

6. Islam

I. Muhammad (570-632)

- 570 born in Mecca into the Banu-Hashim clan of the Quraysh tribe, which had taken control of Mecca in the early 6th century. His father died before his birth; his mother when he was 6. Thereafter he was raised by his uncle Abu Talib.
- 595 Khadijah, a distant relative, 40-year old widow, and wealthy trader, asked him to take a caravan to Syria. He was so successful she proposed marriage.
- 610 Muhammad regularly retreated to a cave on Mt Hira to meditate. In 610, in the month of Ramadan, the angel Gabriel started giving him revelations from God.
- 613 Muhammad began to proclaim these revelations in Mecca, calling people to abandon their idolatry. Khadijah was the first convert, followed soon by his close friend Abu Bakr. But there was much opposition.
- 619 Khadijah died, as did his uncle Abu Talib, who had been his protector.
- 620 a miraculous night journey with Gabriel. Two parts:
- *isra*: on the winged horse Buraq from Mecca to *masjid al-aqsa*, “the farthest mosque,” traditionally identified with the Al-Aqsa Mosque, Jerusalem.
 - *mi'raj*: tour of heaven and hell, during which he spoke with earlier prophets.
- 622 rejected by people of Mecca, he moved to Medina (Yathrib) = the *Hijra*, the start of the Islamic calendar (Hijri Calendar, AH = *anno hegirae*). Medina accepted his leadership and became the first Islamic state. Those Medina converts who welcomed and helped Muhammad and his followers from Mecca became known as *ansar* (supporters). The large Jewish population in Medina refused to convert.
- 630 conquered Mecca. Destroyed all the pagan statues of Arabian gods in and around the Kabaa (the central shrine).
- 632 died.

II. Beliefs & Practices of Islam

Islam: submission to Allah

Muslim: one who submits to Allah

A. Beliefs

1. Three fundamental beliefs

1. *Tawhid*: oneness of Allah
2. *Risalah*: prophethood
3. *Akhirah*: life after death

2. Six articles of faith

1. God: Allah is one; his nature and qualities are revealed in his 99 names.
2. Angels: 4 archangels (incl. Gabriel), ordinary angels; good and bad *jinn* (between angels and humans)
3. Holy Books: Scriptures were revealed to Adam, Seth, Enoch, Abraham (all now lost); to Moses (*tawrat*, Torah), to David (*zabur*, Psalms), both corrupted by Jews; to Jesus (*injil*, the Gospel), corrupted by Christians; and finally to Muhammad (Qur'an).
4. Prophets/apostles: 28. Greatest are Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Muhammad.
5. Day of Judgment: true Muslims rewarded with place in Paradise; all others sent to hell, a place of punishment and suffering.
6. Predestination: decree of good and evil.

3. The Qur'an

Muhammad's proclamations (*qara*) of divine revelation were written down as the Qur'an. It is the word of Allah, directly revealed to Muhammad in Arabic. The Qur'an is divided into *sura* (chapters).

Other important literature includes:

- *hadith*: accounts of Muhammad's teachings and practices (*sunna*, the way or path), written several generations later.
- *sira*: traditional biographies of Muhammad.

B. Five Pillars of Islam

All Muslims are called to perform five basic duties:

1. *Shahadah*: confession of faith. "There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is the messenger of Allah." *la ilaha illa lahu muhammadur rasulul lah*.
2. *Salat*: prayer. 5× daily, facing Mecca.
3. *Sakat*: almsgiving. Give at least 2.5 % of total wealth to poor and needy.
4. *Sawm*: fasting. Refrain from food, water, smoking, sex from sunrise to sunset in month of Ramadan.
5. *Hajj*: Pilgrimage. If possible, at least once to Mecca to engage in rituals.

1. Salat: Prayer

5× daily: *fajr* (dawn, before sunrise), *zuhr* (noon, after sun has passed meridian), *asr* (afternoon, before sunset), *maghrib* (evening, after sunset), *isha* (night).

Summoned by the call to prayer (*adhan* or *azan*) by the *muezzin* from the minaret of the mosque (*masjid*):

God is most great (*allahu akbar*), God is most great, I bear witness that there is no god except God: I bear witness that Muhammad is the apostle of God. Come ye unto prayer. Come ye unto good. Prayer is a better thing than sleep. Come ye to the best deed. God is most great. God is most great. There is no god except God (*la ilaha illa Allah*).

Ritual ablutions (*wudu*) before prayer: wash hands, mouth, nose, arms, face, hair, ears, and feet 3× each in that order. Can perform prayer anywhere, though mosque is preferable. People make a special effort to get to the mosque for Friday noon prayers, when the *imam* preaches a sermon from the *minbar* (pulpit).

Ritual positions for prayer.

Facing Mecca (the Kabaa) = *qiblah* (direction).

2. Hajj: Pilgrimage

If at all possible, all should go at least once to Mecca, in the month of Dhu al-Hijjah (last month), and do the following rituals:

- *tawaf*: walk 7 circuits around the Kabaa, the black cube at the center of the Grand Mosque. This was a pre-Islamic shrine and site of annual pilgrimage. Tradition credits its building to Abraham.
- touch the Black Stone, set in the Kabaa. Tradition claims this stone fell from heaven to show Adam and Eve where to build an altar.
- run back and forth between two hills, to commemorate Hagar who ran between the two hills 7× in fruitless search for water for Ishmael.
- drink from Zamzam well
- Stand vigil on plains of Mt Arafat
- spend night in plain of Muzdalifa
- symbolic stoning of devil by throwing stones at 3 pillars.

One who has made *hajj* is known as *hajj/hajja*.

3. Other Practices

The Qur'an calls for other practices: