

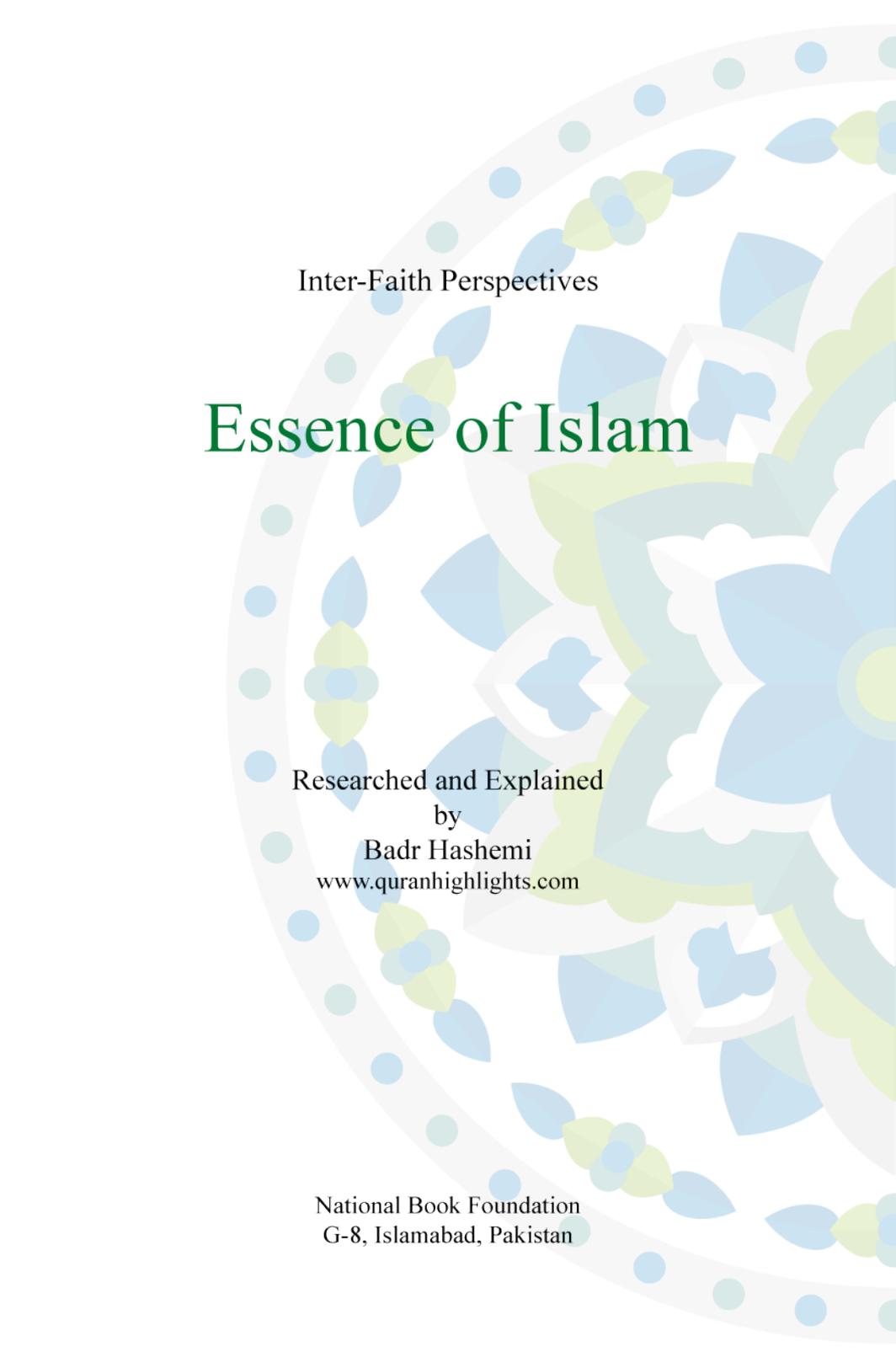


Inter-Faith Perspectives

Essence of Islam

Badr Hashemi



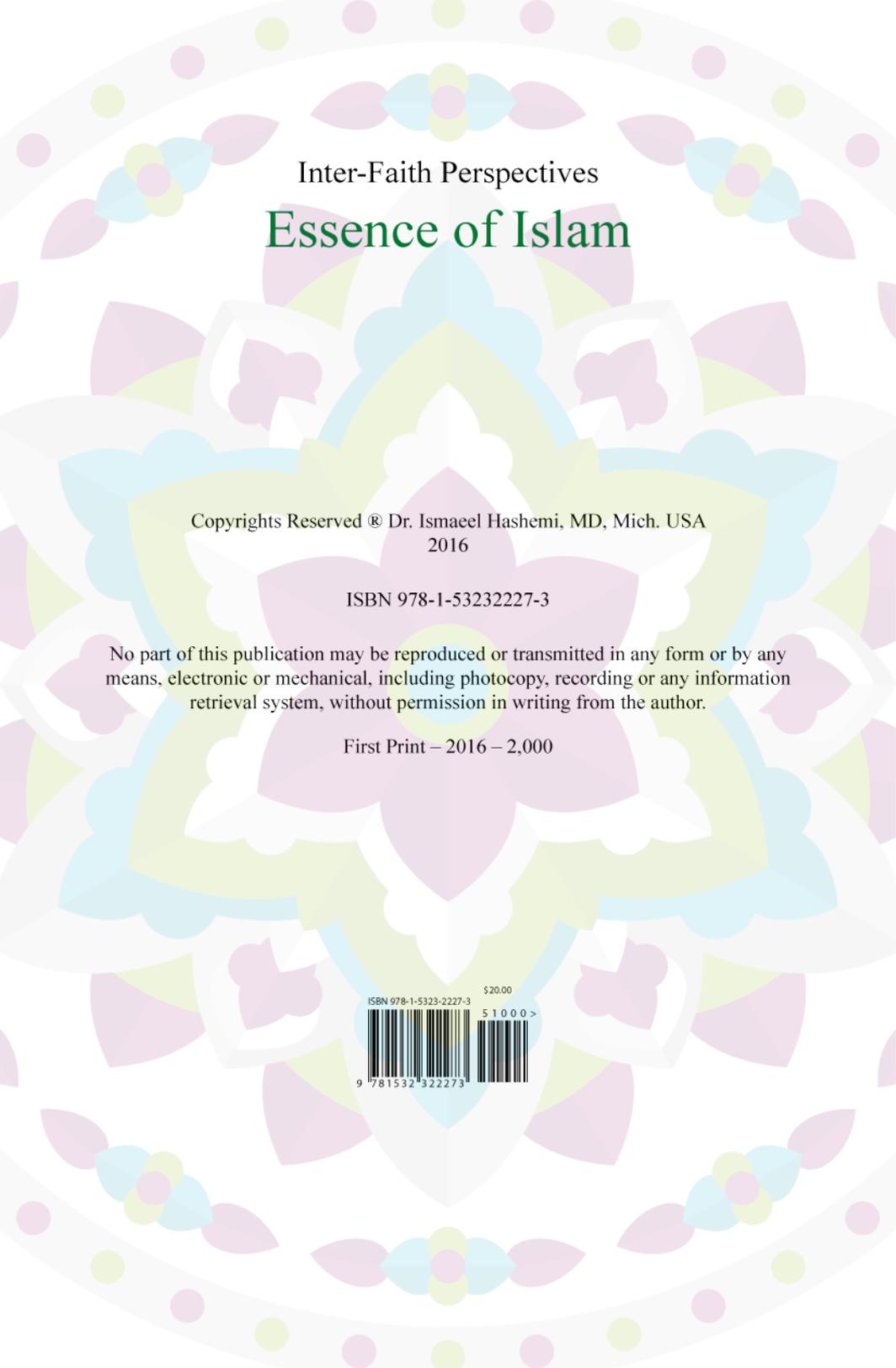


Inter-Faith Perspectives

Essence of Islam

Researched and Explained
by
Badr Hashemi
www.quranhighlights.com

National Book Foundation
G-8, Islamabad, Pakistan



Inter-Faith Perspectives
Essence of Islam

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Opening

The concept of the existence of a Supreme Divine Entity is a living reality with humankind – from eternity to infinity.

The Qur'an tells us that

Allah – The One Lord Supreme has been sending Messengers to various nations with Messages in their own language.

The Qur'an mentions 25 by name, The Torah names some 42, and The Bible lists more than 60.

All Divine Messengers - known, less known or not known - carried a two-dimensional message to their people: Allah – The One God of Unshared Divinity, Unity and Uniqueness; The Resurrection, The Time of Judgment and its Correlatives.

Everyone, regardless of one's ethnicity, gender, social status and riches, is equal in the Sight of Allah; accountable for his/her deeds, conduct and behavior during the worldly life at the Time of Judgment.

All Prophets advocated goodwill, compassion and mercy to all human beings regardless of gender, ethnicity and social status.

Mohammad was the last in the series of Divine Messengers, who carried the Last Divine Message to humankind.

He was The Alumni of The Prophethood.

This book presents the Teachings of Mohammad's Message - Islam in the comparative perspectives of two other leading monotheist religions of the world: Christianity and Judaism.

Islam reverts in Abraham, the First of The Muslim.

Mohammad restored 'pure monotheism' of Abraham where stress is on Allah's transcendence, majesty, omnipotence and untrammelled Will, and upon the submission of one's will to Allah's Will, surrender to Allah's Commands and acceptance of Allah's Judgment – a special originality within the framework of the monotheistic religions.

Islam is a faith of exemplary simplicity.

It presents no mysteries, no myths, no dogmas.

Mohammad's Message gives a new dimension and direction to life.

Islam recognizes that there are a plurality of religions on this planet earth, and gives the right to individuals to choose the path which they believe to be true.

Religion is not to be, and was never, forced upon individuals against their free will, and the living examples from the life of the Prophet are an epitome of the Message of the Qur'an – 02:256 and 109:06 - which promote religious tolerance, inter-faith harmony and sets the guideline for the Muslims' interaction with people of other faiths:

'...There is no compulsion in matters of faith or religion...'

'.... To you is your religion; to me is my religion'.



Opinion

..... For me religion is very important and I think people should always take their time for it. So it was very important for me to take time for 'Essence of Islam' because as I could read you spent a lot of time, research and also used your publications for it..... I appreciate the amount of time & work you spent in this book.... I really, really love it..... I don't know what it is, but somehow I can feel the power this book is giving to me..... The more I read, the more I feel its love and power. To get to know more about Allah, the Qur'an, Islam and everything that has to do with this wonderful religion.....

René Riba
Vienna, Austria

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اسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي
لَهُ الْمُلْكُ الْقَيُّومُ
لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ
مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يَشْفَعُ عِنْدَهُ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ
يَعْلَمُ بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَأَنْفُسِهِمْ
مَا كَانُوا بِشَيْءٍ مِنْ عِلْمِهِ إِلَّا بِمَا
شَاءَ وَسِعَ كُرْسِيُّهُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ
وَهُوَ الْعَلِيُّ الْعَظِيمُ

محمد بن عبد الله



Zero Page

The Qur'an provides a vision to create a society where we all respect one another and help one another to achieve nearness to Allah - The One God. By indifference, our children and younger parents are living in a social environment where goalposts are different. At home we rarely have family time to cultivate Islamic values in them, and at school or work place they are in a variant set up of social and cultural influence.

At the same time, they are facing insurmountable challenges of their faith - teachers and class mates ridicule them as terrorists, their science projects are portrayed as bombs, their parents are alarmed if they innocently utter '*Allah o Akbar*' (Allah is Great) in a public place. Head coverings of Muslim young ladies are pulled away in public and are denied entry to stores and market places, and assaulted in public places.¹

The frequency of acts of violence, discrimination and harassment is on a dramatic rise, both in North America and Europe, hyped by the mainstream partisan electronic media with social media at the grassroots' level.

¹ Our children are prime victims of Islamophobia and extremism – 7% of whom are physically beaten up; bullying has increased by 660%, and about 30% no longer use a Muslim name. Sound Vision. Jun. 12, 2016. Target killing continues in USA; an Arab murdered in Tulsa, 2 Imams shot dead in NY, and a mother and a daughter assaulted in Chicago – Sound Vision. Aug. 16, 2016. None of these were declared 'hate crimes' despite mounting evidence to the contrary. A Muslim woman was asked to remove her niqab or exit the Family Dollar outlet in Gary, Indiana. The Huffington Post. August 4, 2016. In Prague's Old Town Square a group faked an attack by 'Islamists' where a jeep full of bearded men dressed in military garb mixed with traditional Middle Eastern attire drove into the square and began shooting Kalashnikovs into the sky and chanting 'Allah-u Akbar.' Washington Post. August 22, 2016. This was an act of mockery!



The milieu is depressing. And it has deeply sunk into my heart with concern and pain. At times, I have felt helpless, yet at times my heart perceives a light of hope. Thus, it is with this hope that I have put together some of the basic information on Islam, the Qur'an and the Prophet Mohammad, may Allah bless him always with peace and honor, that may help our older children and younger parents in developing some familiarity with a faith to which they are intrinsically connected – a faith seeking peace; a faith teaching harmony and coexistence; a faith preaching repentance and reconciliation.

It is purposely structured in a way that facilitates inter-faith interaction with boys and girls, men and women of other faiths. I see this little booklet as an addition to the existing literature, not in competition, but with a slight difference. It conveys Islam's universal teachings and thus it is a living introduction to Islam - for both Muslims and non-Muslims.

All material is sourced from my research and publications.² I have ensured that the text is academically rigorous in regard to classical Islamic sources and the Islamic sciences. Nevertheless, it does not absolve me of running into some inaccuracies and/or flaws. In that case please do let me know if you come across such weaknesses, and Allah would reward you abundantly.

The template of faith which should be inscribed on our hearts³ is simple. It is the Faith in One God – Allah, Who has no family. And submission to The One God is a great religion. And the system of life that combines both is called Islam; those who live a life by this system are Muslims. Adam, the first male, and Eve, the first female of the human species, were Muslims.

All the great names mentioned in The Torah, The Injil⁴ and The Qur'an, whom Allah inspired with Divine Guidance to keep us on track of truth and righteousness were all Muslims – ranging from the most famous to the less known, as well as other who remain unknown to us - Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses,

² Posted at www.quranhighlights.com

³ Q.58:22.

⁴ The Divine Scripture, The Injil, revealed on to Prophet Jesus, son of Virgin Mary, may Allah bless both with peace and honor, does not seem to exist. Thus, reference to The Injil should be understood to mean the Bible.



Aaron, Ezra, Zachariah, John son of Zachariah, Jesus son of Mary and Mohammad. May Allah bless them with peace and honor.

It is a part of good mannerism that whenever the name of a Prophet is read, heard or mentioned, one should say: Peace and honor be upon him. And whenever, the Name of One God - Allah is read, heard or mentioned, one should say: The Exalted, The Almighty.

I always emphasize that we should cultivate the love of and respect for Allah and The Prophet Mohammad in our children. Tell them, time and again, that The Prophet is our best example, and his example is the one we must all aspire to. Thus, encourage children to do the same as The Prophet would do when it comes to decency, ethics and other issues.

Television, YouTube videos, Social Media, etc. are all accessible ways to harness great information – and disgraceful stuff too. Monitoring media consumption is absolutely necessary, no matter how busy, tired, or digitally illiterate we think we are as parents. Fix a time – say one or two hours every day - for gadget exposure. Never mistrust kids but keep a close and diligent watch. A pornography habit can be squashed if caught early enough. You can stop an embarrassing video/photo from being up/down loaded by simply being aware of what your child is doing online, and how you can ring-fence it.

As for television, sitting with children and watching the programs they do, shall not only make you aware of what they are watching, but it shall also make them aware that you are doing so. It is important as well to comment on what is immodest or inappropriate in these programs so children know, for instance, that staring at a ‘hot’ actor or actress or watching them in ‘mild nudity’ is wrong; it is un-Islamic!

There is a key Islamic concept that we learn from childhood, but it needs to be reiterated as children start becoming mature that ‘Allah is watching us like CCTV’; He knows if we are surfing and seeing something inappropriate online, texting with someone we should not, or posting things that neither He nor our parents would approve of.

It is also important to emphasize to our children from an early age that all actions, good and bad, count for the Life after death, and they are accountable for them. So while parents may be unaware of any



misdeeds, Allah knows them all. While He is Forgiving and Merciful, He shall also hold them and us accountable.

Let us try, as much as we can, to ignite the Spirit of Islam in our children through spending family time with them, creating an environment of moral and spiritual greatness, make this little book a part of their learning, and show-case ourselves as a role model.

Let us also capture the essence of the Qur'anic Ayat/Statement 24-27 of Surah/Chapter Ibrahim: a good tree gives good fruit, and a bad tree gives bad fruit - a parable also cited in The Torah, Psalm 1 and The Injil/Bible. The analogy is that a person with true faith and righteous conduct makes a good Muslim as well as a good citizen of this great society. Let us raise our children as 'good fruitful trees!'⁵



We do our best and the rest we leave to Allah, Who may graciously guide us and our children to live a life that brings us and them close to Him in nearness, and bless us and them with the best of His Blessings in this life as well as in the Life after death.

With my hands raised in prayerful du'a, I seek His forgiveness for any possible errors, omissions, failings and oversights, and that He, in His Graciousness, may grant acceptance to this humble piece of work dedicated to the service of promoting the Cause of Allah, the Cause of Islam and the Cause of Inter-Faith harmony in a fast

⁵ All images have been sourced from various sites on the internet, and none of these carry any advice on copyrights. So it is assumed that these are in public domain and hence used for public interest. The exception is the postures of the Salat where my grandchildren, Ahmad and Aamna, volunteered.



growing environment of religious intolerance and hatred, political demagoguery and bigotry.

والسلام عليكم

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Foreword

The *Essence of Islam* comes along just at a time when Islam has bubbled to the top of the political dialogue. Both Muslims and non-Muslims alike struggle to understand this religion that more than one billion call their own. Some Muslims, especially those living in the West, try to distance themselves from tenets of their faith out of fear of being classified as dangerous. In some cases, we as Muslims have morphed our own faith to something not recognizable in the Qur'an or authentic teachings of Prophet Mohamed, may Allah's blessings of peace be upon him.

This metamorphosis has occurred on two extremes: One, by those who use Islam to instill fear, commit unthinkable acts of violence, and abandon the fundamental truth of Islam as a religion of tolerance. Two, by those who abandon the fundamental practices of worship and accept the premise that Islam is outdated and does not have a place in the 21st century. Both narratives are false.

When I first met Brother Badr Hashemi at Kalamazoo Islamic Center in Michigan, I saw the passion and love for his religion in his words. But, I also saw the concern for all of mankind. He showed a concern for our Muslim youth who are often misguided and bombarded by the messaging in this digital age. There was also sadness that non-Muslims really do not understand their Muslim neighbors.

It is Brother Hashemi's passion that attracted me to this project. As a Muslim American revert to Islam, who was raised as a Christian, I immediately saw the need for the *Essence of Islam*. Indeed, the Qur'an is the most authentic of Islam sources, the *Essence of Islam* tackles the 21st century problems with the clarity needed for those who do not spend hours every day studying Islamic theology. And yet, the *Essence of Islam* is rich with references from authentic Islamic sources.

With unprecedented clarity, this book describes the fundamental beliefs and practices of Islam. Most Muslims and many non-Muslims can spout out the Five Pillars of Islam and the Articles of Faith. However the *Essence of Islam* does not stop there. It tackles social and morality issues that all of mankind has struggled with since the beginning



of time. The *Essence of Islam* dispels common misconceptions propagated intentionally, but often innocently.

Lastly, to our brothers and sisters in other faith-based communities, it clearly shows how Islam's message is not new. To Muslims, the message of the One God brought to mankind from Prophet Mohamed, may Allah's blessings of peace be upon him, is simply the seal of all the messages that came before from the other great Prophets such as Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, and Jesus, may Allah's blessings of peace be upon all of them. It is a pure message to all of mankind.

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Portage. Mich. USA.



①

ALLAH

Who is He?



Allah is the proper name for The Almighty and The Lord Supreme: The One God, Singular, who does not have a gender, parents, siblings, spouse, daughters and/or sons. Allah is above and beyond all perception and description; there is nothing like Him. No human sight has ever seen a glimpse of Him nor would anyone's sight ever see a glimpse of Him.

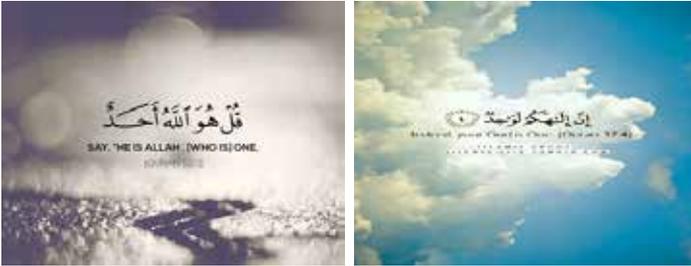
He is the Creator of whatever has existed from infinity and shall be caused to exist to eternity. He has forever been accompanying us, His creation, and He shall be with us to our end. To Allah we belong and to Him we return.⁶

Faith in Allah is the bedrock of Islam and obedience to His Will is the focus of the Muslim way of life. The expression of 'Allah' appears 2,697 times in The Qur'an. The Sacred Names and Majestic Attributes of Allah, *al-Asma al-Husna*,⁷ are traditionally enumerated as 99 epithets, on which is based its systematic expositions about the divine essence and its attributes.

⁶ Q.02:156.

⁷ Means: The Names, The Most Beautiful.

He introduces Himself



Declare: He is Allah – The One *and Only*. Allah - the Eternal, the Uncaused Cause of All Being. He is neither the parent of anyone, and nor is born of any parent. And there is nothing that could ever be compared with Him.⁸

Allah - there is no entity for worship *in all existence* except Him, the Ever-Living, the Eternal.

Slumber does not overtake Him, nor does sleep.⁹

To Him belongs all *the imperceptible to the senses of humans* in the cosmos, *the celestial space* and all that is on the earth.

Who is there that could intercede with Him *at the Time of Judgment*, unless it be by His permission?

He knows all that lies open before them and all that is hidden from them, *the matters pertaining to the angelic world, the resurrection and its correlatives*, etc. whereas they cannot attain to any of His Knowledge except that which He may will *them to attain*.

The supremacy of His eternal power overspreads the cosmos and the earth – *the whole universe*, and their upholding does not make Him tired.

And He alone is *truly* The Exalted, Immensely Great.¹⁰

⁸ Surah al-Ikhlās: Q.112.

⁹ 'See, the Guardian of Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps.' The Psalm 121:4.

¹⁰ Q.02:255 called Ayat al-Kursi.



Divine Manifestations¹¹

The One Lord Supreme was known as El-Shaddai to **Abraham**; YaHWeh¹²/Elohim to **Moses**. Elah, an Aramaic expression, written in Tanakh describes God of the Jews. **Jesus** addressed Him as Eloi. To **Mohammad**, Allah was the Proper Sacred Name for The Lord Supreme. Interestingly, the Divine Names of Elohim, Elah, Eloi and Elah/Allah are etymologically related and carry a close common thematic denominator.

All the Divine Scriptures carry almost similar and resembling manifestations of the One Lord Supreme. The thread of commonality is apparent in all three divinely revealed books.



The **Torah** enumerates some of the Divine Attributes which are familiar in The Qur'anic text too; some examples: None Beside Him, None before Him, None like to Him; Most High; Gracious; Merciful; Compassionate; Forgiving; Master to be worshipped; Eternal; Love; Light; etc.

The **Bible** lists some of the Divine Attributes as: Almighty; Creator of heaven and earth; Salvation is through His Name; The Everlasting; The Light; Unchangeable; Inexhaustible; Believers are to gather in His Name; Prayer is to be made in His Name; etc.

The **Qur'an** lists some of the Majestic Attributes as: Lord of Infinite Mercy; The Source of All Compassion; The First and the Last; The Pure of all Weaknesses; The Giver of Peace; The Fount of Love; The Almighty; The Light; The One Who Creates from Nothing and without precedent; The All-Forgiving; The Giver of All Blessings; etc.

¹¹ Adopted from 'The Divine 99' by Badr Hashemi. International Islamic University. Islamabad. 2014.

¹² The common pronunciation 'Jehovah' is probably imprecise. It is derived from combining the vowels for Adonai (Lord) with the four consonants of YHWH. A more correct pronunciation, and that which is used among scholars, is 'Yahweh.'



His Love & His Anger

The Divine Attribute of 'The Loving' - Q.11:90¹³ and 85:14 - is articulately balanced by its counterpoint in Q.05:54, depicting Divine Love answered by human love: He loves them as they love Him.

A number of the Ayat declare stereotypically that **Allah loves** those men and women, young and old, who are:



- Q.02:195; 03:134 - devoted to doing good/deeds of righteousness;
- Q.03:159 - put trust in Allah – The One God;
- Q.02:222 - cleanse themselves of spiritual impurities and are repentant;
- Q.03:76 - Allah-conscious and fear His disobedience;
- Q.03:146 - patient and steadfast in situations of adversity etc.

While **Allah does not love**:

- Q02:205 - corruption/the corrupt;
- Q.03:57 - evildoing/the evildoers;
- Q.02:190 - aggression/the aggressors;
- Q.02:276; 03:32 - disbelief/the disbelievers;
- Q.02:190 - who overstep the limits set by Him, etc.

¹³ Read 'Q' for The Qur'an. First number is number of the Surah and the second number is number of the Ayah. Thus, 11:90 means Surah 11 (Hud) and Ayah 90.

②

THE QUR'AN

What is this Book?



It is also transliterated as Koran, Qur'aan, Coran, Kuran, Quraan, Kura'n and Al-Qur'an. It is The Book that was **revealed on to Mohammad from the same One Divine Source – Allah, which sent down The Injil to Jesus, The Psalms to David, The Torah to Moses, and The Scriptures to almost every other Prophet.**

It is the last of the Divine Scriptures revealed by Allah for the welfare of humanity as it declares: This **Qur'an** is a Good Counsel for everyone in the World – Q.81:27. It is the absolute and unchanging Word of Allah revealed on to Mohammad, the last Prophet, with spiritually nourishing latent content: a divine, eternal and dynamic text. It **enjoins us to stand against bitterness, arrogance and racism.** Its Message transcends the boundaries of space and time to address humanity across generations and continents, shaping its destiny until The Last Hour. It is both a living and an ever-living introduction to Islam.

The ideal of Peace, al-Salam, is the center piece of The Qur'an. The revelation and the night in which it came down are peace. Peace is the pinnacle of the Muslim paradise. **Allah is al-Salam, Allah is The Peace** – Q.59:23. While the Q.56:25-26 treat spiritual ideals, they do have implications for the Qur'an's view of proper human behavior, where it clearly sees its depiction of heaven, in which there is no talk of sin, as a model for how people should behave in this life. In that ideal community, both non-Muslims and Muslims greet each other with

prayers for their peace and well-being. And in this world, even those who taunt and humiliate Muslims should receive prayers for peace – Q.25:63. For those who are heavily burdened by partisan inclinations and quote the Qur'an partially or selectively to justify violence, it seems clear that they are leaving out some of the most important parts of the Divine Scripture.

Q.04:105 asserts 'We have revealed on to you The Book to arbitrate among people in accordance with what Allah has enlightened you with in the form of its Divine Laws.' And, further, Q.45:18-20 makes it mandatory to diligently follow the laws embodied in The Qur'an, and not to be swayed away by inclinations of those do not believe in its divine descent.

Living Truth & Great Wonders

Among other matters, The Qur'an signified science of the Divine Creative Power/Phenomena 1500 years ago, the confirmation of which was established in not too distant a past by research, science and technology in creation of the cosmos, space and earth, astronomy, earth science and water cycle, animal and plant kingdoms, human and animal reproduction, etc.

Q.10:05 tells us the sun is a source of radiant light and the moon is light reflected.

Q.13:03 – And out of every kind of fruit He made on earth pairs: male and female. This is fully in accord with today's botanical science.

Q.16:68-69 - And your Allah embedded in the nature of the honey bees: Build your hives in mountains, trees and in what people build. Then eat (Arabic Sacred Text uses feminine gender) from every fruit and follow (feminine gender) your Allah's enslaved paths, from their bellies (feminine gender) exits drink of different colors, in it is healing for mankind. [The worker bees, those who gather pollen and make the honey, are actually all females. The male bees do not make honey].

Q.21:30 teaches us about initiation of the creation and motion: Do the disbelievers not know and reflect that the cosmos and the earth were once one nebular mass, and then We split them apart?

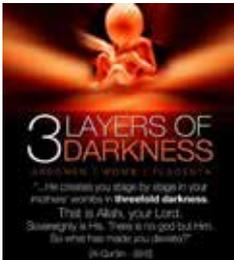


Q.21:33: And it is He, Who created the nighttime and the daytime, and the sun and the moon each one floating in its orbit.

Q.22:05 states the cycle of human life which develops through five successive formative stages in nine months, slowly but steadily – also Q.23:12-14 and 46:15.

Q.32:05 - Allah rules the cosmic affairs from the heavens to the Earth; then this affair travels back to Him, a distance in one day, at a measure of one thousand years of what you count – the angels were created from noor/light, thus they commute to and fro at a speed which turns out to be the known speed of light!

Q.39:06 describes that it is Allah Who creates you in the wombs of your mothers in successive formations, one act and phase of creation after another, in three layers of darkness - an allusion to the successive stages of embryonic development, and to the darkness of the womb, the membrane enveloping the embryo, and its pre-natal blindness.



Q.46:15 reminds us that ‘the bearing of a child to his/her weaning is a period of at least thirty months’ – read it together with Q.02:233 and 31:14.

Q.51:07 declares ‘the cosmos full of orbits.’

Q.51:47 - And the great system of cosmos and the universe, We made with Our Hand – with Our Unshared Power of Creativity; and, indeed, We constantly cause it to expand as well.

Q.53:45 informs us: ‘Indeed, it is He Who created the pairs, the male and the female of everything that you already know and others you still do not know for reproduction and perpetuation of its own species.’

Q.55:33 - If you reckon that you can manage to pass beyond the realms/diameters of the Cosmos and the Earth, and escape Our Might you shall never be able to pass as these are Our Realms..... [Radius and diameters are properties of circles or spheres only].

Q.55:19-20 - He has made the two seas meet, between them a barrier that they do not transgress. The difference in temperature, salinity and CO₂ concentrations in seas cause water to separate into layers.

Q.56:75-76 tells us of the locations, positions, stages and orbits of stars and planets in the cosmos world.

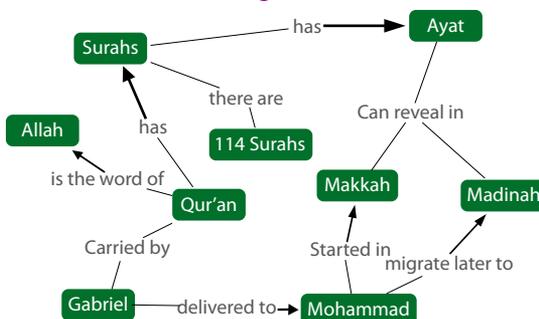
Q.67:03 asks us to consider that it is He, Who created ‘seven skies one above the other’ in harmony with each other, i.e. signifying a ‘multiverse’ rather than a ‘universe’.

Q.75:04 - We shall resurrect him by assembling his bones, and indeed We even have the power of restoring the very tips of his fingers with their lines too -

Q.81:16 - planets receding moving in their orbits.....

The Qur’an is not just paper and ink. It is a guide for ethics, morality and societal change with focus on shaping one’s life on Allah’s Will. Its revelation started in year AD 610 when The Prophet Mohammad was 40, and completed it gradually over a period of approximately 23 years, in AD 632, the year when he passed away from this world to the proximity of His Divine Lordship in the realm of heaven.

Composition





It consists of **114 Chapters** (Surah) of unequal length, and **6,666 Statements** (Ayah)¹⁴ of varying lengths composed in **30 Parts** (Juz') of equal length besides the first Surah, Al-Fatihah. The longest Chapter is Al-Baqarah comprising 286 Statements, and the shortest Chapters are three: Al-Kawthar, Al-'Asr and Lahab/Tabbat with 3 Statements in each.

Out of the 114 Chapters, 86 were revealed in the twelve years that the Prophet lived in Makkah after the revelation. The other 28 Chapters were revealed in Madinah, which include some of the longest Chapters with detailed instructions on legal, social and societal issues.

The first Chapter is Al-Fatihah and the last An-Nas.¹⁵ While 24 Prophets are mentioned by name, there are only 6 Chapters that are named after 6 Prophets: Yunus, Hud, Yusuf, Ibrahim, Nuh, and Mohammed.

It is to follow the Prophetic practice to fall in Prostration while reciting, reading or listening to a particular Statement of the 15 Ayat in 14 Chapters – the first appearing in Chapter 7 and the last in Chapter 96.

Those who are familiar with the style of the Bible get surprised, and even baffled, when they read a translation of The Qur'an. Unlike the Torah and the Bible, The Qur'an is not a book on history. Although it contains historical narratives about good and evil individuals and nations that lived before the time of Prophet Muhammad, it has a unique style even in relating history. It is not interested in pure history, but in the educational dimensions of historical events which are mentioned in order to highlight their didactic lessons.¹⁶

One aspect of the uniqueness of The **Qur'anic text** is that it **did not change over time**. This is the view of the overwhelming majority of scholars, both Muslim and non-Muslim. The Qur'an itself proclaims that **it is protected by Allah against any attempt to tamper with it**.¹⁷

¹⁴ I have rendered Ayah as Statement as it is inappropriate to translate it as Verse because The Qur'an is not poetry - Q. 36:69. The number vary between 6,210 to 6,666, depending upon whether 'Bismillah' is enumerated as part of every Surah except for 'Tawbah,' besides inserting 'waqf' – full stop – within certain Ayat, etc. Regardless of the count, this does not change or alter the meaning and the message.

¹⁵ In its written form it would be spelled as Al-Nas.

¹⁶ See Section on History in The Qur'an.

¹⁷ Q.15:09, 41:42



Simply put, The Qur'an that we read today in AD 2016 is the same Divine Book that was revealed on to Prophet Muhammad in AD 610. This is in contrast to the Torah and the Bible which, though slightly influenced by original divine scriptures, have been written, composed and edited by humans.

Power & Blessings

Q.07:204 asks its audience to listen to the recitation of The Qur'an, silently and attentively *so as to understand its message and demonstrate reverence and respect for The Sacred Word of Allah. Thus, you may be blessed with His Mercy.*

Q.10:57 states that The Qur'an is a cure for all *spiritual ailments and superstitions that may embed in you;* and a source of guidance and a Mercy for the Faithful.

Q.38:29 reminds us that The Qur'an is a Book blessed and full of blessings. *Its purpose is that people with conscience may reflect over its Messages and shape their individual and collective lives in accordance with it.*

Q.59:22 describes the Power of The Qur'an in these words: Had We sent down this, *The Qur'an,* even on to a mountain, you would have surely seen it humbled and shattering apart *with its power and shaking influence, and in its Awe of Allah.*

Q.61:08-09 assures the Faithful that Allah's Light, *by way of The Qur'an,* shall prevail to eternity despite vicious hostility and deep hatred *against its descent as the Divine Message.*



③

THE KA'BAH

It is the cube-like structure within the premises of al-Masjid al-Haram in Makkah, which is clad with a black silk covering embroidered in gold with passages of The Qur'an. It is called The House of The Lord Supreme, Allah – The One God. **It is towards this site that the Muslims direct their Prayers; they do not worship it.**



It was **built by** Prophet **Abraham** under the Divine Guidance with the helping hand from his first born son, young **Ishmael** in his early teens, who was later assigned prophet-hood. He was the elder brother of Isaac by 14 years.¹⁸ Abraham and Ishmael were the **forefathers of Mohammad**.

Allah chose Abraham as a role model for the Muslim¹⁹ and responded his invocations about his son: ‘As for Ishmael, I have heard you; I shall certainly bless him And I shall make him a great nation’.²⁰

Mohammad and his followers, who face towards the Ka’bah in worshipful devotion, **fulfill the divinely promised great nation stated in The Book of Genesis – 17:20.**

¹⁸ Genesis 21:12. 1 Chronicles 1:32 state that Abraham had a third wife named Keturah and she bore Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak and Shuah.

¹⁹ Q.22:78.

²⁰ Genesis – 17:20.

ISLAM & MUSLIMS

What is Islam?

Islam means **submission to Allah** like a servant to the master - Q.02:208 and 214. It is the True Religion *free of dogma, myth and rituals* – Q.30:30. The term is applied to the religion proclaimed by all Prophets of Allah from Adam to Mohammad, peace and honor be upon them. However, the expression has eventually become synonymous with the Followers of The Qur'an and The Prophet Mohammad who are called Muslims.

Q.03:19 states that ‘the right religion in the Sight of Allah is Islam’ *in its true connotations*. It is a **religion of moderation and human connection**. It does not allow anything that is extreme or that tarnishes the human connection. It encourages its followers to speak freely, and in some cases it stresses upon them to speak without any fear; however, when it comes to speech **hurting** the feelings or **beliefs of someone**, Islam advises to **refrain from it** and adopt a way that is more subtle.

Islam sets out principles about the relation of faith and human being, brotherhood and community life, social justice and laws, love and adversity, war and peace. It also invites every faithful to develop a **relationship directly with Allah** for it is he/she who would be responsible for the belief he/she holds as well as for the life that he/she lives with this belief. And, it is on a combination of the two that Divine Judgment shall be made for award of the rewards.

Featuring the Muslim

The Qur'an sketches out the portrait of a Muslim²¹ in Q.23:01-04, 25:63-76, 31:04-05 and 70:19-35. Some of the features comprise: who walk and **talk modestly; avoid absurdity and vulgarity** in speech and conduct; when encounter a vicious person they respond gently; **neither wasteful nor stingy; not to kill people; generous** and active in deeds of charity; stay up late at night in worship of Allah; **not to testify to falsehood**; remain **steadfast in adversity; not to slander, backbite, and**

²¹ All genders.



hinder good; guard chastity; keep promise and honesty in oaths and giving testimonies; etc.

Furthermore, a Muslim shall always bear in mind that Allah does not forbid you to deal kindly with those *of the non-Muslims* who do not wage war against you because of your Faith, and *do not* evict you from your *homelands* – Q.60:08.



PILLARS OF THE FAITH

- i. Shahadah/**Proclamation** of the Faith.
- ii. Salat/Establishment of **daily Prayers**.
- iii. **Fasting** during the month of Ramadan.
- iv. Zakat/Paying out **annual charity**.
- v. Hajj/Annual **Pilgrimage to Makkah**.

Additionally, Islam demands a firm belief in Allah, the angels, the books revealed on to all Prophets for guidance of human beings, the resurrection, the time of final judgment, award of rewards: people with true faith and good deeds go to paradise, and others to hell. The same belief is upheld by both the Jews and the Christians with some qualifiers.

Muslims also believe in ‘*qada wal qadar*’ meaning that all good and all evil happens by decree and **predestination** from Allah and by no means can people help or harm themselves or others.²² Q.57:22-23 explains the concept in this manner: No calamity *or catastrophe, whether natural or man-made*, befalls *either* the earth, *like tsunami, earthquakes or droughts*, or yourselves, *like epidemics, loss of family members or material deprivation* that was not set down in a Book, even before We make it happen.

Indeed, this is easy for Allah, so that you may neither despair *nor grieve* over what is lost to you, nor *unduly* over-joy on what came your way as Allah does not like any exultant, boastful.

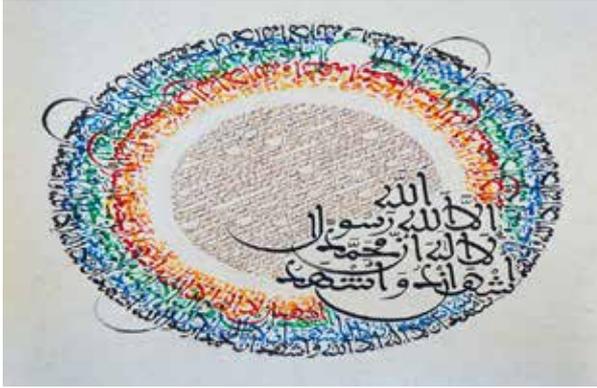


²² See Glossary.



Shahadah

Proclamation of the Faith



‘I testify that there is no entity worthy of worship and can never be but The One God, The One Lord, Allah; and I also testify that Mohammad is His Last Prophet.’

Allah is One and Unique, without beginning and without end, and His Being is beyond the range of human comprehension or imagination. Q.07:180 warns against blaspheming His Oneness and Uniqueness; and any attempt at making partners in His Divinity and Unity, and depicting Him in images amounts to denial of The Truth.

Mohammad was a human being like all other Prophets of Allah, lived a normal life, got married and had children.²³ Allah chose him to be His Prophet and His Messenger, and closed the cycle of prophet-hood with him, and thus titled him ‘Seal of all Prophets and Messengers.’

Whoever embraces Islam by this Proclamation, his/her previous sins are believed to be forgiven - as Allah is the Lord of Infinite Mercy and Full of Compassion.²⁴

²³ Q.13:38, Q.25:07 and 20; and see the Section on Mohammad, Mercy for Mankind, as well as 'Living with Mohammad' by Badr Hashemi. ISBN- 978-1-5323-2228-0.

²⁴ Q.47:01-02.



Salat

What is Salat?

It is a series of acts/postures of worship, encompassing spirit, mind and body, performed in a fully described manner by Muslims five times a day,²⁵ preferably in groups, **facing** toward the **Ka'bah**.

It comprises **postures of standing, bending on knees, falling down in prostration and sitting** with folded legs. It includes short recitations from the Sacred Qur'anic Text **in Arabic**.

It is the cardinal form of worship for the Muslims. It should never be missed under any circumstance; if performing the standing posture is difficult, then it is to be done while sitting on a chair or a prayer mat; if seriously ill/sick, then it is to be done on bed by making gestures.

Preparing for Salat²⁶

The prayers are preceded by **ablutions with clean water**, and consists of prescribed **series of acts** comprising washing the hands, rinsing mouth and nose/nostrils, washing the face and arms up to the elbows, passing wet hands lightly over the head, and washing the feet.²⁷ In all these successive acts, right comes first, i.e. first the right hand then the left, and so forth.

Performing the Salat

Qiyam: **Facing** towards **The Ka'bah**, the *raka'* or a unit of prayer, begins with **proclamation of Allah o Akbar** (Allah is Great) followed by a short prayer of praise, then the *Fatihah* combined with a Surah or a part of it.²⁸ While moving from one posture to another, one would bend and lower the palms to the knees and bow the head (*Ruku*), straighten up again, prostrate on toes, knees, palms, and forehead (*Sujud*), and return to a sitting position, hands on knees for the final

²⁵ Variance in frequency and practice may exist but acts/postures remain the same. Interestingly the Jewish Law enjoins its followers to pray 3 times daily: in the morning (*shacharit*), in the afternoon (*minchah*) and at nightfall (*arvith* or *maariv*).

²⁶ See for details: Salat/Nimaz. www.quranhighlights.com

²⁷ Q.05:06 specifies the following: wash face with clean water, wash arms up to the elbows, pass wet hands lightly over your head and feet. Additionally, the Prophetic practice include: washing hands, rinsing mouth and nostrils and washing feet. In case water is not available, despite efforts to find it, then do 'tayyammum' by striking both hands on some clean topsoil and pass therewith lightly over your face and arms up to elbows.

²⁸ With a minimum of 3 Ayat/Statements.



posture (*Tashahhud*). The **completion** is done by turning the face first to the right and then to the left while uttering ‘*Assalam-o Alaikum wa Rahmatullah*’ – may Allah’s peace and blessings be upon you – followed by *Du’a*.



Sequence of the Prayer Postures (top first left to right onward) – Iqamah, Qiyam, Ruku’, Sujood, Qa’adah, Tashahhud, Salam R&L.

Raka’/Units & Timelines

Prayers / Raka	Al-Fajr (early morning)	Az-Zuhr* (early afternoon)	Al-‘Asr (afternoon)	Al-Maghrib (dusk)	Al-‘Isha (night)
Obligatory	2	4	4	3	4
Non obligatory	2 (before obligatory)	4+2 (4 before obligatory; 2 after)	4 (before obligatory)	2 (after obligatory)	2+3 (2 and 3 after obligatory)
Optional	0	2+	0	2+	2+

*The Friday Grand Congregation, called *Jumu’ah* Prayers, comprises 2 Obligatory instead of 4 for *Zuhr* and rest of the count remains the same. Similarly, both ‘*Eid* Prayers comprise 2 raka’ each; and the *Funeral* Prayers only 1 raka’.

The number of requisite *raka’* – units of *Salat* - ranges from two, three to four depending on the timing of the Prayer for which there is always a range from start of the time to end of the time.



However, there is an option to **shorten and combine prayers** when **traveling**; so instead of five you only have **three prayers by combining** Az-Zuhr with Al-‘Asr, and Al-Maghrib with Al-‘Isha. **Shortening** would mean offering 2 Raka’ each for Az-Zuhr, Al-Asr and Al-‘Isha while for Al-Fajr and Al-Maghrib would remain the same – 2 and 3 respectively. This practice is also followed during the Hajj, the annual pilgrimage to Holy Makkah.





Fasting

Fasting is obligatory in all religions

The Fasting is an obligatory act of worshipful devotion and meditation among **Muslims, Christians, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists** and followers of other prominent religions. All consider that Fasting is not merely abstinence from food and drink, but an obligation to fully obey Allah's Commands particularly the ones relating to caring for the poor and oppressed; and it is towards this goalpost that Muslims give out more charity during Ramadan - the month of Fasting - than any other month in a follow-up of the Prophetic practice.

Ramadan is associated with piety and intense worship, charitable deeds and supplication. Thus the Muslim Fast is an expressive demonstration of wholesome submission to Allah with mind focused on a spiritual plane that also demands to spend time with ourselves and look inside our heart and soul - an **exercise of reflection, spiritual rejuvenation, and self-correction**. Ramadan expects us to **build up love, goodwill and respect for others; remove anger, hatred, and prejudice from within**.

Blessedness of Ramadan increases with every day passed in Fasting and its intensity reaches the peak with the arrival of the **Night of Majesty and Power, Lailat - ul - Qadr**. It is one of the nights toward the end of Ramadan; a night in which revelation of The Qur'an started; standing in worship and meditation during this one night is promised to be **better than one thousand months** of worship.²⁹

Cycle is from dawn to dusk

Muslim Fasting starts from **dawn-break to sunset/dusk**. It involves abstinence from foods, drinks, smoking, wife-husband cohabitation, avoiding ill speech, arguments, loss of temper and malicious behavior during 29 or 30 days of Ramadan³⁰ – depending on the cycle of the moon, which shifts earlier each year by eleven days, so that over 33 years it traverses all the different seasons. Ramadan is one of the 12 lunar months of the Islamic Calendar.

²⁹ Q.97:03.

³⁰ The Islamic year consists of 12 lunar cycles and hence it is 354 or 355 days long as compared to the Gregorian calendar comprising 12 months with 365 days.



The restrictions are lifted from sunset/dusk to pre-dawn, and the breaking of the **Fast** each evening is a joyous occasion. Children, elderly, pregnant or nursing mothers, menstruating, the seriously ill and long-distance travelers are **allowed to postpone** till their condition/situation returns to normal; notwithstanding the temporary relief, they are obliged to pay for the food of one person for the days missed.

Time for Celebrations

One-day festivities are celebrated at the end of Ramadan, called ‘**Eid-al-Fitr**. Fasting is regulated by the lunar calendar, and thus it is not associated with a particular season or a date, as with **Christians’ Christmas** or **Jewish Pesach/Passover**. The Prophet Mohammad used to fast regularly and diligently.

Opportunities for Additional Blessings

In follow-up of the Prophetic tradition, there are days of additional **Fasting** that are **optional** but carry immense spiritual reward. These comprise the first 15 days of the month of Sha’ban; 6 days after ‘Eid al-Fitr following the Ramadan Fasting; every Monday and Thursday of the week; 13th, 14th and 15th day of every Lunar month, and/or first/last three days of every Lunar month; 10th day of the month of Moharram.





Zakat

What is it and why pay it?

The Arabic Sacred Text expression **Zakat** is linked to *zaka* (to be pure). It implies expiation or **purification of one's material possessions**, i.e. money, property, bonds, stocks, precious metals, minerals, agricultural produce and livestock, etc.

It is **paid out yearly** by the well-to-do Muslims, as obligatory charity, for the **causes set out in Q.09:60**.

Zakat provides social security and is an important parameter of Islamic fiscal system. **It is like the Jewish and Christian tithes**.

Q.03:92 asserts that you should **give in charity what you cherish the most**.

Traditionally, 2.5 percent³¹ of a person's savings, retained over a lunar year, is paid out as Zakat at the end of the year; rates on other assets and resources vary. Zakat is distinct from the duty of giving alms (*sadaqah*) on a spot basis to those in need (Muslim tradition asserts that one should never refuse a person in need). Zakat as a civil code is now virtually extinct, having been replaced by modern tax codes. It is a voluntary yet highly respected form of offering.



³¹ This is an indicative minimum; it can be higher – and higher the better.



The Hajj

It is the **annual pilgrimage to Holy Makkah** in the month of Dhul-Hijjah, the 12th lunar month of the Islamic Calendar; required of all adult Muslims once in their lifetime, who can afford it financially and physically, with necessary arrangements ensured for those members of the family who remain behind with regard to finances and conveniences of life.

Obligations of Hajj – Manasik



The **Hajj dates** and **dress**³² are specific; the Hajj **stations** comprise al-Masjid al-Haram, Mina, ‘Arafat (essential parts of the Hajj ceremonies occur here) and Muzdalifah (a location some half-way between Mina and ‘Arafat where the pilgrims returning from ‘Arafat spend the night in worshipful devotion) before returning to Mina, where pebble pelting (ramee) is done at specified times, every day, for 3 days.

All Hajj manasik are performed in and around Makkah within its 13-mile periphery. Q.02:196-203 relate to the manasik and its correlatives.

Aside from its devotional aspects, the Hajj also causes Muslims of all races, colors and economic brackets to meet on an equal basis, stripped of the accoutrements of class and status. The Prophet Mohammad attended only one Hajj towards the tail-end of his lifetime when it was divinely decreed to be a part of the Faith of Islam.

³² Called Ihram, comprising 2 white sheets of unstitched cloth for males, and head to toe covering for females with exception of their face, hands and feet.

STRIVING FOR ALLAH

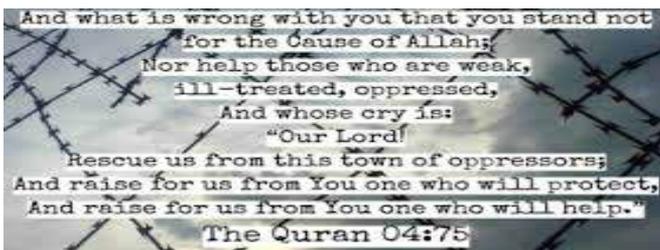
What is Jihad?

Jihad in Islam is not a holy war as The Torah advocates. It is an expression generally encompassing **non-violent struggle**, effort, endeavor, a state of striving for the Cause of Allah – utilizing all physical, mental and spiritual faculties to suppress tyranny, ensure the right of an individual to home and freedom, prevent persecution in religion and guarantee freedom of belief to all people – whether Jews, Christians, Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs, or others.³³

It is not meant to impose Islam or spread it by force – Q. 02:190, 256; 03:20, 104; 04:90; 05:14; 10:100; 16:125; 24:54; 109:01-06. The expression is also applied to a person's own struggle against one's temptations and illicit impulses. In its extended meaning, the expression carries social justice movements.

The **best** approach to **jihad** is 'Jahid-hum Bi-hi Jihad-an Kabira' that is to say 'strive against the **disbelievers with this** – *The Qur'an* – in a great striving' and **make great defense for The Faith** – Q.25:52, i.e. Teach the Message of The Qur'an and that would be jihad. It may also be relevant to bear in mind Q.50:45 that counsels The Prophet '..... you are **not** required to **force** things on them; **exhort with The Qur'an** all those who are fearful of My Warning.'

Qital is going to war



While jihad is struggle for a 'just cause', and if the 'cause' demands armed struggle, then it is sanctified by the cause. Then the

³³ This is not an apologetic definition. This is truly what The Qur'an states with emphasis to do Jihad with teachings of The Qur'an – Q.25:52.



expression becomes **qital/battle**. There are different opinions as to the circumstances under which qital becomes necessary. Since the early history of Islam until the Ottomans, declaration of **qital was always, repeat always, in the realm of state authority, not individuals or groups**. Battles fought during the time of The Prophet Mohammad and later were either in self-defense or to win freedom from falsehood, suppression and tyranny - Q.04:75.

The Torah commands its followers to go to ‘holy wars’ as these are fought on the authority of the God of Israel. The Jews believe that they fight alongside God in their wars. The Torah is loaded with references to go to battles and wars in the Name of God. Ex 17:8-15; Num 21:1-3 and 31:1-8; Josh 8:1-24, 10:1-13 and 11:1-23; Judges 1:8-2:3, 3:12-30, 4, 6-7, 10-11 and 20; 1 Sam 28-29, 311 Cron 10:1-14; etc.

Killing a Co-believer

Q.04:93 sets out **Divine Ruling** for deliberate killing of a Muslim by another Muslim: ‘Hellfire, to remain therein forever.’ There is also a report that quotes **The Prophet Mohammad** as **saying**: If anyone says, ‘I am a Muslim believer’, and does not act or speak in a manner contradicting his professed faith, the community must consider him a believer.³⁴ Q.04:94 issues a warning: ...’do not say to anyone who offers you peace – You are not a Muslim!’

Thus, **manifestations of jihadism**, now in vogue,³⁵ Muslim **killing a co-believer** is nothing but *fitnah*, i.e. treason, scandalizing situations, seducing and misleading masses to spread anarchy and terror to destabilize society. The Qur’an denounces *fitnah* and decrees it to be worse than a murder, and hence **severely punishable**.³⁶



³⁴ Al-Bokhari/Book of Hadith.

³⁵ Like Da’ish standing for Daulah Islamiya of Iraq and Syria (known in the Western media as ISIS), Al-Qaeda and Taliban, etc.

³⁶ Q.05:33-34, etc.

MESSAGES OF THE QUR'AN

Religious

Do not associate anyone or anything in the divinity, unity and uniqueness of Allah, Whose Divinity is the unshared divinity, Whose Unity is the unshared unity, and Whose Uniqueness is the unshared uniqueness.

While starting to read The Qur'an **seek Allah's protection** from the Satanic and evil forces within human soul and social environment.

Do not approach The Qur'an in haste; recite it calmly and distinctly with your mind attuned to the meaning.

Whenever it is read with faith and reverence, **it serves as a healing of hearts**, spiritual ailments and a blessing.

There is **neither any coercion in matters of faith** nor it is to be followed blindly. And you are not invested with authority to compel people to accept the Faith of Islam.

All existence in the **universe submits to Allah** in worship and obedience – the sun, moon, and stars as well as trees, mountains, birds, animals and most of the human beings. The thunder and lightning exalt Allah with His Praise.



It invites people of all religions to use reasoning while reflecting on its teachings to find the indisputable truth, spiritual solace, and peace of mind.



Every religious community has its own worshipful rituals – the Jews, the Christians, the Hindus, the Buddhists, the Sikhs, etc., so let them not dispute with you, but you should invite them to your Lord.

There is neither any difference nor any discrimination among any of Allah's Prophets; they were all assigned with one common mission to preach Allah's Unshared Unity and Divinity, submission to His Commandments, and kindness to all people irrespective of color, creed or ethnicity.

Do not deal in 'Riba'/Interest as it is a business devoid of Divine Blessings and it is like going to war against Allah's Command.³⁷ Interest is considered as a tool of exploitation; instead, trade, business and investment are recommended.

Wherever and whenever The Message of The Qur'an is being ridiculed and blasphemed, you must leave.

The Muslims are treated as any other religious community by being told when it comes to Divine Justice and Judgment at the Time of Judgment, reward shall be commensurate with one's faith, conduct and behavior within the society.

Do not divide the Unity of Faith because you are One Nation serving One God - Allah.

Satan, the evil, has no real power over people. All it can do is to tempt and entice those who allow themselves to be influenced. Thus, they will only have themselves to blame for their choice of falling into error.

Every person's ability to hear, to see, to think and to act shall be called to account at the Time of Judgment and rewarded.

This Qur'an is a reminder; so whoever wills, let him pay attention to it and follow.

³⁷ In an interesting contrast, The Torah/Book of Deuteronomy states: 'Do not charge your brother interest, whether on money or food or anything else that may earn interest. However, you may charge a foreigner interest, but not a brother Israelite.' 23:19-20.



Social

Regardless of their faith be **respectful** and caring to the parents, siblings, relatives, elders; but if they ask you to do something against Islam, then do not obey.

Be a **good neighbor**; take care of each other.

Be **generous** and look after the needy, poor, and destitute; but do not be a squanderer.

Never raise your lustful **flirting** eye to the opposite gender; be pure at heart.

Do **not cheat**; do **not bribe** especially the officials in authority; do **not jeer** or mock others; do **not conspire**; do **not support vanity**; do **not enter** others' houses without prior permission and if it is not granted, turn away without grumbling; be modest and unpretentious.

Honor oaths, testimonies and **promises**; maintain ties of kinship, especially with siblings and near relatives.

Pay out the **bridal money** to your brides willingly, *not their families*; this is their right, unless they voluntarily favor you with a part of it.

Do not usurp one another's possessions *by way of cheating, extortion, bribery, robbery, misappropriations, hoarding, lottery, gambling and illegal gifting.*

Rally for a good cause; promote goodwill and inter-faith harmony by greeting each other with greetings of peace.

Do not overstep the limits set by Allah in matters of faith, business dealings and human relationships.

Allah does not change a peoples' condition unless they first change what is in themselves: thinking, attitude, conduct and behavior – a **mindset** reflected in social behavior and public dealings.

Fight against social corruption and injustice, commercial dishonesty and economic exploitation through advocacy, drawing upon public opinion, and enactment and execution of appropriate legal framework.

You are forbidden pornography, same-gender marital relationships and any mating outside the bond of marriage.

Do not indulge in alcohol and intoxicants, drugs, cocaine, heroin – whether drank, sniffed or ingested orally or through IV, gambling, fetishes, lottery, etc.

Do not raise your voice while conversing; argue with people of other religions in a polite manner, and if they turn arrogant and aggressive, ignore them and walk away gently.

Magic, witchcraft and sorcery are as sinful as disbelief and condemns it in strong terms.

Morality

Social morality and ethics of reciprocity is a moral maxim which reflects the fundamental human nature. Thus the maxim is a core teaching of all religions as it is only ‘the religion’ that can ensure prevention from evil and harm of individuals by individuals and the society. The Torah/Leviticus 19:18 states – ‘You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against your kinsfolk. Love your neighbor as yourself.’ The Bible/Luke 06:31 enjoins ‘Do to others what you want them to do to you.’ The Qur’an 24:22 asserts ‘And you should forgive and overlook; do you not like Allah to forgive you?’

The Prophet Mohammad is reported to have said: ‘None of you truly believes until he wishes for his brother what he wishes for himself.’³⁸

Other citations from Hindu/Mahabharata. Shanti-Parva 167:09 state: ‘Treat others as you treat yourself.’ Buddhism/Sutta Nipata 705 asserts: ‘Just as I am so are they, just as they are so am I; he should neither kill nor cause others to kill.’

³⁸ An-Nawawi’s 40 Ahadith; No. 13.



Despite these explicit divine teachings and religious assertions by Jews, Christians, Hindus and Buddhists, the world is bathing in the sacred blood of The Faithful, in lands of the crescent as well as in other lands, from Burma to Libya, between and beyond.

In order to preserve and nourish love, peace, harmony and friendship all religions set out a framework ensuring that it is enforced in the same spirit as Commanded by The Divine. Thus, the concept of disturbing sanctity of the framework is termed as punishment, and it is linked to ring-fencing influence of evil in the society and purging it from the social fabric.

The **crime and punishment** matrix rests on four considerations: **fencing the society** via isolation by imposing proportionate measure as penalty; **deterrence to discourage others**; to neutralize the natural instinct for individual retribution; and to **reform the repentant** via restoration of his social status. Thus the **nature and severity of punishment has to be directly related to the intensity of an offence/crime committed**.

The **basic framework** was detailed in **The Torah** by Divine Decrees, which The Divine retained in **The Qur'an** as well but with flexibility for allowing a person a chance to correct him/herself. It is illustrated in Chapter 8 - Inter Faith Perspectives.





Mannerism

While many parents dread having ‘the talk’ about **inter/intra-gender** issues, it is even more necessary today than ever. Children are learning earlier about these issues through exposure to the graphic content on the internet and television or learning through sources unbecoming. Thus, we need to discuss Islamic requirements of chastity, namely:

1 Lowering the looks at the opposite gender – no lustful gaze (Q.24:30-31).

2 Appropriate dress that does not entice the opposite gender to fall in sin; what is acceptable and what is not.

3 No flirtatious conversations in person or via texting/social media.

4 Respectful interaction with parents, grandparents, elders and the opposite gender.

5 Respect privacy of others (Q.24:27 and 59).

6 Manners for visiting friends and relatives (Q.24:61).





History

Why history in The Qur'an?

Accounts of specific historical events often emphasize the moral significance of an event over its narrative sequence. The struggle between truth and falsehood, between belief and disbelief, and between doing good and spreading mischief on the earth is played out in the human 'exercise of free will,' which makes humans morally aware of their actions. This transforms history into the realm of freedom, where we are able to salvage or condemn ourselves. Divine guidance is still there, as Allah is manifested in word (the Scriptures) and deed (the sacred history).³⁹

Yet humans need to orient themselves to an overall divine plan that comprehends the cosmos as well as humans and other creation. This is precisely why Islamic sacred history begins with Allah and the creation of the world, followed by the narratives (of Warners/Prophets and their communities) within which historic moments are sanctified by revelation.

The Qur'an also makes it clear that, for every community to which a Warner was sent, the basis of opposition to the Divine Message was always provided by the wicked who formed the leadership of the community by virtue of their wealth and social position. This is the reason why it is stated in a number of Ayat/Statements that: when it is Our Will to destroy a community We convey Our command to the wealthy, and if they continue in their abominations, the sentence passed on the community takes effect, and We break it to smithereens - Q.17:16.

This establishes a **historical correlation between the oppression of the rulers and the destruction that ensues**. Q.50:37 teaches us that there is *always* a lesson to learn for everyone who has a *living* heart, *conscious of learning from annals of history*, and *cares to listen with an attentive mind what follows below*.

³⁹ Rahman, F. (1989) Major Themes of the Quran, Minneapolis: Bibliotheca Islamica.

12 Lessons

The whole creation narrative - **Adam and Eve** – is intended to express basic truths about human nature where with growth of consciousness, we became endowed with the moral free-will, in relative terms, that distinguishes us from other sentient beings.

Noah's very long years of preaching could not motivate people to accept the Divine Truth; Allah's stern punishment for their disobedience came in the form of massive flooding that wiped out all life from the land mass, with the exception of only those few who were with Noah. it is a continuous experience since then, though in bits and pieces.

Ancient civilizations of Aad, Thamud, Aykah, Ar-Rass and Tubba' achieved magnificent material development but remained devoid of True Faith, and hence were devastated by the Divine Punishment.

Abraham's tough fight against the falsehood and immense sufferings in the Cause of Allah demonstrates an individual's resolve to stand up for truth, even if it puts one's life to serious risk.

Lot could not succeed in preventing his people from giving themselves over to fornication with males. Thus suffering Allah's vengeance, when their cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were turned upside down⁴⁰ – believed to be the present site of the Dead Sea.



⁴⁰ 'Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.' – New Testament/The Book of **Jude** 1:7. But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly' – The Book of **Genesis** 13:13. For the homosexual cravings, God rained down "brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven' – The Book of **Genesis** 19:24.



Joseph experienced suffering from his step-brothers, guarded his chastity from women, spent years in jail, and was hugely rewarded for his endurance and chastity. Message: remain chaste and steadfast and Allah shall reward you out of His Grace.

Miraculous escape of **Moses'** people and the doom of Pharaoh and the migration of Hebrews from Egypt into a divinely guided exodus – all this is told with reference not only to historical occurrences, but also to supernatural ones that are meant to bring out a lesson in ethics. Again, Moses' quest for knowledge serves as a parable: during his meeting with the un-named mysterious sage (al-Khidr⁴¹), he gains insights into events whose meaning/understanding goes beyond surface appearance.

Sleepers of the Cave – demonstrating the reality of world-abandonment for the sake of faith, and experiencing the resurrection after long years of living out of this life.

Narratives about **David**, **Solomon** and **Dhul-Qarnayn** demonstrate that while they were endowed with worldly power, it need not conflict with spiritual righteousness so long as we remain conscious of our ultimate responsibility to Allah.

When it comes to serving the Cause of Allah, one may have to **leave the loved ones** - illustrations from Noah's wife and son, Abraham's father and Lot's wife, etc. who did not stand by the faith they followed.

The reference to **Gog** and **Magog** may be considered a reference to social catastrophes that would cause unbelievable destruction while approaching the Last Hour.

It is neither the richness of **Korah**, nor worldly power and grandeur of **Pharaoh**, nor royalty/family/tribal connections of 'Aad, Thamud, Aykah Ar-Rass and Tubba' that may help one with Allah, 'it is only the one who is most devout' - *best in piety, righteousness and obedience to Allah's Injunctions.*

⁴¹ Al-Bokhari/Book of Hadith.

INTER-FAITH PERSPECTIVES



1 Retribution in case of **murder** –

The **Torah**: Kill him and hang the body on tree.⁴²

The **Bible**: Those who kill by word must die by sword.⁴³

The **Qur'an**: 3 options - giving pardon to the murderer would be of best deeds; pay the blood money to the family of victim; if nothing works, then murder for murder.

2 Retribution in case of **adultery** –

The **Torah**: Stone to death.

The **Bible**: Anyone who looks at woman lustfully, has already committed adultery with her in his heart; if your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away.

The **Qur'an**: 100 lashes.⁴⁴

3 Retribution in case of **theft**/shop lifting/robbery –

The **Torah**: Sell the thief as a slave.⁴⁵

⁴² All references to The Torah are contained in the Book of Deuteronomy, unless otherwise stated.

⁴³ All references to The Injil/Bible are contained in the Book of Matthew, unless otherwise stated.

⁴⁴ In accordance with the conditions of the statutory punishment vide Q.04:15-16. In case of false accusation, the accuser shall be lashed eighty times and his testimony as a credible person shall never be accepted – Q.24:04-05. See also Q.24:06-10 where one of the spouse accuses the other of adultery but cannot present a valid evidence. The reported Prophetic practice of stoning to death, in following the injunctions laid out in The Torah, would have been before the revelation of this injunction. The thesis that punishment of lashes is for the un-married and stoning to death for the married is untenable for the Divine Sacred Text does not purposely set out the marital status of the offender. Q.03:135 may also be considered as an outlet.

⁴⁵ That is to sell freedom for slavery of the convict.



The **Bible**: Thieves will not enter the Kingdom of God.⁴⁶
 The **Qur'an**: Sever the hand.⁴⁷

4 Homosexuality⁴⁸ and same-sex marriages –

The **Torah**: Condemnation to death.⁴⁹
 The **Bible**: Severe Condemnation.⁵⁰
 The **Qur'an**: Severe Condemnation.⁵¹

Also, for those men and women, young and old who follow The Divine Scriptures, i.e. The Jews, The Christians and The Muslims, should recognize that **marriage** is a divine institution – Q.30:20-21. The scriptural references to marriage always imply a **union of a man and a woman** - e.g. The Torah/**Genesis** 01:27-28; The Bible/**Mark** 10:6-9; and The **Qur'an** - 07:189. The Qur'an puts it yet in another perspective – Q.07:80-84 – ‘**You come to men with lust instead of women. thus We rained a destructive rain of stones upon them** Then, look, how was the fate of the criminals committed to accumulating sins!’

The **Torah/Genesis**, The **Bible/Jude** and The **Qur'an** contain the **narrative of Sodom and Gomorrah**, where Lot implores his people not to act wickedly and indulge in homosexuality with his male guests. Thus, he made himself absolutely clear about widespread fornication and homosexual behavior. This example is a sobering **warning for those societies which promote such lifestyles**; and, thus, Allah's command seems clear.⁵²

Discussion

Allah terms **drugs/intoxicants** and **gambling** as abominations of Satan – Q.05:90, as are **ignoring modesty, slandering, back-biting, spying** and **kidnapping**, etc. – Q.49:11. While these do not entail any physical punishment in The Qur'an, Q.24:19 and 23 warn the offenders of Allah's strong **disapproval** and grievous **suffering** in the life after this

⁴⁶ 1 Corinthians 6:9-10.

⁴⁷ Q.05:38.

⁴⁸ See also Section ‘History in The Qur'an.’

⁴⁹ Leviticus 18:22, 20:13. ‘*Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.*’

⁵⁰ See Section on The Fault Lines – Biblical Perspective.

⁵¹ Q.07:80-84 ‘And We rained down on them a shower of stones. So witness the end of sinners!’ and 27:54-56.

⁵² Read it together with Section on ‘History in The Qur'an.’



life. As such, we must refrain from any behavior that Allah commands against. **While we may be tempted to sin; the test is to remain steadfast.**

The Qur'an takes atonement for **breaking an oath** seriously. Q.05:89 states the penalty as: either feeding 10 poor persons, or clothing 10 poor persons, or freeing a person from captivity, or Fasting for 3 consecutive days.

The **10 Commandments** in The **Torah** loudly declare: 'You shall not murder; you shall not commit adultery; you shall not steal; you shall not give false testimony; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife; etc. Penalties for specific offences/crimes comprise: kidnapping – stone to death; if a son is rebellious and profligate, stone him to death; if 2 men fight and one's wife comes in to rescue her husband and she seizes assailant's private parts, cut off her hand; if 2 men have a dispute, the guilty must be flogged with the number of lashes his crime deserves but not more than 40; and, slandering – fine of 100 shekels of silver; etc.

The Qur'an carries 3 Ayat/Statements in Surah 5, Al-Ma'idah, which are very revealing; consider:

We sent down the **Torah** which contains guidance and light ... those who do not judge by Allah's revelations are disobedient – Q. 05:44.

Let the people of the **Injil/Bible** judge by what has been revealed in it by Allah... those who do not judge in accordance with what Allah has revealed are transgressors – Q. 05:47.

And to you We have revealed the Book of **Qur'an** containing the truth, confirming the earlier revelations, and preserving them *from change and corruption*. So judge between them by what has been revealed by Allah. – Q. 05:48.

The message continues: **to each of you – the Jews, the Christians and the Muslims - We have given a law and a way and a pattern of life. If Allah Willed He could have made you one people, professing one faith; but He wished to test you by that which He gave you. So try to excel in good deeds – Q. 05:48.**



Are the punishments barbaric?

The **punishments decreed in The Torah**, The **Injil/Bible** and The **Qur'an** are Divine. Thus, labelling a **Divine Decree** as barbaric or inhuman would amount to committing blasphemy. Allah created us, He knows our behavioral traits in as much as the ways to discipline it. It is thus demanded of a faithful to remain compliant to Allah's Commands, failing which would entail His Displeasure and Wrath.

Therefore, the **widely-held perception that the Qur'anic punishments are barbaric is false, contrary to the teachings and a gross misplacement.** If it were so, then all the divinely decreed punishments in The Torah and The Injil/Bible would be far more barbaric and inhuman. The Qur'an decrees punishment only to **pre-empt the happening** of an **offence** and **prevent its re-happening.** Consider the point that even in case of a murder, options exist to save the murderer's life.

The Divine Laws are for welfare of human society, and to protect it from the evil, whether they appear in **The Torah** or The **Injil/Bible** or **The Qur'an.** **Islam maintains a subtle balance between 'the individual' and 'the society'** as the two are inter-linked, inter-dependent.



MOHAMMAD MERCY FOR MANKIND

Early Life



Arabic Writing of *Mohammad Mercy for Mankind*

Mohammad was **born** in Makkah, a commercial metropolis and a pilgrims' hub in the Arabian Peninsula, **in AD 570**.⁵³ He was the **only child** of his parents – Sayed 'Abd Allah bin 'Abd Al-Muttalib Al-Hashemi and Sayedah Aminah bint Wahb Al-Zuhriyya. Shepherd in early life, and then, as a young person, he was a **successful merchant**. He **married** Sayedah Khadijah in AD 595⁵⁴ at the age of 25. They made a happy couple and became the parents of **two sons** and **four daughters**.

Mohammad was popularly reputed as **friendly**, **trustworthy** and a **gentleman** of impeccable character. As he was attaining maturity, he was getting deeply disturbed by the social and moral environment around him. He found the idolatry and fetishism vulgar and social injustices distressing. He increasingly began to search for a response to his own agony at the injustice and chaos around him by resorting to **meditation**. He would go away from home for several days in a row and stay in a small cave on Mount al-Noor, named Hira', on the outskirts of Makkah.

⁵³ The Prophet was born either on the 12th or the 17th night of Rabi' al-Awwal, in the Year of the Elephant. This corresponds to the year AD 570. Ibn Hisham. As-Sirah an-Nabaviyyah. Dar al-Jil. Beirut. For details of The Prophet's biography see ' Living with Mohammad ' by Badr Hashemi, 2016.

⁵⁴ She was a widow. In fact, The Prophet took in marriage only two virgins, Sayedah 'Aishah bint Abu Bakr, and Sayedah Mariya al-Qibtiyyah; the rest were either elderly widows of the Companions who had fallen in the wars, and The Prophet married them to shelter them and provide them with homes, or divorcees. Indeed, the best spouse is the one who is best in her/his duty to Allah and in companionship with her husband. See for details, English Paraphrasing of The Qur'an, Vol. 5. Badr Hashemi, as well as ISBN 978-1-5323-2228-0.



Experiencing Sublime Expanse



Cave Hira', Mount al-Noor, Outskirts of Makkah

The meditation and seclusion continued for a considerable period of time. It was in **AD 610**, when he attained 40, that he underwent an experience of his life in Hira'. It was one night, after midnight, during the last ten days of the month of Ramadan, that he received the Divine Call. It was the beginning of the **Divine Prophetic Mission** for Mohammad. The Mission focused on **three** principal **themes**:

First, Allah - the Lord Unitary, is the absolute source of all social, religious, political and legal authority.

Second, all human beings are equal regardless of lineage, race and color.

Third, the governance must be based on humaneness and social responsibility.

Prophet Mohammad's life and mission made an overwhelming appeal to the masses. It **uplifted** the status of **women**, **gave rights to** the under privileged, and **regulated the moral and social life of the disenfranchised**. Obviously, it undermined the social and political authority of the ruling and the privileged in Makkah. They felt threatened. They started a systemic campaign of intimidation and persecution of the newly formed nucleus of Prophet Mohammad's followers. The campaign of oppression and torture continued for ten long years.



Birth of Ummah and Statehood

Finally, Allah guided His Last Prophet Mohammad and his companions to **emigrate** to Madinah in **AD 622**, as he approached 53. It took him several years to strive and **battle against tyranny, oppression and social injustice**. He created a generation of highly inspired Faithful for whom his words were the guiding star of their lives. His words continue to be the guiding star for millions - past, present and future. The Qur'an portrays this group of the Faithful as in Statement 110, Chapter 03:

1 You are the noblest community that has ever been raised up for the human race.

2 As you enjoin wholesome justice, equity and fairness, and, you forbid all that is wrong.

3 As you firmly believe in the oneness, supremacy and un-shared divinity of Allah.

It was in Madinah that he, slowly but steadily, set up the foundations of the first Islamic Welfare State. He wrote the charter that guaranteed the political and economic rights of all men and women. He established the code of ethics for times of peace and times of war. **He set a track record of personal examples of social responsibility and egalitarianism**. It is to this time that the Muslim Faithful, around the world, are inspired to re-establish this model state as a political and economic system.

Last Public Address

While he was approaching the sixty-third year of his life, the Last Prophet prepared himself and his family for the Hajj - the only Hajj that he performed in his lifetime. On this occasion he was pleased to be in the company of 124,000-144,000 Believing Faithful who gathered at Arafat on Friday, the 09th of Dhul-Hijjah⁵⁵, in **AD 632**. He spoke short portions, and men around him repeated his words so that everyone throughout the valley could hear his speech from the slopes of Mount al-Rahmah. The essence of his address was intense and powerful, and it set the foundation of **his teachings** and Mission for all times:

⁵⁵ Corresponding to the month of late-March or early-April.



The Charter of Madinah - Article 25

The Covenant with Jews

'The Jews of Banu Awf are an ummah (community) along with their believers. The Jews have their own religion and so do the Muslims. This includes themselves and their freed slaves.'

The Covenant with Christians

This is a message from Mohammad son of Abdullah, as a covenant to those who adopt Christianity, near and far, we are with them. Verily I, the servants, the helpers, and my followers defend them, because Christians are my citizens; and by God! I hold out against anything that displeases them.

No compulsion is to be on them. Neither are their judges to be removed from their fore nor their monks from their monasteries.

No one is to destroy a house of their religion, to damage it, or to carry anything from it to the Muslims' houses. Should anyone take any of these, he would spoil God's covenant and disobey His Prophet. Verily, they are my allies and have my secure charter against all that they hate.

No one is to force them to travel or to oblige them to fight. The Muslims are to fight for them. If a female Christian is married to Muslim, it is not to take place without her approval. She is not to be prevented from visiting her church to pray.

Their churches are to be respected. They are neither to be prevented from repairing them nor the sacredness of their covenants. No one of the nation (Muslims) is to disobey the covenant till the Last Day (end of the world).



1 Treat the life and property of every Muslim as a sacred trust.

2 Hurt no one so that no one may hurt you.

3 Do not inflict inequity and, as a consequence, do not cause yourselves to suffer inequity.

4 You are forbidden for all times to get involved in usury/interest business.

5 Treat your spouse with kindness; they are your partners in life and faithful supporters.

6 Stay fully and sincerely committed to the worship of One Allah....Offer the daily Mandatory Prayers....Fast during the month of Ramadan.....Give a part of your wealth in Zakat.

7 All human beings are equal. The superiority of one over the other is only by one's reverence to Allah, deeds of righteousness and responsible social behavior.

8 The Muslim Community constitutes One Family.

9 Hold fast to the Qur'an!

This appeared to be his last public address. This was also the time when he received the last Divine Revelation - Q.05:03 – ‘This day I have perfected your religion for you, completed My Favors upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion.’ The last cycle of prophet-hood was drawing to its close; Mohammad’s Divine Prophetic Mission to humanity was being wrapped-up. The Qur’an was complete; and so was the time for The Prophet to leave.

Time to Leave and he leaves

Back in Madinah from the Hājj, he was frail, weak and unwell. He was running intense fevers. In the forenoon of one summer of AD 632, at the age of 52, while he was in his chamber, he was preparing to leave this world, he raised his index finger and eyes to the Heaven and called out: ‘Better the next world...’ With these words he peacefully left this



world for a better world; his home beyond this life, in proximity to The One, his Best Friend, *Rafiq-al- 'Ala*, his Lord Supreme.

His body was respectfully laid to rest in the place where he breathed his last breath.

It is since that hot summer day that the Community of Muslim Believers have never ceased, all over the world and through the ages, to salute The Last Prophet and recite, with all their hearts and love: Allah and His angels and all righteous souls send their wholesome blessings on Mohammad.⁵⁶ Mohammad, the person - Gem of a Person. Mohammad, the Prophet - Gem of a Prophet, The Alumni of The Prophethood.

The green dome of The [Prophet Masjid in Madinah](#), Arabian Peninsula, makes the canopy of his [resting place](#).



⁵⁶ Q.33:56.



Allah's Tribute to His Last Prophet

Q. 04:80 – Whoever obeys the Messenger Mohammad, in fact obeys Allah.

Q.07:158 – Mohammad is The Messenger of Allah assigned to all human beings, for all times to The Last Hour.

Q.21:107 – We have sent you O Mohammad as a manifestation of Our Grace and Mercy for the Worlds.

Q.33:21 – In the person of Allah's Messenger Mohammad you have an excellent example to follow.

Q.33:40 – Mohammad is Allah's Messenger and Seal of the finality of Prophethood.

Q.33:56-57 – Truly Allah and His Angels always shower blessings on The Prophet Mohammad; you are thus required to invoke Allah's Blessings upon him and submit to him in total obedience.

Q.47:33 - Obey Allah and obey the Messenger Mohammad. And do not let any of your good deeds go to waste by acts of disobedience and overstepping the limits imposed by Allah and His Prophet.

Q.48:08 - We have sent you O Mohammad as a witness, and as a bearer of good news to the faithful, and as a giver of warning faithless.

Q.48:10 - Those who pledge their word of allegiance to you O Prophet Mohammad are, in fact, pledging their word of allegiance to Allah.

Q.48:17 - And whoever obeys Allah and His Messenger Mohammad, He shall admit them into Gardens of Eternity with rivers of water, milk, honey and wine flowing by them.

Q.68:04 – And surely O Mohammad you are of an exalted status of moral excellence.

Q.94:04 – And We have exalted you O Mohammad in eminence and dignity.

Q.108:01 - We have granted you O Mohammad Al-Kawthar: pre-eminence and abundance of good.



Three quotes from The Prophet

1 **Love Allah.** The Qur'an teaches us in return: Say – if you love Allah, follow me and Allah will love you.⁵⁷

2 Whoever hurts a **non-Muslim citizen** of an Islamic State⁵⁸ hurts me, and he whoever hurts me, annoys Allah.⁵⁹

3 Beware! Whoever is cruel and hard on a **non-Muslim minority**, curtails their rights, burden them with more than they can bear, or takes anything from them against their free will; I will complain against him at the Time of Judgment.⁶⁰

The Prophet selected a non-Muslim, Amr-ibn Umaiyah-ad-Damri, as an ambassador to be sent to Negus, the King of Ethiopia.

Islam recognizes that there are a **plurality of religions** on this earth, and gives the right to individuals to choose the path which they believe to be true. Religion is not to be, and was never, forced upon individuals against their free will, and these examples from the life of the Prophet are an epitome of the Message of the Qur'an – 02:256 - which promotes religious tolerance and sets the guideline for the Muslims' interaction with people of other faiths:

*'...There is no compulsion in matters of faith or religion...'
'.... To you is your religion; to me is my religion'.*



⁵⁷ Q.03:31.

⁵⁸ Islamic State meaning 'Ad-Daula al-Islamia,' the Constitution, Legal Framework and Governing Structure of which is based on the principles laid down in The Qur'an and the Sunnah, where the individuals do not aspire to seek a public office, and all matters are mutually discussed and decided upon for welfare of the people at large, not specific groups, etc. In the contemporary context, it means to replicate the model of the State established in Madinah by The Prophet.

⁵⁹ Al-Bokhari/Book of Hadith.

⁶⁰ Abu Dawood/Book of Hadith.

Seeking The Divine



Allah assures the faithful in Q.02:186 - And if My servants ask you *O Mohammad* about Me – tell them, I am indeed *very close to them*; **I respond to the supplication** of every supplicant whenever he/she calls upon Me; let them, then, respond to Me, and believe in Me, *persevere in faith*, so that they become righteously guided. Q.01:05; 39:53 and 40:60 also convey a similar essence.

The Arabic Sacred Text uses three expressions, *da'wa*, *addaa'* and *da'aanee*, with a common root to mean to call upon, call out, invoke, etc. Thus, 'Seeking The Divine' implies *du'a* - supplication and invocation. And we are told to invoke Allah, in all circumstances, for help, mercy, compassion and guidance, as did all the Great Prophets like Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Mohammad – Peace and honor be upon them. **Du'a can change circumstances for the better**; it can cause a sick person to recover, a single person to find a match, and a poor person to have his/her needs met.

The **Qur'anic du'as** are short, succinct and eloquent; they **are powerful and empowering**; their wording soaked in our heartfelt sincere feelings cause them to ascend to the heaven. However, all languages are Allah's, so use any language for invocation and develop a relationship with Him. While being in the state of *du'a*, invoke the Divine Attributes frequently, unceasingly. He would lighten the burden of our mistakes, however serious, because He is the Infinitely Merciful to everyone and Ever-Compassionate to all of us.



Du'as are **addressed directly to Allah** alone, no one else; not through a rabbi, priest, a saint, imam or a holy person, as He has **no intermediaries!** The Prophet Mohammad is reported to have said: Ad-Du'a al-mukh al-'Ibadah, i.e. du'a is the essence of the worship/servitude.⁶¹

Veiling the Attitude⁶²

The basic message of The Qur'an for modesty is based on the premise to avoid drawing attention to oneself, especially those features of human anatomy that are physically attractive, and enticing, to the opposite gender. This **applies for boys and girls, men and women.**

Q.40:19 reads: 'He is aware of the **infidelity of the eyes i.e. intentional and lustful look at the opposite gender that induces evil.** And whatever the hearts conceal *that induce evil to cause infidelity.*' The Statement applies to both genders. Thus, placing the burden primarily on girls/ladies without calling for a restraint of boys/men to discipline their lustful appetite shall be contrary to the spirit of The Qur'an which is all about 'Taqlwa'⁶³ – **self-righteousness, self-control and self-restraint.**

The 'covering' of the entire feminine body⁶⁴ is a divinely ordained solution to the seeming disparities in male and female carnal appetites – Q.24:31 and Q.33:59. The '*hijab*'⁶⁵ – head covering - remains a potent symbol of the female Muslim identity, and modesty around the world in a myriad of cultures and societies. With this symbol, a female's bodily space is marked as specifically Muslim and sacred; thus, easing their movement outside their home and correcting a grossly inaccurate impression that the Muslim females do not interact in public space; in fact, they do while preserving a sacred state.

It is becoming a common experience all over the Western World that girls/ladies wearing '*hijab*' experience **harassment, humiliation and discrimination** – at the social level as well as at work. This is an **unworthy attitude. And asking Muslim women to take off the hijab is akin to asking them to violate their connection with the Creator.**

⁶¹ Al-Bokhari/Book of Hadith.

⁶² Extracts are taken from 'Veiling The Attitudes and The Hemline' by Badr Hashemi. Paper presented at the First National Conference on Haya. Organized by Haya Movement. International Islamic University, Islamabad. March 2016.

⁶³ In a sense it also implies Allah-consciousness; being always mindful of any action, conduct or behavior that may cause Allah's displeasure due to our disobedience of any of His Injunctions or Commandments.

⁶⁴ Expression of the Qur'anic Sacred Text meaning 'bosoms.'

⁶⁵ Head covering extending to the neckline, shoulders and below.



There are dress codes in Judaism too, but it is only a relatively small number of ultraorthodox women who observe them. The hijab, by contrast, is ubiquitous in Muslim communities and in Muslim countries. Again, this is often a **conscious choice**. Many Muslims take their religion so seriously that they want to observe seemingly restrictive and pre-modern dress codes. This is the case even in Turkey, where millions of women cover their hair despite decades of secular government and forced unveiling in state institutions.

Consider Q.33:59 which entails the Divine Decree to ensure respect for feminine modesty and avoidance of harassment:

O The Prophet! Direct your wives, and your daughters, as well as the female believers that they should let down their outer garments over themselves *when outside their homes and/or when with men whom they are not forbidden to marry*. This is more fitting and respectable so that they are recognized as decent women, and are not to be harassed by evil eyes.⁶⁶

Prior to the foregoing injunction, Syedah Khadijah, Syedah 'Ai'shah, The Prophet's other wives and his daughters were present in his life, and active in public life. Even after this injunction - Q.33:59 - these ladies never confused modesty with disappearing from the social, political, economic and even military sphere.

It is something that all followers of the Great Abrahamic Faith agree - Jews, Christians and Muslims - that it is good for a man not to stare at with evil eye and/or touch a woman except for those that appear in the list of divinely permissible.

Gender & Gender

The Qur'anic Teachings are universal. It neither blames woman for the Fall of Man nor does it view pregnancy and childbirth as punishments for eating from the forbidden tree.⁶⁷ On the contrary, while it depicts Adam and Eve as equally responsible for their first act of disobedience and fall from the Divine Blessedness,⁶⁸ it also considers pregnancy and childbirth as the cause for love and respect for the mothers from their children.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Translation adapted from English Paraphrasing of The Qur'an. Vol. 5. Badr Hashemi. The Holy Qur'an Research Foundation. Islamabad. 2016.

⁶⁷ Alluding to the Biblical belief. See Genesis 2:4-3:24.

⁶⁸ Q.07:19-23.

⁶⁹ Q.31:14 and Q.46:15.



Islam sets the **roles of men and women as complementary and cooperative, not competitive**. Both have the same religious, spiritual, moral and social responsibilities. The Qur'an provides for the participation of women in the state, society, social and political activities, except for a few gender-specific peculiarities. Indeed, there is no evidence to preclude women from headship of the state.

The Qur'an does not consider the male gender's superiority over the female gender; let's look at a few illustrations:

Q.03:195 - *I shall not lose sight of the labor of any of you who labors in My way, be it man or woman, you are members one of another.*

Q.04:124 - *Anyone - be it man or woman - who does whatever he can of good deeds and is a believer, shall enter paradise, and shall not be wronged by as much as would fill the groove of a date-stone.* **Q.49:13** - *O Mankind! We have created you all out of a male and a female, and have made you into nations and tribes, so that you might come to know one another. Indeed, the most honored of you in the Sight of Allah is the one who is most righteous of you. This precludes any other basis for superiority, including gender or ethnicity.*

Q.78:08 and 36:36 - *And We have created you in pairs, male and female. Each component of the pair is as important as the other and hence is equal to each other.*

The Qur'an recognizes the **full property rights**⁷⁰ of women before and after marriage. They may buy, sell or lease any or all of their properties at will. For this reason, Muslim **women may keep**, and in fact they have traditionally kept, **their maiden names after marriage, an indication of their independence and respect for their own personality.**

Generally, a Muslim **woman is guaranteed support in all stages** of her life. The **financial advantages** accorded to women and not to men **in marriage and in family** have a **social counterpart** in the provisions that The Qur'an lays down in the **laws of inheritance**, which afford the male, twice the inheritance of a female. **Males inherit more** but ultimately they are financially **responsible for their female relatives:**

⁷⁰ Q.04:11-12, 19 and 33.



their wives, daughters, mothers and sisters. Females inherit less but retain their share for investment and financial security, without any legal obligation to spend any part of it, even for their own sustenance like food, clothing, housing, and medication, etc.

Q.04:34 is highly significant for it is grossly misunderstood in grossly wrong context. It does not allow the husband to strike his wife in any circumstances unless she has caused a breach of trust, demonstrated rebelliousness and/or committed infidelity. Thus, the 3-tier approach outlined in Q.04:34 is aimed at education and saving the marriage from collapse in case of a wife's misconduct.⁷¹

Islam never leaves women unprotected in the face of men's harsh treatment and negligence of their family duties. Should marital disputes arise, the Qur'an encourages couples to resolve them privately in a spirit of fairness and probity.⁷² Under no circumstances does the Qur'an encourage, allow, or condone family violence or physical abuse.⁷³ Any excess, cruelty, family violence, or abuse committed by any Muslim are to be blamed on the person himself. In the event that dispute cannot be resolved equitably between husband and wife, the Qur'an prescribes mediation between the parties through family intervention on behalf of both spouses.⁷⁴

Divorce is a last resort, permissible but not encouraged, for the Qur'an esteems the preservation of faith and the individual's right, male and female alike, to felicity. Forms of marriage dissolution include an enactment based upon mutual agreement, the husband's initiative, the wife's initiative, the court's decision on a wife's initiative, and the wife's initiative without a cause, provided that she returns her marital gift to her husband - *khul'* or divestiture.

The reason for variations in the number of male and female witnesses required is to corroborate the female's witness and prevent unintended errors in the perception of the business deal.⁷⁵ The Arabic term used in this passage, *tadhilla*, literally means 'loses the way' or 'gets confused' or 'errs.' No reference is made to the inferiority or

⁷¹ See Tafsir Jarīr at-Tabarī, Abū Dāwūd, Ibn Mājah and Highlights of The Qur'an by Badr Hashemi, 2013.

⁷² Q.04:35 and 128.

⁷³ Q.04:130.

⁷⁴ Op.cit.

⁷⁵ Q.02:282.



superiority of one gender's witness or the other's. But are females the only gender that may err and need corroboration of their testimony? Definitely not, and that is why the general rule of testimony in Islamic law is to have two witnesses, even when they are both male.

However, it is also true that the Qur'an in other situations accepts the testimony of a woman as equal to that of a man. In fact the woman's testimony can even invalidate the man's. If a man accuses his wife of being unchastely, he is required by the Qur'an to solemnly swear five times as evidence of the wife's guilt. If the wife denies and swears similarly five times, she is not considered guilty and in either case the marriage is dissolved.⁷⁶

They respond to the needs and circumstances of diverse times, cultures and circumstances. Some measures may work in some cases and cultures or with certain persons but may not be effective in others.

On the other hand, Jewish Rabbis count women's not being able to bear witness among the nine curses inflicted upon all women because of the Fall. Women in today's Israel are not allowed to give evidence in rabbinical courts citing Genesis 18:9-16.

The Christian West, both ecclesiastical and civil law, debarred women from giving testimony until late 20th century.

The seclusion of women from public life is alien to the Prophetic period. Interpretive problems in justifying seclusion reflect, in part, cultural influences and circumstances in different Muslim countries. Women at the Prophet's time and after him participated with men in acts of worship along with men, in learning and teaching, in the market place, in the discussion of public issues, political life as well as in the battlefield.⁷⁷

Woman, however, may not lead prayers, except for an all-women congregation, as Muslim prayers involve prostrations and close body contact – shoulder to shoulder, foot to foot. Since the prayer leader is supposed to stand in front of the congregation and may move forward in the middle of crowded rows, it would be against the modesty of a female to be in such a position and prostrate, hands, knees and

⁷⁶ Q. 24:06-11.

⁷⁷ See Nazeer Ahmed, The Encyclopedia of Islamic History.



forehead on the ground, with rows of men behind her. In the [history of Islam](#), there have been many examples of female scholars teaching all genders, but [never a female leading an all-gender prayer](#).

In the prevailing environment of religious bigotry against Islam and its religious values, especially about the status, role and space for the Muslim women, the opening of a first [All-Women Masjid](#), named ‘Mariam Mosque’ in the Danish capital of Copenhagen joined a quiet renaissance from the heart of Christian Europe. The prayers are led by a woman and attended by all women.⁷⁸ Is there a Synagogue, a Church, a Temple, a Gurdwara or a Mandir dedicated to all-women?

[In Islam women are human beings just as are men; both are made in the Divine Image regardless of their mutual relationship – whether as husband and wife, daughter and father, son and mother or brother and sister.](#)

Targeting a Faith and Faithful

[Violence and Terrorism is not a religion](#)⁷⁹ just as nuclear capability is not. How could a [Jew](#) blow up The Wailing Wall; a [Christian](#), Church of the Holy Sepulcher; or a [Muslim](#), Sacred Madinah? Yet [someone by the name of a Muslim targeted Madinah](#)⁸⁰

We are all victims. We are witnessing that for terrorists, there are no differences between Turkey and France, Iraq and Belgium, or Saudi Arabia and America.

Q.05:32 states that [whoever kills another person](#), other than in retribution for another person, it shall be considered as if he [has killed all of humankind](#); whereas, whoever spares the life of a person shall be deemed to have given life to all of humankind. The Torah also carries a similar message.

[Islam is a victim](#) of viciously crafted schemes. It is on the hate and hit-list of Western media, social networking and politics; it is a part of electioneering campaigns – from the lowest to the highest public office. Like, for instance, the [US Presidential elections](#), where statement after statement by the Republican nominee for 2016 Elections talk about

⁷⁸ The Washington Post, August 30, 2016.

⁷⁹ Pope Francis Explains Why It's Not Right To Equate Islam With Terrorism - If I speak of Islamic violence, I have to speak of Catholic violence. See The Huffington Post, August 2, 2016.

⁸⁰ Washington Post, July 4, 2016.



tactics aimed at isolating and dehumanizing the Muslim-Americans and imposing a complete ban on the entry of Muslims to USA.

The **widespread posting of anti-Muslim memes** as well as the use of hashtags like #banislam, #killmuslims, #attackamosque, #bansharia and #islamisterror. Islamophobia, Facebook and Twitter have become platforms where people who ‘actively believe in the extermination of Muslims’ ‘The only peaceful and moderate Muslims are the dead ones’ ‘Hard to tell what we should build first: a border wall or a gas chamber for Muslims.’ This is a worrying situation.

These memes would have you believe that the Qur’an compels Muslims to violence that Muslims want to take over the US and implement ‘Sharia’ that promulgates barbaric laws;⁸¹ Islam hates women;⁸² all Arabs are Muslim and all Muslims are Arab. A deviated cult, which calls itself ‘Ahmadi Muslims’, actively stands by this Anti-Muslim Garbage. It is precisely this kind of **misinformed, misguided and hugely partisan hate propaganda that is leading to crimes targeting Muslims, men and women, because of their faith.**

There is a realization among the political leadership across Europe that ‘**The Nazi label does not stick anymore**’. Thus their collective wisdom has given them a ‘Vital Alternative’ - ‘Fascist Islam’; anti-Muslim bigotry and hatred.

Populist movements have been launched to close Islamic Schools, introduce legal ban on Muslim females from covering their hair or face in public. A mother has launched a ‘crusade’ against the textbooks used in the local school district after she found out her daughter was learning about Islam as part of the 7th grade social studies curriculum. She claims that her daughter’s ‘personal religious beliefs were violated’ with lessons about Islam.⁸³

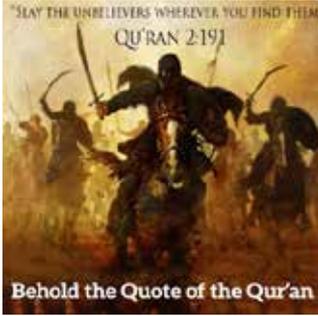
Huge billboards, like the one here, create an environment that Nazi Christian Germany created for extermination of the Jews in 1940’s. The Qur’anic Statements are being taken out-of-context and fed for hate and fear. While the billboard correctly quotes from 02:191, it viciously ignores its preceding and following Statement, i.e. 02:190 and 02:192-3, which defines the objective and circumstances that may warrant such an initiative.

⁸¹ See Section on ‘Inter-Faith Perspectives’.

⁸² See Section on ‘Gender & Gender’.

⁸³ The Kingsport Times News. Oct 5, 2016.

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Let's read the full Sacred Text:

1 02:190 - And fight in the Cause of Allah against those who fight against you, but do not commit aggression *and war crimes* - for, indeed, Allah does not love aggressors.

2 02:191 - And slay them wherever you may find them, and expel them from wherever they expelled you - for oppression is even worse than killing. And do not fight against them near the Sacred House of Worship unless they fight against you there first; but if they fight against you, then slay them: such shall be the recompense of those who deny the truth.

3 02:192 - But if they desist, then Allah is truly Forgiving, Merciful.

4 02:193 - Hence, fight against them until there is no more oppression and religion is for Allah; but if they desist, then all hostility shall cease, except against those who *willfully* do wrong.

The Muslim community is trying to neutralize the image being created by Da'ish/ISIS, truly and sincerely, yet it appears on defensive, an apologists' response. The community should reveal the whole truth of any citation from the Sacred Text of the Qur'an and do not let it loom.

Would it be a better world to live if similar populist movements, similar memes and similar bill boards against the Christians and the Jews, the Hindus and the Buddhists were to become a part of the Muslim societies and media of two billion men and women? Let's advocate: 'Live and let live!'

⁸⁴ The HuffPost. Oct. 06, 2016.

⁸⁵ SoundVision. Oct. 10. 2016.



The Qur'an repeatedly reminds that Allah created human beings and set them free to accept the faith or reject it; mankind has free-will to believe as they choose. After conveying the Message of Islam, the Prophet Mohammad left people to their consciences; he accepted those who believed in what he preached as his brothers or sisters in religion, but he showed no hostility to those who did not accept what he preached and who wanted to maintain their former beliefs; rather he respected their beliefs.

The Prophet Mohammad granted peace and security to the Christians and the Jews of his time. He signed pacts and treaties for their safety. While he was establishing the foundations of the first Islamic State consider the following declarations that guaranteed Inter-Faith harmony and freedom in the choice and practice of religion - Article 25 of the Madinah Charter.

In contrast, Muslims in USA and Europe live under a dark cloud of suspicion. They are considered as the 'least accepted' religious community. Notwithstanding that 'violent extremists' do NOT represent the very large majority of the peaceful and peace loving Muslims, they do bring a very bad name to their co-believers and their own faith. Unwittingly, they damage their faith, Islam, far more than any non-Muslim would do.

Muslims in their lands and in lands of others face fear as well as clear internal disaster. Every Masjid and every Muslim organization must reflect and rethink its priorities and plans. We must allocate more time and resources for Inter-Faith dialogues, connecting with neighbors, developing coalitions, and engaging in civil society. To empower ourselves, to liberate our children and countries from demagoguery and fear, hate and anger, and to adopt wiser approaches to defeat terrorists and hatemongers.



Going after Strange Flesh



Orange – No / Olive – Yes

Q.103:01-03, one of the shortest Surah of The Qur'an, Al-‘Asr, contains **basic teachings of Islam in 14 words**, namely, man is bound to lose himself unless he be of those who believe, do good, motivate one another in keeping to truth and remain steadfast *in pursuing this agenda*. The corollary is that more a society distances itself from ‘the belief,’ the closer it gets to moral and spiritual degeneration. This portrays our contemporary situation where we are divided in two camps: orange and olive in the map.⁸⁶

It is apparent that there is a general acceptance of homosexuality and same-gender marriages in countries of North America, the European Union, and much of Latin America but equally widespread rejection in Africa, Middle East as well as other parts of Asia and in Russia.

Let's look at what the **Bible**⁸⁷ tells its followers in North America, the European Union, and Latin America:

I Corinthians 6:9 – Do you not know that the **wicked will not inherit the Kingdom of God? Do not be deceived Male prostitutes or homosexual offenders.**'

I Corinthians 6:13, 15, 18 and 19 – **The body is not meant for sexual immortality, but for the Lord. Do you know that your bodies**

⁸⁶ Pew Research Center. Survey conducted in 2013. PEW Washington, DC. USA.

⁸⁷ New International Version. International Bible Society, 1983. Colorado. USA.



are members of Christ himself? Flee from sexual immorality. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God?

Romans 1:27 – Man abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.

Romans 12:19 - and He made Himself absolutely clear about His view of widespread fornication and homosexual behavior Lord rained down burning sulphur out of heaven and overthrew *Sodom and Gomorrah*.

Jude 1:7 - *Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves over to sexual immorality and perversion. They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire.*

Genesis 13:13 - But the men of Sodom were wicked and were sinning greatly against the Lord.

Genesis 19 - Two classifications are listed. The first, fornication, is cited nearly 100 times in the Old Testament and is referred to over a dozen times in the New—always as a condemnation of sexual behavior outside the relations of man/husband and woman/wife. The other classification is going after strange flesh makes it perfectly clear that this exceedingly awful sin was homosexual perversion.

Genesis 19:24 - For these ... homosexual cravings - Lord rained down burning Sulphur out of heaven and overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns.⁸⁸

The Bible is precisely clear: fornication and homosexual behavior is condemned, calls it perversion, and makes it punishable. This is a sobering warning for those societies which would be promoting such lifestyles. Would it not be a better choice to follow their religious

⁸⁸ See also Romans 12:19, I Timothy 1:8-10 and Genesis 19:24, etc.



guidelines, stay close to their faith, keep their bodies for the Lord, and not invite God's judgmental wrath and vengeance of eternal fire?

Celebrations & Festivities



The **Muslims** and the **Jews** have **seven celebrations**.⁸⁹ For Muslims major one-day festivities are celebrated at the end of Ramadan Fasting, called al-‘Eid al-Fitr; and three-day festivities with completion of the Hajj and by slaughtering goat, sheep or bigger cattle. Regardless of whether one attends the Hajj or not, festivities are celebrated and cattle are offered in sacrifice to Allah around the Muslim World. This is called al-‘Eid al-Adha, popularly known as al-‘Eid al-Kabir and the former as al-‘Eid al-Saghir.

Other **5 festivities** include: Al-Hijra, the Islamic New Year, is celebrated on the first day of Muharram, the month in which The Prophet emigrated from Makkah to Madinah in AD 622. 12th day of Rabi-al-Awwal⁹⁰, birthday of The Prophet; Laylat al-Bara’⁹¹ or Mid-Sha’ban; Isra wal Mi’raj⁹¹ – the night of 27 Rajab when The Prophet journeyed by night from al-Masjid al-Haram in Makkah to al-Masjid

⁸⁹ Interestingly, the Jews also have 7 festivities: Passover, Unleavened Bread, Firstfruits, Pentecost, Day of Blowing Trumpets/New Year, Day of Atonement, and Tabernacles.

⁹⁰ Or 17 Rabi’ al-Awwal.

⁹¹ mentioned in Q.17:01.



al-Aqsa in Jerusalem and then to the realm of heavens; Laylat al-Qadr⁹² is the night when the first Ayat of The Qur'an were revealed on to The Prophet - it is one of the odd nights of the last ten nights of Ramadan, the month of Fasting.

Unlike Christians' Christmas and Jewish Pesach/Passover, our festivities are not associated with a particular season or a date, as both are regulated by the lunar calendar which is linked to the cycle of the moon. The cycle shifts earlier each year by eleven days, so that over 33 years it traverses all the different seasons.



⁹² also known as Shab-e-Qadr; mentioned in Q.97:01.

GLOSSARY

Allah - It is an Arabic expression, a proper name for the Almighty and Supreme Being: The One God, singular, who does not have a gender, parents, siblings, spouse, daughters and/or sons.

AD – Common Era Calendar. AD stands for Anno Domini in Latin.

Blasphemy - Speech or writing that is derogatory to Allah and His Message in The Qur'an, and His Last Messenger Mohammad.

Blessings - Allah bestows blessings on humankind by way of providing sustenance, progeny, material wealth, health, protection, deliverance from enemies, and so on. Expression of gratitude for Allah's blessings is a fundamental obligation and failure to do so is tantamount to disbelief.

Chapter - The Qur'an comprises 114 Chapters, which are an embodiment of a collection of Statements that vary in length from 286 to 3.

Dhikr - It implies following the Qur'an and keeping up with Injunctions of Allah. The Qur'an teaches us that Salat is dhikr and so is the recitation of The Qur'an.

Hadith/Ahadith (pl) – A corpus of explicit statement, text, maxim, saying or action attributed to the Prophet Muhammad; always naming both the transmitter(s) and the original source. Sometimes translated as the Tradition. A number of compilations made after about two centuries of the demise of the Prophet are regarded as authentic on the subject; these comprise: Al-Bokhari, Al-Muslim, Al-Tirmidi, Sunan Ibn Majah, Sunan Abu Dawood, Sunan Nasa'i, Mauta Imam Malik, and Kafi, etc.

Haram - Sacred, forbidden; Sanctuary surrounding the Ka'bah (Makkah); also the Prophet's Masjid in the premises of his final resting place in Madinah.

Hajj - The annual pilgrimage to Makkah in the month of Dhul-Hijjah, the twelfth month of the Islamic Calendar; required of all adult Muslims once in their lifetime, if possible. It is one of the five Pillars of the Faith of Islam.



Hereafter, The - implies al-Aakhirah. Q.02:04 defines the parameter of our Faith: ‘... who in their hearts are certain of Al-Aakhirah; Life after this life. This life begins in different stages starting with death, followed by the Resurrection, the Time of Judgement and then continues perpetually: a life of happiness and joy for those who believed in Allah – The One God, His angels, revealed books and His Messengers, and did good deeds in their lives, while the disbelievers will be severely punished. All the Prophets, without exception, taught their followers to pursue Al-Aakhirah. It is the foundation of the Faith of Islam, and one cannot genuinely be a Muslim until one believes in Al-Aakhirah, the unseen still to be experienced in the next life.

Islam - Surrender/submission to the Will of Allah; the followers of The Qur’an and Prophet Mohammad.

Jihad - Struggle, effort, endeavor, a state of striving for the Cause of Allah – utilizing all physical, mental and spiritual faculties in accordance with the Shari’ah/Muslim Law to suppress tyranny, ensure the right of an individual to home and freedom, prevent persecution in religion and guarantee freedom of belief to all people; it also includes war/qital - there are different opinions as to the circumstances under which it becomes necessary. Jihad is a non-violent activity and is not meant to impose Islam or spread it by force. The expression is also applied to a person’s own struggle against one’s baser impulses.

Jinn - Affirmed by the Qur’an as Allah’s creation, are the conscious beings, intelligent, corporal that cannot be seen by human beings – Q.07:27. The Qur’an presents the Jinn, like humans, as good or bad.

Ka’bah - The cube-like structure within the al-Masjid al-Haram in Makkah, which is clad with black covering. It is towards this site that the Muslims direct their Prayers; but do not worship it.

Madinah - ~250 miles north of Makkah; The Prophet spent last 10 years of his prophet-hood here, and it is his final resting place.

Masjid - Usually translated as Mosque; place of worship for Muslims where the Salat/Salah is performed - daily five times in congregation.

Makkah - the Epicenter of Islam and houses the Holy Ka’bah; birthplace of Prophet Mohammad. It lies about 45 miles east of the Red Sea port of Jeddah, Arabian Peninsula.



Muslim - Derived from Islam, means surrender/submission of one's being to One Allah and obedience to The Qur'an and Prophet Mohammad.

Q – Stands for a reference to The Qur'an as Q.02:02 implying Second Ayah of Second Surah of The Qur'an.

Satan – Shaytan in Arabic; meaning exceedingly evil; rebellious; obstinate; perverse; far from Allah's mercy; the impulses in human soul which run counter to truth and morality. It does not necessarily mean devil.

The Qur'an – The Divine Scripture revealed by Allah on to Prophet Mohammad. It comprises 30 Parts of equal length, and consists of 114 Chapters of unequal length.

Rabb - The Arabic expression is used for Allah, usually rendered in English as Lord, which is too limited to convey essence of the expression. Hence, it has been retained as it appears in the Arabic Sacred Text. It conveys not only the idea of fostering, bringing up and nourishing but also that of regulating, completing, accomplishing, sustaining and perfection. It also means originator of things and their combiner to create new forms. The lexicons of Arabic language speak of all of them, and more, when they give the detailed meaning of the root Rabb, the stress in accent is on letter 'b' as 'b' in abbey.

Ramadan – Fasting from dawn-break till sunset/dusk; abstinence from foods, drinks, smoking, wife-husband cohabitation, and human baser desires during 29 or 30 days of Ramadan – ninth month of the Islamic Calendar. Obligatory on all adult Muslims, except for reasons of old age, sickness and travel, etc. It is one of the five Pillars of the Faith of Islam.

Salat/Salah – A series of acts/postures of worship, encompassing spirit, mind and body, performed in a fully described manner by Muslims five times a day – early morning, afternoon, late afternoon, dusk and night, preferably in groups, facing toward the Ka'bah. It is one of the five Pillars of the Faith of Islam.

Statement - of the Qur'an as the translation of the Arabic Ayah/Ayat (pl). Usually translated as 'Verse' which is incorrect because The



Qur'an is not poetry - Q. 36:69 - to have a verse or a set of verses, and
The Prophet was not a poet - Q. 21:05.

Sunnah - The body of recorded words, actions, gestures and practices of Prophet Mohammad that have been established as legally binding. This material constitutes the second foundation of the Faith of Islam and its legal system, The Qur'an being the first and prime source.

Zakat – Translated as charity; it implies expiation or purification of one's material possessions, i.e. money, wealth and property - a fixed proportion of which is supposed to be paid out yearly by the well-to-do Muslims as obligatory charity to the poor and/or for other defined causes. It is also one of the five Pillars of the Faith of Islam.





ABHut

Badr Hashemi (BH) was born (1944) and raised in a religious family environment which inherited a legacy of the centuries' old tradition of dispensing values, virtues and education. He completed the elementary learning and partly memorized the Qur'an while under ten and continued with learning the Arabic language, grammar and exegesis of the Qur'an and Hadith in parallel with formal western education in social sciences and development studies.

BH attended sandwich courses at Al-Azhar in the Qur'anic Arabic and lectures in interpretation of the Qur'an and Fiqh by Shykh Ali Al-Tantawi (Faqih) in Cairo, and Shykh Yusuf Al-Qaradawi (Faqih) in Qatar. He had periodic learning sessions with Professor Arther J. Arberry (Roman Catholic, translator of the Qur'an and Ahadith, etc.) during the mid-sixties while BH was a student at the University of Cambridge (UK), and, later in the late-eighties, with Muhammad Asad (Jewish convert to Islam, translator of the Qur'an and Ahadith, etc.) in Gibraltar.

BH is a Professional Economist and a Fellow of the World Bank Institute of Development Economics in Washington DC, and the United Nations Asian Development Institute. Worked as a civil servant in Pakistan and was part of the international civil service with the United Nations. He has been a keynote speaker at international seminars/conferences in Europe, the Middle East-North Africa, and the Far East; widely travelled with long periods of stay in the Arab Middle East and North Africa.

Well versed in Arabic and English and well read in the Torah, the Psalms, the Bible, Islamic history and culture, ancient civilizations and comparative religions, BH has held interactive discussions with Jewish Rabbis and Christian Priests in North America and Western Europe. He has visited various sites and places of history enumerated in the Torah, the Bible and the Qur'an – scattered from the Nile delta through the Levant to Babylon.

He is also exploring the principal thematic issues in the Hadith literature that form the common heritage between the Shiite and the Sunni schools of thought in Islam. BH can be reached via email at hashemibadr@gmail.com, and visited on www.quranhighlights.com



Alhamdo-liAllāhi Fil'Oūlā Wal-ākhirah
Tammat Khushū'an QalimatuAllāhi-Al-Azīz
Was-Salāt-o Was-Salām-o 'Al-n-Nabiyyī al-Ummy
Alladhi Lā Nabiyya Ba'dah

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