

### WAMY Series on Islam No. 14

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Mankind and the universe were not created by accident or chance, but according to the plan of the Creator, who is known as Allah (lit.: the one God) in Islam. The Qur'an states that it is the duty of all individuals to learn about Allah and to live according to His will. As we cannot accomplish this by ourselves, Allah has sent messengers and prophets to guide humanity. All of these chosen individuals have brought the same message and have served as examples to their people of how Allah desires all human beings to live. Through these selected people, we have been told why mankind was created, what will happen to us after death, and what Allah expects of us. But most importantly, we have been told that Allah is unique—He has no partners, no sons or daughters, and no competitors, as so many other man-made religious systems have postulated. This message always remains the same, whereas the laws laid down for a particular time might show some slight differences.

Muhammad, the last of Allah's prophets, was sent to present Allah's revelation in its final form and for the last time. This was necessary because the message delivered by the previous prophets and messengers had been corrupted or distorted by their followers. They had been mixed with philosophical speculations, superstitions, myths, and neglect. Therefore, Islam is not a new religion—it is a restatement of the original religion of Allah in its purest form and is designed to provide humanity with the uncorrupted message of Allah.

Islam is an Arabic word that denotes submission and obedience to Allah. It also means "peace," for it brings peace of mind as well as peace on the individual and the social levels.

### **THE FIVE PILLARS OF ISLAM**

In Islam, the term "worship" covers any action that one does in accordance with the will of Allah. It can be mental, physical, spoken, or otherwise. All such actions will be rewarded.

There are five acts of worship that are so fundamental that the Prophet grouped them together as the five pillars of Islam. Every Muslim is expected to fulfill these obligations.

They are:

#### **THE DECLARATION OF MONOTHEISM:**

Recognizing and acknowledging the monotheistic nature of Allah stands at the core of Islam. This consists of a public affirmation that "there is no god but Allah (God), and Muhammad is His Messenger." One cannot be a Muslim until he states this fact in the presence of Muslim witnesses.

#### **PRAYERS:**

A Muslim must perform the five daily prayers. These must be performed at specific times, corresponding roughly with dawn, noon, afternoon, sunset, and nightfall. The prayers can be made in any clean place, but it is preferable to pray them with others in a mosque, for this communal undertaking acts as a reminder that all Muslims are equal. When many people are praying together, it becomes clear that color, economic status, social position, and all other artificial distinctions have no importance to Allah, for all Muslims are commanded to stand together, shoulder to shoulder, and prostrate themselves before Him.

There are no exceptions. Prayers also elevated the individual to a higher level of morality, purifies his heart, and helps him to resist his desire to engage in forbidden activities.

### **FASTING THE MONTH OF RAMADAN:**

Every year during the Muslim month of Ramadan, Muslims abstain from food, drink, and sexual activity from dawn to sunset. While this gives the body a much needed rest and improves one's health by getting rid of excess weight, it also increases one's commitment to Allah, develops his social conscience, and reminds him of how the less fortunate live every day. In addition, it strengthens one's patience, self-restraint, will power, and sincerity.

### **CHARITY (Zakat):**

Every Muslim whose net annual savings are above a certain specified minimum must pay an annual amount of 2.5% to the poor and needy. This action purifies one's accrued wealth, fosters the quality of sacrifice, and rids him of selfishness and greed. It also helps to reduce resentment and envy between a society's poor and rich classes.

### **HAJJ (Pilgrimage to Makkah):**

Hajj is an act of worship that is to be performed at least once in a lifetime, provided that one is physically and financially able to do so. During this time, Muslims meet from all corners of the world in an international congregation for the sole purpose of responding to the call of Allah. It also reminds the participants that all Muslims are equal, irrespective of their geographical, cultural, or racial origins.

### **THE ARTICLES OF FAITH**

All Muslims believe in:

- The oneness of Allah. Allah has no partner, son, daughter, helper, or competitor. There is nothing that even remotely resembles Him, for He is unique.
- All of the messengers and prophets of Allah. The Qur'an states that each people has received revelation from Allah in its own tongue so that all individuals know what is required of them. The Qur'an mentions twenty-five of them by name, among them Noah, Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, David, Solomon, John, Jesus, and Muhammad. There are, however, many others who are not named. Muhammad, the last prophet, was sent with a universal message meant for all of humanity. The message revealed through him is the Qur'an, which is Allah's final presentation of the original revelation received by mankind in its purest form. A Muslim must accept all of Allah's prophets and messengers as legitimate, for denial of one means denial of all. For western readers who are not convinced that Muhammad is a prophet of Allah, proof of this claim can be found in the Bible (Deut. 18:15-18, 33:2-3; Isaiah 29:12; Songs of Solomon 5:16; John 14:15-16, 16:12-14) as well as in the biographical accounts of Muhammad's life, which was lived in full view of his contemporaries.
- The original messages revealed through Allah's various prophets and messengers. The purest of these is the Qur'an, for it was recorded during the lifetime of the Prophet and under his direct supervision. The revelations mentioned in the Qur'an

as having been received by other prophets, such as the Suhuf of Abraham, the Torah of Moses, the Zubur (Psalms) of David, and the Injeel (Bible) of Jesus, have all been either lost or corrupted.

- The existence of angels as part of the unseen world. They are spiritual beings who have no need for food, drink, or sleep.
- The Day of Judgment. The Qur'an teaches that life is a test for each individual, for everyone must choose whether he will or will not follow the commands of Allah. On this day, a person will be resurrected and asked to account for what he did while he was alive. Those with good records will be rewarded and enter paradise, while those with bad records will be punished by being sent to hell. This belief develops within the individual an awareness of Allah's presence and a desire to obey His laws sincerely and voluntarily
- A Muslim believes that nothing happens without the knowledge and permission of Allah. While we may not understand why certain things happens, it is part of the divine plan for our lives.

### **MUSLIMS: THE MODERATE NATION**

Islam does not divide life into "spiritual" and "secular" realms. As all of life is thus unified and interconnected, Islam avoids the dangers of the extreme ritualism, secularism, or materialism that is found in other civilizations. Activities are not classified as belonging to the state or the individual, religion or daily life, but as belonging to Allah alone, Who has provided guidelines for individuals. These are to be followed in every aspect of their lives: individual, social, governmental, political, economical, spiritual, and otherwise Reflecting this moderation, the Qur'an has entitled the Muslims the "moderate nation. "

### **SOURCES OF ISLAMIC TEACHINGS**

The Islamic way of life is based on the teachings and laws found in the Qur'an and the example (Sunnah) of the Prophet Muhammad.

The Qur'an is the word of Allah and was revealed in portions to Muhammad, via the Angel Gabriel, over a twenty-three year period. Each portion was recorded in writing by his official scribes and memorized by thousands of his followers. After his death, the written collection was given to Abu Bakr, the first caliph, who oversaw its collection into one volume. The third caliph, Uthman, prepared several copies and sent them to different Muslim territories. Ever since that time, the same version has been used by Muslims. The wording, order, and language have never been altered in the slightest manner. No other book claiming to be a divine revelation can make this claim, and no one has ever been able to refute the claim of the Qur'an to complete authenticity

The Sunnah consists of the teachings, sayings, and actions of Prophet Muhammad. This information was meticulously reported and collected by his Companions. It is essentially an elaboration of the Qur'anic verses that shows how they are to be implemented in one's daily life.

### **ISLAM: THE RELIGION OF EQUALITY**

Islam recognizes no man-made artificial distinctions based on color, tribe, race, nationality, or otherwise. As all people come from the original couple-Adam and Eve-they are all one family and therefore equal before God. What distinguishes people from each other is their commitment to Islam: "The most honored in the sight of Allah is (he who is) most righteous." (Qur'an 3:86).

### **ISLAM IS YOUR BIRTHRIGHT**

Islam states clearly that everyone is born a Muslim and is therefore monotheistic by nature. We read in the Qur'an that humanity has been created with the natural disposition towards the unity of God. This is to be expected, for Allah, who has breathed His spirit into each of us, is Himself the example of perfect unity. In the words of the Prophet Muhammad: "Every person is born with the innate religious faith (to submit to God Almighty)." Thus when an individual accepts Islam, he is not turning his back on any prior revelation but rather is returning to the original and true revelation of Allah and to his own nature as a creation of Allah. This being the case, Islam is your birthright-other religious or ideological systems are either corruptions or outright denials of Islam.

### **CRITERIA FOR TRUTH**

How do you know if your belief system is true? Take a moment to look at the following list.

- Are the teachings of your belief system rational? Do they conform to the norms of human reason and intellect?
- Is the creator of your belief system perfect? Allah, the creator of Islam, is. . Does your belief system contain superstitions or myths? Islam presents humanity with only true knowledge.
- Can your belief system withstand the discoveries and claims of modern science? Islam can and does.
- How accurate are your belief system's prophecies and predications? Islam's are always completely accurate.
- Could a person have devised your belief system? No one has ever been able to imitate the Qur'an, although many have tried over the centuries.

Islam is not a new religion founded by Muhammad, but a final restatement of the original revelation that has been conveyed to humanity by messengers and prophets sent by Allah for that very purpose: "This day I have perfected your religion for you, completed My favor upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion" (5:3). As the Qur'an is the final revelation and Muhammad is the final prophet, humanity is obligated to accept it: "If anyone desires a religion other than Islam, never will it be accepted of him; and in the Hereafter he will be in the ranks of those who have lost all spiritual good" (3:86).

### **THE CHOICE IS YOURS TO MAKE!!!**