

A Window to
ISLAM



By Saheeh International

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Compiled by Saheeh International

First published by DAR ABUL-QASIM, 1995

King Fahd National Library Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Legal Deposit no. 1433/
ISBN: 978-9960-887-48-7

DAR ABUL-QASIM

e-mail: abulqasimbooks@hotmail.com
website: www.abulqasimbooks.com

THIS BOOK HAS BEEN PRODUCED IN COLLABORATION WITH
SAHEEH INTERNATIONAL™
Professional Editing and Typesetting of Islamic

INTRODUCING ISLAM

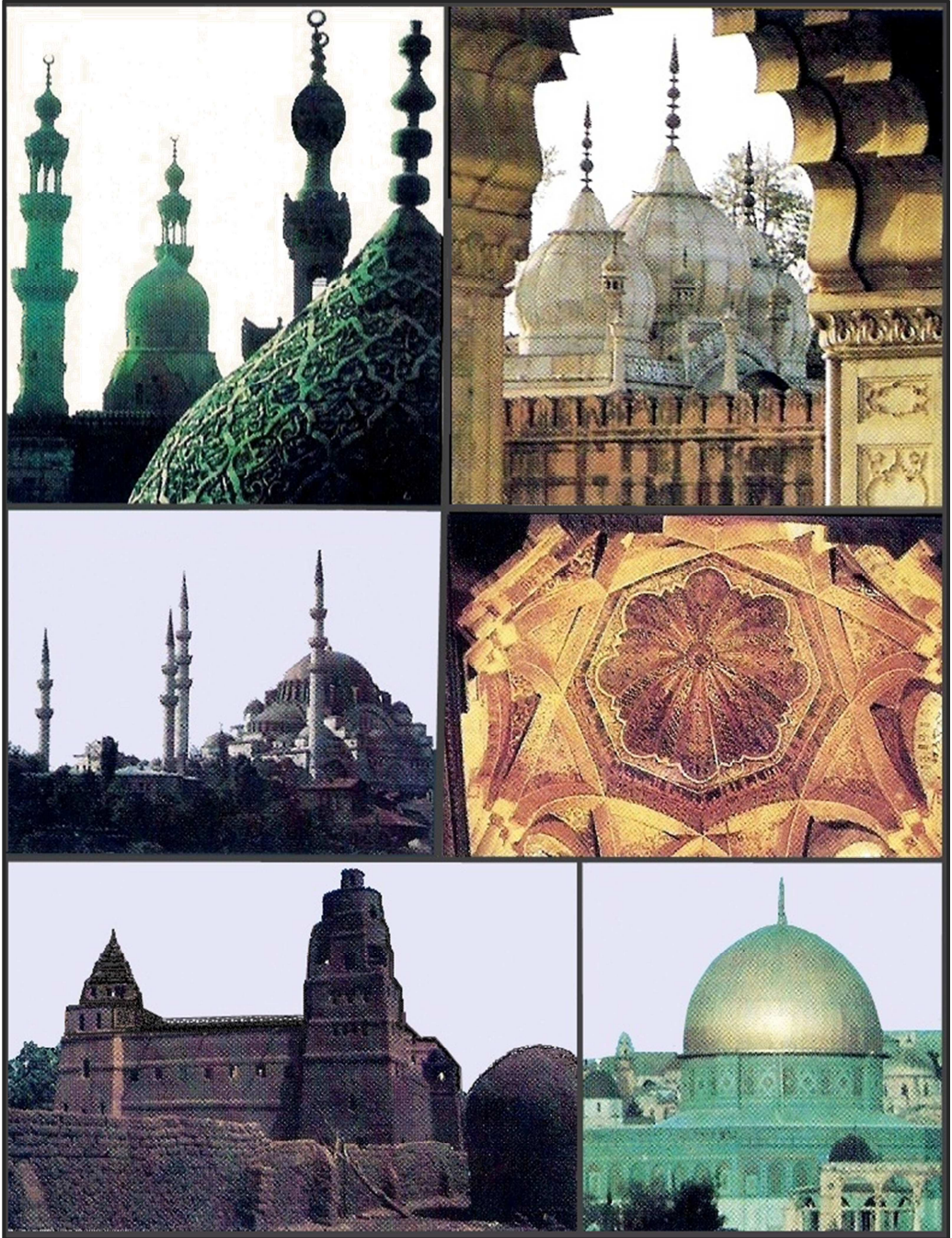
There are few people on earth today who have not heard something about Islam. Yet, one is often surprised to learn that it is really quite different from his initial impression. For Islam is not as it is represented in the Western media, nor is it Arab culture, nor is it a religion in the sense of mere private conviction (or more often, speculation) concerning the state of existence.

Islam is a voluntary relationship between an individual and his Creator. The outstanding difference between this and other religions is that Islam refuses to accept any form of creation whatsoever as a deity worthy of worship. It emphasizes the exclusive worship of the One who created the heavens and the earth, to whom all creation will finally return. It is not a new religion but the continuation and culmination of preceding monotheistic religion – the same truth revealed by God to every prophet. Hence, it is for all peoples and all times.

Islam has always appealed to a certain kind of person, irrespective of his religious or cultural background – the sincere, open-minded human being who has not lost hope of eventually knowing a truth which will satisfy his soul.

WHO ARE THE MUSLIMS?

Over one and a half billion people (about one-fourth of the world's population) from a vast range of races, nationalities and cultures across the globe are united by the common Islamic faith. Of these, about 18 percent live in the Arab world. The world's largest Muslim community is in Indonesia, and substantial parts of Asia and much of Africa are Muslim, while significant minorities are to be found in India, China, and Russia, as well as North and South America, Europe and Oceania. For Muslims, Islam is both a religion and a complete way of life.



The variety of Islamic culture reflected in mosque architecture

WHAT DO MUSLIMS BELIEVE?

Muslims believe in one, unique, incomparable God, in the angels created by Him, in the prophets through whom His revelations were brought to mankind, in the Day of Judgement and individual accountability for actions, in God's complete authority over human destiny, and in life after death. God alone is the judge of human righteousness, and it is He alone who rewards and punishes in this life and in the Hereafter.

God (whose name is "Allah" in Arabic) is the creator and sustainer of this universe. Since man cannot know his Creator through the physical senses, God has revealed information about Himself through a series of messengers and prophets. We are familiar with some of them through earlier scriptures such as the Torah and the Gospel. Every people on earth was at some time sent a messenger from God, but with the passing of generations, men tended to deviate from the true religion, often replacing it with alien concepts and practices. Each prophet was sent to reform his people and turn them back to the worship of God alone. The last of these prophets was Muhammad (blessings and peace be upon him), through whom God's message was completed. God promised that this final message would be preserved for all mankind. And the words revealed by God through the angel Gabriel to Prophet Muhammad have indeed been passed down to us in their original Arabic text, unchanged since the time of revelation. This scripture is called the Qur'an.

The essence of God's message through all of the prophets was: "O mankind, worship God; you have no deity other than Him."¹ Nothing is worthy of worship except Him who created the universe – not stone idols or fire, not heavenly bodies such as the sun and moon, not animals, not angels, and not other men (including prophets) – for all of these are His creations.

God is one. His unity is evident in the order, arrangement and symmetry of the universe. He is all-knowing and all-powerful. He is completely just and merciful. God has revealed certain names and descriptions of Himself so that we may have some understanding of His qualities and therefore love, and at the same time, fear Him.

¹ Qur'an: 7:59, 7:65, 7:73, 7:85, 11:50, 11:61, 11:84, 23:23 and 23:32.

This universe was not formed by chance, nor is it left to chance. God created it for a purpose and subjected it to physical laws for an appointed period of time. Man was created for a purpose as well – to serve God on earth and live according to His law. This is the essence of Islam, a word which means literally, "submission to the will of God." It is God alone (who created us and knows us better than we know ourselves) who has the right to govern our lives. And His law means justice for all people regardless of gender, nationality, color or social status. Human beings are judged only on the basis of righteousness.

Man has been given a free will and has been left the choice of whether or not he will follow the way of God. Furthermore, he has been given a mind with which he is able to reason and choose wisely. One may, by his own efforts, gain knowledge that enables him to recognize the evidence of God in His creation. By contemplation one may weigh, measure and learn from all situations. And finally, because the human mind and experience is limited, God has revealed the guidance we need through prophets.

After making available the information necessary for one to choose His way, God informs us in the Qur'an that after passing through a temporary stage of death, man will bear the consequences of his choice in a greater life to come. Every individual is personally responsible for his own deeds – both good and evil. No one else can carry the burden of his sins. On the other hand, God is always prepared to accept and forgive any servant who has gone astray and then repents and turns back to Him. The compensation for evil will be exact justice, but the compensation for good will be much greater – complete satisfaction and happiness.

This last message revealed by God to mankind through Prophet Muhammad is the final and complete religion and legal code for mankind. Just as a new revised law supersedes and invalidates what came before it, Islam now nullifies all former religions on earth. It corrects the deviations that had crept into religion previously, in the realm of both belief and practice. The text of the Qur'an has been preserved by God in order that humanity may no longer have an excuse to deviate and that there may always be men who keep the true religion.

The final prophet sent by the Creator to mankind was an example to be followed and obeyed. Prophet Muhammad patterned his life on the teachings of the Qur'an, which were revealed to him by God. True Muslims try to follow this noble example. A high moral

standard is clearly the goal of Islam. It is the duty of every Muslim to learn and put into practice all that he can of his religion in order to earn the approval of God before returning to Him.

Muslims have two distinct advantages to help them in the practice of Islam as their way of life:

1. The sacred scripture, the Qur'an, which God revealed to Prophet Muhammad in the seventh century, still remains authentic in its original Arabic text. This language is used and understood by millions of people in the world today. The Qur'an is the final revelation of God to all mankind. It contains God's guidance in teachings and commandments which continue to be valid for all times and places and which encompass all spheres of human life.

2. The example of Prophet Muhammad lives on as well. There is a complete and authentic record showing how he exemplified the teachings and commandments of God and elaborated the principles laid down in the Qur'an – all in order to provide a sure guidance for their interpretation and application for all later times and societies.





WHAT ARE THE FIVE "PILLARS" OF ISLAM?

They are the framework of a Muslim's life: the declaration of faith, regular prayer, *zakah*, fasting and pilgrimage, which will be described briefly in the following pages.

Shahadah (Declaration of Faith)

The first and foremost pillar of Islam is the *shahadah* (declaration of faith). The statement: "I bear witness that there is no deity [worthy of worship] but God, and I bear witness that Muhammad is His servant and messenger" is the testimony required of a Muslim, and to pronounce it with sincerity is all that is necessary for someone to enter Islam.

The concept of "no deity except God" is always alive in the Muslim's heart. He recognizes that God alone is the Creator, that He alone is the Provider and Sustainer, that He is the true Reality, the source of all things – of all benefit and harm. This necessitates that He be worshipped and obeyed.

Islam emphasizes the unity of divinity (*tawheed*) as opposed to the concept of trinity and plurality of gods in other religions. God is the original source of all occurrences and actions. He is completely superior to and unlike anything He has created. He is not in any way a part of His creation, nor is it a part of Him. Therefore, although God has revealed to us certain qualities of His, they are not like those found in man. No one is able to imagine God because He is completely above and beyond His creation. This concept of the uniqueness of God, the Creator, is found only in Islam. The significance of that uniqueness is that He alone can rightfully be worshipped. In addition, no other creature or human being has the right of intercession between man and God. Instead, the Muslim's relationship with Him is direct and personal.

"No deity except God" includes the question of authority. The right to govern man belongs to the One who created him. When a person is guided to the true path of God, all other ways of life lose their place in his heart and are replaced by a desire to please Him alone in anticipation of the judgement and full compensation in the next life.

Belief in God's messenger means accepting Prophet Muhammad as the last messenger sent by Him. While previous messengers were sent to peoples at different times to guide and reform them, the "Seal of the Prophets," Muhammad (peace be upon him and upon all of God's messengers), was sent with the final revelation (i.e., the Qur'an) to all of mankind as guidance for humanity until the Day of Judgement.

Prophet Muhammad spoke on behalf of God by His authority. Muhammad's duty was not only to deliver the message which God revealed but also to explain it and put it into practice as an example to be followed by mankind. Thus, the Qur'an and the authentic *Sunnah* (the Prophet's sayings and examples) are the two main sources of Islamic law.

In the Qur'an, God has made obedience to the Prophet obligatory upon believers. The teachings of Prophet Muhammad are available today in the form of *hadith*, i.e., his sayings and traditions as related and recorded by those who actually witnessed or heard them. Scholars have carefully scrutinized the reliability of all transmitters of these traditions, accepting only those whose chain of narrators is known to be completely reliable and sound.

Acceptance of Prophet Muhammad as the final messenger sent by God to complete His religion upon the earth eliminates belief in any claim to prophethood after him. Thus, a Muslim completely rejects the claims of false prophets. The Qur'an states:

"Muhammad is not the father of any one of your men, but [he is] the Messenger of God and the Seal of the Prophets. And ever is God, of all things, Knowing."²

Some examples of the Prophet's sayings are as follows:

- ♦ *"God does not look at your bodies or faces, but He looks at your hearts and deeds."³*
- ♦ *"Wealth is not in an abundance of goods, but it is in contentment of the soul."⁴*

² Surah al-Ahzab, 33:40.

³ Narrated by Muslim.

⁴ Narrated by al-Bukhari and Muslim.

- ♦ *"Righteousness is good morals, and wrongdoing is that which wavers within yourself and you would dislike people to discover."*⁵
- ♦ *"The believer who mixes with the people and is patient with their abuse is better than the believer who does not mix with the people and is not patient with their abuse."*⁶
- ♦ *"None of you [truly] believes until he likes for his brother what he likes for himself."*⁷

Salah (Regular Prayer)

No other form of worship can be compared to prayer (*salah*), for it is the basis of religion without which there is no religion. Prayer was practised in some form by the earlier prophets and their followers as an essential part of the religion of God. Islam, which is the final stage, the completion and confirmation of monotheistic religion, considers prayer essential, and its denial removes one from the ranks of Islam.

Prayers are performed in congregation or individually and are a direct link between the worshipper and God. Obligatory prayers are performed by adult men and women five times during every 24 hours: at dawn, noon, mid-afternoon, sunset and nightfall, and thus determine the rhythm of the entire day. Visitors to the Muslim world are often struck by the centrality of prayer in daily life.

Although men should attend congregational prayers in a mosque whenever possible, a Muslim is permitted to pray in any clean place – a university, office, factory, field or by the side of a road. There is no hierarchical authority or priesthood in Islam, so group prayers are led by one who has the most knowledge of the Qur'an. Both obligatory and voluntary prayers contain verses from the Qur'an which are recited in Arabic, the language of the revelation. Personal supplication may be offered in one's own language.

5 Narrated by Muslim.

6 Narrated by Ahmad and at-Tirmidhi – saheeh.

7 Narrated by al-Bukhari and Muslim.

Zakah (Required Expenditure)

One of the most important principles of Islam is that all things belong to God and that wealth is therefore held by human beings in trust. *Zakah* is the right of the Creator upon His servants as well as the right of those in need from the wealth of the rich. It represents a firm bond between members of society at every level. *Zakah* is neither a charity nor a tax, but an obligatory expenditure due from those Muslims who possess wealth in excess of their basic requirements. The word *zakah* means "purification and growth." Its regular payment purifies the owner's remaining wealth and purifies his heart from such ailments as greed and selfishness.

Each Muslim calculates his or her own *zakah* individually. In most cases this involves the payment each year of two and a half percent of one's capital savings in excess of his basic needs and includes unsold merchandise. Not all possessions and properties are subject to *zakah*; only specific types of wealth.

A person may also give as much as he or she pleases in voluntary charity (*sadaqah*) seeking additional reward. This is preferably done in secret. Although the word "*sadaqah*" can be translated as charity, it has a wider meaning. For example, the Prophet said: *"Every good deed is a sadaqah. And one who directs [others] toward good is like him who does it."*⁸

Siyam (Fasting)

Fasting, which involves abstinence from eating, drinking, smoking and marital intercourse, is observed throughout the daylight hours of the 29 or 30 days of the lunar month of Ramadhan in obedience to God's command. This teaches the believers patience and self-control, as well as reminding them of their responsibility toward the millions of human beings in the world who lack provisions or are victims of their unjust distribution.

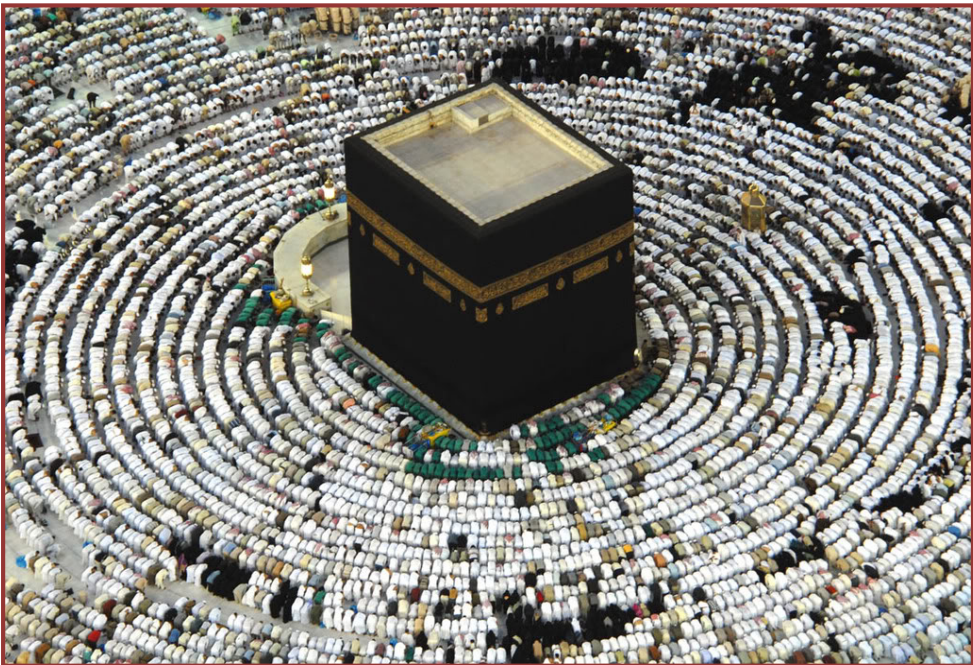
The month of fasting is accompanied by increased efforts toward good manners and righteous deeds, along with additional worship at night. It is not a retreat from worldly life, but rather, a supplement to one's ordinary activities. Fasting in obedience to God prepares Muslims to practice fortitude during periods of hardship as

⁸ Narrated by al-Bayhaqi – saheeh.

well as generating compassion and responsibility toward the poor. An ancient form of worship, it enables one to overcome his physical demands and deepen his relationship with God.

Hajj (Pilgrimage)

Hajj, the annual pilgrimage to Makkah, is an obligation once in a lifetime but only for those who are physically and financially able to perform it. Nevertheless, about two million people set out for Makkah each year from every corner of the globe to worship at the Sacred Mosque and stand together on the plain of 'Arafah, seeking God's favor and forgiveness. It also provides a unique opportunity for those of different nations and cultures to meet and become acquainted. Because the Islamic calendar is based on lunar months, *Hajj* and Ramadhan sometimes occur in summer and sometimes in winter.



Pilgrims praying at the Ka'bah in Makkah

Pilgrims wear special clothing – simple garments which strip away distinctions of class and culture – so that all stand equal before God. They come together as brothers, disregarding differences in race, language, nationality and educational level. During the *Hajj*

season, Muslims demonstrate that humanity can become as one family worshipping one God.

DOES ISLAM TOLERATE OTHER BELIEFS?

Religious tolerance is an essential principle of Islam. It is a moral value set forth in Islamic teachings and enjoined upon Muslims long before philosophies of tolerance entered into the discourse of modern Western thought.

One function of Islamic law is to protect the rights and status of minorities. History provides many examples of Muslim tolerance towards other faiths. For example, when the caliph, 'Umar, entered Jerusalem in the year 634, freedom of worship was granted to all religious communities in the city. It is a well-known historical fact that adherents to other faiths – Jews, Christians, Magians and Sabians – lived under Islamic rule for many centuries with their honor upheld.

It has been said that a people can be known during times of power and predominance. When Islam enjoyed supremacy and influence, it demonstrated a high level of morality, even toward those who had opposed it in combat. Throughout their history, even though they had full power over vast expanses of land for over a thousand years, Muslims did not mistreat non-Muslims. Under Islamic rule non-Muslims lived peacefully alongside Muslims and were free to practice their religion.

The Qur'an states:

"God does not prohibit you regarding those who do not fight you because of religion and do not expel you from your homes from being righteous toward them and acting justly toward them. Indeed, God loves those who act justly."⁹

⁹ Surah al-Mumtahinah, 60:8.

JESUS IN THE QUR'AN

The Qur'an provides the proper perspective concerning the person of Jesus – that he is a human prophet, like all of the others, to be held in honor and respect but not in worship. This view is consistent with the unity and exclusiveness of God. The virgin birth of Jesus is confirmed in the Qur'an and compared to the creation of Adam – without father or mother, by God's will.

Like other prophets, Jesus was sent to confirm and renew the basic doctrine of belief in one God. The words of Jesus are related in the Qur'an:

"[I have come] confirming what was before me of the Torah and to make lawful for you some of what was forbidden to you."¹⁰

"O Children of Israel, worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord. Indeed, he who associates others with God – He has forbidden him Paradise."¹¹

And in the Qur'an, God denies the claims of those who attribute divinity to Jesus, saying:

"Christ, the son of Mary, was not but a messenger. [Other] messengers have passed on before him. And his mother was a woman of truth."¹²

"Never would the Messiah disdain to be a servant of Allah, nor would the angels near to Him."¹³

ISLAM'S VIEW OF MODERN SCIENCE

Many people presume that religion cannot be compatible with scientific development. But researchers have provided ample evidence that this assumption does not apply to Islam. In fact, every new discovery in the world of matter, energy, time and space only increases the Muslim believer in faith.

¹⁰ Surah Ali 'Imran, 3:50.

¹¹ Surah al-Ma'idah, 5:72.

¹² Surah al-Ma'idah, 5:75.

¹³ Surah an-Nisaa', 4:172.

The Qur'an is basically a book of guidance but it contains some amazing statements. They are amazing because although they were revealed to Prophet Muhammad over fourteen centuries ago, they were not adequately understood until scientists "discovered" them in recent times. Within the Qur'an are numerous verses that speak of the universe, its components and phenomena – the earth, sun, moon, stars, mountains, wind, rivers and seas, plants, animals, and successive stages in the development of a human being.

However, it is not a book of scientific facts, as such. It merely mentions certain realities recognized by men both at the time of its revelation and again in later centuries which are submitted as undeniable proofs. It appeals to logic, following clear reasoning and citing evidences from the created universe, from history, and from the human soul to establish not only the existence of God but also His uniqueness and absolute perfection.

The scientific miracle of the Qur'an does not lie merely in its allusion to certain physical realities but in promotion of the research, study, thought and contemplation that



leads humanity to faith by actual conviction rather than blind acceptance. The Qur'an urges man to consider the signs found within creation, including himself, and gives him guidelines for sound thinking that leads one to correct conclusions. This final revelation to mankind is a continuing miracle by which the Creator presents ever-increasing evidence of His power and ability whenever man increases in knowledge of the vast universe in which he lives. Allah has promised: **We shall show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes evident to them that it is the truth.**"¹⁴

¹⁴ Surah Fussilat, 41:53.

THE FAMILY IN ISLAM

The family is the foundation of Islamic society. The peace and security offered by a stable family unit is greatly valued and seen as essential for the spiritual growth of its members. A harmonious social order is created by the existence of extended families. Children are cherished and rarely live outside the home before marriage.

Islam sees a woman, whether single or married, as an independent individual with the right to own and dispose of her property and earnings. A marriage dowry must be given by the groom to the bride for her own personal use, and she keeps her family name rather than taking her husband's. Both men and women are expected to dress in a modest and dignified way and to remain chaste. Islam encourages the facilitation of marriage and allows a man to have more than one legal wife while strictly forbidding any extramarital relationships between the sexes.

Because Islam was ordained for all societies and all times, it accommodates widely differing social requirements. Circumstances may warrant the taking of another wife, but according to the Qur'an the right is granted only on the condition that the husband is scrupulously fair in dealing with each. Islam is explicit about the rights and duties of both husbands and wives; therefore, divorce is not common. It is, however, permitted as a last resort if a marriage should fail.



Muslim parents are treated with kindness, mercy and selflessness. Caring for one's parents, especially in old age, is considered an honor and blessing as well as an opportunity for spiritual growth. Mothers are particularly honored, for the Prophet taught that Paradise lies under the feet of mothers. The Qur'an instructs:

"Your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him, and kindness to parents. If one or both of them attain old age while with you, do not [even] say 'uff' to them, but speak to them with honor and kindness. Treat them with humbleness and say, 'My Lord, have mercy upon them, as they raised me when I was small.'"¹⁵

HOW DO MUSLIMS VIEW DEATH?

Muslims believe that the present life is a trial in preparation for the next realm of existence. When a Muslim dies, he or she is washed and wrapped in clean, white cloth (usually by a family member) and buried after a funeral prayer, preferably the same day. Muslims consider this a final service that they can do for their relatives and an opportunity to remember that their own existence here on earth is brief. The Prophet taught that three things continue to benefit a person even after death – a continuing charity established by him, knowledge he had taught, and supplication on his behalf by a righteous child.¹⁶

A day will come when the whole universe will be destroyed, and the dead will be resurrected to stand before God. That day will be the beginning of a life that will never end. And that day every person will be compensated by God according to his or her good or evil deeds.

The explanation that the Qur'an gives about the necessity of life after death is exactly what the moral consciousness of man demands. If there were no life after death, the very belief in God would become meaningless; or even if one believed in God, it would then be an unjust and indifferent deity, having once created man and no longer being concerned with his

¹⁵ Surah al-Israa', 17:23-24.

¹⁶ Narrated by Muslim.

fate. Surely, God is just. He will punish the tyrants, whose crimes are beyond count – having killed hundreds of innocent people, created great corruption in society, enslaved numerous persons to serve their whims, etc. Because man has a very short lifespan in this world and because numerous individuals are affected by one's actions, adequate punishments and rewards are not possible in this life. The Qur'an very emphatically states that the Day of Judgement must come and that God will decide the fate of each soul according to his or her record of deeds.

THE MORAL SYSTEM OF ISLAM

Islam has laid down some universal fundamental rights for humanity as a whole, which are to be observed and respected under all circumstances. To maintain these rights Islam provides not only legal safeguards but also a very effective moral system. Thus, whatever leads to the welfare of the individual or society is morally good in Islam, and whatever is injurious is morally bad.

Islam does not, through a false sense of originality and innovation, provide any new moral virtues, nor does it seek to minimize the importance of established moral norms, nor does it give exaggerated importance to some and neglect others. It addresses all of the commonly known moral virtues, and with a sense of balance and proportion it assigns a suitable place and function to each one in the total scheme of life. It widens the scope of man's individual and collective life, his domestic associations, his civic conduct, and his activities in the political, economic, legal, educational and social realms. It covers his activities from home life to public responsibilities, from dining table to battlefield and peace conference – literally, from the cradle to the grave. In short, no sphere of life is exempt from the universal and comprehensive application of Islam's moral principles. It makes morality reign supreme and ensures that instead of being dominated by selfish desires and petty interests, the affairs of life are regulated by norms of morality.

GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS (TAQWA)

The Qur'an cites *taqwa* as being the highest quality in the character of a Muslim:

"Indeed, the most noble among you in the sight of God is the one who is most God-conscious [i.e., righteous]."¹⁷

Awareness of the Creator's perfect knowledge of all things, including every soul's innermost thoughts and intentions, insures both public and private morality in the believer. As stated in the Qur'an:

"[God] knows that which deceives the eyes and what the breasts conceal."¹⁸

When continually remembering God and seeking His acceptance in all that one does, even ordinary daily tasks become expressions of worship that are rewarded in the Hereafter. Such qualities as faithfulness, obedience, honesty, patience, self-control, modesty, generosity and courage are strengthened by the remembrance of God and of the judgement to come.

"And race to forgiveness from your Lord and a Garden [i.e., Paradise] as wide as the heavens and earth prepared for the God-conscious, who spend [for the cause of God] during ease and hardship and restrain anger and pardon the people; and God loves those who do good."¹⁹

STRIVING IN THE CAUSE OF GOD (JIHAD)

Islam is not an arbitrary religion and has never ordered Muslims to force others to adopt it, even though it is the final and complete way of life revealed by God. The Qur'an specifies:

¹⁷ Surah al-Hujurat, 49:13.

¹⁸ Surah Ghafir, 40:19.

¹⁹ Surah Ali 'Imran, 3:133-134.

**"There shall be no compulsion in [acceptance of] religion.
The right course has become distinct from the wrong."²⁰**

It is a grave error to imagine that *jihad* is synonymous with war, for that is but one particular aspect of the term. In the name of *jihad*, Islam calls for the protection of societies from oppression, foreign domination and dictatorships that usurp rights and freedom, that abolish just and moral rule, that prevent people from hearing the truth or following it, and that practice religious persecution. And in the name of *jihad*, Islam calls for social reform and the elimination of ignorance, superstition, poverty, disease and racial discrimination. Among its objects is the protection of weaker members of society against the impositions of the powerful and influential.

Muslims are first commanded to defend their brothers against deception and materialism. Second, they are ordered to defend liberty of thought and to invite others to sound belief. Muslims are required to establish justice in the world and to allow all peoples to enjoy this justice as individuals, as members of society, as citizens of a nation, and as members of the international community. Thus, Muslims are commanded to combat injustice wherever it may be, whether it is individual, social, national or international. Taking up arms for this purpose is prescribed for the Islamic state (not for independent individuals) when all other measures fail. The term *jihad* includes peaceful efforts as well as armed struggle.

HUMAN RIGHTS IN ISLAM

Because God is the absolute owner of mankind and the universe, the sovereign Lord, the Sustainer and Provider who created our common ancestor Adam from the earth, and favored mankind among His creatures with human dignity and honor, it follows that all men are substantially equal and that no distinction should be made between them on the basis of such superficial differences as race, color or nationality. Every human being is related to all others, and all are one community of servants to the Lord of the universe. In such an atmosphere the Islamic testimony of the oneness of God is

²⁰ Surah al-Baqarah, 2:256.

dominant and central, and it necessarily entails the concept of the oneness of humanity and the brotherhood of mankind.

Islam does not restrict human rights and privileges to the limits of its own state or community. It has laid down some universal fundamental rights for humanity as a whole, which are to be observed and respected under all circumstances – whether or not a person is a resident of an Islamic state, and whether he is at peace or at war. The Qur'an clearly commands:

"O you who have believed, stand up firmly for God and witness with justice, and do not let the hatred of a people prevent you from being just. Be just; that is nearer to righteousness."²¹

Human blood is sacred in any case and cannot be spilled without legal justification. Indeed, if anyone violates the sanctity of human blood by killing a soul without justification, the Qur'an equates it to killing the entire human race:

"Whoever kills a soul except [in legal retribution] for [murder of] a soul or corruption [done] in the land – it is as if he had slain mankind entirely."²²

Even during war it is not permissible to oppress women, children, the elderly, the sick or the wounded. Women's honor and chastity are to be respected under all circumstances. The hungry person must be fed, the naked clothed, and the wounded or diseased treated medically, irrespective of who they are. The life and property of all citizens are inviolable, whether or not a person is Muslim.

Moreover, racism is incomprehensible to Muslims, for the Qur'an speaks of human equality in the clearest terms:

"O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may come to know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of God is most God-conscious. Indeed, God is Knowing and Aware."²³

²¹ Surah al-Ma'idah, 5:8.

²² Surah al-Ma'idah, 5:32.

²³ Surah al-Hujurat, 49:13.



FINALLY...

Islam is a complete way of life, combining aspects of faith and worship, legislation and moral teachings to offer the most intensive and effective means to purify and refine the human soul and human societies. Unlike many other religions and ideologies which emphasize some aspects of man's nature at the expense of others, Islam does justice to the demands of all three of his faculties: the physical, intellectual and spiritual. Among its unique features are the following:

- Islam is the only religion which insists upon worship of the Creator alone and completely rejects the worship of any of His creations. Hence, it provides liberation from servitude to other men as well as the highest spiritual fulfillment and contentment that humans are capable of attaining.

- Islam is the only religion whose sources are authentically preserved and have remained immaculately free of human alteration and interference. Its divine scripture, the Qur'an, is free of mythical elements incompatible with modern man's understanding of the world. It is in harmony with the established facts of science, clearly bearing the signature of the author of the universe.
- Contrary to the teachings of religions which assume the incompatibility of faith and reason, Islam upholds the role of the mind and regards those who fail to use reason as intellectually deficient. The Qur'an is unique in its approach to knowledge, stressing observation, experience and intellect rather than custom and blind assumption. It provides answers to questions that haunt the mind of every intelligent person, those related to the purpose of life and about further existence after death.
- Islamic beliefs and practices are natural and appeal to common sense. They take into account both the instincts and faculties of human beings and present a balanced program of life that caters to basic physical as well as spiritual needs.
- Islam dispenses with all intermediaries between man and God and allows every individual to contact Him directly, thus eliminating hierarchies and other sources of religious exploitation which have characterized religious history throughout the ages.
- Islam stresses human brotherhood, eliminating the tribalism, nationalism and racism which create and sustain conflicts.



Note: There are Islamic centers in most major cities of the world. For further information, contact the one nearest you.