

Part 1: Islamic Beliefs (the Pillars of Islam)

1. Monotheism: The Oneness of Allah (Tawhid)

Allah, or God, is the center of Muslim belief. Whereas certain religions focus on individuals, like Christianity focuses on Jesus (peace be upon him), Islam focuses solely on Allah. Although Muslims respect the divine prophets, the prophets – including Prophet Muhammad (S) – are still only servants of Allah.

The Qur'an itself speaks of the oneness of God:

"Allah has borne witness that there is no God but Him – and the angels, and those with knowledge also witness this. He is always standing firm on justice. There is no God but Him, the Mighty, the Wise." (3:18)

The oneness of Allah is not only a philosophical argument but is an affirmation that all human beings declared before their souls came into their bodies:

[Remember] when your Lord brought forth the children of Adam from their loins and made them testify over themselves, saying, "Am I not your Lord?" They said, "Yes! We testify," lest you should say on the Day of Resurrection, "Verily, we were unaware of this." (7:172)

Such was the covenant that Allah made with all people at the time of creation regardless of whether these same people now claim to believe in God or not. At that time, they proclaimed His majesty, His sovereignty, His power, and His absolute oneness and transcendence.

Likewise, all people today, regardless of their origins, are naturally inclined towards the idea that God is one and without partner. The Qur'an tells Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him):

Set your face to the true religion [Islamic monotheism], the natural inclination (fitra) with which Allah has created mankind. [Let there be] no change in what Allah has made; that is the straight religion, but most people do not understand. (30:30)

Describing God

One of the shortest chapters of the Qur'an, "The Oneness of God"– Al-Tawhid, Chapter 112, summarizes the nature of God in five verses:

In the name of Allah, the most Gracious, the Most Merciful

Say, He is Allah, the One

Allah, the Eternal

He begets not, nor was He begotten

And there is nothing at all comparable to Him.

The most fundamental Islamic teachings about God are contained in these verses, i.e. that there is only one God Who is eternal, unique, and has no blood relation to any human beings. Different prophets also gave their own descriptions of God which are also related in the Qur'an. Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) says:

"My Lord is He Who gives life and causes death." (2:258)

After him, Moses (peace be upon him), when confronting the Pharaoh, says:

"Our Lord is He Who gave each thing its form and nature then guided it aright." (20:50)

These two verses both describe Allah in His relation to human beings, but of course Allah's being extends far beyond His relation to mankind.

Imam 'Ali (peace be upon him) has also described Him thus:

He who assigns to Him different conditions does not believe in His oneness, nor does he who likens Him grasp His reality. He who illustrates Him does not signify Him; he who points at Him and imagines Him does not mean Him. Everything that is known through itself has been created, and everything that exists by virtue of other things is the effect of a cause. He works, but not with the help of instruments; He fixes measures, but not with the activities of thinking; He is rich, but not by acquisition.

Time does not keep company with Him, and implements do not help Him. His being precedes time, His existence precedes non-existence, and His eternity precedes beginning. By His creating the senses, it is known that He has no senses. By the contraries in various matters, it is known that He has no contrary, and by the similarity between things it is known that there is nothing similar to Him.

He has made light the contrary of darkness, brightness that of gloom, dryness that of moisture, and heat that of cold. He produces affection among inimical things.... He is not confined by limits nor counted by numbers. Material parts can surround things of their own kind, and organs can point out things similar to themselves....

Through them, the Creator manifests Himself to the intelligence, and through them He is guarded from the sight of the eyes.... He has not begotten anyone lest He be regarded as having been born. He has not been begotten, otherwise He would be contained within limits. He is too high to have sons.... Understanding cannot think of Him so as to give Him shape....[1](#)

Allah expresses His own eternity and perpetuity Himself:

"Every thing on earth shall perish, but the face of Allah will remain, full of majesty and honor."
(55:26-27)

The 99 Names of Allah

"And to Allah belong the most beautiful names, so call on Him by them." (7:180)

Islamic tradition says that Allah has many different names representing different aspects of His being, and 99 of them are commonly recited together:

English Arabic

The Merciful ar-rahim

The Beneficent ar-rahmaan

The Sovereign al-malik

The Holy al-quddus

The Peace as-salaam

The Guardian of Faith al-mu'min

The Protector al-muhaymin

The Mighty al-'aziz

The Compellor al-jabbar

The Majestic al-mutakabbir

The Creator al-khaaliq

The Evolver al-baari'

The Fashioner al-musawwir

The Forgiver al-ghaffar

The Subduer al-qahhar

The Bestower al-wahhab

The Provider ar-razzaq

The Opener al-fattah

The Knowing al-'alim

The Constrictor al-qaabid

The Abaser al-khaafid

The Expander al-baasit

The Honorer al-mu'izz

The Exalter ar-raafi'

The Hearing as-sami'

The Dishonorer al-mudhill

The Judge al-hakam

The Seeing al-basir

The Subtle al-latif

The Kind al-halim

The Just al-'adl

The Aware al-khabir

The All-Forgiving al-ghafur

The Great al-'azim

The High al-'aliy

The Appreciative ash-shakur

The Preserver al-hafiz

The Immense al-kabir

The Reckoner al–hasib

The Maintainer al–muqit

The Generous al–karim

The Majestic al–jalil

The Responsive al–mujib

The Wise al–hakim

The Watchful ar–raqib

The All–Surrounding al–waasi'

The Glorious al–majid

The Loving al–wadud

The Witness ash–shahid

The Resurrector al–baa'ith

The Truth al–haqq

The Trustee al–wakil

The Strong al–qawi

The Firm al–matin

The Praiseworthy al–hamid

The Guardian al–wali

The Originator al–mubdi

The Reckoner al–muhsi

The Giver of Life al–muhyi

The Restorer al–mu'id

The Creator of Death al–mumit

The Living al–hayy

The Self-Subsisting al-qayyum

The Finder al-waajid

The Noble al-maajid

The Unique al-waahid

The One al-ahad

The Eternal as-samad

The Able al-qadir

The Powerful al-muqtadir

The Expediter al-muqaddim

The Delayer al-mu'akhhir

The First al-awwal

The Last al-aakhir

The Manifest az-zaahir

The Hidden al-baatin

The Governor al-waali

The Exalted al-muta'ali

The Source of Goodness al-barr

The Acceptor of Repentance at-tawwab

The Avenger al-muntaqim

The Pardoner al-'afuw

The Compassionate ar-ra'uf

The Owner of Sovereignty maalik al-mulk

The Lord of Majesty dhul jalaali wal-ikraam

and Bounty

The Equitable al-muqsit

The Gatherer al-jaami'

The Self-Sufficient al-ghani

The Enricher al-mughni

The Preventer al-mani'

The Distresser ad-darr

The Benefitor an-naafi'

The Light an-nur

The Guide al-haadi

The Incomparable al-badi'

The Everlasting al-baaqi

The Inheritor al-waarith

The Guide to the Right Path ar-rashid

The Patient as-sabur

[The Viewpoints of Islam and Christianity Regarding Allah \(God\)](#)

The distinguishing feature of Islam is its insistence on absolute monotheism and the forbidding of anything, at all, to be associated with God. This includes the refusal of the idea that Jesus (peace be upon him), the Messenger of God, was God. Allah says in the Qur'an:

Surely they have disbelieved who say that Allah is the Messiah [Jesus], the son of Mary. But the Messiah said, "O Children of Israel, worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord. Truly, whoever sets up partners in worship with Allah, then Allah has forbidden Paradise for him, and Fire will be his abode. And for the wrongdoers there are no helpers. Surely, they have disbelieved who say, "Allah is the third of three," for there is no God but Allah Who is one. And if they do not cease what they say, verily, a painful torment will befall the disbelievers among them.... The Messiah, the son of Mary, was nothing other than a messenger; many were the messengers who passed before him. His mother was a woman of truth.... (5:72-75)

Muslims believe that neither the Old Testament nor the New Testament had mentioned in any way that Jesus was the son of God. According to a contemporary American scholar, Barbara Brown:

The doctrine of divinity states that Jesus is the Son of God, the Word of God made flesh. Even though Jesus himself never claimed to be divine, Paul gave him this attribute for one reason – to gain converts among the Gentiles.

The Gentiles were pagans who were used to worshipping gods that had wonderful legends and myths behind them. Several of the pagan deities of the time such as Mithras, Adonis, Attis, and Osiris were all the offspring of a supreme ruling god, and each had died a violent death at a young age, coming back to life a short time later in order to save their people.

Paul took this into account, giving the pagans something similar in Christianity. He attributed divinity to Jesus, saying he was the Son of God, the Supreme, and that he too had died for their sins. In doing so, Paul compromised the teaching of Jesus with pagan beliefs in order to make Christianity more acceptable to the Gentiles.

The term "son of God" was not something new. However, it had been used in the Old Testament to refer to David (Saul 2:7) and his son Solomon (I Chronicles 22: 100) and to refer to Adam (Luke 3:38) in the New Testament. In his famous Sermon on the Mount, detailed in Matthew 5, Jesus tells his listeners, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God."

In all cases, the term "son of God" was not meant to be applied literally but to signify love and affection from God to the righteous. "Son of God" means a special closeness to God, not to be of God. After all, people are sons of God, and Allah is the creator of all life.[2](#)

Christians who lived during the time of Jesus (peace be upon him) believed that he was the divine messenger to them, bringing them the words of God and guiding them. However, after the ascension of Jesus to heaven, Saint Paul, who was deeply influenced by Roman paganism, wanted his preaching of Christianity to be more appealing to the Gentiles, so he compromised the teachings of Jesus (peace be upon him) by adopting certain pagan ideas and interpolating them into Christianity. Thus, the idea of the trinity spread even though it was not part of the original teachings of Jesus (peace be upon him).

[2. Divine Justice \('Adl\)](#)

Anyone who believes in Islamic monotheism must believe in the Almighty's justice. Because Allah is just, He never wrongs His creatures, for injustice is an evil deed while He is far from doing evil. Because He is omniscient, He does not neglect anything, and because He is self-sufficient, He has no cause to wrong others. Since He owns everything, He does not need the actions of anyone. His wisdom also transcends the universe. Thus, unlike some human beings, He has no cause for injustice:

"He is always standing firm on justice. There is no God but Him, the Mighty, the Wise." (3: 18)

"And your Lord does not deal unjustly with anyone." (18:49)

"We³ did not wrong them, but they wronged themselves." (16:118)

Just as Allah encourages human beings to emulate some of His attributes, such as being patient and forgiving, He also tells us to follow the way of justice.

"Say: 'My Lord has enjoined upon me justice.'" (7:29)

Although common people may falter in this area, none of the prophets of God or their successors ever committed any act of injustice.

Allah's justice embraces the entire universe. Whoever ponders over the existence of the universe and the order therein will not only observe the spread of Allah's justice over His entire creation but also each of its signs apparent in all aspects of nature -- from the physical world to the biological world, and from the microcosmos to the macrocosmos. The justice of God is particularly visible in the fate and destiny of human beings, and in their freedom of choice.

Although Allah's justice encompasses everything, people should pray to Allah to treat them not with His justice but rather with His mercy, for if He treated people solely with His justice and punished them immediately for all of their sins, humanity would have perished a long time ago.

Predestination or Free Will?

The question of man's predestination or freedom of choice has preoccupied mankind throughout the ages and continues to be discussed by Islamic philosophers and scholars. Ultimately, two schools of thought regarding this question have emerged.

One, called the Compulsionists, holds that human beings have no freedom of choice whatsoever in life. Every decision people make, every word people say has been predestined since the time of creation. If someone is faithful, it is not he who decides to embrace the faith; if someone is unfaithful, it is not he who rejects the faith. All has been written.

The second school of thought, the Free Will school, declares that human beings are masters of their own acts. This notion is in concordance with the Qur'an, which states:

"None will be wronged in anything, nor will you be requited anything except that which you used to do," (36:54)

as well as:

"The truth is from your Lord. So whomever wills, let him believe, and whoever wills, let him disbelieve." (18:29)

From these two verses, it is clear that human beings have the freedom to act but must bear the moral

responsibilities for their own actions. Furthermore, the acknowledgement of divine justice itself forces people to accept that their every action is not predestined.

The beginning of guidance is always from Allah, but the beginning of man's destruction is in his own erroneous opinions.

"Whatever good reaches you is from Allah, but whatever evil befalls you is from yourself." (4:79)

3. Prophethood (Nubuwwa)

The prophets were the people who received divine revelation. Allah has sent numerous prophets and messengers to humankind since the dawn of history. These prophets were of two types: "local" and "universal." While the local prophets were sent with specific messages to specific groups of people, the universal prophets were sent with messages and books for all of humankind. There were only five universal prophets, and their names were Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad (may the peace of Allah be upon all of them).

A unique characteristic of all the prophets and messengers is that they were infallible – that is, they never committed any sin. The easiest way to see this is to consider that these people were the examples sent for humanity to follow, and so if they committed errors, people would be obliged to follow their errors, thereby making the prophets and messengers untrustable.

Infallibility means protection, and, in Islamic terminology, means the spiritual grace of Allah enabling a person to abstain from sins by his own free will. This power of infallibility and sinlessness does not make a person incapable of committing sins; rather, he refrains from sins and mistakes by his own power and will.

Infallibility is essential since the job of the prophets and messengers is not only to convey the divine scriptures of Allah but also to lead and guide humanity towards the right path. Therefore, they have to be role models and perfect examples for mankind. This has basis in both the Qur'an and conventional wisdom; the Qur'an mentions infallibility 13 times. Allah says to the Satan:

"Certainly you shall have no authority over My servants except those who follow you and go astray." (15:42)

The Satan then says to Allah:

"By Your might, then I will surely mislead them all, except Your chosen servants among them [the messengers and imams]."(38:82)

Not only did Prophet Muhammad (S) not commit any sins, but he was also never harsh to human beings or animals. Allah says:

"And by the mercy of Allah you dealt with them [people] gently, and had you been severe and harsh-hearted, they would have broken away from you." (3: 158)

In most societies, people with bad records would be ineligible to be presidential, governmental, or mayoral candidates since they would be expected to lead society and be good examples of righteousness and honesty. Unfortunately, as a campaign of distorting the image of the prophets of God, many distorted stories exist today, such as the stories in the present-day version of the Old Testament accusing Prophet David (peace be upon him) of adultery with Baathsheba, Prophet Noah (peace be upon him) getting drunk, Prophet Lot (peace be upon him) committing incest, and Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) committing adultery with the Ethiopian women. These are examples of the ethical wrongdoings and moral weaknesses that the enemies of Allah tried to ascribe to His pure messengers.

The Holy Qur'an⁴ speaks of the sins attributed to certain prophets such as Adam (peace be upon him). These verses should not be understood literally in the sense that Adam was committing a sin; allegorical verses are common in the Qur'an. Adam (peace be upon him) did not disobey the obligatory commands of Allah; the command that he did not honor was a recommended command, and, therefore, in the Islamic law, he cannot be considered to have committed a sin.

Although Allah preordained who the prophets were going to be, the prophets nonetheless had to strive for this position. The foremost example of this testing that the prophets had to endure can be seen in the life of Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him), the father of the prophets.

Abraham (peace be upon him) was born into an idolatrous society, but by the purity of his nature he recognized that the idols his people worshipped were capable of nothing, neither harm nor good. So one day, when no one was present, he smashed all of them but the largest, and when the people came to him and asked who had destroyed their gods, he told them to ask the remaining statue if they really believed that their stone idols had power.

Although the people realized at that point that their idols were powerless, they didn't know how to respond, so out of shame and anger they cast Abraham (peace be upon him) into a huge fire. But Allah protected Abraham (peace be upon him) from the fire and confounded the plots of the polytheists.⁵

After being tortured for and then saved by his faith in Allah, Abraham (peace be upon him) still had to undergo the hardest test of obedience to Allah – the direct order, from Allah, to sacrifice his son Ishmael.⁶

This order came to him in a dream, and although sadness overwhelmed him, he was a strong believer in Allah and did not question it. Ishmael too accepted the command of Allah unquestioningly and allowed his father to lead him to a mountaintop to be sacrificed. His only request was that his father place him face down so that his father would not see his expression as he was being killed.

Abraham (peace be upon him) raised his blade, still ready to comply with the command of Allah. But just

then came the revelation that this had only been a test, that God would not order Abraham (peace be upon him) to sacrifice his son, and that Abraham (peace be upon him) could sacrifice a sheep in his stead. This event is commemorated every year on a holiday called the Feast of Sacrifice ('eid al-adhaa) on which animals are killed and the meat distributed to the poor.

After passing these tests, Abraham (peace be upon him) became the leader of humankind as well as the father of the prophets of the three main monotheistic religions – Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

Although Allah sent prophets to every group of people on the earth, the Qur'an only mentions the names of 25 of them. The first of them was Adam (peace be upon him), the father of humanity, and the last of them and the seal of the prophets was Prophet Muhammad (S).

Why did Allah send Different Prophets and Different Religions?

The way of Allah is one, and because the final messenger, Prophet Muhammad (S), has come, there should be no dispute as to what is the right way to follow. However, throughout history, different messengers with slightly different messages were sent to different peoples because the religious needs of humanity were growing and developing just as the human race was itself growing and developing, and also because different civilizations needed different types of guidance. Nevertheless, the source and basic message behind them was the same – namely, Allah the Exalted and Glorious.

Allah sent Moses (peace be upon him) with the Torah as a light and guidance for the Children of Israel (the Jews) along with many other prophets such as David, Solomon, and so on (peace be upon them). 1,500 years after Moses, Allah sent Jesus (peace be upon him), the son of Mary (peace be upon her), confirming the Torah and bringing the Gospel which has also been likened to guidance and light. Finally, 600 years after Jesus (peace be upon him), Allah sent Prophet Muhammad (S) with the Qur'an to confirm all the messages before him and to complete the revelation of religion to mankind.

Since all the Judeo-Christian-Islamic prophets were sent sequentially, the question arises as to why Judaism, Christianity, and Islam now exist as separate religions. The answer is that the followers of these religions, particularly Judaism and Christianity, corrupted the original teachings given to them and ended up making sects of their own rather than following the pure word of God. But as the Qur'an says:

For each of you, We have made a Law and a clear way. If Allah had willed, He would have made you one nation but that He may test you in what He has given you. So strive as a race in good deeds. Your return is to Allah; then He will inform you about that which you used to differ. (5:48)

The Life of Prophet Muhammad (S)

In 6th-century CE Arabia, the majority of people were pagans. They lived in tribes, each with its own leader. Some were farmers, others traders, but many reared camels and raided other tribes for booty. It was into this society, in CE 570, that Prophet Muhammad (S)7 was born in Makkah.

His parents died and he was looked after first by his grandfather and then by his uncle. As he grew up, Prophet Muhammad (S) became known as Prophet Muhammad (S) al-Amin, 'the trustworthy'. He worked for a wealthy older widow, Khadija, who, impressed with his honesty, asked him to marry her. He was twenty-five, and they remained married until her death twenty-five years later.

Prophet Muhammad (S) often used to go from the bustle of Makkah for periods of reflection in a cave outside the city. During one such time, when he was forty years old, he heard the voice of the angel Jibril giving him a command:

Recite in the Name of your Lord who creates,

Creates man from a clot.

Recite! Your Lord is the Most Bountiful,

Who taught the use of the pen,

Taught humankind that which they knew not. (96: 1-5)

Prophet Muhammad (S) repeated the words until he had learned them by heart. He rushed home and related his experience to his wife, who comforted and reassured him. Khadija and the Prophet's young cousin 'Ali (peace be upon him) were the first people to understand and accept that Allah had chosen 'the trustworthy one' to deliver his final guidance.

Prophet Muhammad (S) continued to receive revelations for over twenty years.

As time passed, it became clear to ever-increasing numbers of people that Prophet Muhammad (S) was indeed a Messenger of Allah. The least receptive were those powerful Makkans who trafficked in idols and slaves and benefited most from idol worship and the pilgrim trade. They treated Prophet Muhammad (S) with derision. Despite this, he continued to deliver the revelations of Allah's mercy and justice, which were welcomed by the poor and oppressed.

The Prophet (S), his family, and followers were driven from Makkah. For three years they sheltered in a valley outside the city in conditions of hardship and hunger. Narrowly escaping assassination in Makkah, the Prophet (S) traveled to Madina in CE 622. The migration from Makkah to Madina, known as the Hijrah, became the starting point of the Muslim calendar.

Prophet Muhammad (S) was very well received in Madina where he became head of what was to become the first Islamic state. In CE 630, Prophet Muhammad (S) and his followers entered Makkah. At the Ka'bah, Prophet Muhammad (S) cleared the hundreds of idols from inside and proclaimed that truth had come and falsehood had vanished. He was 63 when he died, and by the time of his death the majority of people in Arabia had accepted Islam as their way of life.

The final verse of the Qur'an to be revealed to Prophet Muhammad (S), a few days before his death, was this:

"Today I [Allah] have perfected for you your religion, completed my favor upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion." (5:3)

4. Succession to the Prophet Muhammad (S) (Imama)

All of the prophets and messengers of God had successors, and just as Allah appointed His prophets and messengers for the guidance of mankind, He also appointed successors to the prophets and messengers as a matter of necessity. Abraham (peace be upon him) was succeeded by two of his sons, Isaac and Ishmael (peace be upon them), while Moses (peace be upon him) was succeeded by his brother Aaron (peace be upon him) and Jesus (peace be upon him) by two prophets whom the Qur'an mentions in the chapter called "Ya Sin".[8](#)

Likewise, Prophet Muhammad (S) was succeeded by twelve distinguished successors, one after another. These successors were called imams and were appointed by Allah, not by humankind. The right to ordain imams belongs only to Almighty Allah, and the Qur'an speaks about this in many verses:

"And remember when your Lord said to the angels, 'Verily I am going to place a successor (khalifa).'" (2:30)

Allah addressed Prophet David (peace be upon him) as such:

"O David! Verily We have placed you as a successor on earth." (38:26)

"And remember when the Lord of Abraham tried him with certain commands which he fulfilled; Allah said to him, 'Verily I am going to make you a leader (imam) of mankind.'" (2:124)

Allah also attributes the right of appointing leaders to Himself: "We made from among them leaders, giving guidance under Our command." (32:24)

During his lifetime, Prophet Muhammad (S) specifically mentioned the names of the leaders that would come after him, that there would be twelve of them, and that all of them would be descended from a particular Arab tribe called Quraysh.[9](#)

The twelve successors to Prophet Muhammad (S) are as follows:

Imam 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (600–661)

Imam 'Ali (peace be upon him) was the Prophet's cousin and son-in-law and the one about whom he said: "I am the city of knowledge and 'Ali is its gate." He also said, "Whoever considers me his leader, 'Ali is also his leader."

110,000 people heard the Prophet (S) say this at a place called Ghadir Khum. Muslims and non-Muslims alike recognized Imam 'Ali (peace be upon him) for his wisdom, bravery, and justice. Many of

his sayings and speeches have been preserved in a book called The Peak of Eloquence (Nahj al-Balagha). He was assassinated by members of a fringe movement while he was praying.

[Fatima az-Zahra \(562-580\)](#)

Although not one of the successors, Fatima al-Zahra (peace be upon her) is included in this list because of her high status and importance. Fatima al-Zahra (peace be upon her) was the daughter of the beloved Prophet of Islam (S) from his respected wife Khadija.

She was born in Makkah on the twentieth day of Jumaada al-Thaani (the sixth month of the Islamic calendar). Although he had several children, Fatima was his favorite, for she was carrying the light of the message of the Prophet (S) to the generations to come through her offspring. A chapter of the Qur'an¹⁰ was revealed about her:

***Verily We have granted you [Prophet Muhammad] al-kawthar¹¹
Therefore, turn in prayer to your Lord and sacrifice for Him.
And he who makes you angry - he will be cut off from offspring.***

She and her father had a mutual attachment; 'Aisha, one of the wives of the Prophet (S), has said: "I never saw a person who so resembled her father in speech, movements, and gestures more than Fatima, and once she goes to visit her father, he stands, takes her hand, kisses it, and places her in his own seat."¹²

Fatima was so emotionally and spiritually close to her father that he declared: "Fatima is part of me. Whoever angers her angers me, and she is the mother of her father."¹³

Fatima proved to be the best daughter to her father, mother for her four children (Hasan, Husayn, Zaynab, and Um Kalthoum), and the ideal wife for her husband Imam 'Ali (peace be upon him). She was the perfect example of a virtuous, righteous lady in Islam.

She set many examples in her social and political life. As a result of the conflict over power after the demise of the Holy Prophet (S), Fatima al-Zahra (peace be upon her) died at the age of 18 years.

[Imam Hasan ibn 'Ali \(625-670\)](#)

[Imam Husayn ibn 'Ali \(626-680\)](#)

Imam Husayn (peace be upon him) revolted against the tyrant of his time, Yazid the son of Mu'awiyah. He left his hometown of Madina to go to the city of Makkah and then with 72 of his followers and close family members to Iraq where he was brutally massacred on the day of Ashura¹⁴ in the city of Karbala, 60 miles to the south of Baghdad.

Imam Husayn (peace be upon him) stood for truth, sacrificed himself for truth and justice, and fought

corruption and aggression. The battle of Karbala represents the battle between truth and falsehood, good versus evil, and justice versus aggression, oppression, and tyranny.

Therefore, he became the beacon of light for all free people in this universe, shook the foundations of the Muslim nation with his martyrdom, and steered the consciousness of the Muslim people at that time. Hundreds of revolutions and revolts followed his martyrdom until the corrupt empire of Bani Umayyah collapsed. Imam Husayn (peace be upon him) still plays a very significant role in the life of the Muslims in their endeavor to fight injustice and deviation in all societies.

Imam 'Ali ibn al-Husayn (659-713)

Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (676-733)

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (702-765)

Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (peace be upon him) was the son of Muhammad al-Baqir (peace be upon him) and was the sixth imam of the school of the Ahlul Bayt. He was born on the seventeenth day of Rabi' al-Awwal (the third month of the Islamic calendar) in the city of Madina. He learned from his father the sciences of religion and the teachings of Islam and became the authority of jurisprudents, scholars, and preachers after the martyrdom of his father.

He made the mosque of Madina a university from which to spread Islamic ideology and graduated hundreds of scholars versed in Islamic sciences and prophetic traditions. Scholars and preachers gave their testimonies acknowledging his great standing and abundant knowledge.

One of them, Sibt al-Jawzi has said, "Never have I seen scholars less knowledgeable in the presence of a man like al-Sadiq." The men of knowledge and piety saw in Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (peace be upon him) a leader, a scholar, and an unmatched educator. He was also a great social personality and an effective political force in the leading political circles.

Imam al-Sadiq (peace be upon him) taught two of the leaders of the other Islamic schools of jurisprudence: Abu Hanifa (Nu'man ibn Thabit) and Malik ibn Anas. Imam al-Sadiq (peace be upon him) uttered thousands of hadith (Prophetic traditions) regarding every facet of life. He extensively discussed Islamic ethics, mannerisms, integrity, goodness of character, and acts of worship in addition to jurisprudence and debated with leaders of other schools of thought.

Imam al-Sadiq (peace be upon him) was poisoned by the caliph of his time and was buried in the cemetery of al-Baqi' in Madina.

Imam Musa al-Kazim (746-799)

Imam 'Ali ar-Rida (765–818)

Imam Muhammad al-Jawad (811–835)

Imam 'Ali al-Hadi (827–868)

Imam Hasan al-Askari (846–874)

Imam Muhammad al-Mahdi (869–present)

Imam al-Mahdi is the last of the imams of the people on earth, and with him the line of succession to the Holy Prophet (S) ends. Because of the necessity of having a representative from Allah present on the earth, he still – by the will of Allah – lives in this world, but he does not live in public view. He will, however, reappear towards the end of human civilization at a time when the world has been filled with evil and injustice to restore order and make justice prevail.

These imams were the authorities of Allah among mankind. Like the Holy Prophet (S), they were all special personalities in matters of knowledge, forbearance, morality, and justice.

The Family of the Prophet (Ahlul Bayt)

The Ahlul Bayt are the immediately family of the Prophet Muhammad (S), namely: his daughter Fatima al-Zahra; his cousin, son-in-law, and first successor Imam 'Ali; and his grandchildren Hasan and Husayn (peace be upon them). The purity of these five is spoken of in the Qur'an:

"Allah only wishes to remove all uncleanness from you, O People of the House (Ahlul Bayt), and to make you as pure as possible." (33:33)

Like the prophets and the prophets' successors, these five were infallible, free from all sin or error.

Near the end of his life, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said: "It is probable that I will be called soon, and I will respond. So I leave behind me among you two weighty things: the Book of Allah [the Qur'an], and my Ahlul Bayt. Verily, Allah, the Merciful, the Aware, has informed me that these two will never be separated from each other until they meet me at the fountain in Heaven called Kawthar."¹⁵

The Prophet (S) has also said: "The parable of my Ahlul Bayt is similar to that of Noah's ark. Whoever embarks on it will certainly be rescued, but whoever opposes the boarding of it will surely be drowned."¹⁶

The necessity of taking hold of both things that the Prophet (S) left behind cannot be overemphasized; those who choose to follow the Qur'an but not the guidance of the Ahlul Bayt will invariably go astray.

As a rule, the prophets of Allah did not ask any reward for the pain and suffering they endured while

attempting to guide mankind. In fact, this refusal to accept compensation can be seen as the mark of a prophet:

"Obey those who ask no reward from you and who have themselves received guidance." (36:21)

However, by the command of Allah, Prophet Muhammad (S) made one slight exception; although he refused to accept anything for himself, he was commanded to say:

"I do not ask you for any reward except love for my relatives [the Ahlul Bayt]." (42:23)

Love for the Prophet's Ahlul Bayt does not benefit the Prophet himself (S) so much as it does the one who approaches them with kindness and loyalty and in return derives knowledge, guidance, and blessings from Allah.

Imam 'Ali (peace be upon him) has spoken about the Ahlul Bayt:

We, the Ahlul Bayt, possess the doors of wisdom and light of governance. Beware that the paths of religion are one and its highways are straight. He who follows them achieves and secures the aim and objective. And he who stands away from them goes astray and incurs repentance. [17](#)

The example of the descendants of Muhammad – peace and blessing of Allah be upon him and his descendants – is like that of stars in the sky. When one star sets another one rises. [18](#)

We are lights of the heavens and the earth and the ships of salvation. We are the repository of knowledge, and towards us is the homecoming of all matters. Through our Mahdi (the final successor to the Prophet) all arguments shall be refuted, and he is the seal of the imams, the deliverer of the ummah (the Muslim nation), and the extremity of the light. Happy are those who hold onto our handle and are brought together upon our love. [19](#)

5. The Day of Judgement and the Resurrection (Qiyama)

Approximately 1,200 verses of the Qur'an speak of life after death and the Day of Resurrection, as do a vast number of sayings related from Prophet Muhammad and his successors (peace be upon all of them). This number reveals the importance and significance of life after death and emphasizes that the life of the human being does not end at death but in fact continues afterwards towards a new life – indeed, its true life.

Allah placed human beings on the earth to test them, and so different people live for different lengths of time before they die and their souls are separated from their bodies. Their souls then live on, facing the grave and the questioning therein. After that, the souls return to their bodies which will be resurrected on the Day of Judgement, on which day they will receive whatever they deserve according to their beliefs and deeds in life.

Some people will go to Heaven, also called the Garden, or the Paradise. Others will go to Hell, oftentimes called the Fire. And a select few will be brought into a state of nearness to God.

Both Heaven and Hell have different levels; the worst of people will be in the lowest depths of Hell, while the best of them will be in the highest parts of Heaven.

Death and Life after Death

And they ask you concerning the spirit. Say: "The spirit, it is one of the things, the knowledge of which is only with my Lord, and of knowledge, you mankind have been given only a little. (17:85)

Although humanity has been permitted to know only a little about life after death right now, the Holy Qur'an still reveals some of the secrets surrounding the soul. The Qur'an says:

It is Allah who takes away the souls at the time of their death, and those that die not during their sleep. He keeps those souls for which He has ordained death and sends the rest for a term appointed. Verily, in this are signs for people who think deeply. (39:42)

The soul will be buried along with the body in the grave. It could get permission from Allah to depart from the grave, but it must go back to it again. Each individual, if faithful, faces two paradises after death, or if he is unfaithful and a sinner, two hells.²⁰ One of them is for the souls before the Day of Judgement, and the second is the permanent abode.

Once Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) sent two messengers to the city of Antioch to call for monotheism and the worshipping of Allah. One of the men of that town embraced the faith and followed them, so the king of the land ordered that righteous man to be killed. When he died, he said:

"Verily I have believed in your Lord. So listen to me. It was said to him when the disbelievers killed him, 'Enter paradise.' He said, Would that my people knew what my Lord Allah has forgiven me for and made me one of the honored ones." (36:25-27)

The paradise that he had entered was of the kind, called barzakh, that the soul lives in before the Day of Judgement; on the Day of Judgement everyone will know the fate of everyone else, and there will be no need, as above, to tell others. The descriptions of both types of hellfire are very vivid and painful:

"Evil torment encompassed Pharaoh's people - the fire: they are exposed to it morning and afternoon, and on the day when the Hour will be established." (40:46)

Islam teaches that the parting of the soul is accompanied with severe pain. The moment of death has been described:

Nay! When the soul reaches the collarbone, and it will be said, "Who can cure him and save him from death?" and he, the dying person, will conclude that it is the time of departing, and he is

shrouded; the drive on that day will be to your Lord. (75:26-30)

Remember that the two recording angels receive each human being after attaining the age of puberty, one sitting on the right and one on the left, to note his actions. Not a word does he utter but there is a watcher sitting by him to record it. And the stupor of death will come in truth; this is what you have been avoiding. And the trumpet will be blown; that will be the day whereof warning had been given, and every person will come forth with an angel to drive him and an angel to bear witness. It will be said to the sinners:

"Indeed, you were heedless of this. Now We have removed your covering, and sharp is your sight this day." (50: 17-22)

But for the true believers, the departure of the soul will be peaceful:

It will be said to the pious: "O you in complete rest and satisfaction, come back to your Lord well-please yourself and well-pleasing unto Him. Enter then among my honored servants, and enter my Paradise." (89:27-30)

Repentance and Forgiveness

Repentance is the giving up of sin and is the best way of expressing regret for having committed one. It involves both sincerely regretting having committed the particular sin and then resolving never to do it again. Repentance is the source of and means to success:

"Turn to Allah, O Believers, that you may be successful." (24:31)

No matter how grievous a person's sin may be, the forgiveness of Allah is greater, and no one should be ashamed to turn towards Allah in repentance because Allah can erase the sins of whomever He pleases.

Say: "O My servants who have transgressed against themselves, despair not of the mercy of Allah; verily, Allah forgives all sins. Verily, He is the Forgiving, the Merciful. (39:53)

Tell My servants that I am the Forgiving, the Merciful. (15:49)

Will they not turn to Allah and ask His forgiveness? Allah is the Forgiving, the Merciful. (5:74)

Your Lord is full of forgiveness for mankind in spite of their wrongdoing. (13:6)

Despite His ability to destroy mankind if he so willed, the main characteristics of Allah are forgiveness and mercy, and for this reason Muslims begin nearly every action, speech, or endeavor with the words, "In the name of Allah, the most Merciful, the most Compassionate."[21](#)

Repentance is of benefit both now and during the Hereafter. Prophet Muhammad (S) has narrated that

repenting brings an increase of wealth, protection from danger, and an easing of hardships and difficulties. Furthermore, it has been said that the fastest way to attain nearness to Allah is to humble the self before Allah and admit to wrongdoing. The benefits of repentance for the next life are obvious – entrance into Paradise and safety from the Hellfire.

Repentance will be accepted up until the moment of death. Prophet Muhammad (S) once said that if a person seeks repentance one year before dying, Allah will accept it. Even if a person seeks repentance one day before dying, Allah will accept it. Then he pointed to his throat and said that even if someone seeks repentance before his soul reaches here, Allah will accept it.

Nonetheless, repentance should be done as soon as possible and should not be delayed; this point has been emphasized again and again in the Islamic tradition. Imam 'Ali says: "How numerous are the procrastinators who postpone [repenting and doing good deeds] until death overtakes them!"²²

Repentance should be done in secrecy and privacy. People can establish a direct link to Allah while seeking repentance without the necessity of a third person interfering and in fact should not let others know about their sins. Prophet Muhammad (S) once told Imam 'Ali (peace be upon him): "O 'Ali, blessed is he whom Allah looks upon while he is weeping for the sin that none is aware of except Allah."²³

In addition to not revealing his own sins, every person must conceal the faults of his brother or sister in religion to preserve that person's honor and society. That person's faults may be dealt with personally and privately but must not be spread among society.

A person who sincerely repents is loved by Allah and is as if he or she had never committed any sins at all. Imam al-Baqir (peace be upon him) has said: "He who repents of his sins is as one who has not any burden of sin."²⁴

But repentance must be sincere; Allah knows who sincerely regrets misdeeds and who is just saying words. A person came to Imam 'Ali (peace be upon him) and said, "Astaghfirullah, I seek Allah's forgiveness," and the Imam (peace be upon him) replied:

Do you know what asking Allah's forgiveness is? It is a word that stands on six supports. The first is to repent over the past. The second is to make a firm determination never to revert to it. The third is to discharge all the rights of people so that you may meet Allah quite clean with nothing to account for.

The fourth is to fulfill every obligation which you ignored in the past so that you may now be just with it. The fifth is to aim at the flesh grown as a result of unlawful earning so that you may melt it by grief of repentance till the skin touches the bone and a new flesh grows between them. And the sixth is to make the body taste the pain of obedience as you previously made it taste the sweetness of disobedience. On such an occasion, you may say, "I seek Allah's forgiveness."²⁵

^{1.} Nahj al-Balagha (The Peak of Eloquence), sermon #186.

^{2.} Barbara Brown, A Closer Look at Christianity.

- [3.](#) "We" refers to Allah. Sometimes "We" is used instead of "I" or "Allah" in the Qur'an to refer to Allah the Glorious.
- [4.](#) See Qur'an 20: 121
- [5.](#) This story is mentioned in the Qur'an 21:51–68.
- [6.](#) This same story is mentioned in the Old Testament with the only difference being that the Old Testament says that Abraham (peace be upon him) was supposed to sacrifice his son Issac.
- [7.](#) (S): abbreviation that stands for the Arabic of peace be upon him and his family
- [8.](#) Ref. to 36: 13–14.
- [9.](#) Bukhari, The Book of Ahkam (Laws), vol. 1 p. 101; Muslim, Kitab al-Imaara (The Book of Leadership), vol. 1 narrations 4–6, et al.
- [10.](#) Al-Kawthar/Chapter 108
- [11.](#) Kawthar is one of the names of Fatima al-Zahra (peace be upon her) as well as the name of a river in Paradise.
- [12.](#) Feiruz Abadi, Fadhaail al-Khamsa, vol. 3 p. 127.
- [13.](#) Bukhari, vol. 2 p. 185; Usud al-Ghaaba, vol. 5 p. 520.
- [14.](#) The tenth day of Muharram, the first month in the Islamic calendar.
- [15.](#) Sahih Muslim, vol. 2 p. 238; Sahih Tirmithi, vol. II p. 220, et. al.
- [16.](#) Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Mishkaat al-masaabih, p. 523; Faraa'id al-Simtayn, vol. 2 p. 242, et. Al.
- [17.](#) Nahj al-Balagha (The Peak of Eloquence), sermon 120.
- [18.](#) Nahj al-Balagha (The Peak of Eloquence), sermon 100.
- [19.](#) Sibt ibn al-Jawzi, Tadhkirat al-Khawass, p. 138.
- [20.](#) Qur'an 36:27
- [21.](#) bismillah al-rahman al-rahim.
- [22.](#) Ghurar al-Hikm, p. 240.
- [23.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 77 p. 63.
- [24.](#) Wasaa'il ash-Shi'a, vol. 16 p. 74.
- [25.](#) Nahj al-Balagha (The Peak of Eloquence), saying #426

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