

With G_d's Name, the Merciful Benefactor, the Merciful Redeemer

What is Islam? An Essay

by

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What is Islam, more correctly, what is Al-Islam? The full name is Al-Islam. What is Al-Islam? It is okay to say, Islam, because that is what the public says. That is why you see me use, Islam. I use the expression, Islam. The public, they know the religion by, Islam. We don't want them to think we are talking about a different religion, so to the public it is, Islam. But to those who know the Qur'an, they say, Al-Islam.

What is Al-Islam? Muhammed, the Prophet, gave as an answer when he was asked, "What is Islam?" The answer given by the Prophet, himself, simply said, "Al-Islam is to witness that there is but One G_d and to pray". Now, we know it is to witness that there is but One G_d and Muhammed is His Messenger (shahada). But that is not how he answered it. We know it is to pray five times a day, but he didn't say that. He said, "To pray" and, "to pray to that G_d, or to G_d and to give in charity and to fast the month of Ramadan and to visit the house; that is; to make Pilgrimage to the house built by Abraham and his son, Isma'il, peace be upon them, the Ka'bah; to go there and salute the Ka'bah. Well, you really salute the black stone in the corner of the Ka'bah and you make your rituals. You begin your rituals to complete the Hajj. That is Islam. That is what Islam is. But look at how broad each of these structures are.

Shahada is acknowledging

Shahada, itself, is not just a statement of belief, but it is an acknowledgment by the faithful. I am acknowledging. Shahada means you acknowledge, not just believe. That is why we have articles of faith and principles of action and these five that were given in, "What is Islam?" are really principles of action. There is a certain action to follow when you say, "La ilah illallah, there is but one G_d, or, "Ash hadu an la ilah illallah, I witness that there is but One G_d". There is an action to follow that statement of recognition. If you say in the court of the judge, "I witness

such and such”, it means that you have knowledge of some evidence that is admitted into the court, if he accepts your testimony.

So, Islam is not a religion that wants you to be committed on an emotional charge. “Oh, I like this. Yes, I want to become one of you”. No, “Have you thought over anything? Have you used your mind and made any judgment on the value of this religion? Have you had any rational interaction with this religion and come to a rational conclusion that this religion deserves your support as an adherent or as a believer, as a member or follower? Have you done that? If you have, then take your shahada and say, ‘I witness that there is no G_d but Allah’, or, ‘that there is but One G_d and I witness that Muhammed is the Messenger of G_d. I witness’.”

Is this in accord with previous Scriptures? Yes. Previous Scriptures talk about witnesses and talk about G_d is going to make witnesses. There is a whole order of Christians by the name witnesses, Jehovah Witnesses. So, this witness is strong in religion, strong. There is more to say about that, so what is Islam? We should use the simple answer that Muhammed, the Prophet, gave us when anybody asks what is Islam? And then, whatever you want to say, let what you say be second to that, not first. “Oh, Islam is not to drink and not to smoke”, but go to jail every 4 months or every 30 days. Go to jail and preach in there and come back out and get caught, again, and go back to jail. “Just don’t smoke and don’t drink. Don’t eat pork”. That is Islam?

Islam is a religion of action

No, don’t talk from your own head about what Islam is. Come from the memory of what is taught that Islam is. Muhammed is the best of teachers for us and the world and he taught us what Islam is. Islam is the five principles of action. Islam is a religion of action. It is a religion of work. It is a religion of do, not just talk. That is what Islam is.

You say there is One G_d, show it in your action. You say, “Well, how can I show in my action that there is One G_d?” Obey that G_d and don’t put obedience to something else above obedience to that G_d. That is the way you witness that there is but One G_d. That was clear, wasn’t it? Kind of tightened you up a little bit, didn’t it? You see, I felt some people squeaking.

That is okay. Let it hurt a little bit and ask Allah for the strength to do what you're supposed to do.

Mind you, I never come from my knowledge. I always come from what has been revealed. You may not recognize it when I am speaking, but I never come from my knowledge. I come from what has been revealed. If I come from my knowledge I tell you that. I tell you. I make it personal. I say, "This is what my experience says. This is what I am explaining". But, if I am not explaining to you that it is personal and that is what I experienced, I am coming straight from Scripture. I am not always coming from the Qur'an, but most of time from the Qur'an; never against the Qur'an. Whatever I come from, if it is from the Bible or anything, it is something that is in accord with the Qur'an. And if it is not, I explain to you the difference. "This comes from the Bible, or some other source and is not like what comes from the Qur'an". So, I'm very careful. That is what I want you to know.

Al-Islam satisfies need Allah put in the soul

So, the question is asked. What is Islam? We say what is Al-Islam? We put "al" there, because in the Qur'an, it is Al-Islam in Arabic. "What is Al-Islam?" we said. But we said that since Islam is, the religion of Islam, Al-Islam, is popular in the minds and on the tongues of people as just, Islam. There is nothing wrong with us saying, "Islam". But, when we are teaching, inviting people to Islam, we should be sure that the audience is aware that the full name is Al-Islam and it means, "The peaceful submission to the Will of G_d in accordance with the best of human nature". That's what it means. It is a natural surrender. It is a natural submission. It is a natural urge in us for peace in our souls that G_d put there. G_d put that design in our souls when He made us. He put that need in our souls for the peace that only He can give us, a complete peace.

And when we accept Islam, the revealed book of the Muslims, of Islam, the Qur'an and Muhammed (the prayers and the peace be upon him), the one who received that book as Revelation from G_d over a period of about 23 years, 14 centuries and some years ago, we accept that we are Muslims proper; although we are Muslims in our nature as new born babies when we come from our mothers' womb. We are Muslims by creation. Prophet Muhammed said every

child is born a Muslim and it is the circumstances that he is put in, or she is put in, that makes that person something else.

So, what is Al Islam? Al-Islam is a religion of peace. Al-Islam is a religion of obedience to G_d. And obedience there is guaranteed to give us peace. It is a religion of surrender. When we say surrender our soul, our will to G_d, we mean obedience. Surrender is just one expression, but that surrender means peaceful surrender. It means obedience, willing obedience. So, Islam is a religion of obedience to G_d, an obedience that brings us into peace and a total peace, a complete peace.

A three-day journey

Muhammed, the Prophet, peace be on him, was pressed three times before he could speak, before he could recite Qur'an. And we find another figure in the Bible who had lost his mission, Jonah, and G_d's book, the Qur'an, and the Bible, as it is now, seems to be giving us the same report on him, on his situation. The Bible says that after he went through his ordeal and was cast upon the bank of the river by the whale (the big fish), he said, *"I have a three-day journey"*. This is the Bible, *"I have a three-day journey"*. And in Qur'an, he's shown as a figure that had been saved from one predicament but was in another. He was on the bank with the sun punishing his head and Allah's Mercy caused a gourd plant, a vine plant, a gourd plant like squash and other things, to grow up upon him, to climb upon him and put leaves above his head to protect his head from the sun. He said, *"I have a three-day journey"*, meaning he was not yet where he should be. *"I have a three-day journey"*.

Three steps to enter city (Qur'an, 95.1-3)

I am going to address Qur'anic text, now and I feel pretty sure that in the Qur'an, Allah's word to us in the Qur'an, teen (fig), zaytuun (olive), and turi seeneen (Mt. Sinai), are giving us the steps of a journey. But before proceeding with this line of reasoning, I want to point you to a situation that Jonah found himself in with the sun punishing his head and Allah had to show him mercy. Allah tells us in the Qur'an that there are some who want to get closer and closer, too close to the

light and so they're blinded by the light. I'll come back to that, inshaa Allah (if it is G_d's Will). But now let us continue with the three steps to the city, three steps that bring us to enter the city.

Taqweem excellent mold (Qur'an, 95.4)

It follows that the sequence, or that progression, is followed by, "*Laqad khalaqnaal insaana fee ahsani taqweem*"; laqad, indeed. It is a strong, strong emphasis here, stronger than, enna. "Laqad, indeed, We created the human being in the best of molds". That is how it is translated, "In the best of molds, fee ahsani taqweem". "Taqweem" is from "Qaum", from, "Qama, stood up, to stand". "Fee ahsani taqweem, in the best of molds, best postures". We could say that, because it comes from, "Qama, to stand; postures", or, "in the best of molds". And of the Prophet and his mission Allah says to us in the Qur'an that the purpose is to take us out of the darkness into the light; "*Minadh dhulumaati ilan nuur, out of the darkness into the light*". And of the light that G_d gives Divine light, G_d says of it, "*It is light upon light*".

Promised Land

Most importantly then, we should see the city, the Promised Land, as a fulfillment of G_d's promise to lead us into the light, into the light that will remove all doubts in all the problems, or, the need to search for the light and brings satisfaction to the soul. Incidentally...well, maybe not incidentally, the city (Madinah) of the Prophet is called the, "City of the Light" and some seem to be very hesitant in embracing my interpretation of that progression, "*Wa teeni wa zaytuun wa turi seeneen, wa hadhaal baladil ameen, by the fig and the olive and the Mt. of Sinai and this city made safe*", because on many occasions I have said that that "Baladil ameen" is the city of the Prophet. It is not Makkah. The road to the Promised Land begins where we originally were and man in his original place is told this, symbolically, by the Ka'bah and the black stone in sacred, venerable Makkah. So, then the journey should be from the Ka'bah to the light, to Madinah al-Munarrawah, the city of enlightenment.

Empirical Knowledge

Light upon light. Before continuing this, I want to go back to the caution that G_d gives not to want to get too close to the light with our eyes, because it may blind us. The world's light is the dhulumaat, darkness, and the same steps followed by the humble servants of G_d that take them into the nur, into the light, takes the world into the darkness and their darkness is darkness upon darkness arising from the depths of the sea; darkness upon darkness.

And they too, I repeat, follow the same procedure, 1. Teen, fig, 2. Zaytuun, olive, but their 3. Turi seeneen is not the Turi seeneen of Moses. It is their faith in their own spirit and intuition, human intuition, not divinely sparked intuition. And the end of their journey is what they call the pure sciences and the pure sciences bring them to dismiss G_d. "G_d causes a problem, so dismiss G_d; be objective. Obey matter, completely, as you should obey G_d. Obey matter. Only speak what matter says; only report what matter says; only come to the conclusions that matter implies or directs you to". Empiricism, I think they call that. And that is what has given us the secular world that we have on us, right now.

Spontaneous bursts of energy in the intellect

That's their Madinah, their Madinah of darkness. They say that in education there is teen (fig). You must use your imagination. You must trust creative thought. You must trust spontaneous bursts of energy in the intellect. They may even play some music for you while you're straining your brain to help that happen. And they, also, say that they come up with one knowledge. But out of the zaytuun (olive), or in the zaytuun, I should say, we read oneness. We read singleness. We read tauheed. We read Islamic monotheism, for want of a better expression.

Zaytun, olive, secular world

But in the secular world, the zaytuun is science, one science; all sciences agreeing in one science, material science; and their turi seeneen is the intuitive edge, not the intuition that G_d gave the Prophets, but the intuitive edge. Now where is the support for this kind of reasoning? Allah says in our holy book, the Qur'an, "There were some who sought a hearing on high and Allah says you cannot and you will find that there will be shooting balls of fire and you cannot get there, *illa*

bisultanin atheem, except as a big, mighty sultan (authority)". But, He didn't say you couldn't get there.

Jinn heard recital of Qur'an (Qur'an, 46.29)

The jinn, a company of them, heard the recital of the Qur'an and they said, "*We bear witness that this is a wonderful recital. None but G_d has done this*". They were not inspired or given inspiration. Their intuitive light in the intellect was turned on, sparked by, divine gift or divine intervention. It is a property that they have. So just like we have in common with the Jinn community, the property of reasoning, we also have with them in common the property of intuitive insight.

So, they have their teen, their zaytuun, and their turi see. I can't say it is the turi seeneen. It is not Mt. Sinai. It is certainly not Mt. Sinai, but they have their turi see something. And they want the baladil ameen, the society established upon trust, the society secured upon trust. They want that and not even America has it. Our society is a society under fear, not secured upon trust and our society gives its citizens secular knowledge to support them and to guide them; not Revelation. So, even America's Promised Land is a land of darkness.

Zaytuun, Tauheed

Now, going back to the zaytuun as a symbol, I said the zaytuun is to be understood as a symbol or signal to signal us to the idea of tauheed, oneness, but in knowledge, in science; oneness that one G_d did it all; not an accident, not the big bang, but purpose, divine purpose, explains why this earth and this creation, this universe, is here bearing one design, the universal system of law, or laws.

For Muslims no separation of church and state

Before us, the Jews claimed the olive. They still do. They are a people of the olive, the blessed olive; and we know that we are closer to Christians in our spirit, but definitely close to the Jews in the reading of the concept of G_d (oneness). For us science is not separated, just like life is not separated. For the Western world, for America, Western democracy, there is a separation of

religion and government, or church and state as they put it. And you know, for us there is no such separation. For Muslims there is no such separation.

Separation of knowledge

Also, for the West, there is a separation of knowledge, pure truth, exactness in the perception of knowledge, or pure knowledge, or truth. But for us, there is no separation. For the West, there is the world of physical science, the world of secularism, and the world of religious science, or spiritual science. Now, we know in Islam we have the branch called, spiritual sciences, from the “Ruh”, meaning, “Spirit”. But those sciences in our religion are not completely foreign to all the other sciences and that is what tauheed means, that there is a oneness. There is a oneness of knowledge and all knowledge belongs to that wholeness of knowledge. So, there is seventy hundred, or seventy thousand, or whatever we might say, branches of spiritual science that have to be seen in connection with social science and all other sciences.