

Islam and Shari'a

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What is Islam?

- *Islam is one of the three **Monotheistic religions** in the world: Judaism, Christianity & Islam. All three religions **claim heritage to Abraham**
- *Islam means **willful submission to God**
- *Islam is a **continuation of previous Divine guidance** to mankind
- *Muslims represent more than **1.3 Billion**
- *Many **misconceptions** about Islam

Eiman (Belief, Faith or conviction)

When prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was asked to define Eiman, he said:

(Eiman is to believe in Allah, and His Angels, and His Books, and His messengers, and in the Last Day, and in Qadar (Fate) its good and bad)

Bokhari & Muslim

Islam (Willful submission to Allah)

The five pillars of Islam

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said:

(Islam is to bear witness that there is no god but Allah, and that Muhammad is Allah's messenger; and to establish regular prayers; and to give Zakat (obligatory charity); and to fast Ramadan; and to perform Hajj (pilgrimage) if you have the way and means)

Bokhari & Muslim

Ihsan (Goodness and righteousness)

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said:

(Ihsan is to worship Allah as if you see Him,
realizing that if you do not see Him, He sees
you and what you do)

Bokhari & Muslim

Faith has degrees, and increases or decreases

Islam is to say the words of Shahada (bearing witness) and doing rituals of worship

Eiman (Faith) is what you exhibit in your character and behavior, confirming the convictions in your heart

Ihsan (Goodness & righteousness) is to hasten in doing good and watching your behavior because you realize your accountability

**By serving God, our faith increases
and we attain righteousness**

**“O people serve your Lord, Who created you
and those before you, that you may learn
Taqwa (righteousness)**

Al-Baqara (The Cow) 2: 23

**We evolve and improve and become better
human beings**

The concept of God in Islam

- 1- There is only One God, the God of all whether Muslims, Christians, Jews or Agnostics
- 2- God created us, provides for us and guides us to His way
- 3- We are accountable to God
- 4- God is merciful, and forgives our sins
- 5- God is just, and He responds to our prayers
- 6- God knows what we do
- 7- We cannot see God, nor understand His innate nature. We know Him through His creation and as He described Himself in attributes of perfection

God responds to our prayers when we call on Him in distress

“Who listens to the soul when it calls on Him,
and who relieves the suffering, and makes
you mankind inheritors of the earth ? Can
there be another god besides Allah ? Little it
is that they heed!”

An-Naml (The Ants) 27: 62

God hears and answers our prayers

“When My servants ask you concerning Me, I am indeed close to them: I listen to the prayer of every supplicant when he calls on Me. Let them also with a will, listen to My call, and believe in Me, that they may walk in the right way“

Al-Baqara (The Cow) 2: 186

God is forgiving, most-merciful

“He ordained on Himself the rule of mercy“

Al-An'am (The Cattle) 6: 12

“Without doubt I am He that forgives again and again, to those who repent, believe and do good, and are ready to receive guidance“

Ta Ha 20: 82

“Unless he repents, believes and works righteous deeds, for Allah then changes the evil of such persons into good, for Allah is often-forgiving, most-merciful“

Al-Furqan (The Criterion) 25: 70

Allah knows what we are doing

“On the Day that Allah will raise them all up again and show them the truth of their conduct. Allah has reckoned its value, though they may have forgotten it, for Allah is a witness to all things“

Al-Mujadalah (The Woman pleading) 58: 6

Accountability

- *Muslims believe that after we die, we will be resurrected to stand judgment and account for our deeds in life
- There is reward for those who do good and obey Allah: paradise; and there is punishment for those who were wicked and disobeyed God: Hell
- God's forgiveness and mercy extends to everyone who has even a small amount of faith
- Intercession is granted by Allah to whom He pleases and on behalf those who are acceptable to Him

Reward and punishment

“Tell my servants that I am indeed the one who forgives and shows mercy, but I am also severe in punishment“

Al-Hijr (The Rocky tract) 15: 49 & 50

Our good deeds intercede on our behalf on the Day of judgment

“Establish regular prayers during the day and night; those things that are good remove those that are evil. Be that a word of remembrance to those who remember their Lord. And be steadfast in patience, for Allah allows not the reward of the righteous to perish“

Hud (Prophet Hud) 11: 114 & 115

The rewards of our good deeds varies

Our reward depends on:

- 1- Our sincerity and motivation
- 2- The difficulty we encounter in doing good
- 3- Helping others is rewarded more than individual acts of worship
- 4- We are rewarded more when others follow our example
- 5- Our reward is increased during Ramadan

How can we atone for our sins?

- 1- Recognizing that we have sinned or made a mistake
- 2- Turning to God seeking His forgiveness
- 3- Making a pledge not to repeat our mistake
- 4- Doing good to cancel the wrong we committed

Belief in God's Divine revelations

1- The Torah revealed to prophet Musa (Moses)

2- The Injeel (Bible) revealed to prophet Eisa (Jesus)*

3- The Qur'an revealed to prophet Muhammad

“ It is He who sent down to you, in truth, the Book confirming what went before it; and He sent down the Torah and the Gospel as a guide to mankind, and He sent down the Criterion (of judgment between right and wrong)

Al-Imran (The Family of Imran) 3 : 3 & 4

* We do not have the Injeel. What we have today is writings by Christians who related to us what they believed Jesus (PBUH) said or meant to convey

The Qur'an was safeguarded by Allah from alteration

“ We have sent down the message, and We
will guard it “

Al-Hijr (Rocky Tract) 15 : 9

The Qur'an corrects mistakes humans introduced into Divine texts

“To you We sent the scripture in truth,
confirming the scripture that came before it,
and guarding it in safety: so judge between
them by what Allah has revealed, and follow
not their vain desires, diverging from the
truth that has come to you.. “

Al-Maeda (The Table) 5 : 48

What is the function of God's prophets & messengers?

- They deliver God's message to their people and explain it
- They apply the message in their character and behavior
- They serve as examples for others to follow
- They live with their people and show how we as human beings react to difficulty, tests and trials. God's messengers faced rejection and were patient. They never lost faith, but were steadfast and were wise, caring and kind

Belief in Fate, its good and its bad all come from God

- 1- God knows what will happen in the future, we do not know that
- 2-Nothing occurs without God's permission
- 3-God knows our suffering and struggle
- 4-Through patient perseverance we can change our fate to another fate that God wills for us; we cannot sit idle and give up
- 5-We are rewarded for our effort and for our faith and not losing hope

We are tested according to the strength of our faith

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said:

(The ones tested the most are the prophets and the most righteous. Every person is tested according to the degree of his faith. If his faith is strong, his test will be more severe; and if his faith is weak, his test will be lighter)

Ibn Hibban, Termedhi & Ahmad

Rituals of worship

1- Prayer

2- Charity

3- Fasting (Ramadan)

4- Pilgrimage (Hajj)

Prayer in Islam

- 1- Muslims pray five obligatory prayers each day
- 2- There are optional prayers as well
- 3- Prayer in congregation like the Friday prayer
- 4- Prayer in Islam is structured, and only the Arabic Qur'an is recited
- 5- There is a rational and wisdom for praying
- 6- Great reward for praying

The wisdom and rational of prayer

- 1-Prayer teaches obedience, submission and devotion to God
- 2- We recite the Qur'an (God's words) in our prayers and listen to its guidance
- 3- Prayer protects us from sin and shameful deeds
- 4-Prayer teaches discipline & organization, commitment and placing our priorities correctly
- 5-Prayer in congregation allows Muslims to know each other, work together and help each other
- 6-We are promised a great reward for safeguarding our prayers

Learning from the Qur'an that we recite during prayers

“ Here is a Book which We have sent down to you, full of blessings, that they may consider its signs, and that people of understanding may receive admonition “

Sa D 38 : 29

Zakat (obligatory charity)

Important concepts

- To help the poor and needy is an obligation on those who can afford to give in charity
- It is actually God's money, we only use it during our life, and we are accountable how we earn it and how we spend it
- There is a great reward for giving charity
- Charity is more than just giving money: effort, guidance and kind words are charitable deeds
- If we do not give in charity we are penalized
- The rationale & wisdom of charity

The rationale of Zakat

- 1- To help the poor & needy and correct social injustice
- 2- To re-circulate the wealth of the community, create jobs and stimulate the economy
- 3- To help support institutions that provide valuable service to the community
- 4- To liberate our souls of greed
- 5- To avoid jealousy and hatred between rich and poor
- 6- To please God and get His reward

Fasting the month of Ramadan

- Muslims are obligated to fast Ramadan (the 9th month in the lunar year)
- Fasting involves abstinence from food, drink and sex from dawn till sunset
- Fasting also involves fasting from lying, cheating or doing wrong, and hastening in doing good and helping those who need our help
- We learn patience, self-restraint, piety and obedience to God and we get closer to Him
- Ramadan is a month of blessing and great reward

The Rationale of Hajj

- Hajj is a journey of purification, when a person leaves his worldly preoccupation and journeys to Allah, remembers his obligations and understands his accountability (standing in Arafat)
- Hajj is a new beginning and a pledge to obey God and live our lives as He has commanded
- Hajj is an annular gathering of Muslims
- Visiting the holy places reminds us of God's prophets, their mission and their life struggle
- The reward of Hajj is forgiveness of sin

Sources of knowledge in Islam

1- The Qur'an

2- The Sunnah (tradition) of prophet Muhammad (PBUH)

From these two sources of knowledge scholars reach conclusions that can guide Muslims in the form of :

- **Ijma'** : (collective agreed upon opinion of scholars)
- **Ijtihad** (critical thinking) and Qias (deduction)

The Qur'an

- Is the literal word of God, and not the writings or sayings of Muhammad
- The Qur'an was safeguarded from alteration
- The Qur'an was revealed in Arabic because Muhammad was an Arab
- Qur'anic revelation came gradually over 23 years to strengthen the heart of Muslims, solve problems and answer questions
- The Qur'an guides, is a mercy from God, and a cure for the ills in our hearts
- We have obligations towards the Qur'an

Evidence that the Qur'an is the word of God

- Muhammad was illiterate: he could not read or write
- The evidence for the authenticity of the Qur'an is in the Qur'an itself:
 - **No contradiction** in its verses, rather the verses complete and complement one another
 - It addresses our hearts and minds in a **logical** way and it has a commanding effect
 - **None of its verses were proven wrong**
 - **No one could produce such a Qur'an**

The Qur'an gives guidelines, but does not restrict us with specific details

The Qur'an does not specify the form of government, because the needs of each society is different

What it does provide are the **guidelines of justice, equality and proper representation** which are applicable in every society

The role of prophet Muhammad (PBUH)

- 1- He was **God's prophet to all mankind**. As a prophet, he delivered God's message and explained it
- 2- He **applied the Qur'an in his character and behavior**, and became an **example to follow**
- 3- He **taught and groomed** the next generation of leaders and scholars who carried on his mission
- 4- He **explained in his Sunnah how we can live as Muslims**: we cannot practice our Islam by just following the Qur'an

Follow the spirit of the Hadeeth, not the literal words

The prophet was addressing people who lived in a society different from ours today, and their needs and challenges were different

The message or spirit of the Hadeeth can be applied at all times. When a man was walking arrogantly, drawing his robe on the floor, the prophet said: (What is below the ankles is in hell fire). This does not mean that we must wear short pants. It means that we should be **humble and not arrogant**

Follow the spirit of the Hadeeth

When the prophet called on his Lord to let him live as a meskeen (needy person) he did not mean that he should be dependant on the generosity of others or be at their mercy. Rather, he showed **compassion and solidarity with the needy, deprived and disadvantaged.** In other sayings he **praised hard work that makes us independent and gives us self-dignity**

The difference between hard-line Muslims and liberal Muslims

Some Muslims follow a **strict or literal interpretation of the Sunnah**, and follow the opinions of old scholars who lived many centuries ago

Other Muslims favor **critical thinking** and allow room for interpretation, and **do not necessarily follow the literal words of the Hadeeth**. This allows Islam to be compatible with a **Western democracy and a pleural society**

Do not take the prophet's sayings out of historical context

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was talking to a society with certain traditions and culture. He talked to them in terms they can understand and relate to.

The prophet's saying : (I have been ordered to fight **An-Nas** till they bear witness that there is no god but Allah and that I am His messenger) **does not mean that Muslims should fight everyone till they accept Islam.** This is clearly against **Qur'anic teachings of freedom of faith and choice.** An-Nas here refers to Quraish an Arab tribe that were fierce enemies of the Muslim state

Understand the historical context of the prophet's sayings

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said: (Whomever denounces his religion kill him) Muslim

This Hadeeth does not mean that Muslims should kill an apostate (Ridda) for several reasons:

- The prophet did not kill any apostate though some denounced their Islam
- There is no Qur'anic verse that orders Muslims to do that
- The Qur'an is very clear that **God gave man the freedom to chose to accept or reject faith, and that no one is to be forced to accept Islam against his will**

The prophet was referring to those who left Madina and joined the Muslim enemies and fought against the Muslims. **It was their act as enemy combatants and not their faith that mattered.**

Different schools of thought in Islam

Muslim jurists differed in their own interpretation of the Qur'an & Sunnah, and reached different conclusions. They respected each other's point of view and their right to their respective opinions. They each stated that **my view could be wrong and other views could be right.**

This teaches us to examine different view points and not be rigid or dogmatic

Different schools of thought in Islam

Sunni Jurists

Imams Malik, Abou Hanifa, Shafe'I & Ibn Hanbal represent the four jurists

Shie'ite Jurists

Ja'far & others

Both Sunni & Shie'ite Muslims believe in the Qur'an & Sunnah. They differ regarding who should rule over Muslims and whether the Imam is fallible or infallible and our obedience to him

It is understandable that people will differ in their interpretation

We differ in our education, experience, how we analyze and approach problems and concepts

Therefore, it is expected that we may have different understanding of the Qur'an & Sunnah

We all agree on basic concepts of morality and basic concepts of religion: the Oneness of God and our accountability to Him, being good to our parents, families and neighbors, and that the essence of religion is to serve others and become better human beings. But we differ in our understanding and application of the details

We have no monopoly on the truth

Some Muslims believe that their way is the only correct guided way, and reject any opposing point of view

Other Muslims understand that others of different faith have legitimate and valid view points and listen to them and learn from their prospective.

What is truthful stays, while that which is false will disappear:

“ For the scum disappears like froth cast out, but that which is useful for mankind stays on earth.. “

Ar-Ra'd (The Thunder) 13 : 17

Contrast the truth to falsehood

The Qur'an uses this method in contrasting two opposing points of view in order for us to arrive at the truth, and avoid what is false and wrong

The only way to defeat terrorists and radicals is by exposing their wrong ideas. Killing terrorists or hunting them does not solve the problem because others will take their place and their ideology becomes more twisted and corrupt

Understanding the Qur'an and applying its guidelines changes with time and society

We cannot understand or apply the Qur'an in America in the same way the Qur'an was understood or applied centuries ago, or is applied today in a society different from ours

The Qur'an only gives guidelines and does not restrict us with details

**We should learn from others who are
different and have different
perspective**

“ And among His signs is the creation of the
heaven and earth, and the differences in
your tongues and colors. Indeed, in this are
signs for those who know”

Ar-Rum (The Romans) 30 : 22

Misunderstanding the Qur'an

Muslims are prohibited from forcing any person to become a Muslim against his will

Muslims are ordered to treat non-Muslims on the basis of :

- Kindness
- Justice and not wronging anyone
- Respecting their faith and rights
- Talking to them in a good way
- Working together

Yet some Muslims do not realize these guidelines, nor apply them in their behavior with non-Muslims, and project a hostile arrogant attitude

Respect and safeguard the freedom of religion

Man has a free will to accept or reject faith:

“Let him who will believe, and let him who will reject faith”

Al-Kahf (The Cave) 18: 29

Do not force others to become Muslims against their will:

“Let there be no compulsion in religion”

Al-Baqara (The Cow) 2: 256

“If it was the will of your Lord everyone on earth would have believed; are you then forcing people to believe against their will”

Yunus (Jonah) 10: 99

What is Shari'a?

Shari'a is how we apply our faith in our character and behavior.

Shari'a is not punishment of a thief but it is everything that we do as Muslims every day:

Prayer is Shari'a, giving charity is Shari'a, fasting is Shari'a, being good and helping others is Shari'a, doing our work to the best of our ability is Shari'a.

Follow the concept not the literal words

The Qur'an states that the thief should be punished by cutting off his/ her hand. This may have been applicable centuries ago, but not now. **The concept or guideline is valid: the thief is to be punished so that this crime does not occur again. How the punishment is carried out varies in each society**

The punishment for adultery

The Qur'an recommends whipping in public

The Sunnah (Tradition of the Prophet) recommends death, but the adultery must be proved by 4 witnesses that saw the act of adultery and their testimony must be the same and exact. This obviously cannot be done.

The guideline therefore is valid that adultery is a sin to be avoided, but how it is penalized should be left to each society