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## ISLAM

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### Introduction:

Islam was founded about 1,400 years ago in Arabia by Prophet Mohammed (early 7th century). There are about 950 million people follow Islam. They live mostly in Middle East, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Africa, China, Indonesia, Central Asia, and India.

Many Muslims believe that Prophet Mohammed is not the "founder" of Islam but he received the divine revelations recorded in the Koran during his life (570-632 AD). They regard that their religion is the restoration of the original religion of Abraham (Judaism) through Prophet Mohammed in the 7th century. They would also stress that Islam is a timeless religion, not just because of the eternal truth that it proclaims but also because it is every person's religion, the natural religion in which every person is born.

Islam recognizes God's sending of messengers to all peoples and his granting of "Scripture and Prophethood" to Abraham and his descendants which results in the awareness of a very special link between Muslims, Jews, and Christians as all Abraham's children. Today Islam is the world's fastest growing religion.

### Sects and Major Scripture:

The Koran is the God's Speech. It is the sacred book of Islam explained as the religion of Abraham. There are two main divisions within Islam. The Sunnis are followers of the political successors of Mohammed. The Shites are followers of Mohammed's family successors all martyred at an early age.

### Goals:

The primary goal of Islam is to enjoy eternal life, both physical and spiritual in heaven with Allah (God).

### Religious Philosophy, Belief, and Practice:

Islam is based upon five pillars or principle acts of faith to which every Moslem adheres.

Faith in Allah (Shahada): There is no God but God (Allah)

Ritual Prayer (Salat): Perform five times a day facing Mecca the holy city of Saudi Arabia.

Alms Giving (Zakat): Support the mosque and the poor

Fasting (Sawm): Throughout Ramadan, the ninth month of the Moslem calendar, the faithful fast (abstaining from food and drink) from sunrise to sunset.

Pilgrimage (Hajj): Pilgrimage to the Holy city Mecca once in lifetime.

Islam means submission, total submission to Allah is the single path to salvation. The good Moslem surrenders all pride, sins, and follows explicitly the will of Allah as revealed in the Koran by His last and greatest prophet, Mohammed. This and this alone bring a full and meaningful life and avoid the terrors of the hell, which befalls sinners and infidels.

Islam encompasses personal faith and piety, the creed and worship of the community of believers, a way of life, a code of ethics, a culture, a system of laws, an understanding of the function of the state, in short, guidelines and rules for life in all its aspects and dimensions.

It stresses on the brotherhood of believers, non-difference of religious and secular life, obedience to God's Law, abstinence from alcohol, good conduct, and the limitation of all except Allah.

Allah is the Supreme Creator and Sustainer, all knowing and transcendent and yet the arbiter of good and evil, the final judge of humans.

Islamic doctrines are commonly discussed and taught widely under six headings:

God: The sole creator, the One and Only

Angels: Servants of God, play important role in daily life of Muslims.

Scriptures: God's speech

Messengers: God's message revealed through His Messengers

The Last Day: Every soul will stand-alone and will have to account for its deeds

Predestination: The divine initiative is all-decisive in bringing humans to faith ("had God not guided us, we had surely never been guided," 7:43),

The Koran is the Word of God and the sacred scripture mediated through the Angel Gabriel to the Prophet Mohammed.

Islam believes the direct communion of each human with God, that all are equal in the eyes of God and therefore priests or other mediators are not needed. No form or idol can be worshipped in His Name.

The soul of a human is immortal, embodied once on earth then entering Heaven or Hell upon death according to its conduct and faith on earth.

That truthfulness should be observed in all circumstances, although it may bring injury or pain.

That salvation is only obtained through God's Grace and not through human's efforts yet human should do all good and avoid all sins, especially drunkenness, usury, and gambling.

The Muslims celebrate two main festivals. Id-al-Fitr, the festival of the breaking of the fast on the last day of Ramadan. Id-al-Adha, the festival of the sacrifice (in memory of Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son). This is observed on the 10th day of the month of pilgrimage.

After the death of Mohammed, a series of successors (Khalifa, or Calipha, or IMAM) were chosen to rule in his place.

**Major Symbol:**

The moon gives cool and soothing light to a weary traveler on the hot sands of Arabia and the stars guide him towards his destination. The religion of Islam also gives cool light and solace to the weary traveler on the scorched paths of worldly life and guides him towards Allah, the Supreme God.