

# **“A Short Introduction to Islam” PLUS “Islam Explained”**

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## **A Short Introduction to Islam**

### **What is Islam?**

Islam is one of the three major world religions, along with Christianity and Buddhism. The word “Islam” means “Submission”, from the Arabic root “slm”, the same root as the Arabic word “salam” or “Peace. A “Muslim” is “one who is in Submission”. The first major belief of Islam is that there is only One God. The Arabic word for the One God is “Allah”. “Allah” is a form of “Al-Ilah” or “The God”. This word is similar to the Aramaic word “Allaha” and the Hebrew word “Eloha” both meaning “God” in the singular.

Islamic belief in The God is strictly Unitarian, as opposed to the Trinitarian or “One God in Three Persons” belief of the majority of Christians. Most believing Jews are also strict monotheists although mystical forms of Judaism are looser in this regard.

The Holy Scripture of Islam is the Quran, an Arabic word which has been translated as “The Lecture” or “The Message” or “The Recital”. The Quran was revealed in the 7<sup>th</sup> Century CE to an Arab named Muhammad, who is the Prophet of Islam. Muhammad considered himself a human (and therefore non-divine) prophet in the line beginning with Adam, going through Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Ishmael, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Solomon, John the Baptizer, and Jesus the Messiah, among many others. Prophets were sent to their peoples to preach submission to God by turning to God and turning from their sinful ways.

Originally, the Arabs (descended from Prophet Ishmael) worshipped Allah. Their Holy Sanctuary was the Kaaba in Mecca in Western Arabia. Eventually, the majority of the Arabs turned away from and forgot Allah and began worshipping man-made idols. Various tribes would come to Mecca every year for the Pilgrimage and worship their false gods in the Kaaba. Jews and Christians (People of the Book – those who worship God and to who were sent Prophets and who had scriptures, though these scriptures may be in a corrupted state) settled in Western Arabia. Some Arabs even became Christians. Most Arabs continued to worship their false gods.

Then in the early 7<sup>th</sup> Century CE, Muhammad was called by Allah to be the Prophet to his people, the Arabs. Furthermore, Muhammad was to be the Last Prophet sent by Allah, and so the message of Islam was sent to the Byzantine and Sassanid (Persian) Emperors, and to other nations.

At first, Muslims worshipped in private, but soon it became time to tell the Arabs of Mecca about Islam. Some of the practices of the Arabs that Muhammad preached against

were polytheism as well as treating women as mere property, burying alive unwanted female infants, mistreatment of slaves, mistreating or not helping the poor, and tribal warfare.

The Meccan rulers responded by persecuting the Muslims. Some Muslims were sent to live under the safety of the King of Ethiopia, where the Muslims successfully made their case against agents of the Meccan rulers who wanted to bring the Muslims back to Mecca. Eventually, the city of Yathraib, where some of the citizens had believed Muhammad's Message, invited Muhammad to rule over them because of their internal conflicts. Thus, the first Islamic state was born. Those Muslims who could, fled to Yathraib, now called the City (of the Prophet), or Medina. The Meccan rulers attempted to murder the Prophet in his bed, but the Prophet managed to escape to Medina, while his cousin Ali stayed the Prophet's bed, risking his life. When the assassins saw that it was Ali, they didn't carry out their evil deed.

The Muslims of Medina were called the Helpers, while the Muslims who came from Mecca were called the Immigrants. The Meccan rulers attempted to destroy the Muslim state. The first major battle (of Badr) was a victory for the Muslims. The second major battle (of Uhud) should have been a victory also, but some archers abandoned their position to get their share of the "booty", leaving the flank indefensible. The Prophet was almost killed in this attack. The third major battle (of the Trench) was fought when Mecca attacked Medina. The Muslims built a trench to protect the city and Medina was saved.

Then, The Prophet was able to make a treaty with the Meccans that appeared to be unfavorable for the Muslims. This allowed the Muslims to make their pilgrimage to Mecca during the following year, and allowed Muslims to send teachers to the other Arab tribes. This produced many converts. Finally, allies of Mecca broke the treaty after a few years, and the Muslims marched on and captured Mecca bloodlessly, as several of the Meccan leaders themselves declared they had become Muslims. Eventually, all of Arabia became a united Islamic state.

Today, Islam is the second-largest world religion with more than a billion Muslims worldwide and in most countries.

## **Islam Rightly Explained**

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## **1) A Brief Look at the Common Outline of Islam**

Most people in the West, when they think about Islam, think about the traditional Five Pillars of Islam (Oneness of God, Prophethood of Muhammad (SAW), the 5 Daily Prayers, Giving Charity, and Fasting during the Month of Ramadan). Literature from some Islamic Scholars may list “Holy War” (the “Little” Jihad) as a Sixth Pillar, although that is a recent development. However, below will be the description of Islam from a broader perspective:

## **2) The Five Roots of Religion**

The basic outline of Islam is described as the “Five Roots of Religion”, where Religion (Arabic: Deen) is the Basic Principles of those who are submitted to and at peace with God. Thus, the basic outline can be looked at as the “roots of the tree”, with the “trunk of the tree” being Islam (Arabic: Peace and Submission) itself, with the “branches of the tree” being the resulting practice. Each “root” will be described briefly in the following paragraphs. Some passages from the Holy Quran, the Scripture revealed by the Prophet Muhammad are also provided.

### **Root One: The Oneness of God**

The first root in the outline is the “Oneness of God” (Arabic: Tawheed). There can only be one God (Arabic: Allah a contraction of Al-Ilah; Hebrew: Eloah; Aramaic: Allaha). The Quran, the Holy Scripture of Muslims (Arabic: those at peace with and in submission to God) says this of God:

“Say: He is Allah, the One  
The One upon who all depend  
Who does not give birth nor was He born  
And there is none like Him.”

- Quran 112:1-4.

Allah is unique. Allah is Uncreated, the Eternal (Arabic: Qadeem), is not born, is the Knower (Arabic: Aalim) of all things, and the Perfect. Allah cannot be compelled (Mureed). Allah is true in His words and promises (Arabic: Sadiq). Allah is All-powerful. This is a short summary of the Positive Attributes of Allah.

Also, Allah has no partner or partners. Allah is not made or composed of any material. Allah cannot be divided even in imagination. Allah cannot be confined to any place, for Allah has no body. Allah does not change. Allah is invisible. Allah has no needs. Allah’s attributes cannot be separated from Him. This is a short summary of the Negative Attributes of Allah.

### **Root Two: The Justice of God**

Allah is Just (Arabic: Adl). This means Allah is not a tyrant. Allah rewards everyone depending on his or her deeds. The one who obeys Allah will be saved and receive Paradise as his or her reward. The one who disobeys Allah will be sent to Hell. The Quran says:

“Allah affirms that there is no god but Him,  
And so do the angels,  
And those endued with knowledge,  
He is standing firm in justice.”

- Quran 3:18.

Allah is always just and never chooses to be unjust because Allah will not do that which is against His nature and character. Why would Allah, who is perfect, act imperfectly? The answer is that Allah will never act imperfectly. Allah is also the Beneficent, which can also be translated as the Compassionate (Arabic, Hebrew, Aramaic: Rahman; Greek: Agape) and the Merciful (Arabic: Raheem, Rahman in a narrower sense).

### **Root Three: Prophethood**

Since Allah is the Just, He has a plan or code, for His creatures, which can be said to be Allah’s will for their relationships with other creatures as well as their relationships with Him. Therefore, Allah has sent His prophets to acquaint humanity with these principles and codes of life.

“Nor would we punish without sending messengers to give warning.” – Quran 17:15.

Adam was the first Prophet. Other prophets include Noah , Abraham . Joseph , Moses . David , John the Baptizer , Jesus the Messiah , and Muhammad who was the last Prophet. In all, 124,000 thousand prophets were sent to various peoples at various times.

In fundamental principles, the prophets never disagreed. They were sent to different peoples, at different times, in different regions. The last Prophet, Muhammad was sent to all humanity with the final message from Allah. Islam (Peace and Submission to Allah) is the perfect code of life for all peoples in all places for all times to come.

“We have not sent you (O Muhammad) but as a mercy unto all the worlds.”  
– Quran 21:17.

“And We have not sent thee but as a universal messenger to announce and to warn. But most of the people do not understand.” – Quran 34:28.

### **Root Four: Guidance**

Just as Jesus the Messiah was given by Allah the 12 Apostles to rightly guide those who believed the Gospel after he ascended into Heaven, the Prophet Muhammad was given by Allah 12 Vice Regents (Arabic: Imams) to guide the Muslim community after he passed from the scene. Just like the prophets, including Muhammad these Vice Regents were infallible.

“O, you who believe! Obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those among you invested with Divine Authority; and if ye differ, bring it before Allah and the Messenger if you believe in Allah and the Last Day. This is the best and the fairest way of settlement.” – Quran 4:49.

“(And remember) the Day (of Judgment) when We shall call human beings with their Imams.” – Quran 17:71.

There are Twelve Imams or Vice Regents, all descendants of the Prophet Muhammad the first being Imam Ali Ibn Talib and the 12<sup>th</sup> being Imam Al-Mahdi who will return along with Prophet Jesus the Messiah who will destroy the Anti-Christ and his works.

### **Root Five: Resurrection and Judgment**

The Quran teaches that there is a Last Day, a Resurrection of all humans, and a Divine Judgment, followed by the Life Hereafter, either in Paradise, or in Hell. After death, each person gets the reward or punishment for the deeds he or she performed before death. For this purpose, on the Day of Judgment, all of humanity will be resurrected, judged by Allah, and rewarded with Heaven or Hell, depending on whether or not they submitted unto Allah’s will during their life.

“Beware when the Event (Arabic: Qiyamat) would occur

No soul would then falsify its occurrence,  
(Many) will it bring low,  
(Many) will it bring high;  
When the earth will be shaken to its depths,  
And the mountains would crumble  
Becoming dust all scattered about.” – Quran 56:1-6.

The Day of Qiyamat will be a thousand years long. The sun will come up on that day very low, and the earth will be red-hot like heated copper.

### **3) The Trunk of the Tree**

The Five Roots of Religion listed above are the basic principles of Islam. When Muslims read the Quran or check the books that contain the recorded traditions of the Prophet Muhammad, they consider the light given through him from Allah through the prism of the Five Roots. Thus, if these roots give a foundation to the trunk of the “tree”, which is Peace and Submission to Allah, or Islam, what will be the “branches” of the “tree” of Islam, the deeds of the Muslims?

### **4) The Ten Branches of the Tree**

When someone believes the Five Roots of Religion, and becomes a Muslim, he or she is obligated to perform certain deeds according to Allah’s will as given through the Prophet. These are the Ten Branches of the Tree, so to speak. They are listed below:

- i) Prayer – The five required Daily Prayers (Arabic: Salat) as well as other prayers.
- ii) Fasting – Required during the holy month of Ramadan, and voluntary at other times.
- iii) Pilgrimage – Required once a lifetime if at all possible (Hajj) and voluntary (Umrah).
- iv) Wealth Tax – Required tax paid on certain items to the poor (Zakat).
- v) Savings Tax – Paid on one-fifth of the increase for that year after deductions (Khums).
- vi) Struggle – The great Jihad to be a good Muslim, and the little Jihad to defend.
- vii) Enjoining the Good – Obligatory (Arabic: Amr Bil Maarooif).
- viii) Forbidding the Evil or Prohibited – Obligatory (Arabic: Nahiy Anil Munkar).
- ix) To love Allah, and the chosen ones.