

UNDERSTANDING ISLAM

ALLAH

- The word for “God” in the Arabic language
- All Arabs—both Muslim and Christian—use “Allah” for God
- God is one, but God’s attributes are many: “The 99 Names of God” refer to God’s descriptive names.

ISLAM

- Means *submission*
- One who submits is a MUSLIM (or MOSLEM)
- Submission to what? Submission to “the will of Allah”
- How does one know the will of Allah? It is recorded in the Koran.

KORAN (QURAN)

- A record of the Word of God
- Revealed to “The Prophet”—MUHAMMAD — by the angel Gabriel between 610 and 632 A.D.; first compiled about 650 A.D.
- Contains 114 chapters or *suras*; verses are called *ayat*
- Written in the Arabic language of the 7th century, now known as classical Arabic
- Should be recited by all Muslims in Arabic, the chosen language of God
- Text has remained unchanged over the centuries
- Primary source of Muslim faith and practice
- The opening seven verses of the Koran:

“In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful
Praise be to God, Lord of the Universe,
The Compassionate, the Merciful,
Sovereign of the Day of Judgment!
You alone we worship, and to You alone we turn for help.
Guide us to the straight path,
The path of those whom You have favored,
Not of those who have incurred Your wrath,
Nor of those who have gone astray.”

HADDITH

- A reliably transmitted report of what The Prophet said, did, or approved
- The Haddiths comprise the SUNNA, the practice and example of the Prophet
- The second authority for Muslims
- The Prophet said . . .
 - ▶ "God has no mercy on one who has no mercy for others."
 - ▶ "None of you truly believes until he wishes for his brother what he wishes for himself."
 - ▶ "He who eats his fill while his neighbor goes without food is not a believer."
 - ▶ "The truthful and trusty businessman is associated with the prophets, the saints, and the martyrs."
 - ▶ "Powerful is not he who knocks the other down, indeed powerful is he who controls himself in a fit of anger."
 - ▶ "God does not judge according to your bodies and appearances but He scans your hearts and looks into your deeds."

THE 99 NAMES OF GOD

1. God
2. The Infinitely Good
3. The Merciful
4. The King
5. The Holy
6. The Flawless
7. The Faithful
8. The Guardian
9. The Eminent
10. The Compellor
11. The Proud
12. The Creator
13. The Producer
14. The Fashioner
15. He who is full of forgiveness
16. The Dominator
17. The Bestower
18. The Provider
19. The Opener
20. The Omniscient
21. He who contracts
22. He who expands
23. The Abaser
24. The Exalter
25. The Honourer
26. He who humbles
27. The All-Hearing
28. The All-Seeing
29. The Arbitrator
30. The Just
31. The Benevolent
32. The Totally Aware
33. The Mild
34. The Tremendous
35. The All-Forgiving
36. The Grateful
37. The Most High
38. The Great
39. The All-Preserver
40. The Nourisher
41. The Reckoner
42. The Majestic
43. The Generous
44. The All-Observant
45. The Answerer of prayers
46. The Vast
47. The Wise
48. The Lovingkind
49. The All-Glorious
50. The Raiser of the dead
51. The Universal Witness
52. The Truth
53. The Guardian
54. The Strong
55. The Firm
56. The Patron
57. The Praised
58. The Knower of each separate thing
59. The Beginner, The Cause
60. The Restorer
61. The Life-Giver
62. The Slayer
63. The Living
64. The Self-Existing
65. The Resourceful
66. The Magnificent
67. The Unique
68. The Eternal
69. The All-Powerful
70. The All-Determiner
71. The Promoter
72. The Postponer
73. The First
74. The Last
75. The Manifest
76. The Hidden
77. The Ruler
78. The Exalted
79. The Doer of Good
80. The Ever-relenting
81. The Avenger
82. The Effacer of sins
83. The All-pitying
84. The King of Absolute Sovereignty
85. The Lord of Majesty and Generosity
86. The Equitable
87. The Uniter
88. The Rich
89. The Enricher
90. The Protector
91. The Punisher
92. He who benefits
93. Light
94. The Guide
95. The Absolute Cause
96. The Everlasting
97. The Inheritor
98. The Right in Guidance
99. The Patient

Source:

Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali. *The Ninety-Nine Beautiful Names of God*. Translated by David B. Burrell and Nazih Daher. Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1995. Al-Ghazali lived 1058-1111 a.d., born in Central Asia, taught in Baghdad.

THE FIVE PILLARS OF ISLAM

① SHAHADA

- Declaration of Faith:
"There is no God except God, and Muhammad is the Prophet of God."
- The core belief of Islam

② SALAH

- Prayer
- Direct link between worshipers and God
- Five times a day facing Mecca (preceded by ablutions)
 - Dawn
 - Noon
 - Mid-afternoon
 - Sunset
 - Evening
- Preferably with others and preferably (but not necessarily) in a MOSQUE
- Community prayers at the mosque on Friday
- Prayers are led by the IMAM, chosen by the congregation
- Call to prayers is broadcast from the *mazzana* or MINARET (tower attached to the mosque) by the MUJAZZIN:

"God is most great. God is most great.
I testify that there is no god except God.

I testify that Mohammed is the prophet of God.

Come to prayer. Come to prayer.
Come to success in this life and the Hereafter!

God is most great. God is most great.
There is no god except God."

③ ZAKAT

- Religious Tax (almsgiving)
- The Prophet said: "Charity is a necessity for every Muslim."
- A portion of wealth (2½ % of savings)

set aside for the needy

- *Zakat* ("purification") is obligatory; *Sadaqa* ("sincere gift") is voluntary.

④ SAWM

- Fasting
- Occurs during the month of *Ramadan*, the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar
- Upcoming dates for Ramadan; ends with the Eid Al-Fitr
 - 2002 — Nov. 6 - Dec. 5
 - 2003 — Oct. 26 - Nov. 25
 - 2004 — Oct. 15 - Nov. 13
 - 2005 — Oct. 4 - Nov. 3
- Abstain from food, drink, tobacco, sexual activity during the day
- Meals are taken at night
- The sick, pregnant, elderly, small children are excused, as are those on a journey (always to be made up later, if possible)

⑤ HAJJ

- Pilgrimage
- Travel to Mecca, birthplace of Muhammad, at least once in a lifetime
- Obligatory for those who can afford it
- Purification and spiritual renewal
- Grand Mosque in Mecca contains the KAABA (small cube-shaped building), focal point of the pilgrimage
- *Hajj* may be made only during the twelfth month of the Islamic lunar calendar; *Umrah* may be made any time
- Mecca receives about 2 million pilgrims a year, including 6,000 from the U.S.
- Ends with the Eid al-Adha, Feast of the Sacrifice (re: Abraham and Ishmael)
- *Hajji*: one who has made the hajj

ORIGIN AND DIFFUSION OF ISLAM

Origin: Muhammed Ibn Abdallah, of the tribe of the Quraysh, was born in Mecca about 570 A.D. He was ostracized from Mecca in 622 A.D. and fled to Medina, a journey known as the *hegira*. In 630 A.D. he returned to Mecca where he died in 632 A.D. During his life he received the divine word of God, and his utterances were written down and became the Koran. He established monotheism in the Mecca and Medina, the culture hearth of Islam, and promoted the necessity and universality of "submitting" to the will of one God, Allah.

Diffusion: During Muhammed's lifetime, Islam came to be established on the Arabian Peninsula. Within 100 years of Muhammed's death, Islam extended from the Ganges River of India into Europe, where the advance of Islam was halted at the Battle of Tours (France) in 732 A.D. For almost a century after 661 A.D., the Muslim world was united under the caliphs sitting in Damascus. This was the Umayyad Empire. In 750 A.D., the Abbasid dynasty seized power and moved the capital to Baghdad. Soon thereafter political unity began to crumble.

THE WORLD'S MUSLIMS

- There are over 1.2 billion Muslims living in almost every country of the world.
- The follow countries account for 7 out of 10 of the world's Muslims:

Country	Total Population	Muslim Population	Percent Muslim
Indonesia	228 million	198 million	87
India	1,030 million	144 million	14
Pakistan	145 million	141 million	97
Bangladesh	131 million	115 million	88
Turkey	67 million	66 million	99
Egypt	70 million	66 million	94
Iran	66 million	65 million	99
Nigeria	127 million	64 million	50

- A slight majority of the world's Muslims live in South and Southeast Asia.
- There is only one Arab nation on the above list, Egypt.
- Less than 20% of the world's Muslims live in Arab countries.
- There are 18 million Muslims in China, where they comprise 1.5% of the population. This is only a few million less than the population of Iraq or Saudi Arabia.
- There are about 5½ million Muslims in the United States. There are more Muslims than Presbyterians (4 million), Episcopalians (2.5 million), or Jews (4.3 million).

SUFISM

The mysticism (or "inner dimension") of Islam; the science of the direct knowledge of God. An offshoot seeks reassurance in psychic phenomena, communication with the JINN, trance dancing, magic, and prodigies such as eating glass and piercing the body. The most famous sufis are the "whirling dervishes" of Turkey.

FROM THE KORAN

“It is He Who sent down to thee (step by step), in truth, the Book, confirming what went before it; and He sent down the Law (of Moses) and the Gospel (of Jesus) before this, as a guide to mankind, and He sent down the criterion (of judgment between right and wrong).”

“Say: ‘To whom belongeth all that is in the heavens and on earth?’ Say: ‘To God. He hath inscribed for Himself (the rule of) Mercy. That He will gather you together for the Day of Judgment, there is no doubt whatever. It is they who have lost their own souls, that will not believe’.”

Search and listen to the Koran on-line:

IslamiCity

<http://db.Islam.org:81/Quran/ssearch.htm>

Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia

<http://www.iad.org>

FROM THE HADDITHS

"A man walking along a path felt very thirsty. Reaching a well he descended into it, drank his fill and came up. Then he saw a dog with its tongue hanging out, trying to lick up mud to quench its thirst. The man saw that the dog was feeling the same thirst as he had felt so he went down into the well again and filled his shoe with water and gave the dog a drink. God forgave his sins for this action." The Prophet was asked: "Messenger of God, are we rewarded for kindness towards animals? He said, "There is a reward for kindness to every living thing."

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