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First Edition: April 2021

ISBN 978-1-7353991-0-2

Published and Distributed by:  
Quran For Humanity Foundation,  
8926, N. Greenwood Ave, Unit 261  
Niles, IL 60714  
E-mail: [info@quranforhumanity.org](mailto:info@quranforhumanity.org)  
[www.quranforhumanity.org](http://www.quranforhumanity.org)

# Acknowledgments

All praise belongs to Allah SWT The Most Merciful and Most Compassionate, and may peace and blessings be upon the prophet Muhammad his family and his companions.

First of all, I thank Allah SWT for enabling me to compile some notes on Islam and present them especially for the benefit of brothers and sisters of other faiths who have had little or no exposure to Islam or its sacred scripture, the Qur'an. This work of compilation started long ago, purely as a personal fascination with collecting notes on 'the Qur'an' and 'Islam,' so for that reason I have not maintained a list of books or other sources whose help I received in compiling this collection. May Allah SWT reward them all.

I am sincerely thankful to Shaikh Amin Kholwadia, president of Darul Qasim - Illinois, for his precious guidance and encouragement, which were major factors in getting this booklet published. I am also thankful to Firas Al Khatib for making an initial review of the book and to Ustad Kamiluddin also from Darul Qasim for sparing his precious time and thoroughly reviewing this compilation and making valuable suggestions to improve it. I also owe copious gratitude to Miss Haya Sayeed for doing proofreading. Finally, many thanks to Br. Aaron Wannamaker - Canada for doing the final edit of this work.

May Allah SWT reward them all abundantly both in this world and aakhirah.



A Concise Introduction to  
**Islam**

**Yunoos Deriwala**

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# Preface

I seek refuge with God, the Glorious and Exalted, against Shaitan, who is cursed, and I start with the name of God Who is Most Gracious and Most Merciful. Peace and blessings be upon the final Messenger Muhammad and his family.

This compilation is an effort to present the basic structure of Islam briefly, but at the same time highlighting the core of Islam. It is an insider's view of Islam, written by a Muslim, where enough care has been taken to consider every reader a stakeholder instead of an outsider.

Islam, at its core, is recognizing the fact that there is only one God, Who is our Creator, our Sustainer and also of everything in the universe, and building a relationship with Him. In absence of physical proof of God, one question has always perplexed humankind: how do we recognize God? The Qur'an provides sound and logical answers to that question, which I have tried to incorporate in this booklet.

Recognizing the presence of one God and knowing about Him opens up the gateways of peace at personal and social levels, and one's perspective of life becomes more positive and fruitful. A person finds himself in complete harmony with himself and everything around him.

I hope that this work will serve the same purpose for every reader.

-Yunoos Deriwala

## Notes:

1.Allah is the Arabic name for God, we have used both the words alternatively.

2.SWT - When mentioning the name of God (Allah), Muslims usually add "Subhanahu Wa Ta-ala", meaning "One who is above all shortcomings and Exalted".

In writing it is shortened to SWT

3.PBUH – When mentioning the name of any prophet, Muslims usually say "peace be upon him". In writing shortened to PBUH



# Foreword

Islam and Muslims are always in the news today. In fact, they have been the focal point of news magazines and talk shows for more than two decades. Unfortunately, what captures the imagination of most people about Islam and Muslims is not at all positive. Muslims and Islam have been portrayed negatively in the West since the time of the Crusades and then by Orientalists before the 20th century. As mass media became more accessible, that trend has heightened – primarily for political reasons in the 70's and 80's. After Muslim countries saw a rise in their citizens learning and practicing Islam in the 80's and 90's, Western media refocused its attention to the creed and practice of Islam itself. The tragedy of 9/11 cemented the idea of Islam being a violent religion in the minds of most Western peoples. Both the academia and the media then feasted themselves with vile stereotypical propaganda against Muslims and Islam. More and more educated Westerners saw Islam as a religion that is devoid of human underpinnings. This brings us to this work: A Concise Introduction to Islam.

In this abridged but succinct work, Yunoos Deriwala brings about a much-needed fresh look into Islam, its creed, history, and practice. This work highlights the true hallmarks of Islam and its sacred character. Islam exhorts its adherents to adhere to a faith-based worldview deeply rooted in belief in One God. This One God is the same God of Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus. Islamic practices include almsgiving; being kind to parents and neighbors; personal and communal hygiene; and most of all, worship of One God. Islam's approach to salvation is deeply steeped in the history of all previous God-sent prophets. The biography of Muhammad (Pbuh) is rooted in altruism and compassion for all peoples. Muhammad (Pbuh) never launched a single offensive military attack on any group of people.

Academic works and journalistic reporting thrive on the idea of presenting facts. They strive diligently to present events and phenomena based on research and reporting. They do not like fake news and fake theories. This is what is known as accurate and truthful scholarship and journalism.

The facts mentioned in this booklet are accurate and truthful. It is a must-read for all those who seek the truth. Those who seek truth always find it as God makes it readily available for them. We pray that God facilitates the realization of the intentions of the author.

Shaykh Mohammed Amin Kholwadia,  
Darul Qasim  
Glendale Heights, IL  
April 16th 2020

## 1. Introduction

Islam means “submission,” which comes from root word salaam which means peace. The peace of Islam is the peace a person attains by his submission to God, the One who created him and all that is in the Heavens and the Earth.

## 2. History of Islam

Islam was first introduced on planet Earth with the arrival of the first human, Adam, peace be upon him, who was created by God Almighty. Adam was the very first Prophet of Islam. After Adam, God Almighty sent many more messengers to all parts of the globe, among whom were Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Zachariah, Solomon and Jesus, peace be upon them all. The message preached to mankind by all of God’s messengers was the same: “Worship the Creator (God), not the Creation”.

Prophet Muhammad peace be upon him, is the last and final messenger of Islam; no more messengers or prophets have or will come after him.

## 3. God – Allah (SWT)

God and Allah are the same. Allah is the Arabic word for God and is used by Arab-speaking Christians and Jews to refer to the same deity. God, Glorious and Exalted is He\*, is the One and Only God who is the Creator and Sustainer of the universe and whatever is beyond it. None are worthy of worship but Him. He has no equal, no partner, no helper, no subordinates, no sons nor daughters. He is the sole Creator and everything else is His creation.

Everything and everybody belong to Him, and He alone is in control of the Heavens and the Earth and all that is in between them. He decides, monitors and maintains all that is happening around us. God is All-Powerful.

\* In Arabic, the phrase “Glorious and Exalted is He” is “Subhanahu Wa-Ta’ala,” and is often abbreviated to (swt).

## 4. Attributes of God – Allah (SWT)

God has multiple names based on His attributes, and these names help us greatly in our understanding of Him.

<b>Names</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
Ar-Rahmaan	The Beneficent
Al-Rahim	The Merciful

Al-Aziz	The All-Mighty
Al-Jabbaar	The Omnipotent One, Strong, Compeller
Al-Mutakabbir	The Dominant One
Al-Khaaliq	The Creator
Al-Baari'	The Evolver
Al-Musawwir	The Flawless Shaper
Al-Ghaffaar	The Great Forgiver
Ar-Razzaaq	The Total Provider
Al-'Alim	The All-Knowing One
Al-Latif	The Knower of Subtleties
Al-'Azim	The Magnificent One

Here are some more names: The Holy, The Flawless, The Guardian, The Generous, The Sustainer, The All-Seeing, The One Who is in Full Control, The Eternal, The First and The Last.

## 5. Earlier Prophets of Islam

For the guidance of mankind, God Almighty sent His messengers and scriptures from time to time, in all parts of the world. The Qur'an has mentioned twenty-five of them, some of whom we will discuss here.

### 5.1 Adam (Pbuh)

Adam, peace be upon him, was the first human being created by God. God created him from clay, and then breathed the soul into Adam. God taught him the names of all things. From Adam, God created his mate, Eve. Adam and Eve were in Paradise; they were permitted to move around and eat anything they pleased, but were warned not to eat the fruit from a particular tree. Under the influence of Satan, they ate the fruit of the forbidden tree. After realizing their mistake, both Adam and Eve repented to God sincerely. As a result, God forgave them and sent them to earth. Adam was the first human on earth and the first Prophet of God to humanity.

### 5.2 Noah (Pbuh)

Noah, peace be upon him, was one of the six most prominent Prophets. He was

from the descendants of Cain, the first son of Adam. He was the Messenger who lived the longest life amongst the Prophets. He preached for almost 950 years. He is known for building the first ship ever and having used it during the great flood. He lived near the Euphrates and Tigris rivers in Iraq.

Prophet Noah pleaded to the people of his time to abstain from evil and obey God. He also reminded them about the Oneness of God and warned them about the Day of Judgment. However, his people disbelieved him, so God commanded him to build a ship, gather all his followers, and get a pair of every animal and bird into the ship. God sent a huge flood in that area, but Prophet Noah and his followers were saved in the ship.

### **5.3 Abraham (Pbuh)**

Abraham, peace be upon him, is considered the Father of all Jews, Christians, and Muslims. He was among the greatest Prophets of God. He is widely mentioned in the Qur'an and is described as an ideal and focused believer.

He lived in approximately 2000 BC. His native country was Mesopotamia, in present day Iraq. His people were the worshippers of idols and possessed knowledge of the stars and their movement. When Abraham grew up, this act of idol worshipping posed many questions to his mind. He called his people to one God and commanded them not to worship idols.

God tested his submission to Him many times. Every time he came through successfully. Later on, he rebuilt the house of God which was originally built by Adam. This house still exists today in the city of Mecca in present day Saudi Arabia.

### **5.4 Moses (Pbuh)**

“O Moses, Surely I am your Lord, so put off your shoes, for you are in the sacred valley Tuwa. And I have chosen you: Listen to the revelation. Surely, I am God, there is no God but Me, so you worship (only) Me and keep up prayers for My remembrance.” (20: 11-14)

Moses was gifted with prophethood by God in the valley of Tuwa where he was blessed by God with two signs. First, he was given the rod, which if thrown on the floor would turn into a serpent devouring all that was in its path, and secondly the palm of his hand would shine with light. With these signs at his disposal, God commanded Moses to go to the Pharaoh and convey the message of God's Truth, and liberate his tribe, the Children of Israel.

Backed by the two divine signs, Moses approached the Pharaoh as directed by God, but the arrogant Pharaoh paid no heed to Moses' message despite Moses having warned him of God's wrath. Refusal to accept the message of Truth resulted in Pharaoh being drowned in the Nile River by God, Who parted the sea for Moses to cross over safely along with all those from the Children of Isra-

el who had accepted God's Oneness and Sovereignty. In the Qur'an, God says that Pharaoh's body is kept as an example for future generations to see. Moses is the most frequently mentioned Prophet in the Qur'an.

### **5.5 Jesus (Pbuh)**

The Qur'an emphatically states that Jesus, peace be upon him, was a devoted Messenger of God who called upon his people to worship only One God. He never claimed to be divine himself, nor did he claim to be the son of God. He never asked people to worship him. As described in the Qur'an, Jesus was born miraculously of Mary, a virgin, by the Command of God. He spoke while he was still a baby to defend his mother's honor. Jesus is mentioned by name in the Qur'an name 25 times, by the title "The Messiah" 11 times, and by the name "Son of Mary" 23 times.

After giving birth, Mary brought Jesus to her people, and they said, "O Mary! You have surely committed a monstrous deed." Mary pointed to Jesus. The child then spoke from his cradle.

The child (Jesus) said: "Indeed I am a servant of God: He has given me the Scripture (Gospel) and made me a prophet: And He has made me blessed wherever I be, and has commanded for me prayer and charity as long as I live. He has made me kind to my mother and not arrogant or miserable. And peace on me the day I was born, the day I die, and the day I will be raised (again) to life!" (19:30-33)

Then as per Qur'anic description, Jesus performed numerous miracles such as restoring eyesight of blind people, curing those affected by leprosy, breathing life into the birds and even bringing the dead back to life—all by the permission of God. He was also able to say what a person had eaten or what he or she stored at home.

### **Was Jesus a son of God?**

Since he was born without a human father, Christianity considers Jesus to be the son of God, whereas the Qur'an refutes this belief totally. The Qur'an states: "Truly the likeness of Jesus with God is as the likeness of Adam. He created him (Adam) of dust and then said to him 'Be!' and he was." (3:59)

Many people say that since Jesus was born without a human father, he must be the son of God. However, it must be pointed out that before Jesus, God had created Adam and Eve not only without a father but also without a mother. This fact should be sufficient enough to prove without an iota of doubt that God is All Powerful and does as He will, He just has to say, 'Be' and it happens!

God is supremely exalted and glorified, and it is not befitting for Him to have a son. He is All- Powerful and no human is more than a work His creation. We

humans have to exert ourselves in order to achieve the desired results of our work, but this is not so with Almighty God, Who in all His Glory just has to will something and it instantly takes place. The creation of Jesus was decreed by Him the same way. This makes it clear that in no sense should Jesus be considered the son of God.

The Qur'an describes this phenomenon in these words: "She (Mary) said: 'O my Lord! How shall I have a son when no man has touched Me?' He (angel) said: 'Even so God creates what He wills': When He has decreed a plan He only says to it 'Be'. And it is." (3:47)

"And they say, 'The Most Merciful has taken [for Himself] a son.' You have done an atrocious thing. The heavens almost rupture therefrom and the earth splits open and the mountains collapse in devastation that they attribute to the Most Merciful a son. And it is not appropriate for the Most High." (19:88-92)

The Qur'an is strongly against the idea of people calling Jesus God's "son," and it objects in strong terms to the idea of God having fathered a son, Glory be to Him. On the Day of Judgment even Jesus will appear in front of God as His servant along with everyone else.

### **Did Jesus claim divinity?**

The fact that Jesus had no biological father does not indicate that he should be considered God Himself, Lord of the seen and unseen. The first human created by God, Adam, in fact had no father nor mother. He was simply molded out of mud by Almighty God in all His Glory.

The Qur'an rejects the theory of Trinity and presuppositions of Jesus's divinity, although he is nonetheless highly ranked and revered as a prophet in Islam. According to the teachings of the Qur'an, on the Day of Judgment, God will assemble all prophets and inquire from them about how were they received by their respective people.

This interaction between Jesus and God is mentioned in the Qur'an: "And remember God will say (on the Day of Judgment): 'Oh Jesus the son of Mary! Did you say to men, 'Worship me and my mother as gods in derogation of God?'" He will say 'Glory be to You! It was not for me to say what I had no right to say. If I have said such a thing, You would indeed have known it. You know what is in my heart, even though I do not know what is in Yours. Truly, You fully know all that is hidden and unseen. Never did I say to them anything except what You did command me to say, which is, worship God, my Lord and your Lord; And I was a witness over while I lived among them; When You did take me up, You were the Watcher over them, and You are the witness to all things.'" (5:116-117)

Jesus was specifically sent to the children of Israel, who have deviated from the real teachings of Prophet Moses. The mission of Jesus has been described in the Qur'an: "And (I have come to you), confirming Torah which was before me. And to make lawful to you, part of what was (before) forbidden to you; and I have come to you with proof from your Lord, so fear God, and obey me. It is God Who is my Lord and your Lord; so, worship Him Alone. This is the straight path." (3:50-51)

Jesus also brought the glad tidings of the coming of a final Messenger after him. This is described in the Qur'an, "O children of Israel! I am indeed the Messenger to you, confirming that which was (revealed) before me, and giving good tidings of a Messenger who will come after me, whose name shall be 'Ahmed.'" (61:6)

### **Jesus was not crucified**

Jesus had clearly told his people that he was among them as a servant of God, Who had sent him to inform the people to worship only One God. Some non-believers, instead of following this simple message of Jesus, plotted to kill him.

But God is the best Planner, so when people tried to crucify Jesus for preaching the message of Truth, God saved Jesus by raising him alive to Heaven, and replacing Jesus with someone else on the cross. Islam does suggest that toward the end of time, Jesus will be sent back to earth by God for some length of time. In this regard the Qur'an states: "And his <sup>second</sup> coming is truly a sign for the Hour. So have no doubt about it and follow me. This is the Straight Path." (43:61)

## **6. Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings be upon him)**

Muhammad (Pbuh), is the seal of the prophets. He is the last and final prophet in the chain of prophets sent by God for the guidance of mankind. Although Muhammad (Pbuh) was created like any other human being, God bestowed him with certain unique characteristics and attributes that no other person has or will ever be blessed with.

The name 'Muhammad (Pbuh)' means 'most praiseworthy' or 'most admired'. With the uniqueness of character that he possessed, the name describes him most aptly. He was also known as 'Ahmed', which means 'the praised one'.

As per Islamic belief, Muhammad (Pbuh) is the last prophet in the long chain of prophets; no other prophet will ever come after him. He was commanded to call the people to the worship of One God, as was the case with all the prophets before him. He was from the Banu Hashim clan from the tribe of Quraysh. He

was born in the year 570 CE in the city of Makkah, Saudi Arabia.

He was the only child of his parents. His father Abdullah passed away before he was born, and his mother passed away when he was six years old. He lived with his grandfather until his grandfather passed away, and then he was under the custody of his paternal uncle, Abu Talib.

He was could not read or write. During childhood he worked as a shepherd for others. At the age of twelve, he accompanied his uncle Abu Talib on a business trip to Syria. Later on, he worked for some time for a wealthy merchant lady of Makkah, a widow named Khadija.

He was an upright, honest, and trustworthy man, so he was popularly known in Makkah as 'As Sadeeq' and 'Al Amin' meaning 'the trustworthy' and 'the truthful'. Khadija sent him a proposal of marriage when he was twenty-five, and she was forty. Muhammad (Pbuh) accepted this proposal, and they were married. They had six children from this marriage, four daughters and two sons. His sons did not survive past childhood.

As Muhammad (Pbuh) grew older, he started secluding himself in the caves of a mountain on the outskirts of Makkah, pondering over the situations of the world and thinking about the truth. At the age of forty he received the first revelation from God Almighty through Angel Gabriel and continued to receive revelations for the next twenty-three years.

Muhammad (Pbuh) started preaching Islam soon after he received the first revelation, and gradually people started to accept it. This was not acceptable to the Quraish, who were upset at their people for forsaking the path of their forefathers and joining a new religion. They accused Muhammad (Pbuh) of being a soothsayer, poet, magician, and of being possessed, and started severely persecuting him and his followers. He, along with his family, faced social boycott for some time. When the situation became unbearable, he asked his followers to migrate to Madinah. He migrated to Madinah in the tenth year after the first revelation. This event is known as the 'Hijrah' (Arabic for 'migration') and marks the beginning of the Islamic calendar.

When Muhammad (Pbuh) arrived in Madinah, he was accepted by the people of Madinah as their leader. He signed a treaty with the tribes in Madinah for joint defense of the city. But life in Madinah was also not so easy, as the people of Quraish gathered armies and attacked Madinah three times and a few people from Madinah, despite their treaties with Muhammad (Pbuh), helped the Quraish. Muhammad (Pbuh) and his followers came out victorious in these battles. In the eighth year after the migration, he conquered Makkah peacefully without a battle. The reputation of Islam was established beyond the Arabian Peninsula.



Throughout these years of trials and tribulations, his mission of preaching Islam continued. He started inviting people of different regions to Islam. He was successful in his mission, enduring stiff opposition, persecution, and hardships. In just twenty-three years he transformed a society that was primitive, ignorant, and arrogant into an enlightened nation which was God-fearing and possessed exemplary moral values.

He left this world for the heavenly abode at the age of sixty-three, leaving behind a large group of followers who were firmly established in their faith.

His behavior and conduct are called 'Sunnah' and are an example for all of mankind to follow. What Muhammad (Pbuh) said and did was collected in books called 'ahadith'.

He was the best of all creation, the best living person who ever existed on the face of this earth; he embodied the Qur'an in his personality, and his life was the best example to be emulated by all of mankind after him.

## **7. Reverence for Mary in Islam**

Mary, mother of Jesus, holds an exalted position in Islam. She is praised in the Qur'an for being chaste, pious, and God conscious. When she was born, her mother was expecting a boy, with the intention of giving the boy to the service of temple; God accepted her intention and Mary was raised to an exalted position. She is the only woman mentioned by name in the Qur'an, and it occurs over 30 times. A full chapter, Surah 19, is named after her.

Here are some verses wherein Mary is referred to:

•“And (remember) her, Mary who safeguarded her chastity: We breathed into her from our Spirit, and We made her and her son (Jesus) a Sign for all nations (and people). (21:91)

“(Remember) When the angel said, ‘O Mary, Verily, God gives you good tidings of a Word from Him: his name will be the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, held in honor in this world and the Hereafter, and of (the company of) those nearest to God. He shall speak to the people in the cradle and in manhood, and righteous he shall be. ‘O My Lord,’ said Mary, ‘how shall I have a son seeing no mortal has touched me?’ Even so he (angel) said, ‘God creates what He wills. When He decrees a thing, He only says to it, ‘Be’ and it is’.” (3:45-47)

## **8. The Qur'an – Last divine scripture**

The Qur'an was revealed through Angel Gabriel (Jibraeel) to Prophet Muham-

mad (Pbuh) over a period of 23 years.

As per Islamic belief, the Qur'an is the word of God revealed to Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh) over 1400 years ago and remains unaltered to this day and will remain so till the end of time. This is a clear indication that the Qur'an is the Last and Final Book of Guidance revealed by God to mankind, and that Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh) is the last and final prophet of Islam. There will be no more prophets after him. The word Qur'an is derived from 'qura', the Arabic word for 'recitation'.

The Qur'an as we have it today is the same, word-to-word, as the one that was revealed over 1400 years ago for the guidance of all of humanity. Its message is universal. God Himself has taken the responsibility for its protection from any kind of alteration: "Indeed, it is We who sent down the Qur'an and indeed, We will be its guardian." (15:9)

The Qur'an is the primary source of faith and practice for all Muslims. It deals with all of the subjects that concern human beings—ethics, morale, wisdom, worship, law, etc. As God describes in the Qur'an, "Blessed is the One Who sent down the criterion to His servant, so that he may be a warner to the whole world." (25:1)

The Qur'an is a guidance for all. It is the best gift ever given by God to mankind. If one were to contemplate on the teachings of the Qur'an, and correctly understand its meaning, it will illuminate the reader's heart and rejuvenate his soul. The Qur'an is a gold mine of timeless wisdom. The Qur'an, if read in its original language, Arabic, is bound to have a captivating effect on the reader's mind. There is not a single problem in our life for which the Qur'an does not offer a solution. One only has to take the trouble to read and correctly understand the teachings of the glorious Qur'an and absorb its beauty and wisdom. The teachings of the Qur'an give life a purpose and a sense of fulfillment.

The flow of the Qur'an is not arranged as we normally see in books. Rather it is a collection of divine orations, where one will find various topics discussed in one oration and the same topic repeated several times in different contexts on different occasions.

The Qur'an throughout emphasizes on the Oneness of God. It teaches Muslims to establish a direct and personal relationship with their Creator, to Whom all have to one day return. The Qur'an calls upon people to use their intellect and reasoning capabilities. As mentioned in the Qur'an: "When my servants ask you concerning Me, I am indeed close to them. I listen to the prayer of every (humble) caller when he calls Me: Let them also, listen to My call and believe in Me, that they may be led to the right way." (2:186)

The Qur'an rejects the worshipping of other gods beside God. No one can

share His authority. Ascribing partners to God is strongly abhorred in the Holy Qur'an.

Overall, there are 114 chapters in the Qur'an. Each chapter, called 'surah' in Arabic, is comprised of a varying number of verses called 'ayat' (literally meaning 'sign').

## **9. Six articles of faith**

Islam specifically mentions six articles of faith that Muslims must accept and believe.

### **9.1 Oneness of God**

The very first tenet of Islam a Muslim must acknowledge is that there is no one worthy of worship except God and that Muhammad (Pbuh) is His messenger and slave (laa ilaha illa Allah Muhammad rasul Allah). Only a true and strong acceptance of this belief makes a person Muslim.

This article of Islam emphasizes belief in the Oneness of God. No one is worthy of worship except God. No one equals Him in any manner, nor shares His Power and Authority. He is All Capable, All Seeing, and All Hearing. Everything happens by His permission only. God is Rabb-ul-Aalmeen (Lord of the Worlds). It is God who creates, maintains, and brings all that is in the universe to perfection. God is beyond the imagination of man, who can only know or understand Him through His attributes.

### **9.2 Angels**

Muslims must believe that the angels are one of the creations of God. They are free of needs, wants, and desires, but unlike humans they do not have a free will. They are constantly praising God and carrying out His commands. Angel Gabriel (Jibreel) is the head of all angels and it is he who brought all the revelations to Muhammad (Pbuh).

### **9.3 Books of God**

Muslims believe that God kept guiding humanity ever since the first human was sent to earth. His Guidance kept reaching mankind through messengers and books. The book revealed by God during the time of Moses (Pbuh) was the Taurat (Torah), David (Pbuh) was given the Zabur (Psalms), whereas Jesus (Pbuh) was given the Injil (Gospel). The Qur'an was sent down to Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh) and is the last and final book to be revealed by God for all of humanity. Other prophets were given books but there is no mention of them in the Qur'an. A Muslim is supposed to have faith and believe in all books revealed by God since the message of each revealed book has been the same: "There is no God besides the One God." However, Muslims believes that all earlier books revealed before the Qur'an have been tampered with, changed, or

altered.

#### **9.4 Prophets of God**

Muslims believe that God sent messengers to all nations and regions during all times of human existence. The message of all the messengers was to believe and worship One God only. Muslims also believe in all the messengers and prophets of God. Noah, Abraham, David, Solomon, Moses, John, and Jesus—peace be upon them all—are just a few examples of the prophets who we love and respect. If someone rejects any of God’s prophets, that person cannot be considered a Muslim.

#### **9.5 Day of Judgment**

Muslims believe in life after death, an ultimate Day of Judgment, and a Hereafter containing both Heaven and Hell. Based on their worldly deeds, a person will be assigned a place either in Heaven or Hell. We ask Him for Heaven and we seek refuge in Him from Hell.

#### **9.6 Destiny (Qadar)**

Every Muslim must believe that his or her destiny is firmly in the hands of God. The outcome of every intention, action, and effort is subject to the Will of God. It is obligatory upon a person to make a sound choice and strive utmost for the best, but the outcome will be as according to the Will of God. God is fully aware of our past, present, and future and all that is apparent and hidden. God Almighty always gives the results that are in the best interest of a person. This faith in destiny protects a person from disappointments and depressions.

No failure, setback, hurdle, or calamity in life should disappoint you to the point of leaving you feeling hopeless of God’s help. At the same time, no achievement, success, or profit should allow one to become proud and arrogant. We must always remember that all gains are from God and are a result of His mercy.

For a person to be a Muslim, it is necessary to believe in these six articles of faith.

### **10. Five Pillars of Islam**

Once a person declares faith, he must strive to be mindful of it at all the times and make it stronger. For that purpose, Islam obligates five acts of worship which are known as the five pillars of Islam.

#### **10.1 Testimony (Kalimah)**

Also known as ‘shahada’ it is a testimony that bears witness and affirms the belief that “There is no God worthy of worship except God, and Muhammad (Pbuh) is His Messenger and Servant.”

The first part of this affirmation deals with monotheism (uncompromising belief in the Oneness of God), and this is the core principle of Islam. Associating anybody or anything with God is idolatry and is unacceptable and an unforgivable sin. Any other sin could be forgiven by God if He so wishes but ascribing partners to God cannot be pardoned. In this connection the Qur'an says:

“Surely God does not forgive that a partner is ascribed to Him and He forgives anything else except that for whomsoever He wills. Whoever ascribes a partner to God devises (commits) a grave sin.” (4:48)

However, if a person realizes his mistake and corrects it and repents it during his lifetime, this too can be forgiven as God is always kind and Merciful.

A Muslim is expected to adhere to this testimony strictly, and only then does one remain on the straight path, thus protecting himself from going astray.

The second part of the affirmation states that Muhammad (Pbuh) is God's Messenger and Slave. This affirmation clearly indicates that he was also a human and worshipper of God. Although Muslims revere Muhammad (Pbuh) as a Prophet of God, he cannot and should not be elevated to equal God. Islam makes this fact very clear for the believers; in no way should Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh) be venerated as God, nor divine. It is also implied in the second part that since Muhammad (Pbuh) is the Messenger of God, it is incumbent upon a believer to trust Muhammad (Pbuh) and obey all his instructions.

## **10.2 Prayers (Salat)**

Salat means the offering of prayers to the One and Only God. This involves fixed physical positions which include standing, bowing, and prostrating, requiring the recitation of some Qur'anic verses in a sequence. The prayer must be performed in accordance with the instructions given by Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh), and this has to be offered five times a day at fixed timings only. The prayer keeps the faith of a Believer in God vividly alive in his heart. Prayer is the best way to communicate with God and Islam gives us this opportunity five times a day.

“You alone we worship and to You alone we turn for help. Guide us to the straight path.” (1:5-6)

Prayer is the foremost basic manifestation of faith and basic condition for success (in the Here and the Hereafter). As mentioned in the Qur'an, “Successful indeed are the believers who are humble in their prayers.” (23:1-2)

Muslims pray individually and in congregation in a mosque. They face Mecca while offering prayer. Muslims of the entire world face Mecca while praying, and this way they unify their action in the same direction. It is obligatory on every Muslim male to go to the mosque and pray all five salats in congregation if they reside within certain distance from the mosque. Under certain condi-

tions, they can pray individually.

The five daily prayers are:

1. Fajr: The early morning prayer – performed after dawn and before sunrise.
2. Zuhr: The early afternoon prayer – performed after midday until late afternoon.
3. Asr: The late afternoon prayer – performed late afternoon until just before sunset.
4. Maghrib: The sunset prayer – performed immediately after sunset.
5. Isha: The night prayer – performed one and half hour after sunset until dawn.

### **10.3 Fasting (Sawm)**

It is a religious obligation of every adult Muslim who is physically and medically fit to fast from dawn to dusk during the month of Ramadan. However, people who are sick, elderly, or are travelers are exempted under the condition that they feed the poor or compensate for the lost days by fasting some other time of the year. Muslims generally have a light meal before the start of fasting and take normal food after sunset. During fasting, one must abstain from eating, drinking, and physical relations with one's spouse.

### **10.4 Alms tax (Zakat)**

This is the fourth pillar of Islam. It is obligatory on every adult Muslim to donate 2.5% of his or her surplus wealth (savings) over which one lunar year has elapsed to the needy, destitute, and poor people in the community. The word 'zakat' means 'to purify'. So, by paying zakat, a Muslim is purifying his or her wealth. The underlying principle of zakat is to encourage the concept of charity thereby helping one to overcome greed, hoarding instincts, and attachment to wealth and worldly possessions. Zakat is paid on assets like jewelry, monetary savings, investment in shares, bonds, agricultural products, business stock and properties excluding an individual and his family's primary dwelling place.

### **10.5 Pilgrimage to Mecca (Hajj)**

Visiting Mecca for performing Hajj at least once in a lifetime is the fifth obligatory duty of a Muslim. However, this must be fulfilled only if one is in a position to afford the journey financially, if they are physically able to do so, if the journey is safe, and all the other requirements of one's family needs are met. If a Muslim does not have sufficient means to fulfill this obligation, he or she is exempt.

## **11. Hadith, Sunnah, and Shariah**

### **11.1 Hadith**

The word 'hadith' means news, tale, or report. In the Islamic context, a hadith means a saying, statement, or utterance by Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh). All

authentic sayings, actions, and approvals of the Prophet are called hadith, and these prophetic quotes are collected in books as ahadith. Muslims refer to these ahadith for religious guidance in matters of life.

### **11.2 Sunnah**

‘Sunnah’ means a system or a path. In the Islamic context, it implies following or abiding by the practices and traditions of Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh) which are found in his lifestyle.

Whatever Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh) did or refrained from doing is called a sunnah. Every Muslim tries his best to emulate or follow the example of the Prophet in his day-to-day life and dealings.

### **11.3 Shariah Law**

The word ‘shariah’ in Arabic denotes a path leading to water. In the Islamic context, it means “laws laid down or governed by Islam” hence the word can be interpreted to mean ‘Islamic Law’. The sources of Shariah laws are Qur’an, hadith, and Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh). Shariah provides guidance for the welfare of a person and society in this world, and success in the Hereafter.

## **12. Islam as a Way of Life**

Islam is a complete way of life (a deen), not merely a religion. No aspect of life falls outside the realm of religion. Islam covers all aspects of life from the cradle to the grave. Islam teaches a complete way of dealing in all situations, during good times and bad times, in adversity and prosperity. Islam teaches us to be good in our relationships, be they in family life (husband-wife, parent-children, brother-sister, etc.) or social life (employer-employee, leader-follower, etc.) It also teaches the art of dealing with oneself, with others, with our Lord and Creator, and other creations in the world.

## **13. The Day of Judgment and Life after Death**

The Day of Judgment is the day of meeting with the Creator and getting rewarded or punished as per our deeds.

Death is a reality no one on earth can deny. The Qur’an states that every soul must taste death. There is no disagreement over the fact that eventually all living creatures must eventually die. Pondering over this fact with sincerity will be sufficient in opening the door to wisdom and guidance. What is going to happen to us after death?

“Every soul shall have a taste of death: And only on the Day of Judgment shall you be paid your full recompense. Only he who is saved far from the Fire and

admitted to the Garden will have attained the object (of Life). For the life of this world is but goods and chattels of deception.” (3:185)

This verse explains the real objective of our life. Our final destination is the everlasting life of the Hereafter. Where we end up finally, in Paradise or in Hell, solely depends on what we seek and how we live our lives here on earth. Like in every other endeavor, in order to achieve success, we have to adopt and follow a well-defined plan; so too with our God-given life: in order to succeed we have to follow a plan that is sound and is in strict compliance with God’s wishes. Only then will we succeed in the ‘Here’ and in the ‘Hereafter’.

“O you who believe! Be careful of (your duty to) God and seek means of nearness to Him and strive hard in His way that you may be successful.” (5:35)

Muslims believe in The Day of Judgment. Muslims believe that there is life after death. This life is short and is a trial ground for a person to prove himself worthy of an abode in Paradise. The day will come when the entire universe comes to an end. All the dead people will be resurrected and gathered in one place before God, their Creator.

Everyone will be in a state of shock and despair. Each one will try to fend for themselves alone. All those gathered would have to give an account of the deeds they performed while on earth. The Day of Judgment will prove to be a day of severe reckoning for each and every one; however, the ones with whom God is pleased will have a sigh of relief—they are the ones who will be successful in the real sense.

### **Life after death**

Life in the Hereafter will be eternal. All those who believed in God, followed His commands, and led a pious and good life will be rewarded by God with a place in Paradise (jannah). The permanent abode of those who rejected God and do evil will be Hell (jahannam). On that Day will God’s justice come to pass, and as per His promise He has made in the Qur’an, no one will be denied justice.

## **14. Salvation**

Salvation is the most important motivation and the ultimate goal of all the people who follow any religion. Every religion offers its own theory of salvation. Every person needs to strive for salvation.

In Islam, there are two major conditions concerning salvation.

First and most paramount of all requirements is that a person must accept the sole sovereignty of God and avoid ‘shirk’, which is believing that someone or something has the same powers or attributes as God. For salvation, a person



must believe that God is the only one worthy of worship. Any sin which is lesser in nature than shirk can be forgiven by God, but God will not tolerate shirk even one bit.

If a person stops indulging in shirk as soon as he realizes his mistake and does sincere repentance (tawbah), God is most merciful. He promises forgiveness even for shirk, as long as a person is still alive.

“Those who have disbelieved and died in disbelief, the earth full of gold would not be accepted from any of them if one offered it as a ransom. They will have a painful punishment, and they will have no helpers.” (3:91)

Second, everyone will be responsible for their own deeds. They will get the rewards for their own actions; they will neither be asked for the actions of others nor would anybody else bear the burden of their actions. This makes it mandatory for every person to lead the life in a righteous manner to attain salvation. Everyone is accountable for their own deeds and cannot depend on others for salvation.

In Islam, salvation is a direct deal between a person and God Himself. There is no one who will be able to intercede on behalf of a person except Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh) and persons whom God will permit on the Day of Judgment. This fact puts emphasis on a person to be sincere, active, working toward his own salvation, and not depending on someone else for their salvation.

In Islam, a person is expected to live a righteous and pious life, but to err is human and human beings have many weaknesses. If a person falls prey to wrongdoing because of human weakness, he is supposed to realize his mistakes, sincerely repent, and try not to indulge in them again. If such a person will come to God, full of sins, God will pardon them, if He chooses to do so. God is most Gracious, Most Merciful. This is a strong motivational factor for the people to act in a righteous manner and do as much as they can to attain salvation.

Every person who was born on this earth and attained the age of maturity was given a full chance to comprehend the truth of God's existence. God also sent down His guidance throughout the ages through His messengers and His books. True guidance reaches every person. If a person keeps his heart open and follows the call from within, he will be able to know and recognize the sovereignty of God and comprehend the true purpose of this life. However, if a person dies as a non-believer in God, then God is the Just Judge. He will judge the person as per His Wisdom.

In Islam, a true believer does not stop at simply striving for salvation. A Muslim must always strive to reach higher ranks in Paradise. There are ranks and levels in Paradise. The person with a higher rank will be rewarded much more in comfort and amenities than the person with a lower rank. It is said that a

person of lower rank will look towards the person of higher rank in the same manner as we are looking at the stars from the earth. This is a strong motivation for a person to strive utmost to attain higher ranks.

## **15. Purpose of Life**

“And I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me.” (51:56)

The purpose of this life is to know and recognize our Creator and our self. We have to follow God’s instructions and lead a life that is worthy and in accordance with the guidance provided by our Creator. If we make an effort to know our higher purpose, it will help us recognize our Creator in the process. We are not only flesh, bone and blood; but we carry our soul within our body. The soul has a higher purpose and higher inclination. If we listen to the calls of our soul, it will lead us to recognize our Creator. Once we recognize our Creator it will become easy to follow His instructions.

Knowing our Creator and ourselves is intricately inter-related, as mentioned in the Qur’an: “And be not like those who forgot God, so He made them forget themselves. Those are the defiantly disobedient.” (59:19)

Our Creator has placed an urge within ourselves to seek guidance and recognize the truth, and for the very same purpose He has provided us with necessary tools: our senses and our soul. We therefore need to correctly use these tools provided by our Creator and make a sincere effort to seek His guidance and follow the Truth. Greed and arrogance are the two biggest obstacles in this process. We need to make sure that these hurdles do not block our way toward achieving our goal.

To act as representative of God and try utmost to benefit all the creations around us is also part of our purpose on this earth.

## **16. Signs of God**

Signs proclaiming God’s greatness are all around us and within us. We only need to be aware of and recognize these signs.

The Qur’an puts great emphasis on pondering upon these wonderful and marvelous signs and recognizing that God is the source of them. This aspect is repeatedly mentioned in the Qur’an and it also gives us dire warnings of ignoring these signs. The following are some verses referring to Signs of God.

•“A blessed Book which We have revealed to you, (O Muhammad (Pbuh)), that they might reflect upon its verses and that those of understanding would be reminded.” (38:29)

•“Then do they not reflect upon the Qur’an, or are there locks upon (their) hearts?” (47:24)

•“Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of the night and the day, and the [great] ships which sail through the sea with that which benefits people, and what God has sent down from the heavens of rain, giving life thereby to the earth after its lifelessness and dispersing therein every [kind of] moving creature, and [His] directing of the winds and the clouds controlled between the heaven and earth are signs for a people who use reason.” (2:164)

•“He created the heavens and earth in truth. High is He above what they associate with Him. He created man from a sperm-drop; then at once he is a clear adversary. And the grazing livestock He has created for you; in them is warmth and [numerous] benefits, and from them you eat... So, will you not be reminded?” (16:3-17)

•“And of His signs is that He created you from dust; then, suddenly you were human beings dispersing [throughout the earth]. And of His signs is that He created for you from yourselves mates that you may find tranquility in them; and He placed between you affection and mercy. Indeed, in that are signs for a people who give thought. And of His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth and the diversity of your languages and your colors. Indeed, in that are signs for those of knowledge. And of His signs is your sleep by night and day and your seeking of His bounty. Indeed, in that are signs for a people who listen. And of His signs is [that] He shows you the lightning [causing] fear and aspiration, and He sends down rain from the sky by which He brings to life the earth after its lifelessness. Indeed, in that are signs for a people who use reason. And of His signs is that the heaven and earth stand [i.e., remain] by His command. Then when He calls you with a [single] call from the earth, immediately you will come forth.” (30:20-25)

## **17. Accountability of Humankind**

Our creator has provided us with tools to recognize Him. He has also provided His signs within the universe and within us. Our soul urges us from time to time to recognize those signs and submit to our Creator. If we ignore or suppress our soul and fail to recognize our Creator, we will be held accountable on the Day of Judgment.

We are commanded not to follow something blindly of which we have no knowledge. Our Creator, God, will question us as to why we did not use our faculties of hearing, seeing, and thinking.

“And do not pursue that of which you have no knowledge. Indeed, the hearing,

the sight and the heart - about all those [one] will be questioned.” (17:36)

God Himself will be a witness over us on the Day of Judgment.

“We will show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth. But is it not sufficient concerning your Lord that He is, over all things, a Witness?” (41:53)

God is knower of all that is manifest and all that is hidden. A person will be held accountable if he chooses to ignore the intuitions of his heart. He will show us what our souls used to whisper to us, and no one will be able deny it.

“And We have already created man and know what his soul whispers to him, and We are closer to him than [his] jugular vein.” (50:16)

We will have to give our account by ourselves, and no one will be with us to support or defend us, all our relations and associations will be of no avail to us.

“[It will be said to them], ‘And you have certainly come to Us alone as We created you the first time, and you have left whatever We bestowed upon you behind you. And We do not see with you your ‘intercessors’ which you claimed that they were among you associates [of God]. It has [all] been severed between you, and lost from you is what you used to claim.’” (6:94)

The end result of all the above is that a person will be a witness against his or her own self on the Day of Judgment.

“To your Lord, that Day, is the [place of] permanence. Man will be informed that Day of what he sent ahead and kept back. Rather, man, against himself, will be a witness.” (75:12-14)

“[It will be said], ‘Read your record. Sufficient is yourself against you this Day as accountant.’” (17:14)

## **18. “O Mankind” Verses**

The Qur’an is a book of guidance for people in general and for the believers in particular. It is the textbook of Islam. The Qur’an has been revealed for the guidance of all humanity.

In the Qur’an, there are numerous direct addresses to mankind by God, and these are very thought-provoking. They serve as powerful reminders compelling everyone to comprehend and think deeply about what God is saying to them.

Addresses of the Qur’an to mankind take various forms like “O Mankind” and “O children of Adam”. Mankind is also referred to with phrases like “People

of understanding”, “People who think”, “People who contemplate”, “People who reason”, “People who are reminded/who take heed”, “People who pay attention”, and so on.

The following are few examples where the main audience of the Qur’an—humanity—is directly addressed multiple times.

•“O mankind, indeed, We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of God is the most righteous of you. Indeed, God is Knowing and Acquainted.” (49:13)

•“O mankind, fear your Lord, who created you from one soul and created from it its mate and dispersed from both of them many men and women. And fear God, through whom you ask one another, and the wombs. Indeed, God is ever, over you, an Observer.” (4:1)

•“O mankind, worship your Lord, who created you and those before you, that you may become righteous. [He] who made for you the earth a bed [spread out] and the sky a ceiling and sent down from the sky, rain and brought forth thereby fruits as provision for you. So do not attribute to God equals while you know [that there is nothing similar to Him].” (2:21-22)

•“O mankind, what has deceived you concerning your Lord, the Generous, Who created you, proportioned you, and balanced you? In whatever form He willed has He assembled you. No! But you deny the Recompense. And indeed, [appointed] over you are keepers, noble and recording.” (82:6-11)

•“O Mankind, the Messenger has come to you with the truth from your Lord, so believe; it is better for you. But if you disbelieve—then indeed, to God belongs whatever is in the heavens and earth. And ever is God Knowing and Wise.” (4:170)

## **19. Sayings of Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh)**

Multiple volumes have been compiled on sayings of Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh). Here are just few examples to get the glimpses of beauty and wisdom contained in his words.

•“No man is true believer unless he desires for his brother that which he desires for himself.”

- “Kill not your hearts with excess of eating and drinking.”
- “Every good act is charity.”
- “The exercise of religious duties will not atone for the fault of abusive tongue.”
- “Whoever has been given gentleness has been given a good portion in this world and the next.”
- “Verily, to honor an old man is showing respect to God.”
- “No father has given his child anything better than good manners.”
- “Whoever loves to meet God, God loves to meet him.”
- “God said, “Verily My compassions overcome My wrath.”
- “Trust in God but tie your camel.”
- “God is not merciful to him who is not merciful to mankind.”
- “Be persistent in good actions.”
- “Paradise lies at the feet of the mother.”
- “An hour’s contemplation is better than a year’s adoration.”
- “Seek knowledge from cradle to grave.”
- “He who knows his own self, knows God.”
- “Learn to know thyself.”
- “He who wishes to enter the Paradise at the best door must please his father and mother.”
- “The world and all the things in it are valuable; but the most valuable thing in the world is a virtuous woman.”
- “God enjoins you to treat women well, for they are your mothers, daughters, and aunts.”

## **20. Farewell Sermon of Muhammad (Pbuh)**

This is the sermon Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh) delivered at the time of his last

pilgrimage. This beautiful sermon summarized the doctrine of Islam concisely and effectively.

After praising and thanking God he said:

“O People, lend me an attentive ear, for I know not whether after this year, I shall ever be amongst you again. Therefore, listen to what I am saying to you very carefully and take these words to those who could not be present here today.

O People, just as you regard this month, this day, this city as sacred, so regard the life and property of every Muslim as a sacred trust. Return the goods entrusted to you to their rightful owners. Hurt no one so that no one may hurt you. Remember that you will indeed meet your Lord, and that He will indeed reckon your deeds. God has forbidden you to take usury (interest), therefore all interest obligation shall henceforth be waived. Your capital, however, is yours to keep. You will neither inflict nor suffer any inequity. God has judged that there shall be no interest and that all the interest due to Abbas ibn ‘Abd’al Muttalib (Prophet’s uncle) shall henceforth be waived...

Beware of Satan, for the safety of your religion. He has lost all hope that he will ever be able to lead you astray in big things, so beware of following him in small things.

O People, it is true that you have certain rights with regard to your women, but they also have rights over you. Remember that you have taken them as your wives only under God’s trust and with His permission. If they abide by your right, then to them belongs the right to be fed and clothed in kindness. Do treat your women well and be kind to them for they are your partners and committed helpers. And it is your right that they do not make friends with any one of whom you do not approve, as well as never to be unchaste.

O People, listen to me in earnest, worship God, say your five daily prayers (salat), fast during the month of Ramadan, and give your wealth in Zakat. Perform Hajj if you can afford to.

All mankind is from Adam and Eve. An Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab nor does a non-Arab has any superiority over an Arab; also, a white has no superiority over black nor a black has any superiority over white except by piety and good action. Learn that every Muslim is a brother to every Muslim and that the Muslims constitute one brotherhood. Nothing shall be legitimate to a Muslim which belongs to a fellow Muslim unless it was given freely and willingly. Do not, therefore, do injustice to yourselves.

Remember, one day you will appear before God and answer your deeds. So, beware, do not stray from the path of righteousness after I am gone.

O People, no prophet or apostle will come after me and no new faith will be born. Reason well, therefore, O People, and understand words which I convey to you. I leave behind me two things: the Qur'an and my example, the Sunnah, and if you follow these you will never go astray.

All those who listen to me shall pass on my words to others and those to others again; and may the last ones understand my words better than those who listen to me directly. Be my witness, O God, that I have conveyed your message to your people”

## **21. Conclusion**

I hope this concise introduction will help the reader to grasp the philosophy and faith of Islam and pave the way to dive deeper into more detailed study of Islam.

I have made my meager efforts to act upon the words of our beloved Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh): “Take these words to those who could not be present here today.” And I hope this chain will continue unbroken until the end of time.

## **Further Readings**

References:

- 1.Introduction to Islam: By Maulana Maududi.
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