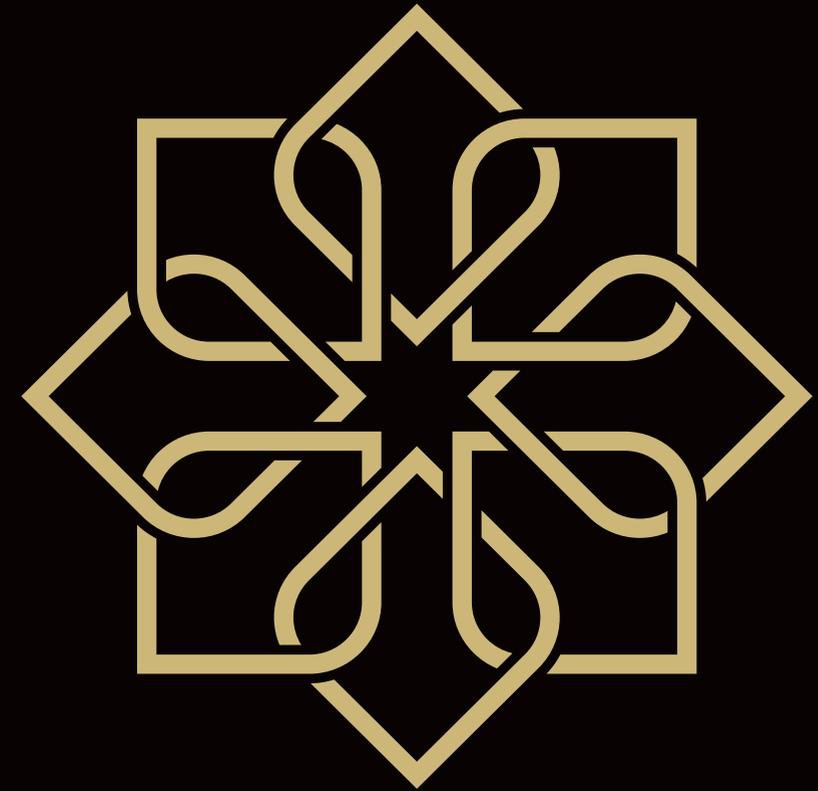


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8. Scientific Miracles Mentioned In The Quran
9. The Concept Of God In Islam
10. Message To Mankind
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13. Does God Exit
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15. Islam For the 21st Century
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18. Muhammed pbuh As A Teacher
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## THE PEOPLE OF THE BOOK

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# The People of the Book!

The Quran is the last and final testament from our creator and it invites all mankind to think and ponder over our own creation and about our Creator in order to achieve a better understanding of who we are and what our purpose in life is!

It is but natural that the Quran would address and invite those who have already known the previous testaments and books of God. For this purpose the Quran uses a beautiful term to call out to those who had been given a Book in the past but no longer have that in its original form now. The Quran uses the term “Ahl-Al kitaab” meaning “People of the Book” to describe Jews and Christians thus making them part and parcel of the long chain of messengers and the message that was brought by each one of them. ‘Ahl al-Kitab‘ means those who possess the scripture or the divine book. The term, along with its derivatives occurs more than 50 times in the Qur’an.

The Quran calls out to both Jews and Christians thus:

*Say: "O people of the Book! come to common terms as between us and you: that we worship none but God; that we associate no partners with Him; that we erect not from among ourselves Lords*

*and patrons other than God." If then they turn back say: "Bear witness that we (at least) are Muslims (bowing to God's will)."(3:64)*

The invitation is clearly to come to common terms-that will form the terms of reference between us and ensure mutual respect and cooperation between us. The next verse that the Quran uses to clarify how humanity got divided into different religions is:

*"Mankind was one single community and God sent Messengers with glad tidings and warnings; and with them He sent the Book in truth to judge between people in matters wherein they differed; but the People of the Book after the clear Signs came to them did not differ among themselves except through selfish contumacy. God by His Grace guided the believers to the truth concerning that wherein they differed. For God guides whom He will to a path that is straight" (2: 213)*

The Quran takes practical steps to establish cordial relations between Muslims and People of the Book by making lawful the food of the people of book with a view to making different communities sit around the same table because a lot can be shared over a cup of tea:

*"This day are (all) things good and pure made lawful unto you. The food of the People of the Book is lawful unto you and yours is lawful unto them. (Lawful unto you in marriage) are (not only) chaste women who are believers but chaste women among the People of the*

*Book revealed before your time when ye give them their due dowers and desire chastity not lewdness nor secret intrigues. If anyone rejects faith fruitless is his work and in the Hereafter he will be in the ranks of those who have lost (all spiritual good)” (5:5)*

The Quran further instructs Muslims to use the most befitting method and ways to approach the people of the book:

*“And dispute ye not with the People of the Book except with means better (than mere disputation) unless it be with those of them who inflict wrong (and injury): but say "We believe in the Revelation which has come down to us and in that which came down to you; Our God and your God is one (and the same); and it is to Him we bow" (29:46)*

The instruction is loud and clear- the Muslims, whilst dealing with the people of the Book, should convey their point of view with utmost respect and in a positive manner. “We believe in the same God in Whom you believe and we are obedient to Him”. We have submitted ourselves to all those commands and injunctions and teachings that have come from Him, whether they were sent down previously to you, or recently to us. Muslims are instructed to clarify to the people of the book that We are obedient servants of God and not of a country or a community or a race. It is also to be clarified that we should not be like those who submit to God’s command when it pleases them or when it is sent down to a particular prophet

and reject it when it does not suit them or is sent down to a different prophet in another place!

The Quran draws home the reality and clarifies the criteria for righteousness and deserving of paradise as doing good deeds and not mere conjecture and self praise:

*“And they say: "None shall enter paradise unless he is a Jew or a Christian." Those are their (vain) desires. Say: "Produce your proof if ye are truthful. Nay whoever submits his whole self to God and is a doer of good he will get his reward with his Lord; on such shall be no fear nor shall they grieve.” (2:11-112)*

The Quran further asks the people of the book to carefully consider why Abraham, who is dearly revered by both Jews and Christians, was the prophet who taught the same message as the last Prophet Muhammed pbuh, as did all the prophets including Moses and Jesus peace be upon all of them. The Quran reveals:

*“O people of the Book! why dispute ye about Abraham when the Law and the Gospel were not revealed till after him? Do you not have understanding? Ah! ye are those who fell to disputing (even) in matters of which ye had some knowledge! but why dispute ye in matters of which ye have no knowledge? It is God Who knows and ye who know not! Abraham was not a Jew nor yet a Christian but he was true in faith and bowed his will to God's (which is Islam) and he*

*joined not partners with God. Without doubt among men the nearest of kin to Abraham are those who follow him as are also this Apostle (Muhummed) and those who believe; and God is the Protector of those who have faith” (3:65-68)*

The Quran further informs how the creation of Judaism and Christianity as religions happened long after Moses and Jesus left the earth. Neither Moses nor Jesus said that they were Jews or Christians! They were, like all prophets, those who were obedient to the commands of their creator-which translates as Muslim in Arabic. The books were changed and tweaked by the clergy for their own self interests and by crossing the boundaries set by God and they did not check each other when committing such mischief:

*“Say: "O people of the Book! exceed not in your religion the bounds (of what is proper) trespassing beyond the truth nor follow the vain desires of people who went wrong in times gone by who misled many and strayed (themselves) from the even way. Curses were pronounced on those among the Children of Israel who rejected faith by the tongue of David and of Jesus the son of Mary: because they disobeyed and persisted in excesses. Nor did they (usually) forbid one another the iniquities which they committed: evil indeed were the deeds which they did” (5:77-79)*

As an example here is what Mathew 23 1-39 says in Bible

*“But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you lock people out of the kingdom of heaven. For you do not go in yourselves, and when others are going in, you stop them.\* 15Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cross sea and land to make a single convert, and you make the new convert twice as much a child of hell\* as yourselves.*

*16 ‘Woe to you, blind guides, who say, “Whoever swears by the sanctuary is bound by nothing, but whoever swears by the gold of the sanctuary is bound by the oath.” 17You blind fools! For which is greater, the gold or the sanctuary that has made the gold sacred? 18And you say, “Whoever swears by the altar is bound by nothing, but whoever swears by the gift that is on the altar is bound by the oath.” 19How blind you are! For which is greater, the gift or the altar that makes the gift sacred? 20So whoever swears by the altar, swears by it and by everything on it; 21and whoever swears by the sanctuary, swears by it and by the one who dwells in it; 22and whoever swears by heaven, swears by the throne of God and by the one who is seated upon it”(Mathew)*

About changing and corrupting the true word of God; Jeremiah 8-8 reads:

*“How can you say, “We are wise because we have the word of the LORD,” when your teachers have twisted it by writing lies?(Jeremiah 8-8)*

It further asks the people of the book to uphold the laws and commands of the Creator in the Gospel and not to follow the deviations from the commands sent down by their creator:

*“Say: "O People of the Book! ye have no ground to stand upon unless ye stand fast by the Law the Gospel and all the revelation that has come to you from your Lord."(5:68)*

It goes on to clarify the need to refer back to the laws of God and doing of good deeds:

*“Those who believe (in the Qur'an) those who follow the Jewish (Scriptures) and the Sabians and the Christians and any who believe in Allah and the Last Day and work righteousness on them shall be no fear nor shall they grieve”.(5:69)*

It invites them to reflect on the revelation sent down in the Quran and not make unjustifiable claims of being the only chosen people of the God:

*“The Jews and the Christians say: 'We are God's children and His beloved ones.' Ask them: 'Why, then, does He chastise you for your sins?' You are the same as other men He has created. He forgives whom He wills and chastises whom He wills. And to God belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth, and all that is between them. To Him is the eventual return”.* (5:18)

*“People of the Book! After a long interlude during which no Messengers have appeared there has come to you Our Messenger(Muhummed) to elucidate the teaching of the true faith lest you say: 'No bearer of glad tidings and no Warner has come to us.' For now there indeed has come to you a bearer of glad tidings and a Warner, (Remember) God is All-Powerful” (5:19)*

These verses signify that the same God who had sent warners and bearers of glad tidings to men in the past has now sent Muhummed (peace be on him) with the same task. At the same time it also means that they should not treat the message of this warner and bearer of glad tidings lightly. They should bear in mind that if they disregard the injunctions of God, He can chastise them as He wills, for He is All-Powerful and All-Mighty.

The Quran also clarifies that the people of the book are the same as any other human community with its proportion of good and bad mix of people. The Quran further holds to account those amongst Jewish community who consider cheating non-Jews as acceptable:

*“Among the People of the Book are some who, if entrusted with a hoard of gold, will (readily) pay it back; others, who, if entrusted with a single silver coin, will not repay it unless thou constantly stood demanding, because, they say, "there is no call on us (to keep faith) with these ignorant (Pagans)." but they tell a lie against God, and (well) they know it”. (3:75)*

The Quran further praises the people of book for their great acts of worship and charity:

*“Of the People of the Book are a portion that stand (For the right): They rehearse the Signs of God all night long, and they prostrate themselves in adoration. (3: 113)*

*“And there are, certainly, among the People of the Book, those who believe in God, in the revelation to you, and in the revelation to them, bowing in humility to God. They will not sell the Signs of God for a miserable gain! For them is a reward with their Lord, and God is swift in account”. (3:199)*

This is the message that the Quran wants to send out to the People of the Book. You are the ones who know about true faith and the fact that Abraham was the mighty prophet of God and he was neither a Jew nor a Christian so we need to adhere to the true message of God by following the Abrahamic Deen or way of Life which is represented in its original form in the Quran. The Quran calls out:

*“People of the Book! Now Our Messenger has come to you: he makes clear to you a good many things of the Book which you were wont to conceal, and also passes over many things. There has now come to you a light from God, and a clear Book” (5:15)*

But this reflection and invite is purely a choice which they are allowed to make for themselves as the Quran clarifies that the freedom of belief is a basic Islamic principle:

*{There must be no coercion in matters of faith. The right way is henceforth distinct from error}. (Al-Baqarah 2: 256).*

Throughout Muslim history, People of the Book, with various religious sects, were free to practise their own faith and follow their way of life in internal and domestic affairs. This tolerant treatment is based on the Prophet's model.

After the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) shortly settled in Madinah, he drew up a constitutional document defining the obligations and responsibilities of every group within the Muslim community, and outlining the nature of its relationship with the Jews, Christians and everyone else living in that area. The constitution outlined full rights to every citizen and gave each person the right to choose and practise his/her way of life without any fear or compulsion.

The Quran invites for an open and honest approach to seek truth and justice for all:

*“Call people to the same religion and be steadfast about it as you were commanded, and do not follow their desires, and say (to them):*

*“I believe in the Book God has sent down. I have been commanded to establish justice among you. God is our Lord and your Lord. We have our deeds and you have your deeds. There is no contention between us and you. God will bring us all together. To Him all are destined to return” (42:15)*

This verse makes it obligatory upon Muslims to declare that we have been appointed to discard the schisms and adopt true impartiality. We do not like to harbour prejudice in favour of one and against the other schism. We have one and the same kind of relationship with all human beings, and it is the relationship of justice and equity. We are companions and supporters of everyone who follows the truth, whether he is an utter stranger for us, and an opponent of everyone who follows falsehood, whether he is a neighbour or a close kinsman.

There is no place of distinction for anybody in the system of truth, which the Quran outlines, it honours everyone equally. It does not contain separate sets of the rights for the kindred and the stranger, the poor and the rich, the noble and the humble. Whatever is good in it is good for everyone, and whatever is sinful and unlawful and criminal in it is sinful, unlawful and criminal for everybody. In its just system, there is no exception even for our own self.

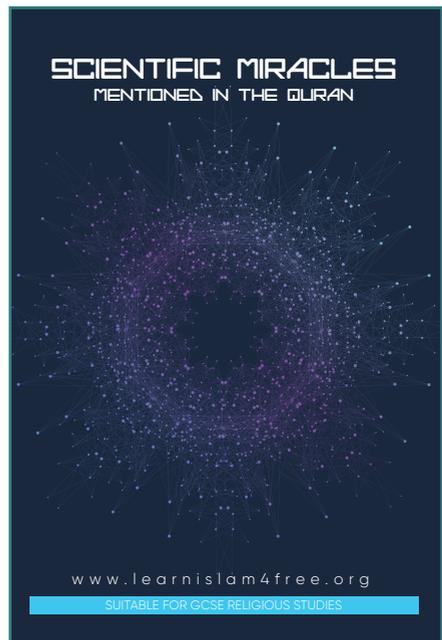
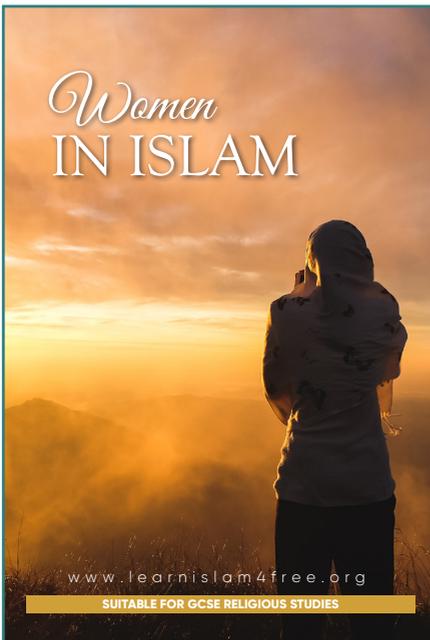
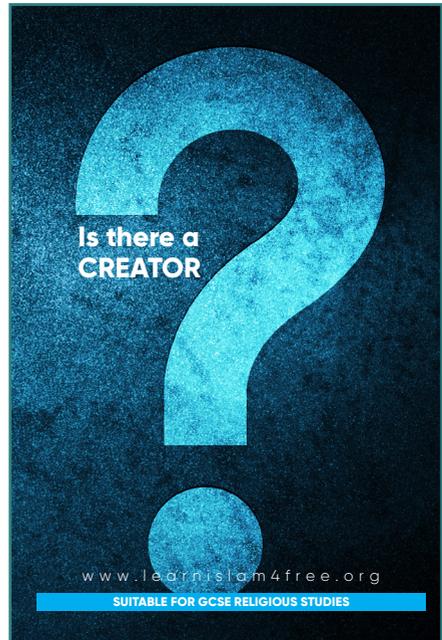
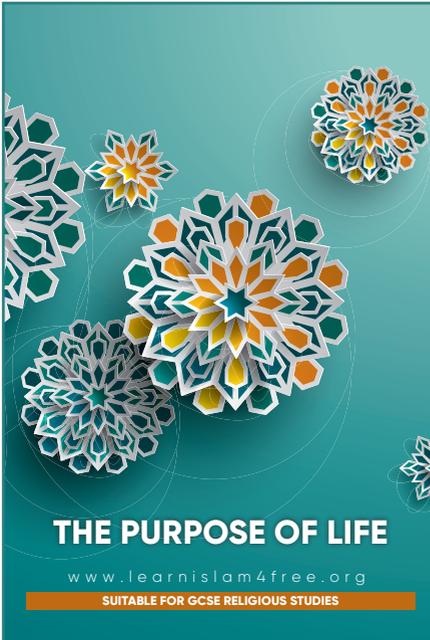
The Quran has been revealed to establish justice in the world. Muslims have been entrusted with the mission of doing justice

between the people and they should work together with all mankind to put an end to their excesses and injustice, which are prevalent in the society.

The Quranic verse further elucidates that each one of us is himself responsible and accountable for his deeds. If you do well, you will yourself profit by its good results, and not we. If we do evil, we ourselves shall bear all its evil consequences, and not you. The same thing has been stated in (Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 139); (Surah Yunus, verse 41); (Surah Houd, verse 35); and (Surah Al-Qasas, verse 55).

The verse ends by conveying the fact that after this message is delivered by Muslims to their brethren called People of The Book, they would have done their best in conveying to you the message in a rational manner. Now there is no use wrangling and disputing; therefore, even if you try to have a dispute with us, we have no desire to join in as all things will ultimately return back to God. If after all these rational and divine explanations you continue to refuse to come to common terms or towards truth and justice, then its fault will lie with you and we will have done our duty of trying to come together for the betterment of all mankind!

## OTHER ESSENTIAL READINGS



## Booklets

1. The Quran
2. The Book That Shook The World
3. World's First Written Constitution
4. The Sharia Law
5. The Purpose Of Life
6. The People Of The Book
7. What Is Islam?
8. The Concept Of God In Islam
9. Jesus In Quran
10. Did Jesus Predict Coming Of Muhammad?
11. Common Misconceptions About Islam
12. Is There A Creator?
13. Women In Islam
14. The Hijab
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16. Message To Mankind
17. Islam's Solution To Terrorism
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19. Muhammed pbuh The True Role Model
20. Muhammed pbuh As A Teacher
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22. Marriage-Relevance And Importance
23. For Those Who Reflect
24. Salah-Islamic Prayer
25. Fasting In Islam
26. Hajj-The Islamic Pilgrimage
27. Islam Has No Clergy
28. Islam Against Sectarianism
29. Concept Of Halal & Haram In Islam
30. What Is Bank Interest And Riba?
31. Is There Life After Death?
32. What Is Zakah?
33. Role Of Masjid And Imam
34. What Is Shahdah?
35. The Wakeup Call
36. Islam Against Racism
37. Remembrance Of God
38. The Book Of Prayers
39. Etiquettes In Islam
40. The Rights Of Parents And Children
41. Beautiful Stories Of Prophet Muhammed pbuh For Children - Book 1
42. Moral Stories For Children - Book 2
43. The Book Of Manners For Children - Book 3
44. Islam For Children
45. The New Muslim Book

