'an provides guidance in all aspects of life and is regarded as Prophet Muhammad's timeless miracle that shall forever remain authentic. Only the original Arabic version is divine. Any translation of the Qur'an is considered only an interpretation, a human endeavor, and not the original Holy Qur'an.

Some Qur'anic Chapters

- The Chapter of Al-'Alaq 96: 1-5:



“Read in the Name of your Lord Who created. He created the human from a clot. Read, and your Lord is the Most Generous, Who has taught by the pen. He has taught the human that which he knew not.”

Commentary: Al-‘Alaq, literally 'clinging clot,' is the first revealed chapter of the Qur’an, in which the humble origin of humankind is contrasted with the intellectual faculties and moral and spiritual potential that God placed within it. The value and importance of knowledge, while acknowledging its source and creator, is also highlighted from the beginning of the Qur'anic message.

- The Chapter of Al-Fatihah 1: 1-7:



“In the Name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Ever-Merciful. Praise be to Allah, the Lord of existence, the All-Merciful, the Ever-Merciful, the Owner (Master) of the Day of Judgment. It is You (alone) we worship, and You (alone) we ask for help. Guide us to the Straight Path, the Path of those on whom You have bestowed Your Grace, not the path of those who have incurred Your Anger, nor of those who have gone astray.”

Commentary: Al-Fatihah, literally the Opening, is a 7-verse Qur’anic chapter described by Prophet Muhammad as the greatest in the entire Qur’an. It establishes the foundations of Islamic belief, worship, and way of life which are detailed in the rest of the Qur’an.

- The Chapter of Al-Ikhlās 112: 1-4:



“Say (O Muhammad): He is Allah, the One God, the Self-Sufficient Master. He does not beget nor is He begotten, and there is nothing equal or comparable to Him.”

Commentary: Al-Ikhlās, literally sincerity and purity of worship, was revealed to Prophet Muhammad when he was asked to define God. The answer was the revelation of this short Qur’anic chapter, which sums up the concept of *Tawhid* (belief in the Oneness of God) and is considered the essence of the Islamic creed.



The Sunnah

Sunnah, or the Way of Prophet Muhammad, refers to his life example, which comprises whatever he said, did, or approved of. Both the Qur'an and the Sunnah are considered divine revelations in Islam; but, unlike the Qur'an, the Sunnah is not the direct, exact Word of God. The Qur'an and the Sunnah are complementary. The Qur'an principally deals with the basics and the Sunnah gives the details and necessary explanations of the Qur'anic laws and specifies how to live by the dictates of the Qur'an.

Some Sayings of Prophet Muhammad



Reliance:

“When you ask, ask God. When you seek help, seek it from God. Know that if people gather together to benefit you with something, they will not benefit you except with something that God has destined for you. And if they gather together to harm you with something, they will not harm you except with something that God has destined for you. The pens have been lifted and the pages have dried.” (Sunan At-Tirmidhy)



Essence:

“Verily, God does not look at your shapes or wealth, but looks at your hearts and deeds.” (Sahih Muslim)



Excellence:

"God loves that when you do something, you do it with excellence." (Al-Mu`jam Al-Awsat by At-Tabarani)



Mercy:

“Show mercy to those on the earth, and He Who is in the heaven will show mercy to you.” (Sunan At-Tirmidhy)



Equality: “Verily, your Lord is One and your father is one (Adam). There is no superiority of the Arab over the non-Arab, or of the non-Arab over the Arab, or of the red over the black, or of the black over the red – except by piety.” (Musnad Ahmad)



Philanthropy: “No one of you truly believes until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself.” (Sahih Al-Bukhary)



Charity: “Any Muslim who plants a seedling from which a human, an animal, or a bird eats, it is for him a charitable deed (of ongoing reward) until the Day of Resurrection.” (Sahih Muslim)



Reform: “Anyone of you who sees something evil, let them change it with their hand (by taking action); if they cannot, then with their tongue (by speaking out); and if they cannot, then with their heart (by hating it and feeling that it is wrong); and that is the weakest of faith.” (Sahih Muslim)



Makkah

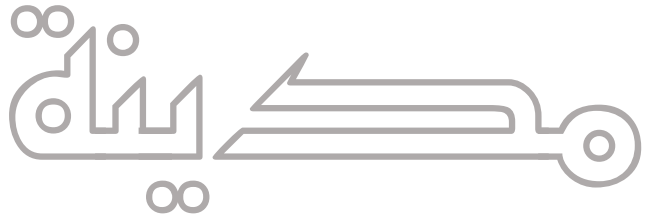


Makkah (Mecca), referred to in the Qur'an as Umm Al-Qura, is the holiest city in Islam, the Mother of all Cities. It is located in the Hijaz region of western Saudi Arabia, around a natural well called Zamzam, whose water is believed to be divinely blessed.

Makkah has been revered as the center of monotheism and a pilgrimage city since ancient times. Its sacredness in Islam derives from the fact that it contains the Ka`bah, which, according to the teachings of Islam, is the first structure that was ever built for the worship of God alone. It is said to have been first built by Prophet Adam and rebuilt by Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) and his son Isma'il (Ishmael), peace be upon them all. The Ka`bah is surrounded by the courtyard of the Sacred Mosque, which is the greatest and holiest of all mosques.

Makkah is the direction all Muslims face when praying and the destination for millions of Muslim pilgrims every year during the lunar month of Dhul-Hijjah.

Makkah was the birthplace of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Before his mission, idol worship was so rampant that every house and district contained an idol, and the Ka`bah itself was surrounded by 360 idols. The House of God and all of Makkah were freed of idols after the minds were first liberated from idol worship.



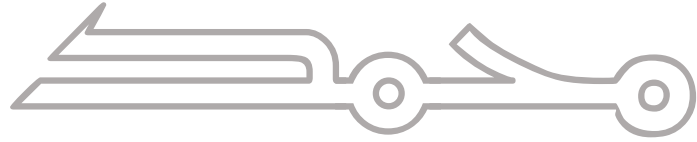
Madinah

Madinah (Medina) is the first capital of Islam and its second holiest city, after Makkah. It is located in the Hejaz region of western Saudi Arabia, about 450 km from Makkah.

It was originally known as Yathrib, but after the emigration of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) to it in 622 C.E., the name was changed to Madinah (Arabic for city or town), which is short for Madinat Al-Nabi (The City of the Prophet) or Al-Madinah Al-Munawwarah (The Enlightened City).

The grave of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and three of the world's oldest and most important mosques are located in Madinah. These mosques are Al-Masjid Al-Nabawi (the Prophet's Mosque), Quba' Mosque, and Masjid Al-Qiblatayn (the Mosque of the Two Qibals).

Madinah is strongly associated in the collective memory with the historical event of Hjirah (the Prophet's emigration from Makkah to Madinah), which marked a turning point in Islamic history and the transition of Islam from being preached locally to being preached globally, and the Muslims from being a small group of believers to being a worldwide Islamic community.



Outlines about the Life of Prophet Muhammad

صلى الله
عليه
وسلم

 Birth:

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was born in 570 C.E. into a family of high respectability in Makkah whose ancestry, according to Arab historians, was traced back to Prophet Ismael (peace be upon him). He was orphaned early, losing his father before his birth and his mother six years later.



Name: His grandfather, `Abdul Muttalib, gave him the name Muhammad, literally ‘the one who is frequently praised,’ with the wish that his grandson would be praised by God in heaven and by people on earth.



Upbringing: His grandfather, as was the custom of the Arabs at the time, entrusted him in his infancy to a Bedouin wet nurse to have him raised strong and independent in the free and healthy desert atmosphere and to acquire pure and correct Arabic.

Work: At the age of eight, after the death of his grandfather, he started working as a shepherd to support himself and his paternal uncle and final guardian, Abu Talib, who had a large family to care for. At the age of twelve, he adopted the major Arab occupation of trading and joined his uncle in his trade caravans.



Reputation: Over time and through interaction with others, he earned such a widespread reputation for honesty, truthfulness, sincerity, and integrity that he was called by whoever knew him ‘*Al-Sadiq Al-Amin* (The Truthful Trustworthy One).’

Background: His desert upbringing and long hours of shepherding developed his close connection with nature. During adulthood, his habit of solitary contemplation of the world around him grew into a customary practice of long retreats in Hira' Cave on Mount Nur. Here, he engaged himself in devotional and meditative worship, addressed to the Creator of the Universe, according to the remnants of the Abrahamic faith, safe from the idolatry and depravities of *Jahiliyah* (pre-Islamic ignorant society), which he shunned and never took part in.



Mission: At the age of forty, on a night during the lunar month of Ramadan, during his solitude and worship in Hira' Cave, he received his first Divine Revelation from God through Angel Gabriel, who descended upon him with the Command, ﴿*Read in the name of your Lord Who created*﴾ [96: 1]. This descent of revelation on an Illiterate Prophet proclaimed a universal injunction to read and explore, outside books, the signs of the Creator placed in creation and put more focus on the rich world of meaning and practice. Angel Gabriel then proceeded to the prophetic charge, ﴿*Arise and warn*﴾ [74: 2]; then the request for him to call his near kindred [26: 214]; then the Call being extended to the whole town of Makkah and all those around it [6:92]; and finally to all of mankind [21: 107].

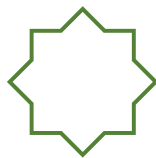
Themes: The key themes of Muhammad’s message were the Oneness of God, rejection of all forms of idolatry (worship of oneself or others), rejection of all forms of *Shirk* (associating others with God in His Divinity or worship), rejection of all forms of material or spiritual bondage, preservation of human dignity, equality of humanity, speaking the truth, safeguarding that which is committed to one’s trust, giving generously, being forgiving, maintaining the ties of kinship, treating neighbors kindly, and refraining from bloodshed, immorality, and forbidden things.

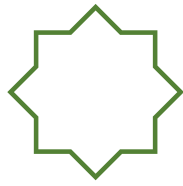
Stages: Muhammad’s Call to Islam spanned two distinct phases: a Makkan phase, from the time he was commissioned with prophethood in 610 to 622, when he emigrated to Madinah; and a Madinan phase, from the time of the Prophet’s entry into Madinah until his death in 632. The Call moved through three stages: secret preaching in Makkah (3 years), open preaching in Makkah (10 years), and propagation of the Call beyond Makkah (10 years).





Trials: During the Makkan phase he was met with disbelief, obstruction, and resistance which took the form of physical persecution and diverse tactics of psychological abuse and rumor campaigns. The warfare escalated into exclusion, besiegement, and starvation combined with allurements of wealth and position. It eventually culminated into a corporate conspiracy of assassination that involved all the tribal chiefs of the Quraish, who felt socially and economically threatened by his message of God's Oneness and the eradication of all idols and intermediaries. Deliverance to him and his oppressed followers came with the divine command to undertake *Hijrah* (emigration) from Makkah to Yathrib, later to be renamed Madinah or City of the Prophet.





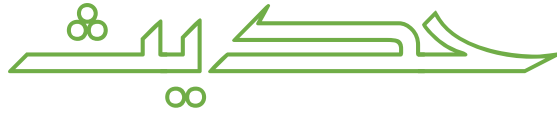
Achievements:

During this short period of his 23 years of prophethood, he changed the entire Arabian Peninsula from paganism and idolatry to the worship of God alone; from tribalism and ceaseless civil wars to solidarity, justice, and equality; from drunkenness and debauchery to sobriety and piety; from licentiousness and anarchy to moral goodness, lawfulness, and order. Human history has never known such a revolution in human thought and behavior that brought about an entire transformation of a people or a place in just over two decades.



Legacy:

Today, after a lapse of fourteen centuries, the doctrine and example of Prophet Muhammad, embodied in the Qur'an and Sunnah (teachings of Prophet Muhammad), have survived without the slightest loss, alteration, or interpolation. They are universal in scope and purpose and offer the same ability to effectively treat humanity's many ills and establish healthy, dynamic, and prosperous societies – just as they did when he was alive.



Prophet's Teachings

Optimism and perseverance despite impossibilities:

“If the Last Hour comes while one of you has a palm seedling in his hand, which he can plant before it falls, let him plant it.” (Musnad Ahmad)

Overcoming difficulties through reliance on God's Power:

“Be keen on what is useful and good for you. Ask God's Help and do not be helpless. When something bad happens to you, do not say, 'If only I done this or that, this or that would have happened.' Rather say, 'This is God's Decree and He does whatever He wills.'” (Sahih Muslim)

- **Intention is what gives an action its value:**

“Actions depend on intentions, and for every person is what he intended.” (Sahih Al-Bukhari)

- **Sagacious investment of youth, health, wealth and time:**

“Take advantage of five things before five others occur. Your youth before you grow old. Your health before you become sick. Your wealth before you become poor. Your leisure before you become busy. And your life before you die.” (Al-Mustadrak)

- **Practicing cheerfulness is practicing charity towards others:**

“Do not underestimate any good deed, even meeting your brother with a cheerful face,” (Sahih Muslim) and “Your smiling in the face of your brother is an act of charity.” (Sahih Ibn Hibban)

- **Purity of the heart is the key to well-being:**

“Beware, every king has a non-tresspassble terrain, and the things God has forbidden are His non-tresspassble terrain. Beware, in the body is a little piece of flesh, which when it is sound, the whole body is sound, and when it is corrupt, the whole body is corrupt; it is the heart.” (Sahih Al-Bukhari)

السَّابِقَةُ

Companions of the Prophet



Companions of the Path:

The term *Sahabah*, Companions of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) in English, refers to the followers of Muhammad, both male and female, who personally met or saw him, believed in him, embraced his message, and died as Muslims.

Number: The exact number of the Companions is not known, but is estimated by scholars to be approximately 114,000 at the time of the Prophet's death. They consisted of people of various ages, colors, classes, and backgrounds.

Status: In Islam, the status of the Companions is second only to the prophets and messengers of God, as they were the people through whom God transmitted the guidance and life example of His last Messenger, via the Qur'an and Sunnah, to the entirety of humanity until the Day of Judgment.

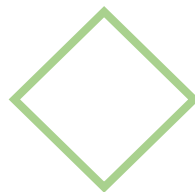


Best generation: Having being taught directly by Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) himself, having witnessed the Noble Qur'an while it was being revealed, and having lived through the circumstances of its revelation, the Companions constituted the best Muslim generation ever. In the process of their conversion, application, preservation, and propagation of Islam they rose to unprecedented heights of sincerity, piety, altruism, and sacrifice.

Altruistic souls of extraordinary fortitude: The Companions endured all kinds of hardship and persecution and placed little value on their own lives and possessions in defense of belief. Based on the testimony of many texts in the Qur'an and Sunnah, they were the best in terms of their understanding and practicing of the message, their obedience to God, their actions, and their emulation of the Prophet's example.

Mission: The Prophet (peace be upon him) placed the responsibility of the universal conveyance of the message of Islam contained in the Qur'an and Sunnah on each and every Companion. Their preparation for this duty required his continuous effort and care. For example, he said, *“Convey on my behalf, even if it is one verse of the Qur'an.”*

Shouldering the message: The Companions measured up to their responsibility and to the Prophet's deep faith in them. They received the hard news of his death with the resolute words of the great Companion and first Successor, Abu Bakr Al-Siddiq (may God be pleased with him): *“Whoever worships Muhammad, Muhammad is dead. Whoever worships God, indeed God is alive and shall never die.”* He then recited to them: *﴿Muhammad is only a messenger, and many a messenger has passed away before him. So if he dies or is killed, will you turn back on your heels (as disbelievers)?﴾* [QU'RAN 3:144]



Universality becoming a reality: The Companions were among the essential elements of the permanency of Islam and they turned the universality of the message into reality. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was sent to the whole of mankind, according to Islam. Therefore, the Companions traveled to every corner of the known world at that time to propagate the final message of God brought by Muhammad (peace be upon him).

Reverence for the Companions: Trust, respect, and love for the Companions are incumbent on every Muslim. According to Muslim scholars, the entire group of the Companions is included in the Qur'anic verse: *﴿God is pleased with them and they are pleased with Him, and He has prepared for them gardens beneath which rivers flow.﴾* [QU'RAN 9:100]

Upon mentioning their names, Muslims should affix the honorific *Radi Allahu anhum/anhu/anha* (may God be pleased with them/him/her) after them.

الرجال والنساء



Men and Women in Islam

Equal souls: Islam affirms that God created men and women as equal beings; equally valuable in His Sight, equally subject to His Sovereignty, equally deserving of His Mercy and Protection, and equally accountable to Him for their deeds.

Both are born innocent and free from sin, capable alike of receiving guidance and knowledge; capable alike of developing their intellectual and moral powers to the highest levels or degrading them to the lowest levels; and capable alike of obeying or disobeying God and doing good or evil.

Establishing this fact, without exalting one above another, the Noble Qur'an says:

﴿O mankind, fear your Lord Who created you from a single soul (Adam), and from it He created its mate (Adam's wife, Eve), and from them both He spread (through the earth) many men and women.﴾ [QU'RAN 4:1]

Effective members: Each individual man and woman is encouraged and expected by Islam to be an active contributor and collaborator, bringing positive changes and energies to the advancement and integrity of their communities. The Noble Qur'an says: *﴿The believing men and the believing women are helpers of one another. They enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and establish prayer and pay alms and obey God and His Messenger. Those – upon them God will have mercy.﴾*
[QU'RAN 9:71]

Just reward: Piety, and piety alone, is the measure of ascendancy and closeness to God. Everyone controls their own rank by how righteously they make use of their present life. Everyone will be recompensed justly based on their deeds, not their gender: *﴿Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while being a believer, We (God) will surely give them a good life, and We will surely reward them according to the best of what they used to do (Paradise).﴾* [QU'RAN 16:97]



Equality is not sameness: While Islam establishes that men and women are equal in worth and dignity, it also recognizes that they are not identical. God created men and women with unique physiological and psychological characteristics and assigned to them special roles that are finely attuned to their natural disposition and best actualize their potentials. Their difference is what makes them complementary and indispensable to each other and to the formation of societies.

Marriage partnership: Through marriage, men and women are enabled to live the most peaceful, compassionate, helpful, and fruitful lives possible. The Noble Qur'an says: *﴿And of His Signs is that He (God) created for you from yourselves spouses that you may dwell in tranquility with them; and He placed between you affection and mercy.﴾* [QU'RAN 30:21]

Employing the metaphor of clothing, the Noble Qur'an explains how a husband and wife should act as a covering for each other, giving protection, shelter, warmth, and privacy, and screening each other from harm and difficulties: *﴿They (wives) are clothing for you and you (husbands) are clothing for them.﴾* [QU'RAN 2: 187]



Balanced roles: The division of roles and responsibilities between husband and wife is clearly defined and acknowledged by Islam, which helps eliminate many problems and much friction. Each spouse has equal rights, equal duties, and equally essential specific roles to carry out. Naturally, pregnancy, delivery, nursing, and infant care lie on the wives and in return, leadership, maintenance, and financial support of the family lie entirely on the husbands. Properly raising, caring for, and educating children are the joint responsibility of both the husband and wife.

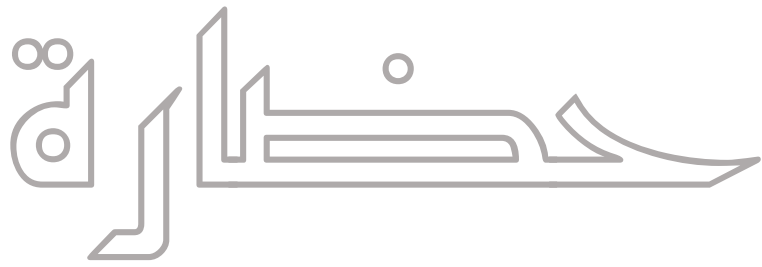
Special Recognition and Protection of Women

- ❖ A woman in Islam has no financial obligations whatsoever at any point in her life. Whether married or single, she should always be financially secure and provided for by her male relatives or by the state if she has none. Even when she has money, she is not obliged to use it for her own maintenance or to support her family, husband, or children.
- ❖ A woman in Islam has the right to own and dispose of her earnings, property, and inheritance as she pleases, without any guardianship over her.
- ❖ A woman in Islam has the right to accept or reject marriage proposals. Her approval is a necessary condition for the marriage to be valid. If she is given in marriage without her tacit or verbal consent, the marriage is illegal and void.
- ❖ A woman in Islam may propose marriage to any righteous and suitable man as long as it is done with decorum and dignity.
- ❖ A woman in Islam is entitled to a mandatory marriage gift, known as *Mahr*, from her groom. It is hers to dispose of as she wishes. Providing and furnishing the marital home is the entire responsibility of the groom. Neither the bride nor her family is obliged to prepare or contribute to the preparation of the marital home.
- ❖ A woman in Islam keeps her own family name rather than adopting her husband's name.
- ❖ A woman in Islam has the right to seek divorce or to divorce herself directly from her husband.

- ❖ A woman in Islam is not required to do the housework, but Muslim women generally perform it in order to alleviate the financial burden of their husbands who, in this case, must help them, following the example of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). He used to assist his wives, sweep the floor, milk the sheep, patch his own garment, and go the market to buy provisions.
- ❖ Women who want to work and be self-supporting and participate in handling the family responsibilities are quite free to do so, provided their integrity and honor are safeguarded. In fact, many essential positions in medicine, nursing, education, social work, and other areas need to be filled by women rather than men.
- ❖ When going out, Muslim women are required to wear the Hijab (Islamic dress code, which consists of a loose dress covering the whole body and a scarf covering the head). Likewise, in public, a Muslim man is required to dress decently and modestly and to lower his gaze. Hijab is worn solely with the intention of pleasing God by looking, dressing, and behaving as God ordained and not as fashion or society dictates. According to the Qur'an, Hijab ensures both protection and respectability for women. It gives the woman wearing it a special identity that protects her in her society from unclean stares, thoughts, or words whenever she goes out in public.

Therefore, for the sake of women, God requested: *«O Prophet (Muhammad), tell your wives, your daughters, and the believing women to draw their veils over themselves (when they go out or are among men). That will be better, that they should be recognized (as modest and virtuous women) so as not to be abused.»* [QU'RAN 33: 59]

- ❖ As mothers, women in Islam enjoy higher recognition and honor in the sight of God than fathers, based on Qur'anic texts. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) also stressed this honor by declaring that Paradise is under the feet of the mothers and entitled them to three-fourths of the filial piety and kindness of their children, with one-fourth left for the fathers.
- ❖ Daughters are viewed as a bounty and a gate to Paradise. In Islam, the kind and good upbringing of girls is strongly appreciated and designated a special reward that is not granted for raising sons. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) promised that any father who brings up his daughter properly and with kindness would be his companion in Paradise.
- ❖ Finally, the unmistakable gauge which Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) laid down to judge a man's true character is his behavior towards his wife. He said, "*The best of you is he who is best to his wife.*" (Sunan At-Tirmidhi)



Islamic Civilization

No conflict: In Islam, conflict between science and religion is inconceivable.

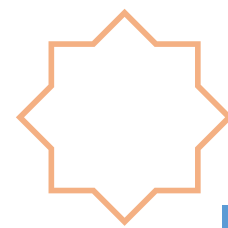
Religion comes from God and so does the universe with its laws and phenomena.

Science is about investigation and learning by enquiry. Diverse and infinite realities exist, within or outside the reach of normal senses, and it is through science that humans can know about them and enhance the human condition.

Every new scientific discovery validates or confirms with proof what religion has already proclaimed – God’s Glory, Power, and magnificent creation.

Knowledge is an act of worship: Islam is a religion of knowledge. The very first revealed Qur’anic verse was the command ﴿Read﴾. The only supplication for increase in the whole Qur’an is: ﴿Say, ‘My Lord! Increase me in knowledge.’﴾ (20:119) Throughout the Qur’an, mankind is urged over and over to observe and reflect on the creation; and while encouraging investigation, the Qur’an itself contains numerous scientific facts and principles. Thus, knowledge in Islam is not only a matter of encouragement, but a matter obligation. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, “*Seeking knowledge is a duty for every Muslim (man or woman).*” (narrated by Ibn Majah) and “*Anyone who follows a path in search of knowledge, God will make easy for them a path to Paradise.*” (Narrated by Muslim)

Collective human good: What lifts up one’s degree according to Islam is their extent of perception and knowledge. The Qur’an specifically states that ﴿God will exalt in degree those of you who believe, and those who have been given knowledge﴾ (58:11) A close connection also exists between faith and collective human promotion in Islam. For one’s faith to become complete, it must move away from individual to collective interest – ﴿I only desire reform as far as I am able﴾ (Hud 11:88) And the broader the usefulness of one’s knowledge and expertise to others, the better the person is. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, “*The best of people are those who are most beneficial to people.*”



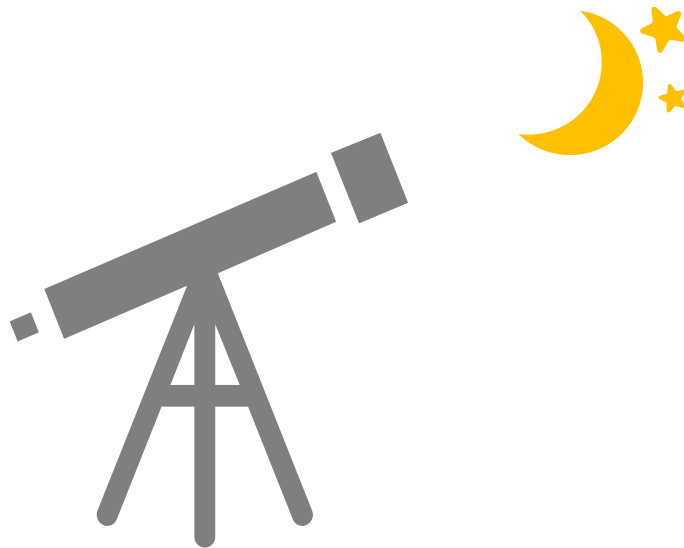
Early Muslim scientists: Inspired by the Qur'anic and prophetic injunction of acquiring and spreading knowledge, early Muslim scientists set out on diligent quests, gathering knowledge from across the world. They studied all branches of existing knowledge, neglecting no field of enquiry. They subjected whatever they read to scrutiny and experimentation and added their own revolutionary findings and interpretations. They gave the world what is considered by historians to be the 'Golden Age of Knowledge' by making some of the world's most important discoveries and advances that greatly contributed to the science, technology, and civilization of today.



Prominent among these Muslim scientists are the following ten names:

- 1. Al-Hasan ibn Al-Haytham:** He was the father of optics, accredited for the invention of the camera.
- 2. Al-Khawarizmi:** He was the founder of Algebra and the inventor of the number zero.
- 3. Al-Jazari:** He was the father of robotics and automation (Al-Jazari built automatic gates driven by hydropower, an automatic waitress that served drinks, an automatic hand-washing device with a flushing mechanism [now used in modern toilets], and the automatic elephant and scribe clocks using water technology). Al-Jazari was also the first to invent the crankshaft and connecting rod system, which is central to modern machinery, such as steam engines and internal combustion engines used in cars today. His treatise, *The Book of Knowledge of Ingenious Mechanical Devices*, is considered a groundbreaking text in the field of mechanical engineering.

4. **Ibn Sina:** He was the father of modern medicine; his 14-volume masterpiece, *The Canon of Medicine*, was the standard medical textbook in Europe and the Muslim world up until the 18th century.
5. **Ibn Al-Nafis:** He was the first physician to discover and describe the pulmonary circulation of the blood (flow of blood from the right to the left ventricle of the heart through the lungs) - almost 300 years before Harvey.
6. **Mariam Al-Ijliya Al-Astrolabiya:** She was a famous scientist who further developed the ingenious astronomical device, the astrolabe, to also determine prayer times, the Qiblah (prayer direction), and the beginning and end of the Islamic calendar months.
7. **`Abbas ibn Firnas:** He was the first man in history to make a scientific attempt at flying using a wing-like cloak and, through it, pioneered the study of aviation.
8. **Al-Idrisi:** He was the constructor of the first accurate – and scientific – map of the world on a silver globe.
9. **Ibn Battuta:** The Prince of Travelers; he travelled the world alone on foot, covering a distance of 117,000 km over a span of 30 years.
10. **Sinan the Architect:** He built 477 structures, more than Michelangelo or any other architect of the Italian Renaissance. His masterpiece is the Selimiye Mosque in Turkey.

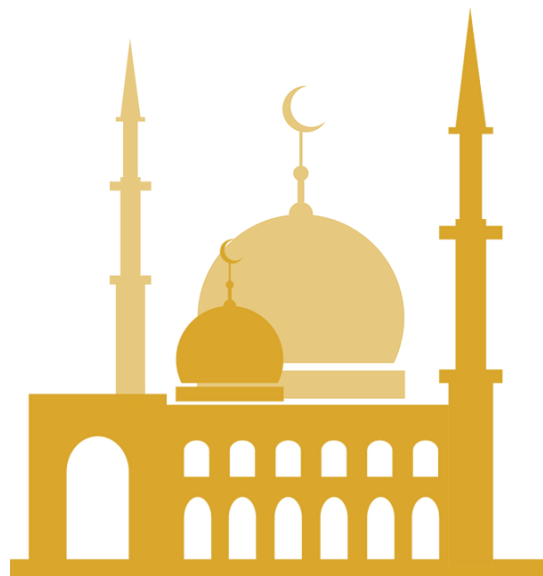


Awakened by the Qur'an to the power of knowledge within oneself, early Muslim scientists realized that there was no limit to what can be discovered and achieved in life:

﴿Verily, in the creation of the heavens and the earth; in the alternation of the night and the day; in the sailing of the ships through the sea with that which profits mankind; in the rain which God sends down from the sky, with which He revives the earth after its death and spreads in it every kind of moving creature; and in the veering of the winds and the clouds which are held between the sky and the earth, there are signs for people who use reason.﴾ [QU'RAN 2:164]



Masjids: Structure and Function



A *Masjid* is a Muslim gathering place for worship, learning, and fellowship.

The Masjid, commonly translated as ‘mosque’ and referred to as ‘House of God,’ literally means ‘place of prostration.’ It takes its name from one of the actions of Muslim prayer, which is *Sujud* (prostration), in which the forehead touches the ground. It is the action with which a worshipper feels utmost humbleness and closeness to God during prayer.

The Typical Parts of a Masjid

Basically, all *Masjids* have the same features, as follows:

1. A *Musalla*, which is a large prayer hall that is fully carpeted, with no furniture or chairs, as prayer should be performed directly on the ground. (Chairs may be provided on request for elderly and sick people.)
2. A *Mihrab*, which is a prayer niche set into the *Qiblah* wall (the wall that indicates the prayer direction towards Makkah).
3. A *Minbar*, which is a raised platform from which the *Imam* (leader of congregational prayers) delivers his sermon to the congregation.
4. A *Minaret*, which is a tower from which the call to prayer is projected.
5. Some grand mosques contain a *Sahn*, which is a large open-air courtyard surrounded by an arcade on all sides and containing a central fountain for performing ablution and providing drinking water.

Beyond these common characteristics, however, *Masjids* are as varied as the lands in which Muslims live around the world. Their decoration is equally varied, from plain earthen or white-plastered walls, to fabulously carved and tiled geometric designs.

None of these designs – nor any other feature of a *Masjid* – depicts an animal or human being, which might suggest worship of any other being but God. Calligraphy, or beautiful writing

from the Qur'an, can be found adorning the walls, pillars, arches, domes, and doors of many *Masjids*. Ornamental colored glass lamps are often hung from the ceiling with chains to lighten the interior.



Role

A *Masjid* not only functions as a place for congregational daily prayers, recitation of the Qur'an, and remembrance of God, but is also an educational institution, a community and activity center, a school and a playground for children, and a charity foundation.

Some *Masjids* even provide a free health clinic. During the time of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and his Companions, the *Masjid* also played the role of parliament, assembly place, public affairs administration base, hospital, and home for the homeless.



Concept of Brotherhood

There are no reserved spots in a *Masjid*; whoever arrives first, sits first, regardless of race, wealth, or social class. Worshippers pray, shoulder to shoulder, all facing towards the *Qiblah*. They arrange themselves in parallel and compact rows behind the *Imam* and stand, bow, and prostrate together in line with the *Imam*.



The Three Holy Masjids

Muslims have three Sacred *Masjids*. In order of greatness and importance, they are:

1. The Sacred Mosque in Makkah

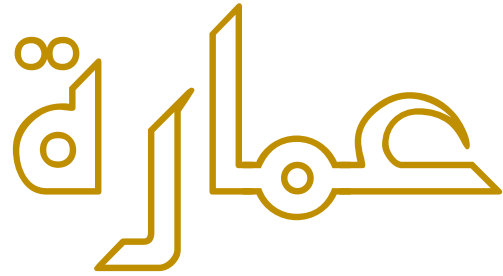
This is the world's oldest, largest, and most sacred mosque, surrounding Islam's holiest site, the Ka`bah, which was the first house ever built for the worship of God. Muslims all over the world are required to pray facing the direction of the Sacred Mosque in Makkah.

2. The Prophet's Mosque in Madinah

This mosque is the second holiest sanctuary in Islam. It was built by Prophet Muhammad after his *Hijrah* (emigration) from Makkah to Madinah. It was originally a very simple structure made from adobe and palm trunks. Adjacent to the mosque was the modest house of Prophet Muhammad in which he was later buried along with two of his companions, Abu Bakr Al-Saddiq and `Umar ibn Al-Khattab.

3. Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem

Al-Aqsa Mosque, which is the second oldest and third most sacred mosque in Islam, is mentioned by name in the Glorious Qur'an. It was the first *Qiblah*, or direction, to which Muslims turned in prayer before the Ka`bah was declared to be the *Qiblah*.



Islamic Architecture



Islamic architecture is the silent yet eloquent language which Muslims used to give powerful expression to the values and teachings of Islam. Through Islamic architecture, buildings, especially mosques and schools, functioned not merely as containers, but as peaceful environments that allowed the mind to drift away toward God and inner tranquility.

Muslim architects used their exquisite talents and love of art to offer praise and glorification to God. As God cannot be represented by an image and as He must be worshipped directly without intercessors, pictures and statues of any beings have no place in Islam. Instead, Islamic art has focused on the

glorification of God's Words, by writing them beautifully in calligraphy, accompanied with a variety of intricate geometric and floral designs, known as arabesque, against backgrounds of craved wood, mosaic tiles, and colored glass windows.

Islamic designs rely extensively on symmetry, unending repetition, and continuous patterns mixed with filtration of light and colors which help create a contemplative atmosphere and relaxing effects. In this sense, ornamental patterns can be used as a meditative tool.

Rather than using symbols or drawings, Islamic architecture represents abstract concepts of unity and beauty that help disengage the viewers from the concrete world and attach them to the spiritual world.



Inspired by the Qur'anic description of Paradise, Muslims architects tried to create a glimpse of heaven on earth:

﴿In a lofty Paradise, the fruits of which are hanging low and near. Eat and drink pleasantly for the good you sent before you in the days past.﴾ [QU'RAN 69:22-24]



النخط الإسلامي



Islamic Calligraphy



The injunction against graven images and graphic representation of living beings channeled the creative energies of Muslim artists toward another decorative art, namely calligraphy.



Islamic calligraphy was first developed to write the Qur'an — the holy book of Islam. For Muslims, the Qur'an is the actual Word of God. It transcends human speech, and so the writing that seeks to record that power must also transcend. Letters must turn into art that can visually display the power and glory of the revelation. Islamic calligraphy developed to serve this double purpose: preserving and glorifying the Qur'an by writing its content beautifully.

This way, elegant conveyance of the sacred text while abiding by the prohibition against figurative art resulted in the elevation of Islamic calligraphy as the highest form of visual art that replaced painting and sculpture in Islamic architecture and designs.

Islamic calligraphy has six major scripts or styles, which are Kufi, Thuluth, Naskh, Riq`ah, Diwani and Ta`liq. A reed pen, with a nib dipped in ink, is the traditional instrument used for writing calligraphy.



A Qur'anic chapter entitled "Al-Qalam (The Pen)" starts by an Oath of God, ﴿Nun, by the pen and what they write﴾ [QU'RAN 68:1] in a powerful signal to the role of the pen as an instrument of storing and transmitting knowledge.

Muslims artists took God's Oath seriously, as God does not make an oath except by the most magnificent of His creation, and shaped reeds into pens in the service of the Qur'an.

حقوق الإنسان



Human Rights in Islam



﴿God enjoins justice, doing good, giving to kith and kin, and forbids immorality, evil, and oppression; He admonishes you, that you may take heed.﴾

[Qur'an 16: 90]



Human rights in Islam are divinely given. Therefore, they are universal and inalienable, and cannot be curtailed, violated, surrendered, or taken away in any manner. The major fundamental human rights are the following:

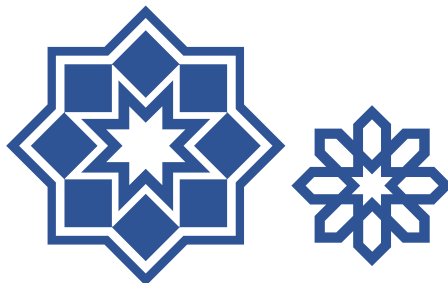
1. The Right to Life

The Qur'an declares all life as inviolable. ﴿Do not kill the soul which God has forbidden (to be killed) except by (legal) right.﴾ [QU'RAN 17:33]

﴿Whoever kills a soul – other than in retaliation for a soul (killed) or for corruption done in the land – it shall be as if he has killed all humanity. And, whoever saves a soul, it shall be as if he has given life to all humanity.﴾ [QU'RAN 5:32]

No human being is permitted to take the life of another unless it is for justice administered by legally constituted authorities as punishment for grave crimes.

In times of war, non-combatants, such as women, children, old people, the infirm, and workers continue to be guaranteed security of life. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) instructed, “Do not kill any old person, any child, or any woman. Do not kill the monks in monasteries.” (Abu Dawud)





2. The Right to Safety from Harm

Along with the right to life is the right of safety from harm. ﴿Transgress not. Indeed, God likes not the transgressors.﴾ [QU'RAN 2:190]

Every human has the right to be free from harm – both physical and psychological. A Muslim is defined by Prophet Muhammad as, “The one whom people feel safe from his tongue and hand (i.e. verbal and physical abuse).”

The security and inviolability extends to all living beings. It is forbidden to abuse or kill any animal just for sport and not for a useful purpose. Prophet Muhammad said, “Do not take anything in which there is a soul as a target.” (Sahih Muslim)



3. The Right to Dignity

The Qur'an asserts the inherent worth and dignity of every human. ﴿Indeed, We (God) have honored the Children of Adam.﴾ [QU'RAN 17:70] This God-bestowed dignity is general and equal. 'Children of Adam' excludes any distinction based on race, color, or gender.



4. The Right to Equality

The Qur'an places strong emphasis on the equality and fraternity of the whole of humanity. All humans are God's creation, descendants of Adam and Eve, and as such are essentially equal; if a person has precedence over another, this relates only to their level of piety and moral excellence.

﴿O mankind, We (God) have created you from a male (Adam) and a female (Eve), and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know one another (not that you may despise one another). Verily, the most honorable of you, in God's Sight, are they who are most God-conscious.﴾ [QU'RAN 49:13]



5. The Right to Justice

The Qur'an maintains the right to seek justice and the duty to administer justice impartially to those concerned, irrespective of who they are. Love and hatred, friendship and enmity, nepotism and self-interest are not permitted to compromise justice.

﴿Truly, God commands you to give back trusts to those to whom they are due; and when you judge between people, you judge with justice.﴾ [QU'RAN 4:58]

﴿Act justly. Truly, God loves those who are just.﴾ [QU'RAN 49:9]

☞ ﴿O you who believe, stand up firmly for God and be just witnesses, and let not the enmity and hatred of others make you avoid justice. Be just; that is nearer to piety, and fear God. Verily, God is Well Aware of what you do.﴾ [Qur'an 5:8]

6. The Right to Freedom

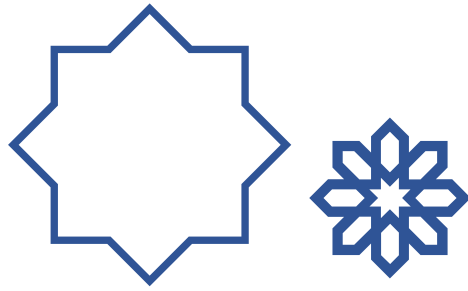
Every person has the right to be their own master, subject only to their Creator's Will and Law, which alone can give proper expression to their humanity, dignity, personhood, and freedom.



﴿Say, O People of earlier Scripture! Come to a word that is just between us and you, that we worship none but God, that we associate nothing with God, and that we do not take one another as lords besides God.﴾ [QU'RAN 3:64]



The right to freedom carries with it the necessity of free choice. The Qur'an declares absolutely that ﴿There is no compulsion in religion.﴾ [QU'RAN 2:256] Every person who possesses free will, and reason to guide their decisions, takes responsibility for their choices and actions. ﴿The truth is from your Lord; so let whoever will, believe, and let whoever will, disbelieve.﴾ [QU'RAN 18:29]

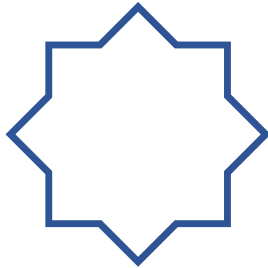


❖ Freedom for all

The Qur'anic description ﴿...relieves them of their burden and the shackles which were upon them﴾ [QU'RAN 7:157] reveals the spiritual and physical dimensions of freedom in the mission of Prophet Muhammad.

Before the advent of Islam, the world was ruled by the laws of slavery. The Prophet came to establish the laws of freedom. A slave was considered merely 'a thing,' not a human; slaves had no rights at all, and toiled constantly.

In a total turnabout, Prophet Muhammad declared that the dignity and honor of slaves be protected by Islamic Law, inviolable by either deeds or words that had enslaving effects, physically or psychologically, and worked to achieve freedom on two levels: internally and externally.



On the level of internal freedom, he placed prohibitions on words that had subjugating or depersonalizing effects: *“None of you should say, ‘My slave.’ You are all the slaves of God.”* (Sahih Muslim) He also stipulated that physical assault would incur like-for-like punishment, which established equality between slaves and masters: *“Whoever kills his slave (man or woman), we shall kill him.”* (Sunan Al-Nasa’iy)

To provide the necessary social elevation to slaves, Prophet Muhammad pushed his efforts at brotherhood, matrimony, and social participation through many merciful Qur’anic and prophetic teachings through which they were smoothly blended into the society of free people. Prophet Muhammad said, *“Anyone who has his brother (slave or freed slave) under his hand should feed him from what he eats and clothe him from what he wears. And do not overburden them with work; if you do overburden them with tasks they cannot do alone, help them.”* (Sahih Al-Bukhari)

On the level of external freedom, his main strategy was to dry up the sources of enslavement and multiply the outlets to freedom. For example, he proclaimed that slapping or beating a slave was a legitimate reason for immediate manumission. He prescribed manumission as expiation for grave and prevalent sins, such as unintentional killing, *Zihar* (a husband declaring his wife as unlawful to him as his mother), and oath breaking. He set many rules and regulations that covered all situations, even the complicated case of a jointly possessed slave, which gradually ended servitude and bondage.



'Atq (voluntary freeing of slaves by masters) and *Mukatabah* (contracting for freedom independent and irrespective of the unwillingness of masters in return for a definite amount of money or labor) were the two emancipating systems that Prophet Muhammad established and implemented to free slaves.

These two systems working together in parallel made the movement towards freedom a collaborative effort that was not monopolized by any section, in which the whole nation participated; freedom could either be granted by the master through voluntary manumission, attained by the slave through *Mukatabah*, or procured by the State or fellow Muslims through buying and freeing slaves or helping the *Mukatab* (a slave with a contract to buy their freedom) pay for their freedom.



Islam's View of the Universe

“Make not mischief on the earth”

(QUR’AN 2: 11)



The universe is Muslim: The Qur'an describes this entire universe and everything in it as God-glorifying and calls it ‘*Muslim*,’ which in the literal sense of the word, means surrendered to God by submission to His physical laws.

Trust: Earth, creation, and nature have been placed in the hands of humankind as a trust, and not as property, to be used for the benefit of humanity and all created beings. It will be accounted for when life is over.

Ethical link: There is an ethical link in Islam between faith in God and love and mercy for His creation, stressed and encouraged by many Islamic teachings.

God's book of nature: Islam regards this universe as a vast book, replete with signs and wonders, which, like the Qur'an, must be read and explored to gain knowledge of God and His Power.

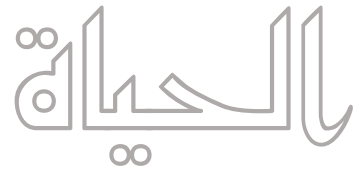
Quest: According to the Qur'an, Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) read the Signs of God in the stars, the moon, and the sun, and understood that the One Who created them and the heavens and earth was his sole God (see Qur'an 6: 75-79).



Reflection: Meditation on God's Creation is an act of worship in Islam known as Tafakkur. Many Qur'anic verses invite humans to ponder their own creation and show inquisitiveness about this entire universe. For example, verses 17-19 of chapter 88 say:

“Do they not look at the camels, how they are created?
At the sky, how it is raised? At the mountains, how they
are rooted and fixed firm?”

Cosmic Qur'anic verses: Cosmic verses, exceeding one thousand, permeate the message of the Qur'an. Abundant references to the universe and its components and phenomena are given in the context of testifying to the unlimited Power, Knowledge, and Wisdom of the Creator and to the divine origin of the Qur'an.



Islam's View of Life

“Truly, to God we belong and truly
to Him we shall return”

(QUR'AN 2: 156)

Special distinction: According to the Qur'an, God created humans in the best form with the highest faculties of feeling and intellect, honoring and elevating them above many of His other creations.

God's vicegerent: Every human has both the dignity and the responsibility to act as God's vicegerent or representative on earth. The role of every individual is one of guardianship and betterment, which requires nurturing and acting according to God's Qualities (truth, compassion, mercy, knowledge, and justice) and Law in every aspect of life towards every created thing.



Inviolability: Life is given by God, and He is the only One with the right to take it back. Suicide and self-destruction are forbidden. The crime of unjustly killing any human soul is as grievous as killing all humankind. Contrastingly, saving a human soul from being killed or legally retaliating for one unjustly killed (thus sparing any other potential victims) is as good as giving life to all humankind. This inviolability does not stop at human life, but includes animals, which it is forbidden to hunt or kill for sport, rather than for food or another useful purpose.

Individual responsibility: Every human, and no one else, will bear the consequences of their actions, good or evil, during this life journey. Their time, knowledge, wealth, and strength are the most important assets of which they should make the best use for the benefit of themselves and others. On Judgement Day, every individual will be asked by God how they spent each of these.

Actions with purpose: The value of an action, as Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) teaches, depends on the intention behind it. Islam aims to instill actions with a meaningful purpose, specifically, with the real purpose of existence which God defined in the verse, "I have not created the jinn and humankind except to worship Me." [QUR'AN 51: 56]



Life into worship: Worship in Islam is as broad as life itself. Its concept encompasses not only ritual worship, but also behavior and common daily tasks. It thus allows the whole of one's life to be an act of worship, as long as every action is done sincerely with the pure intention of pleasing God and is consistent with His Way. Prophet Muhammad said:

Smiling in the face of your brother is an act of charity; enjoining good and forbidding evil is an act of charity; showing the way to a person is an act of charity; seeing for (assisting) a weak-eyed person is an act of charity; removing a rock, a thorn, or a bone from the road is an act of charity; and pouring out from your bucket into that of your brother is an act of charity. (Sunan At-Tirmidhy)

Balance between the physical and spiritual: Islam neither tortures the body to uplift the soul nor ignores the soul for the body to have pleasure. Rather, it creates a balance that satisfies the various human needs on both levels of existence: physical and spiritual. Prophet Muhammad said, "Your Lord has a right over you. Your self has a right over you, and your wife has a right over you. So give every owner of a right their right." (Sahih Al-Bukhari)

Paradigm: "Truly to God we belong and truly to Him we shall return" represents an entire way of seeing the world and responding to experiences of loss and fear in this life. Every person belongs to God and every single thing they have is only a gift that is given to them on loan. It does not truly belong to them. Since God owns everything, anything taken away is simply God taking back what is His. A Muslim should say, respond, and react to it with this conviction and with faith in God's Wisdom, in order to have unquantifiable peace and benefits.

Freedom: Islam aims to bring humanity to God and free it from servitude to anything other than Him; to actually pull it out of the illusion that anyone or anything, independent of God, can benefit or harm, so that each person lives their life and deals with others with the right state of heart and true worship of God. "Let each of you ask his Lord for everything that he needs, even a lace for his shoe when it breaks," said Prophet Muhammad.



Key Spiritual Islamic Behaviors

- ❖ **Dhikr:** Remembrance of God
- ❖ **Husn Al-Dhan:** Having good expectations of God
- ❖ **Ihtisab:** Confident anticipation of God's Recompense
- ❖ **Ikhlas:** Purity and sincerity of faith
- ❖ **Khushu`:** Concentration and humility before God
- ❖ **Rida:** Contentment with God's Decree
- ❖ **Sabr:** Patience with God's Will
- ❖ **Shukr:** Gratefulness to God
- ❖ **Tafakur:** Contemplation of God's signs and creation
- ❖ **Tafwid:** Referring all matters to God's disposal
- ❖ **Taqwa:** God-consciousness, fearing God



- ❖ **Taslim:** Acceptance and contentment with God's Decree
- ❖ **Tawakkul:** Complete reliance on God to the exclusion of all else
- ❖ **Tawbah:** Repentance to God
- ❖ **Yaqin:** Absolute, unwavering, and doubt free faith
- ❖ **Zuhd:** Renunciation or detachment



Common Islamic Terms

- ❖ **`Aqidah:** Creed
- ❖ **Azan:** Call to Prayer; *Muezzin* is the one who makes the call.
- ❖ **Ghayb:** The unseen; all that is hidden or unknown
- ❖ **Hadith:** A narrative record of the sayings and actions of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).
- ❖ **Halal:** Whatever has been declared by Islamic law as lawful.
- ❖ **Haram:** Whatever has been declared by Islamic law as forbidden.
- ❖ **Hijab:** It literally means a cover or a screen and refers to the dress code of Muslim women.
- ❖ **Imam:** A leader of congregational prayers, who can be any learned Muslim well versed in the Qur'an.
- ❖ **Ka`bah:** The first and most ancient house of worship built on earth for the worship of God alone, located in Makkah.
- ❖ **Masjid:** A Muslim place of worship; a mosque.
- ❖ **Mufti:** A Muslim scholar qualified to issue an expert legal opinion known as a *Fatwa*.



- ❖ **Qiblah:** Ka`bah-direction faced in prayer
- ❖ **Qur'an:** Islam's Sacred Book. Muslims believe that God revealed it to Prophet Muhammad word by word through the Archangel Gabriel (Jibril, peace be upon him).
- ❖ **Sahabah:** Companions of Prophet Muhammad.
- ❖ **Sharia:** Islamic Law; the Qur'an and Sunnah are the two primary sources of Sharia.
- ❖ **Sunnah:** Actions, sayings, and teachings of Prophet Muhammad.
- ❖ **Tawhid:** Belief in the Oneness of God
- ❖ **Wudu':** Ablution.

As God is All-Knowing and Changeless, and human nature and needs are basically the same at all times, Islam believes that God's Message is the same for all humanity. Islam represents itself as a universal and perpetual message, preached not only by Prophet Muhammad, but by all the prophets of God before Muhammad, whose true followers were essentially Muslims, that is, they surrendered to God alone.

This booklet gives an overview of the universal message of Islam and its main components.



Your Easy Guide to Understanding Islam