**Fundamentals of Islam**

**Islam:** … submission and surrender to God and acceptance of his will.

**Muslim**: one who submits/ accepts god and his will; a follower of Islam.

**Allah (al-Ilah)** … the god... not a name; not just one of many gods.

God is one... monotheism

…… The creator, personal, living, present, omnipotent and omniscient, just and merciful.

…… beyond description.

**Muhammad**: the prophet.. the last of the line of biblical prophets. The “seal” of the prophets... god’s final messenger.

**The Qur’an, or Koran:** Meaning of the word: “recitation” ... i.e., the scriptures/revelations were to be read aloud, or spoken aloud; The Koran is the sacred book of Islam; there are 114 surahs (chapters); longest first (except for Sura #1) divinely revealed by the archangel Gabriel to Muhammad.

It is the exact word of god... an exact copy of one which exists in heaven.

It is not a book of history, philosophy, or doctrines of theology. Not a life of Muhammad.

It is **primarily proclaiming the oneness**, power, and glory of god, and the necessity of submission of all to his will... surrender to him and his law.

**Hadith:** the stories about and sayings of Muhammad.

**Sunnah:** the normative practice or precedents of Muhammad... his life as role model, or as the ideal response to God.

**Shari’a:** Islamic law... religious, moral, and political & social. It is found in the Koran, in tradition, and in the Hadith.

**Ulama:** the body of scholars and learned men, centered often in the mosque and universities, who interpret the meaning of the Koran and the Hadith, and Islamic law.

**Ummah:** the community of believers; religion, politic, morals, economics, daily life unified in the ummah by basic theocratic beliefs. All is sacred, not just a few rituals and holy days. All of life must be lived in submission to God’s will and in obedience to his laws.

The foundation of the community

... linking God, community, and the entire Muslim world

**The Five Pillars of Islam**

1. the creed of monotheism: there is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is his prophet.

2. prayer... 5 times a day.

3. charity... giving alms to the poor

4. fasting... during the month of Ramadan (Muhammad’s first rev’s)

5. pilgrimage to Mecca

**jihad**: “holy war”... war against infidels... also interpreted as the war waged internally... against evil and temptations in the soul.

**mosque:**

the center of Islam worship and prayer... also historically important center of study, law, and culture. The ‘niche’ in the wall of the mosque points towards Mecca... the direction all are supposed to face when in prayer.

**Man**: special creation of god’s... **free will and responsibility**; moral works, belief in god, following the Koran and the law will gain one salvation.... a dreamlike pleasurable Heaven. Evil deeds and disbelief in god will gain you Hell.

**Salvation by works** is thus emphasized. Islam is more like Judaism than Christianity in its rejection of original sin and its stress on individual free choice and good works being the basis of one’s salvation.

**Faith** for Islam becomes a determining factor in one’s salvation...

which turns faith into a type of ‘works’ .

Infidels go to hell; believers are saved. I.e.,

a second order faith is at work here: having faith (#2) in the idea that having faith (#1) in the doctrines of Islam will help to gain your salvation.

**Angels and jinn exist**: spiritual creatures and demons other than animal life and man exist and work good and evil for man.

**Eschatology**: Judgment day and the Second Creation: as in the Bible, there will an end of the world, a period of catastrophe and judgment; and a ‘second creation’ … eternal heavenly reward for the good and hell for the evil and non-believers.

**Relationship to Judaism and Christianity**

**The Bible:** is accepted by Islam as authentic revelation of God to humanity. Some Islamic scholars say that Islam began not with Muhammad but with the creation of the world and Adam.

**Biblical genealogy:**

Adam —> Noah —> Shem (a son of Noah, from which the name Semite is derived ... descendants of Shem; so Arabs consider themselves to be a Semitic people, as do Jews) ...

from Shem —> Abraham

Abraham —> Isaac (Sara’s son)

and —> Ishmael (Hagar’s son...Hagar, the Egyptian wife of Abraham)

Ishmael was brought to Mecca with Hagar by his father, Abraham. It is from Ishmael’s descendants that the prophet Muhammad arises in 570 of the Common Era.

**Abraham:** the first of god’s prophets. But Judaism and Christianity have not adhered to the revelations to Abraham. They have distorted the message and the way revealed to them. The great figures of the Bible, Adam, Noah, Shem, Abraham, Isaac and Ishmael, Moses, Jesus, Joseph, and Mary... all are accepted, though with variation on the stories and themes, by the Koran.

**Muhammad** is required to clarify god’s message once and for all. He is the last of the prophets.

**Jesus** is a man, not a god, although he is a great and holy teacher. Making Jesus into a god is **idolatry... polytheism.**

**Original Sin:** Islam rejects the doctrine of original sin. Man is free to choose his actions and free to follow the law and thereby gain **salvation.**

**The basic divisions in Islam**

**Sunni** and **Shi‘ah**……… the Sunnis and Shi’ites...

**Question of a successor to Muhammad:** led to factionalism and political fights for leadership of Islam... the **final split occurs in 682**.

The **Sunnis** accept the succession of **Abu Bakr** (632-634), Umar (634-44), and Uthman (644-656).[[1]](#endnote-2)[i]

**Sunnis**: **“Sunna”** means **“the well trodden path”**.. and refers to the path of **tradition.** It is the **consensus of scholars, wise men and jurists** in determining **Islamic law** and interpretation of the **Koran, tradition, and Hadith** which is the authoritative body in Sunni Islam.

**Shi’ah ... Shi’ites**: (= party, faction, or followers... of Ali)

**authority of the Imam**... the holy teacher... in hiding for hundreds of years... and his envoys... this is the basis of authority.

Shi’ites are the minority party... they are more radical and more given to extreme religious passion and militancy... (strong in Iran and in Iraq today...)

The two dominant factions, the **Sunnis** and the **Shi’ites** split apart over the two **questions of succession and authority.[[2]](#endnote-3)[ii]**

... **Sunnis** accept Abu Bakr and the principle of **“consensus”** as the deciding voice or authority in Islam.

**... Shi’ites** reject this, and declare that **Ali is the rightful successor** to Muhammad. Ali is considered to be the first Imam.[[3]](#endnote-4)[iii]

**Sufism**: Islamic **mysticism**... based on the mystic nature of Muhammad... his revelations, and his long periods in trance and meditation on Mount Hira. The inward, spiritual, ecstatic side of Islam is represented here.

For Sufis, it is knowing the God of the Koran intimately, mystically, which counts for more than just following the law (submission). Spiritual masters, communities, schools of meditation, music, wisdom tales, chanting, and dance are all part of the Sufi tradition.

“Sufism is the timeless path known to the wise in all generations.”

Sainthood... being a friend of god (“wali” = saints)

“shaykhs”... spiritual teachers and masters

1. [i]This was the dynasty of the Umayyads   
   (a subdivision of the Prophet’s tribe, the Quraysh) and it lasted until it was replaced after 750 by the Abbasid dynasty.

   **Abu Bakr unified the Arab tribes**, ordered the gathering of the miscellaneous **suras** of the **Qur’an**, and he continued the organizing of the Prophet’s army in preparation for an assault on the outside world. He conducted his affairs of state, military and religion from the courtyard of the mosque **at Medina**.

   [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
2. [ii] John Hutcheson, *PATHS OF FAITH,* McGraw Hill, p. 456.

   [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
3. [iii] **Shi’ites** believe that there have been 12 (or 7) **Imams**... great teachers, all related to Muhammad, **without sin, infallible** in their interpretations of the Koran, and leaders of Islam.

   **The last Imam** is still living and in hiding since the 9th century, according to some divisions of Shi’ite Islam. This Imam and his envoys or representatives are the basis of centralized authority for the Shi’ites.

   And ... there will be **a final Imam** to come at the end of history.

   [↑](#endnote-ref-4)