

Islam teaches us to worship the Creator not the creation. There is only One Creator; everything else is creation: the sun, moon, stars, human beings, money, and wealth. People tend to set up rivals to the Creator by worshipping things He created or their own desires. Only the Creator is Eternally Living - the One who sustains and protects all that exists, and All-Knowing – the only One whose knowledge about His creation is perfect and complete. Only He alone is worthy of worship.

All humanity began with Adam and Eve. They had two sons: Cain and Abel. Cain killed Abel. Why did our Most Loving, Most Merciful God not stop the killing? He gave us the freedom to choose between right and wrong. This freedom comes with Divine guidance. God is All-Wise and He did not put us to test without His guidance. What is His guidance in the Quran about killing? If one of you killed one innocent human being it is as if you killed all of humanity and if you saved one innocent human being it is as if you saved all of humanity. [Quran 5:32]

His guidance continues from Adam and Eve to Noah and then to Abraham. God chose Abraham to be the father of a multitude of nations. [Genesis 17:4] Abraham had two notable sons: Isaac and Ishmael. Isaac was from Sarah and Ishmael was from Hagar. Hagar was his wife as was Sarah. [Genesis 16:3] Ishmael was thus his first-born and also the recipient of God's covenant as was Isaac. From Isaac came Jacob and from him came the twelve sons of the Children of Israel.

God's guidance continues from Abraham to Moses (Torah) to David (Psalms) and to Jesus (Injeel). After Jesus left the Children of Israel divided into Jews and Christians. Did God Almighty leave them as they were: confused, divided? No! God Almighty promised to guide Abraham's righteous descendants back to His way.

God Almighty had blessed the Children of Israel above all nations by sending them His Revelations. What did they do in return? They rejected His guidance. They broke His first commandment by worshipping the golden calf. They broke the Sabbath and did not keep it holy. They mocked, disobeyed and harmed His prophets and messengers. They killed John the Baptist. When Jesus came with signs, wonders and miracles from God to guide the lost sheep of the Children of Israel they tried to kill and crucify him too.

Did God Almighty ignore them? No! God had promised Abraham to guide his righteous descendants. Turning to Abraham's other son: Ishmael, God blessed him and his

descendants by sending down His final Revelation, the Quran, to His final prophet and messenger - Muhammad. The Quran was sent down through Angel Gabriel, the same angel who had brought down the good news of the birth of Jesus to his virgin mother Mary some 571 years earlier. The Quran was sent down piecemeal over a 23-year ministry and Prophet Muhammad was commanded to memorize it word for word and teach it to his companions who passed it down generation after generation to this very day. Today, some ten million Muslims have the Quran memorized, cover to cover. The Quran has remained a pure and perfect Revelation to guide the Children of Israel, the Children of Ishmael and all of mankind back to the way of Abraham.

God says "Say, **"Indeed, my Lord has guided me to a straight path – a correct religion – the way of Abraham, inclining toward truth. And he was not among those who associated others with Allah."** [Quran 6:161] Here Children of Israel, Children of Ishmael and all of mankind are being guided to uphold the covenant Abraham made with God Almighty. Abraham did not associate anything in the worship of Allah; he upheld His first commandment: "Thou shall not have any other gods besides Me."

When a family divides everyone goes back to grandfather. Prophet Muhammad (who was also from the family of Abraham) did not invent a new way or a new religion. God is asking him to ask the Children of Israel and Ishmael and all of mankind to go back to the way of Abraham, who was neither a Jew nor Christian. [Quran 3:67] Abraham worshipped God alone and inclined towards Truth. This has been the call of Prophet Muhammad and of all the Prophets and Messengers through time.

Allah is God's personal name in Arabic. In Hebrew it is Eloha, Elohim, and in Aramaic it is Allaaha. You must have heard the chanting of Hallelujah in church? Hallelujah! Praise be to Allah, Glory be to Allah. The name Allah is built into this phrase. He is the God of Abraham, God of Moses, God of Jesus, and God of Muhammad.

Islam comes from the Divine Name of Allah, As Salaam, which means: source of all peace. Salaam is used in all semitic greetings. In Hebrew it is Shalom and in Aramaic is Salaamah and in Arabic it is Salaam. If Jesus were here he would greet you: as salaamah alaykum! Prophet Muhammad would say: salaam alaykum! Moses would say: Shalom alaykum! This is Islam.

Islam as a verb means - to submit. To do Islam is to surrender, submit, obey in sincerity and acquire peace. In English we would suffix-er to a verb to denote its doer. In Arabic a prefix is used--**mu**. **Mu** plus **Islam** becomes **Muslim** – one who submits to God. Jesus, Moses, Abraham, David and Muhammad were all Muslim,

submitting their wills to the Will of Allah and showing us all the way to submit to Him.

Salvation is easy. Once we accept personal responsibility for our beliefs and actions, and humble ourselves to repent to God if we fall short, then Mercy and Grace of Allah will be with us on the Day of Judgment. God says "My Mercy overtakes My wrath."

What is correct faith? Allah says in what means "Say, **"He is Allah, [who is] One; Allah, the Eternal Refuge. He neither begets nor is He born, nor is there to Him any equivalent."** [Quran 112] All sins could be forgiven, except if we joined gods with Him. (Quran 4:48 & 4:116). This is the correct belief.

What is good in the sight of God? Ritual acts of devotion offered to God alone, being good to parents and protecting your soul from falling into disbelief are considered best good deeds. Disbelief is to associate partners in worship of God.

Being human, we will always fall short and transgress against our own selves, or others like us or God Himself. Once we realize our mistake we should not delay to ask God for forgiveness and His help in abstaining from sin. Repentance is the best good deed. Allah says "Those who repent and believe, and do righteous deeds, for those, Allah will change their sins into good deeds..." (Quran 25:70)

In the end, God's Mercy and Grace will be with us on the Day of Judgment. Allah says "And when those who believe in our verses come to you, say "Peace be unto you. Your Lord has decreed upon Himself mercy that any of you who does wrong out of ignorance and then repents after that and corrects himself. Indeed He is Forgiving and Merciful." [Quran 6:54]

To be Muslim is to be on a straight way to God. To be Muslim is to worship God the way all His prophets and messengers worshipped and walk in their shoes towards God. To be Muslim is to uphold Abraham's covenant with God and unite in worshipping Him alone, without partners. To be Muslim is to enter the House of Shalom, Salaamah and Salaam to attain true peace. Say "There is no god worthy of worship but Allah and Prophet Muhammad is His last and final messenger."