

WHAT IS ISLAM?

Islam is the complete way of life for all humanity. It is the religion of submission to one God, the religion of peace, mercy, and forgiveness. It is the universal religion that calls for "ONE PEOPLE UNDER ONE GOD."

WHAT DOES ISLAM MEAN?

Islam means submission to one God and it also means 'peace.' The word Muslim means the one who has submitted him/herself to God and lives with peace. If one's life is not peaceful, he/she should be concerned about his/her level of submission to God. The more you submit yourself to God, the more you enjoy peace, tranquility, and contentment in life.

IS ISLAM AN ARAB RELIGION?

No! Islam is a religion for all humanity. It is the first religion, which had a universal beginning. The early followers of Prophet Muhammad (peace is upon him) came from Arabia, Africa, Iran, Asia, and the West. Racism, tribalism, and nationalism divided the world before Islam. Some people claimed to have been chosen by God and others as inferiors. The rich considered the poor as people of lower classes. Islam came with: "O people! God created you from a single pair of male and female and made you unto tribes and nations so that you may know one another (not to chastise one another) The best among you is the one who is the most conscious of God" (Al Qur'an: 49:13).

WHAT IS MOHAMMEDANISM?

'Mohammedanism' is a misnomer. Islam is the religion of Allah, the One and Only God. Muhammad was a human being. Islam considers all Prophets (peace be upon them) as

human beings and examples for humanity. God appointed prophets not to be worshipped but to communicate the message of God to humanity.

WHO IS MUHAMMAD?

Muhammad was the son of Abdullah and Amina and was born in Makkah, Saudi Arabia in 570 CE. God chose him to be the last prophet, the seal of prophets and prophecy, at the age of 40. He died in Madina(Saudi Arabia) at the age of 63. He communicated the message of Islam to humanity. He was known as Amin(trustworthy), Sadiq(truthful) from his childhood. He was humble and sincere, loving and caring, forgiving and showing mercy to all.

WHAT IS QUR'AN?

Qur'an is the record of exact words revealed by God through the Angel Gabriel to Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). It was revealed piece by piece over about 23 years, then memorized and written down by the early followers of Islam. This makes Qur'an, the unique and miraculous text preserved as it was revealed in the textual history of world religions.

WHAT DOES A MUSLIM BELIEVE?

Muslims believe in the One and the Only God. The Qur'an says about God, "Say, He Allah, the One. Allah is the Eternal, Absolute. He begetteth not, nor He is begotten. And there is none like unto Him" (Ch.112). Muslims also believe in angels created by God; all prophets and Muhammad as the seal of prophets; revelation and the Holy Scriptures and Qur'an as the final Scripture to humanity. The Muslims believe in the hereafter; the day of the end of the world, the resurrection of humanity, the accountability and judgement by God alone, and the existence of heaven and hell and the

reward for good believers and punishment for sinners.

WHAT ARE THE FIVE PILLARS OF ISLAM?

The five pillars of Islam are the practical aspects of Islam. They are to make you conscious of God and to bring harmony and peace between the physical desires and spiritual needs of a human being. The world is not an illusion to a Muslim. It is a place to work and enjoy; nourish physical and spiritual needs; care and love; forgive and respect others. A Muslim lives a righteous life in this world with a hope enter paradise in the hereafter.

The Pillars are:

1. ***Shahada (to witness)***: It is to witness that there is no god but One God and Muhammad (peace be upon him) is the messenger and servant of God. The declaration of Shahada is necessary if one is to be a Muslim and joins Muslims in worship.
2. ***Salat(worship)***. A Muslim has to worship God five times a day. It is better to worship in congregation in a mosque. One can still perform the worship at home, at work, or anywhere else. Friday is the sacred day of Islam. All Muslims are to leave their jobs and assemble in the central mosque of the area for a sermon and congregational worship at noon. Worship in Islam is a direct communication of an individual with God. It is a highly spiritual and a continuous reminder of one's duty toward God. It is also highly social, teaching unity, equality, and the universality of Islam.
3. ***Zakat(poor due)***. Islam is the first religion that made Zakat obligatory on rich to give to the poor. Zakat is given two and a half percent per year on one's net worth at the

end of year. Other than Zakat, Muslims are encouraged to give charity for the well being of the community. Islam teaches that helping the needy helps one's spiritual growth.

4. ***Siyam (Fasting)***: Fasting in the month of Ramadan is obligatory on all adult, sane, and healthy Muslims. Muslims fast from dawn to sunset. Fasting teaches self-control and self-restraint. It is highly spiritual activity constantly reminding the believers to be conscious of God. Fasting teaches Muslims to be in control of their tongue, to be respectful and to be forgiving. But spiritual uplifting in Ramadan is once again tied with helping the needy. Before the end of Ramadan, every head of the Muslim household who can afford should pay an amount of about 5-8 dollars per member of his/her family to the poor in the area.
5. ***Hajj (pilgrimage to the House of God at Makkah)***. Hajj is obligatory on every Muslim once in a lifetime who can afford it. Hajj is to commemorate the works of Abraham (peace be upon him), his teachings of One God, and his sacrifices in the path of God. He and son Ishmael built the Ka'ba (the House of God) and since then people have been asked to perform the pilgrimage to the House of God. When Muhammad (peace is upon him) came, he recalled the commitment of Abraham to one God. He performed the Pilgrimage and asked Muslims to follow. Hajj is highly spiritual but at the same time highly social and universal activity of Islam. It is a practical demonstration of Islam's call for "***ONE PEOPLE UNDER ONE GOD.***" When Malcolm X went on the Hajj and witnessed the universality of Islam, he returned to America as a new man,

preaching the concept of One God and one humanity.

Does Islam respect other religions?

Islam is the first religion that recognized the presence of other religions and faiths. Islam honors and respects diversity. Islam asks the believers not to abuse or look down upon other faiths or followers of other faiths.

Why is family important in Islam?

Family is the foundation of Muslim society. A stable family is must for the sound spiritual and physical growth of our future generation. Children are the blessing of God. Good parenting in the light of Islam has high merits, bringing near God.

What is marriage in Islam?

Islam regards male and female as equals before God. Marriage in Islam is a contract between two equals. The wife does not necessarily have to carry the husband's name. Divorce is permissible but is to be avoided.

How does some one become a Muslim?

Just say the Shahadah: "There is no God but One God, and Muhammad (peace be upon him) is the messenger and servant of God." With its declaration, you become a member of the universal community of Islam. Islam is a simple religion. There is no priesthood, no intermediary between you and God. Worship God, be conscious of God, and enjoy the beauty and freedom of Islam.

INTRODUCTION

TO ISLAM



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