

Islam and the Qu'ran

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Basics about Islamic Faith

- Islam means “submission to God”. For believers in Islam, this is a central concept. A virtuous person of the Islamic faith considers her position to be of subservience to the will of Allah, or God.
- Allah means God. It is not the name of the god of the faith.
- Islam is an **Abrahamic faith**, one descended from the monotheist tradition of the biblical patriarch Abraham.
- Islam never underwent a period of Reformation, like Christianity, explaining its stronger connection to ancient roots today.
- Six Articles of Faith
 - Belief in Allah, the one and only god.
 - Belief in Angels
 - Belief in the Book (Qur'an)
 - Belief in all the Prophets and Messengers
 - Belief in Fate (Qadar)
 - Belief in a day of Judgment and Resurrection
 - In English, the Muslim creed of faith is: “I believe in Allah; and in His Angels; and in His Scriptures; and in His Messengers; and in The Final Day; and in Fate, that Good and Evil are from Allah, and Resurrection after death be Truth. I testify that there is nothing worthy of worship but Allah; and I testify that Mohammed is His Messenger.
- Prophets of Islam include: Adam, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Mohammed.
- The Qur'an does not propound a doctrine of the original or essential sinfulness of humanity. Humans are not born sinful, but they are forgetful.

The Qur'an

- The Qur'an is believed to be the literal word of God, revealed to the merchant Mohammed over a period of 22 years, by the angel Gabriel (the messenger). Mohammed received his first vision around 610 C.E.
- Divided into 114 **suras** (chapters). Each sura is divided into ayat, "verses."
- Qur'anic reciters and commentators refer to the tone of the Qur'an as one of sadness (**huzn**), but the sadness is not world-rejecting. Instead, the tone is one of sadness at the inability of the human mind to encompass the world's mystery and splendor—or that the human heart has somehow forgotten the capacity to encompass them.
- The Qur'anic voice shifts constantly. Sometimes the One God is referred to as “we”, sometimes as “your Lord” or “Allah,” and sometimes as “I.” While these shifts add to the complexity of understanding the Qur'an, they have an important literary and theological purpose: to prevent the One God from being defined in anthropomorphic terms.
- The Qur'an developed parallel to a cultural explosion in the Arab world—Mohammed was reciting to “an audience that had developed one of the most finely honed and scrutinizing tastes in the history of speech. This love for language had been associated with...the kahins (seers) and sha'irs (poets) of Arabia who had developed centuries of oral tradition.” (Sellers p. 7)

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- The Qur'ān is challenging to non-Arabic speakers, because the text is not arranged in a chronological or even narrative pattern. For example, the story of Moses is told throughout 44 different passages in the Qur'ān, but is never brought together in a single Sura.
 - Norman Brown suggests that “it is the scattered mode of composition that allows the Qur'ān to achieve its most profound effects, as if the intensity of the prophetic message were shattering the vehicle of human language in which it was being communicated.”
- Muslims believe in the “uncreated and eternal” Qur'ān—that the Qur'ān has always existed and will always exist. It was not created by Muhammad, but revealed to him. (Platonic view of the forms)
 - Although the Qur'ān views itself as representing the prophetic tradition of Abraham, Moses, and Jesus, as a document, the Qur'ān is approached differently than the Torah or the Christian Bible. Most Jews and Christians acknowledge that the Biblical texts may have been composed by a wide variety of authors over a long period of time, under divine inspiration certainly, but not necessarily by direct speech of the deity.” (Sellers p. 15)
 - As a result, differences between the Qur'ān and Bible are the result of human corruption and failure.
 - Only in Arabic is the Qur'ān considered to be the word of God. The Qur'ān is considered by Muslims to be an untranslatable text.

