

ISLAM

The Way Of Life

What is Islam?

In short: Islam is a comprehensive way of life based on the belief of the oneness of God (Allah). This belief is the core teachings of the Qur'an and the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

“To Allah belongs the Dominion of the Heavens and the Earth, and all that is between. He creates what He pleases. For Allah has power over all things.” {5:19} “There is no God but He, the Creator of all things.” {6:102}

What is Islam?

- A human being has two aspects of life. One is the biological system and life-cycle following the rules set by God(Allah), the Creator. The other aspect of life is human intellectual abilities.
- Allah has granted freedom to human beings to use these abilities to make decisions and to take actions regarding their way of life. A Muslim is a person who uses intellect to conform to the commandments of Allah. By doing so, that person fulfills the purpose of his life and thus is in the state of 'Islam'. Islam is an Arabic word meaning submission, surrender, and obedience.
- Allah, in His Book the Qur'an says, "*The deen(code of life) is Islam*" {3:19}; "*Die not except in a state of Islam*" {3:102}. Islam as a way of life provides guidance in all spheres of a person's life, be they individual or collective.

How Old is Islam?

- Muslims believe that submission to the worship of one God the Creator is the oldest and original nature of religious belief. ***“I have only created Jinns and Men, that they may serve Me.”*** {51:56} ***“Mankind was one single nation, and Allah sent messengers with glad tidings and warnings.”*** {2:213}
- Islam teaches that prophet Adam PBUH was the first prophet of Allah and that Muhammad PBUH was the last Prophet and Messenger of Allah. Muslims believe that there were thousands of prophets given guidance throughout history including Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus son of Mary PBUT. ***“We assuredly sent amongst every people an Apostle, (with the command), “Serve Allah and eschew Evil”.*** {16:36} The Qur’an mentions only a few, about 25.

Belief System of Islam

- There are six main articles of faith that one must believe in to be an adherent to Islam.
- 1. Belief in Tawheed or oneness God.
- 2. Belief in Angels (also Jinn)
- 3. Belief in Divine Books
- 4. Belief in the Prophets and Messengers
- 5. Belief in Resurrection and Day of Judgment
- 6. Belief in the divine Decree of Allah
- *“O you who believe! Believe in Allah and His messenger (Muhammad), and the scripture that He has sent to His messenger, and the scriptures He has sent to those before. Any who denies Allah, His angels, His books, His messenger, and the Day of Judgment has gone far, far astray.” {4:136}*

Faith In Oneness Of God

- The most important article of faith is the belief in the oneness of God. This is emphasized in the Qur'an in many places. The expression "There is no god but Allah" differentiates a Muslim from a non-Muslim. Oneness of God was the cornerstone of teachings of all of God's prophets and messengers. A Muslim must not, in any shape or form, ascribe partners to Allah, meaning, His personality, attributes, authority, or rights. *"The is no god but He, the Living, the Self-subsisting, Eternal."* {3:2} *"Know, therefore, that there is no god but Allah."* {47:19} *"Say: He is Allah, the One and Only. Allah, the Eternal, Absolute. He begets not nor is He begotten. And none is like Him."* {112:1-4}

Faith in God's Angels

- Belief in the existence of God's angels is the second article of faith. The prophet Muhammad PBUH had stated that the angels are made from light. They do not deviate from the commands of God but they are in no way related to God and have no share in His divinity. The Muslims are forbidden from worshipping angels or seeking any help or any intercession from them. One of the well-known angels of God is Gabriel, who was responsible for bringing God's messages and revelations to His prophets. ***“Praise be to Allah, who created the heavens and the earth, who made the angels, messengers with wings, two, three, or four(pairs).”*** {35:1} ***“And the angels celebrate the praises of their Lord, and for forgiveness for (all) beings on earth.”*** {42:5}

Faith in God's Books (Scriptures)

- As the third article of faith, a Muslim must believe in all scriptures that were revealed by God in the manner the Qur'an was revealed to the prophet Muhammad PBUH. A Muslim must believe in the scriptures, such as the Books of Abraham, Psalms of David, Torah of Moses, and Gospel of Jesus, but only in their original and unadulterated forms. However, full contents of these and other scriptures (whose names were not given to Muslims) were not saved. As a consequence, translations of only parts of those earlier books are available today. Also, languages of the older books are extinct and thus not accessible to people today. In comparison, the Qur'an's language is fully preserved and alive today and so is the Qur'anic text in its entirety. *“It is He who sent down to you, in truth, the Book, confirming what went before it,” {3:3}*

Faith in God's Prophets

- As the fourth article of faith, Muslims must believe that God chose some human beings as His prophets and messengers for the guidance of all nations and peoples. Teachings imparted by all prophets were applicable to the people they were sent to. Muslims believe Muhammad PBUH was the last prophet of God and his teachings superseded all previous teachings, and hence applied to all people of his time and to all human beings who will follow him until the end of this world. The Qur'an says about Muhammad PBUH, "*We (Allah) have not sent you but as a universal (messenger) to mankind, giving them glad tidings and warning them (against sin).*" {34:28}

Faith in Life After Death

- Islam's fifth article is the faith in the life after death or the hereafter, when all human beings will be brought back to life. Belief in the hereafter has the most profound effect on a Muslim's actions in this life, because he believes that he is accountable for all his actions, small or large, covert or overt. On judgment day, complete records of every man and woman's actions will be presented to God. Based on the weights of these actions, God will justly decide every human being's destination in Paradise or Hell. Muslims believe that the ultimate success or failure of a person is what he attains in the life of the hereafter. *“On that day We shall leave them to surge like waves on one another; the trumpet will be blown, and We shall collect them all together” {18:99}*
“Verily the hour is coming-My design is to keep it hidden-for every should is to receive its reward by the measure of its endeavor.” {20:15}

Faith in Divine Decree

- As the sixth article of faith, a Muslim believes in Divine Decree or destiny-*qadr* in Arabic. When Allah created each thing, He determined when it would come into existence and when it would cease to exist. He also determined its qualities and nature. And everything in the universe, the seen and the unseen, is completely subject to the overriding power of Allah. Nothing can happen outside His Will. *“With Him are the keys of the Unseen, the treasures that none knows but He. He knows whatever there is on the earth and in the sea. Not a leaf does fall but with His knowledge.”* {6:59} *“To Allah do belong the Unseen of the heavens and the earth, and to Him goes back every affair (for decision).”* {11:123}

Pillars of Islam

The structure of Islam stands on its five pillars.

Establishing these pillars is essential for a Muslim who wants to fulfill the duty of submission to God.

The pillars are:

1. Faith (Shahadah)
2. Prayers (Salah)
3. Fasting (Sawm)
4. Alms (Zakah)
5. Pilgrimage (Hajj)



Faith (Shahadah)

The declaration that, “There is no deity but God (Allah) and Muhammad is His Messenger,” is the first pillar of Islam. A Muslim must have knowledge and full conviction in the attributes of God. For example, He is one and only and has no partners; He is the Creator, the Ruler, and the Sustainer of the whole universe; He hears, sees, and knows all, whether it is open or hidden; He is the most Merciful and the Just. In other words, He is Omnipotent, Omniscient, and Omnipresent. The second part of the shahadah covers the finality of prophethood of Muhammad PBUH. He was the last in the chain of prophets sent by God to guide human beings to Him. His mission was universal and for the whole of mankind. ***“He (Muhammad) is the messenger of Allah and the seal of the prophets.”*** {33:40}

Prayers (Salah)

The five daily prayers (salah) constitute an important pillar of Islam. The salah is an expression of gratefulness to God and is a method of purifying the heart and the soul, while safeguarding a person from indecency and evil. The obligatory salah is offered during five windows of time throughout the day; for optional prayers, however, there is almost no time constraint. The daily prayers include recitation of parts of the Qur'an and the physical postures of bowing and prostration. Salah in congregation is highly recommended, as it is an expression of collective piety and solidarity of Muslims. The prayers can be offered almost anywhere: home, workplace, school, etc. if one cannot attend the mosque. *“And establish prayer and give zakah and bow with those who bow (in worship and obedience).”* {2:43} *“Guard strictly your prayers, especially the middle prayer, and stand before Allah ,devoutly obedient.”* {2:238}

Fasting (Sawm)

Fasting (sawm), another pillar of Islam, builds a spirit of patience and self-discipline in a Muslim. By denying oneself food, drink, and intimate spousal relations, the fasting person suppresses his basic needs and desires, thus reinforcing his faith in God. Through fasting, a Muslim develops compassion for the needy and the hungry. Every day of Ramadan (the 9th month in the Islamic lunar calendar), the fast lasts from dawn to sunset. *“O you who believe! Fasting is prescribed for you as it was prescribed to those before you, that you may (learn) self-restraint” {2:183} “So every one of you who is present (at his home) during that month (Ramadan) should spend it in fasting.” {2:185}*

Alms-Due (Zakah)

Zakah, as a pillar of Islam, is an act of charity for the social and economic benefit of a society and a way of achieving God consciousness and spiritual elevation. Zakah is a means of minimizing the affliction of the poor and the deserving sections of a society. Paying of zakah (and other voluntary charity) cleanses a person's heart of greed, hatred, and jealousy, and replaces them with generosity, compassion, and goodwill. Every Muslim, male or female, who for one year has owned cash, gold and other forms of wealth above a certain limit, is obliged to give away 2.5% of their excess wealth as zakah. *“Alms are for the poor and the needy, and those employed to administer (the funds), and those whose hearts are to be reconciled, and to free the captives and for those in debt, and in the cause of Allah, and for the wayfarer; (thus is it) ordained by Allah. Allah is the Knower, the Wise.” {9:60}*

Pilgrimage (Hajj)

Hajj or pilgrimage is the final pillar of Islam. Muslims from all over the world travel to Mecca to perform hajj filled with an intense sense of devotion. These pilgrims embark on this journey with a common objective of acquiring the pleasure of God. Hajj is highlighted by a complete atmosphere of peace, the peace within pilgrims' souls and the peace with all creatures of God. Every Muslim man and woman is required to perform hajj once in his or her lifetime, provided they are physically, mentally, and financially capable. Many rituals of hajj date back to the time of Prophets Abraham and Ishmael PBUH. *“In it are clear signs, the standing place of Abraham, and whoever enters it shall be secure, and pilgrimage to the House is incumbent upon men for the sake of Allah, (upon) every one who is able to undertake the journey to it.” {3:97}*

Prophet Muhammad

Who was the Prophet Muhammad?

Prophet Muhammad was born in 570 CE (Common Era) in the city of Mecca in the Arabian Peninsula, part of modern day Saudi Arabia. As his father had died shortly after marriage, his grandfather 'Abd al-Muttalib became his guardian. 'Abd al-Muttalib was the respected head of the clan of Hashim and the tribe of Quraysh, to which his clan belonged. With the Quraysh being the biggest and most influential tribe in Mecca, 'Abd al-Muttalib was seen as the master of all of Mecca.

The Prophet was only about five to six years old when he lost his mother. Orphan Muhammad then lost his grandfather and custodian ‘Abd al-Muttalib at the age of eight. Now one of ‘Abd al-Muttalib’s sons, Abu Talib, became the guardian of his orphan nephew. Though respected by the clan of Hashim and the people of Mecca in general, Abu Talib did not possess the high status and influence of his father.

When Muhammad was twenty five years old, he was hired by a woman called Khadija to take her merchandize to Syria. Khadija, a widow fifteen years Muhammad’s senior, later proposed marriage to him, which he agreed to. They lived together for almost a quarter of a century, until the death of Khadija about 8-9 years after the revelation of the Qur’an.

Muhammad was deeply interested in matters beyond this mundane life. He used to frequent a cave that became known as “Hira” on the Mountain of “Nur” (light) for contemplation. It was in that cave in 610 CE, i.e. at the age of forty, that Prophet Muhammad received from Allah the first verses of the Qur’an. Then and there, history changed. He was unlettered meaning he could not read or write.

The Qur’an continued to be revealed in fragments to Prophet Muhammad over the following twenty two years. The last words of the Book were revealed to the Prophet shortly before his death in 632 CE.

Holidays, Festivals, or 'Eids

Islam celebrates 2 major religious days of observance referred to as 'Eid and one minor one. There are 'Eid al-Fitr, 'Eid al-Adha and the weekly day of congregation Friday or Jummu'ah.

'Eid al-Fitr

- **Eid al-Fitr**, also called **Feast of Breaking the Fast** and The Lesser 'Eid, is celebrated by Muslims worldwide that marks the end of Ramadan, the Islamic holy month of fasting (*sawm*). The religious Eid is a single day and Muslims are not permitted to fast on that day. The holiday celebrates the conclusion of the 29 or 30 days of dawn-to-sunset fasting during the entire month of Ramadan. The day of Eid, therefore, falls on the first day of the month of Shawwal. This is a day when Muslims around the world show a common goal of unity. The date for the start of any lunar Hijri month varies based on the observation of new moon by local religious authorities, so the exact day of celebration varies by locality. However, in most countries, it is generally celebrated on the same day as Saudi Arabia. Muslims will attend a prayer and sermon at the mosque that is usually conducted in the morning. The rest of the day is spent celebrating by visiting family and friends and eating together.

'Eid al-Adha

- **Eid al-Adha** also called the **Feast of the Sacrifice** or the Greater Eid is the second of two religious holidays celebrated by Muslims worldwide each year. It honors the willingness of Ibrahim to sacrifice his young first-born son Ishmael as an act of submission to God's command, before God then intervened to provide Abraham with a lamb to sacrifice instead. In the lunar-based Islamic calendar, *Eid al-Adha* falls on the 10th day of Dhu al-Hijjah and lasts for four days. Like Eid al-Fitr, Eid al-Adha begins with a congregational prayer followed by a sermon. Eid al-Adha celebrations start after the descent of the *Hajji or pilgrims* from Mount Arafat, a hill east of Mecca. Ritual observance of the holiday lasts until sunset of the 12th day of Dhu al-Hijjah. Slaughtering an animal usually a cow, but can also be a camel, goat, sheep or ram is part of the traditions to commemorate the sacrifice of the lamb instead of Ibrahim's son Ishmael. The adha or sacrificed animal meat is then divided up usually in three parts and given to the needy. A Muslim would wear very nice new clothes during the 'Eid more so than 'Eid al-Fitr.

Jumu'ah

- *Jumu'ah* is a congregational prayer (*salat*) that Muslims hold every Friday, just after noon in the place of *Dhuhr*(*noon prayer*). Muslims pray ordinarily five times each day according to the sun's sky path regardless of clock time. It is mentioned in the Qur'an as:
- *“O ye who believe! When the call is proclaimed to prayer on Friday (the Day of Assembly, yawm al-jumu'ah), hasten earnestly to the Remembrance of Allah, and leave off business. That is best for you if ye but knew!
And when the Prayer is finished, then may ye disperse through the land, and seek of the Bounty of Allah: and celebrate the Praises of Allah often that ye may prosper.”* {62:9-10}
- The service consists of a sermon (*khutbah*) followed by congregational prayer. The sermon is no more than 30 to 40 minutes.

Pictures

'Eid Celebration



Jumu'ah Khutbah



Hajjis at Mecca



Sacred Places

Three main holy sites.

Mecca

Madina

Jerusalem or Al-Quds



Mecca

Birth place of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH. Location of the Kaaba, considered by Muslims to be the first house of worship built initially by Prophet Adam PBUH.

The early Muslims who heeded the call back to the worship of Allah alone suffered intense persecution and torture for 13 years in Mecca. It was the center of trade in Arabia and hosted many pagan idols inside and surrounding the Kaaba. The origins of the pagan influence can be traced back several generations before the Prophet's PBUH birth. The governing tribe of Qur'aysh, his own family, were against Muhammad's mission because it would mean an end to their economic benefits of Mecca being a place of pilgrimage for anyone and everyone.

The Kaaba

First house of worship according to the Qur'an. Built initially by prophet Adam PBUH and then rebuilt centuries later by Prophets Ibrahim and his son Ishmael.

Qur'an 2: 124-133

Tells story of Prophets Ibrahim and Ishmael and how Allah commanded them to re-establish this as a place of worship for His sake only.

- Islamic scholars have generally assumed that the Kaaba was constructed by Ibrahim around 2130 BC. The Kaaba is, therefore, believed by Muslims to be more than a millennium older than Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem which is believed to have been finished in 1007 BC. These dates remain consistent with the Muslim belief that the Kaaba is the first and thus oldest mosque in history.



Well of Zamzam

The **Well of Zamzam** is a well located within the Masjid al-Haram in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, east of the Kaaba, the holiest place in Islam. According to Islamic belief, it is a miraculously-generated source of water from God, which began thousands of years ago when Ibrahim's infant son Ishmael was thirsty and kept crying for water. Millions of pilgrims visit the well each year while performing the *Hajj* or *Umrah* pilgrimages, in order to drink its water.



Islamic history states that the Zamzam Well was revealed to Hagar, the second wife of Abraham¹ and mother of Ismail. By the instruction of God, Abraham left his wife and son at spot in the desert and walked away. She was desperately seeking water for her infant son, but she could not find any, as Mecca is located in a hot dry valley with few sources of water. Hagar ran seven times back and forth in the scorching heat between the two hills of Safa and Marwah, looking for water. Getting thirstier by the second, the infant Ismail scraped the land with his feet, where suddenly water sprang out. There are other versions of the story involving God sending his angel, Gabriel, who kicked the ground with his heel and the water rose.



Madinah

The burial place of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH, it is the second holiest city in Islam after Mecca. Medina is critically significant in Islamic history as Muhammad's final religious base after the *Hijrah* or *migration* and the location of his death in 632 AD/11 AH. Medina was the power base of Islam in its first century, being where the early Muslim community (*ummah*) developed, first under Muhammad's leadership and then under the first four caliphs of Islam: Abu Bakr, `Umar, `Uthman and `Ali.

In fact, Year 1 of the Islamic calendar is based on the year of the emigration or Hijra of Muhammad and his original followers from Mecca to the city of Medina in 622 AD/1 AH. The Arabic word *madinah* simply means "city." Before the advent of Islam, the city was known as **Yathrib** but was personally renamed by Muhammad PBUH.

Masjid An-Nabawi

Medina's importance as a religious site derives from the presence of *Al Masjid Al-Nabawi* or *The Mosque of The Prophet*. The tomb of Prophet Muhammad later became part of the mosque when it was expanded by the Umayyad Caliph Al-Walid 1. There are other significant masajid in Madinah but this is the most important.



Sacredness of Madinah

Sahih Bukhari says:

Narrated Anas: The Prophet said, "Medina is a sanctuary from that place to that. Its trees should not be cut and no heresy should be innovated nor any sin should be committed in it, and whoever innovates in it an heresy or commits sins (bad deeds), then he will incur the curse of Allah, the angels, and all the people."



Jerusalem or Al-Quds

The status of Jerusalem in the Muslim religious tradition is significant. The al-Aqsa masjid in Jerusalem is built on the site of the second place of worship built by man, after the Masjid al-Haram in Mecca. Al-Aqsa is the third holiest site in Islam after the mosques of al-Haram in Mecca and al-Nabawi in Medina. It is strongly associated with the Biblical prophets David, Solomon, Elijah and Jesus PBUH. It was the first direction of prayer in Islam, before the Kaaba in Mecca; According to the Quran Muhammad was taken by the miraculous steed Buraq to visit the Farthest Mosque (which Muslims believe is the Al Aqsa Mosque), where he prayed, and was then taken to heaven, in a single night in the year 620 This event is known as Isra wal Mi'raj, in Islamic tradition.

Isra & Mi'raj

- ‘The journey & ascension’. Prophet Muhammad's journey to the Farthest Mosque is mentioned in the Qur'an. *“Glory be to Him Who made His servant to go on a night from the Sacred Mosque to the remote mosque of which We have blessed the precincts, so that We may show to him some of Our signs; surely He is the Hearing, the Seeing.”* {17:1}
- It is then specified in the Hadith, the sayings of the Prophet Mohammad, that the Al Aqsa Mosque is indeed located in Jerusalem:
- That he heard Allah's Apostle saying, "When the people of Quraish did not believe me (i.e. the story of my Night Journey), I stood up in Al-Hijr and Allah displayed Jerusalem in front of me, and I began describing it to them while I was looking at it." Sahih Bukhari: Volume 5, Book 58, Number 226.

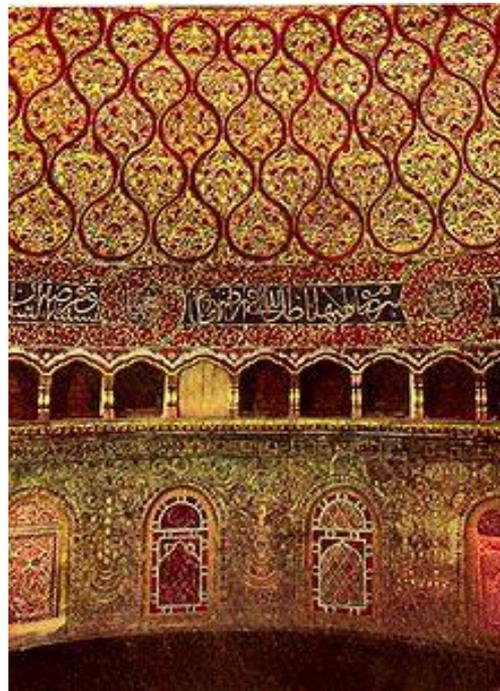
The Dome of The Rock

The **Dome of the Rock** is a shrine located on the Temple Mount in the Old City of Jerusalem. It was initially completed in 691 CE at the order of Umayyad Caliph Abd al-Malik. Muslims believe the location of the Dome of the Rock to be the site of the Islamic miracle of the Isra and Miraj. Caliph Omar ibn al Khattab (579-644) was advised by his associate, Ka'ab Al-Ahbar, a Jewish rabbi who converted to Islam that the Night Journey took place at the site of the former Jewish Temples.



Dome of The Rock

Interior Pictures



Exterior Tile work



Masjid Al-Aqsa

Al-Aqsa Mosque, (the Farthest Mosque) is the third holiest site in Islam and is located in the Old City of Jerusalem. The site on which the silver domed mosque sits, along with the Dome of The Rock, also referred to as *al-Haram ash-Sharif* or "Noble Sanctuary," is the Temple Mount, the holiest site in Judaism, the place where the Temple is generally accepted to have stood. Muslims believe that Muhammad was transported from the Sacred Mosque in Mecca to al-Aqsa during the Night Journey. Islamic tradition holds that Muhammad led prayers towards this site until the seventeenth month after the Hijra or emigration, when God directed him to turn towards the Kaaba.



Muslims In The World

Nearly one-fourth of the world's population today is Muslim. The Muslim population is a diverse community of believers spanning the globe. Over fifty countries have Muslim-majority populations, while other groups of believers are clustered in minority communities on nearly every continent.

Countries With The Largest Muslim Populations (2009):

Country	Number of Muslims
Indonesia	203 million
Pakistan	174 million
India	161 million
Bangladesh	145 million
Egypt	79 million
Nigeria	78 million
Iran	74 million
Turkey	74 million
Algeria	34 million
Morocco	32 million
Iraq	30 million
Sudan	30 million
Afghanistan	28 million
Ethiopia	28 million
Uzbekistan	26 million
Saudi Arabia	25 million
Yemen	23 million
China	22 million
Syria	20 million
Russia	16 million



Asalam Alaikum
Peace Be Upon You All