

ISLAM

(VOLUNTARY SUBMISSION TO GOD)

Definition:

Islam is the religion that Allah (God) has chosen and accepted for mankind. To Allah there is only one religion, Islam. This means willingly submitting to His will and obeying His orders serving and worshipping no others besides Allah.

This willful and voluntary submission to Allah as Lord and Master, living our life as He has ordered us to do, i.e. worshipping Him, is the essence and the core principle and message of all of God's prophets; therefore, all the prophets and messengers sent by Allah were Muslims for they submitted their will to His and they all preached to their people the same message, that of serving and worshipping none but Allah (God).

When we submit our will to God and live our life according to divine inspiration, we attain inner peace liberating ourselves from serving any other master.

ISLAM IS GOD'S RELIGION

There is only one religion, Islam, meaning submission to Allah and worshipping Him alone. The Qur'an stresses this concept.

﴿ إِنَّ الدِّينَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الْإِسْلَامُ ۚ وَمَا اخْتَلَفَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ إِلَّا مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَهُمُ الْعِلْمُ بَغْيًا بَيْنَهُمْ ۚ وَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِنَائِتِ اللَّهِ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ ۝ ﴾

[آل عمران: ١٩]

"The religion before Allah is Islam (submission to His Will): nor did the people of the Book dissent therefrom except through envy of each other, after knowledge had come to them. But if any deny the Signs of Allah, Allah is swift in calling to account"

(Al-Imran 3 : 19)

Only one faith or conviction will be accepted on the Day of Judgment, that of total submission to Allah.

﴿ وَمَنْ يَتَّبِعْ غَيْرَ الْإِسْلَامِ دِينًا فَلَنْ يُقْبَلَ مِنْهُ وَهُوَ فِي الْآخِرَةِ مِنَ الْخَسِرِينَ ﴾

[آل عمران: ٨٥]

"If anyone desires a religion other than Islam (submission to Allah), 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)"

(Al-Imran 3 : 85)

This means that true faith in Allah implies that we serve none but Him, and it implies our understanding and realization that we are indeed accountable to Him. Therefore, we must live our lives as He ordered in His Divine Books and as His Prophets and Messengers explained.

This means that Divine message is the same; our job as human beings is to serve God. The Qur'an sums up this concept:

﴿ وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ مِنْ رَسُولٍ إِلَّا نُوحِي إِلَيْهِ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنَا فَاعْبُدُونِ ﴾

[الأنبياء: ٢٥]

"Not a messenger did We send before thee without this inspiration sent by Us to him: that there is no god but I; therefore worship and serve Me" (Al-Anbia'a 21 : 25).

The message of all the prophets was similar, establish the religion and worship your Lord. They only differed in the details of their message and its scope.

﴿ شَرَعَ لَكُمْ مِنَ الدِّينِ مَا وَصَّى بِهِ نُوحًا وَالَّذِي أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ وَمَا وَصَّيْنَا بِهِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَمُوسَى وَعِيسَى أَنْ أَقِيمُوا الدِّينَ وَلَا تَتَفَرَّقُوا فِيهِ كَبُرَ عَلَى الْمُشْرِكِينَ مَا تَدْعُوهُمْ إِلَيْهِ اللَّهُ يَجْتَبِي إِلَيْهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيَهْدِي إِلَيْهِ مَنْ يُنِيبُ ﴾ [الشورى: ١٣]

"The same religion has He established for you as that which He enjoined on Noah - that which We have sent by inspiration to thee - and that which We enjoined on Abraham, Moses, and Jesus: namely, that ye should remain steadfast in Religion, and make no divisions therein: to those who worship other things than Allah, hard is the (way) to which thou callest them. Allah chooses to Himself those whom He pleases, and guides to Himself those who turn (to Him)" (Ash-Shur'a 42 : 13)

The five messengers mentioned in this verse are those who had a major impact on humanity and influenced our thinking. The Qur'an considers all God's prophets as Muslims. Prophet Noah was ordered to be a Muslim.

﴿وَأَنْتَلِّ عَلَيْهِمْ نَبَأَ نُوحٍ إِذْ قَالَ لِقَوْمِهِ يَفْقَهُمْ إِنْ كَانَتْ كِبَرٌ عَلَيْكُمْ مَقَامِي وَتَذَكَّرِ بِغَايَةِ اللَّهِ فَعَلَى اللَّهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ فَأَجْمِعُوا أَمْرَكُمْ وَشُرَكَاءَكُمْ ثُمَّ لَا يَكُنْ أَمْرُكُمْ عَلَيْكُمْ غُمَّةً ثُمَّ اقْضُوا إِلَيَّ وَلَا تُنظِرُونِ﴾ [يونس: ٧١]

"Relate to them the story of Noah. Behold! he said to his people: "O my People! if it be hard on your (mind) that I should stay (with you) and commemorate the Signs of Allah, yet I put my trust in Allah. Get ye then an agreement about your plan and among your Partners, so your plan be not to you dark and dubious. Then pass your sentence on me, and give me no respite" (Yunus 10 : 71)

﴿فَإِنْ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ فَمَا سَأَلْتُكُمْ مِنْ أَجْرٍ إِنْ أَجِرِيَ إِلَّا عَلَى اللَّهِ وَأُمِرْتُ أَنْ أَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ﴾ [يونس: ٧٢]

"But if ye turn back, (consider): no reward have I asked of you: my reward is only due from Allah and I have been commanded to be of those who submit to Allah's Will (in Islam)" (Yunus 10 : 72)

As to Prophet Abraham, the Qur'an is very clear that he was not a Jew nor a Christian but a devout Muslim who submitted his will to Allah.

﴿مَا كَانَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ يَهُودِيًّا وَلَا نَصْرَانِيًّا وَلَكِنْ كَانَ حَنِيفًا مُسْلِمًا وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ﴾ [آل عمران: ٦٧]

"Abraham was not a Jew nor yet a Christian; but he was true in Faith, and bowed his will to Allah's (which is Islam), and he joined not gods with Allah" (Al-Imran 3 : 67)

Abraham and Jacob both submitted their will to Allah and advised their children not to die except in a state of Islam, submission to Allah serving Him alone.

﴿ إِذْ قَالَ لَهُ رَبُّهُ أَسْلِمْ ۖ قَالَ أَسْلَمْتُ لِرَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴾ [البقرة: ١٣١]

"Behold! his Lord said to him: "Bow (thy will to Me):" he said: "I bow (my will) to the Lord and Cherisher of the Universe"
(Al-Baqara 2 : 131)

﴿ وَوَصَّىٰ بِهَا إِبْرَاهِيمُ بَنِيهِ وَيَعْقُوبُ بَنِيَّ ۖ إِنَّ اللَّهَ اصْطَفَىٰ لَكُمُ الدِّينَ فَلَا تَمُوتُنَّ إِلَّا وَأَنتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ ﴾ [البقرة: ١٣٢]

"And this was the Legacy that Abraham left to his sons, and so did Jacob; "O my sons! Allah has chosen the Faith for you; then die not except in the state of submission (to Allah)"
(Al-Baqara 2 : 132)

The Qur'an also mentions that Prophet Moses advised his people to put their trust in Allah and confirm their faith in Him as Muslims, meaning submitting their will to Allah.

﴿ وَقَالَ مُوسَىٰ يَنْقُومُ إِن كُنتُمْ ءَامَنُمْ بِاللَّهِ فَعَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلُوا إِن كُنتُمْ مُسْلِمِينَ ﴾ [يونس: ٨٤]

"Moses said: "O my people! If ye do (really) believe in Allah, then in Him put your trust if ye submit (your will to His) " (Yunus 10 : 84)

Islam is obviously the religion and the Law that Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) brought from Allah. The followers of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) are recognized as Muslims. The Qur'an again emphasized that Allah has perfected this religion for mankind and has chosen Islam for them as their way of life.

﴿ الْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتِمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي وَرَضِيتُ لَكُمُ الْإِسْلَامَ دِينًا ﴾ [المائدة: ٣]

"This day have I perfected your religion for you, completed My favour upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion"

(Al-Maeda 5 : 3)

If we understand Islam as submitting our will to God and accepting our accountability to Him and living our life as He has told us to do, then we can understand that there is really one religion and one faith. Many messengers and prophets were sent to guide mankind to the way of God. Their message complemented and completed this divine guidance, until the message was completed by God's last prophet Muhammad (PBUH), and the Qur'an was safeguarded as God's last divine revelation. What we call Judaism and Christianity were only phases in the divine message, but the essence of the message is the same and the objective is only one, to submit to the One and Only God and to serve Him. This submission and service is Islam.

If we understand this concept, then followers of all three divine religions will realize that they are serving the same God and that they should work together because their faith unites them, rather than dividing them. Religion should not be used as a pretext to fighting or oppressing others. Religion should make us better human beings more kind and forgiving if we truly believe in God and submit our will to Him.

ISLAM IS HELPING OTHERS

Islam is a way of life. We live our life as God told us to do and obey His orders. Islam is behaving in a righteous way, doing good and helping those who need our help.

We are ordered to follow the way of Abraham, for he was a devoted servant of Allah and an example of sincerity, obedience and sacrifice. The Qur'an praises Abraham and encourages Muslims to be sincere and do good following in the footsteps of Allah's prophet.

﴿ وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ دِينًا مِمَّنْ أَسْلَمَ وَجْهَهُ لِلَّهِ وَهُوَ مُحْسِنٌ وَاتَّبَعَ مِلَّةَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ حَنِيفًا ۚ وَاتَّخَذَ اللَّهُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ خَلِيلًا ﴾ [النساء: ١٢٥]

"Who can be better in religion than one who submits his whole self

to Allah, does good, and follows the way of Abraham the true in faith? For Allah did take Abraham for a friend" (An-Nesa'a 4:125)

Our deeds are judged according to our intention and what motivates these efforts. We are ordered to worship Allah with sincere devotion.

﴿قُلْ إِنِّي أُمِرْتُ أَنْ أَعْبُدَ اللَّهَ مُخْلِصًا لَهُ الدِّينَ﴾ [الزمر: ١١]

"Say: Verily, I am commanded to serve Allah with sincere devotion;" (Az-Zumar 39 : 11)

﴿وَأُمِرْتُ لِأَنْ أَكُونَ أَوَّلَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ﴾ [الزمر: ١٢]

"And I am commanded to be the first of those who bow to Allah in Islam" (Az-Zumar 39 : 12).

Islam is belief in Allah that is confirmed by our deeds, best exemplified in rituals of worship. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) explained Islam as,

Abou Horaira (May Allah be pleased with him) related that the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said,

"Islam is to worship Allah alone and not worship others with Him; and to establish regular prayer; and to give regular charity; and to fast Ramadan; and to perform Hajj (pilgrimage) if you have the way and the means."

Narrated by Bokhari & Muslim

Islam means obeying Allah's orders in the Qur'an and following the tradition of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). It means we do what Allah and His messengers ordered us to do, and to avoid that which we are forbidden.

﴿قُلْ أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ﴾ [النور: ٥٤]

"Say: Obey Allah, and obey the Messenger" (An-Nur 24 : 54)

Islam is to submit our will to Allah and follow his orders and confirm our belief by the way in which we live our life.

﴿وَأَنِيبُوا إِلَىٰ رَبِّكُمْ وَأَسْلِمُوا لَهُ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ يَأْتِيَكُمُ الْعَذَابُ ثُمَّ لَا تُنصَرُونَ﴾

[الزمر: ٥٤]

"Turn ye to your Lord (in repentance) and bow to His (Will), before the Penalty comes on you: after that ye shall not be helped"

(Az-Zumar 39 : 54)

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) explained the importance of Islam, prayer and Jihad when he said,

Moa'dh bin Jabal (May Allah be pleased with him) said, "I said, 'O Messenger of Allah, tell me about a deed that allows me to enter paradise and let me avoid Hell.' He said, 'You have asked about something great, but it is easy for whom Allah makes it easy for him; you worship Allah alone and not serve others besides Him; and establish regular prayers; and give Zakat; and fast Ramadan; and perform Hajj.' Then he said, 'Shall I tell you the ways of goodness? Fasting protects you, and giving charity wipes out your sins as the water extinguishes the fire; and the prayer of the person late at night.' Then he recited the Qur'anic verse,

﴿تَتَجَافَىٰ جُنُوبُهُمْ عَنِ الْمَضَاجِعِ يَدْعُونَ رَبَّهُمْ خَوْفًا وَطَمَعًا وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ

يُنْفِقُونَ﴾ [السجدة: ١٦]

"Their limbs do forsake their beds of sleep, the while they call on their Lord, in Fear and Hope: and they spend (in charity) out of the sustenance which We have bestowed on them" (As-Sajda 32 : 16)

﴿فَلَا تَعْلَمُ نَفْسٌ مَّا أُخْفِيَ لَهُمْ مِنْ قُرَّةِ أَعْيُنٍ جَزَاءً بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ﴾ [السجدة: ١٤]

"Now no person knows what delights of the eye are kept hidden (in reserve) for them, as a reward for their (good) Deeds"

(As-Sajda 32 : 17)

Then he said, 'Shall I tell you the basis of the whole thing, its cornerstone and its pinnacle?' He said, 'The basis of the whole thing is Islam; its cornerstone is prayer and its summit and pinnacle is Jihad.'

Narrated by Termedhi

We learn from this saying of the Prophet (PBUH) that Islam and its guidelines and principles should govern our life. That safeguarding our prayers will ensure that we live our life upright as God intends us to do; and that Jihad or striving in the cause of Allah is the ultimate expression of our faith. There is no Islam without regular prayer and our Islam has not matured nor reached its potential unless we understand our obligation of striving with our possessions and our persons to our utmost ability.

THE RIGHTS OF MUSLIMS OVER EACH OTHER

Since Muslims share the same belief and live their life aware of their duty towards God, it is understandable that they feel close to one another and that they are united by a bond that transcends other relationships. They are brothers and feel for each other and they help one another.

The Qur'an stresses such close relationship and explains the obligations of Muslims towards each other. Such a bond is implied in understanding our duty of watching our behavior and of being God-conscious, and is a prerequisite of obtaining God's mercy.

﴿ إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِخْوَةٌ فَأَصْلَحُوا بَيْنَ أَخَوَيْكُمْ ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ ﴾

[الحجرات: ١٠]

"The Believers are but a single Brotherhood: so make peace and reconciliation between your two (contending) brothers; and fear Allah, that you may receive Mercy" (Al-Hujerat 49 : 10)

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) detailed the obligations of Muslims and the rights of their brothers as follows:

1. To help them.
2. Not to wrong them.
3. Their life and possessions are sacred.
4. To cover their faults.
5. To greet them.
6. To visit them when they are sick.
7. To pray for them when they die.
8. To say Du'aa on their behalf.
9. To give sincere and sound advice when asked.

Ibn Omar (May Allah be pleased with him and his father) related that the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said,

“The Muslim is the brother of another Muslim. He does not leave him to his enemy nor does he wrong him. Whoever is helping his brother, Allah will help him. Whoever relieves the distress of another Muslim Allah will relieve his distress on the Day of Judgment. Whoever covers the faults of a Muslim and shields him, Allah will cover his faults and shield him on the Day of Judgment.”

Narrated by Bokhari & Muslim

This saying of the Prophet (PBUH) stresses five obligations and virtues of a Muslim towards his brother:

1. To be just and not wrong him.
2. Not to leave him alone but support him.
3. To relieve his distress and help solve his problem.
4. To stand by him and go out of his way trying to help him.
5. To cover his fault and not expose him.

Other obligations and duties are explained in another Hadith of the Prophet (PBUH):

Anas Bin Malik (May Allah be pleased with him) related that the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said:

“Do not hate each other; do not envy each other; do not turn your backs on one another and be servants of Allah, brothers to each other. It is not allowed for a Muslim to stay away from his brother more than three nights.”

Narrated by Bokhari and Muslim

In another narration related by Abou Dawood Al-Ansari (May Allah be pleased with him), the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said,

“It is not allowed for a Man to stay away from his brother more than three nights, they meet each other, this one turns away and this one turns away; the better of the two is the one who starts the other one with the greetings.”

Narrated by Bokhari and Muslim

In these two sayings of the Prophet (PBUH), we learn:

1. Hatred and enmity is forbidden between Muslims.
2. Envy is not allowed among Muslims.
3. Muslims are not allowed to turn their backs on each other or become separated.
4. Muslims should not stay away or separate themselves from one another.

A Muslim should not fear any harm from another Muslim, he should feel safe and secure that other Muslims will protect and defend him. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said,

Abdullah Bin Amrou Bin Al-A's (May Allah be pleased with him) related that the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said,

"The Muslim is whom other Muslims fear no harm from his tongue or hand and he who migrates is the one who avoids what Allah has disallowed."

Narrated by Bokhari and Muslim

It is also the duty of Muslims to give sound and sincere advice; and it is the duty of those receiving such advice to listen and accept the advice with a good heart, and not reject it out of arrogance, or persist in their wrong ways:

Tameem Ad-Dary (May Allah be pleased with him) related that the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said,

"Religion is to give sound and sincere advice." The companions asked, "To whom?" He said, "To Allah, to His Book; to His Messenger; and to the Muslim leaders and to every common Muslim."

Narrated by Muslim

To Allah, giving advice means believing in Him, obeying His orders and realizing our accountability to Him. To the Qur'an, it means reciting it and trying to understand its message, then applying it and teaching the Qur'an to others. Giving advice to Allah's Messenger (PBUH) means obeying his orders, following his example and spreading his message. Giving advice to the Muslim leaders means obeying them as long as they obey Allah and His messenger, and explaining to them their wrong doings

unafraid of punishment. Giving advice to every Muslim means helping them and guiding them to the truth and to what Allah has ordained.

It is also important to seek God's forgiveness and guidance for other Muslims. Such a Du'aa is necessary and is amply rewarded by Allah.

Abi Ad-Darda'a (May Allah be pleased with him) related that the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said,

"Any Muslim who says Du'aa on behalf of his brother, in his absence, an angel will say, 'and you get the same Du'aa and reward.'"

Narrated by Muslim

Our obligations towards our Muslim brothers extend to the time of their death, since we are charged with the responsibility of attending their funeral and praying on their behalf.

Aesha (May Allah be pleased with her) related that the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said,

"Any Muslim on whose behalf a group of Muslims pray, reaching one hundred, seeking Allah's forgiveness for him, till Allah will accept their intercession on his behalf."

Narrated by Muslim

It is understood that such intercession is accepted if he was a good righteous person. Intercession is not allowed for those who reject faith or those who worship others besides Allah.

REWARDS OF PATIENCE

Our Islam should provide us with the faith and resolve to withstand adversity and difficulty and not to lose hope. Whatever we are going through, Allah is well aware of and He will reward us for our patience and perseverance. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) explained this concept.

Abi Saed Al-Khudry (May Allah be pleased with him) related that the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said,

"Whatever afflicts the Muslim of tiredness, or sickness, or worry, or

sorrow, or harm or sadness, even a thorn that pricks him, till Allah remits his sins by virtue of his suffering.”

Narrated by Bokhari and Muslim

Obviously, such rewards are given to those who exhibit patience and confirm their belief. Those who question Allah’s decree and complain that what they are facing is not just, or lose faith turning their backs only confirm that their faith is weak and shaky and unable to stand up in the face of difficulties. Those who reject faith will not receive any reward and will be accountable for their failures.

In another Hadith, the Prophet (PBUH) explained that if we were true and faithful in our behavior, Allah would remit the sins that we committed prior to accepting Islam:

Abi Saed Al-Khudry (May Allah be pleased with him) related that the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said,

“When a person accepts Islam and becomes a good Muslim, Allah will remit every sin he has done beforehand, then his accountability is due, good deeds are rewarded ten times to seven hundred times; a bad deed is counted as one bad deed unless Allah overlooks it.”

Narrated by Bokhari and Muslim

ISLAM IS A RELIGION OF MODERATION

Islam is a religion of moderation. Allah does not ask us to do more than that which we are capable. Extremes should be avoided, even in rituals of worship for it is against human nature.

Jareer Bin Abdullah (May Allah be pleased with him) said, “I gave my pledge to the Prophet (PBUH) to hear and obey. He told me to say, ‘Within the limits of my capability,’ and ordered me to give sound and sincere advice to every Muslim.”

Narrated by Bokhari and Muslim

Islam is not a difficult religion to follow for it respects human nature and asks its followers only to do the best that they can; therefore we

should not be too harsh or severe or ask too much of other people. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said,

Abi Horaira (May Allah be pleased with him) related that the Prophet (PBUH) said,

“The religion of Islam is tolerant and not difficult. No one should be extreme because this religion will overcome anyone who does that; therefore do what you are capable of and try your best; and be glad for the glad tidings you are promised; and seek help in prayer both during parts of the day and by night.”

Narrated by Bokhari

BENEFITS OF ISLAM

Islam is the only faith that God accepts and it is a prerequisite to entering Paradise and forgiveness of sin.

Islam is a practical and tolerant religion that avoids what is extreme and what is against human nature.

Islam calls for social justice and equality, promoting peace and harmony. Muslims should be proud and dignified but never arrogant. They have a responsibility of guiding others to the truth.

Muslims are brothers to each other cooperating and working together to promote virtue and piety standing against immorality, injustice and oppression.