

The background is a solid gold color. It is decorated with several intricate, multi-layered geometric patterns. These patterns are composed of overlapping lines in a teal or light blue color, creating a complex, star-like or floral appearance. The patterns are scattered across the page, with some being larger and more prominent than others. The overall aesthetic is clean, modern, and culturally inspired.

# *What Is* ISLAM?

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**SUITABLE FOR GCSE RELIGIOUS STUDIES**

# *What Is* ISLAM?

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# WHAT IS ISLAM?

When people talk about religion or religions they tend to think of different messages, different Gods and different people with diagonally opposite views. Then they start to question as to why there are so many religions if there is only one God? This further leads to people thinking that may be God and religion are just a creation of man's imagination to fulfil the need for defining our place in cosmos. Islam however, clarifies for us all such doubts and confusions. Islam is the way of life revealed to mankind from the very first day of human appearance on our planet. God says in the Quran that when He created Adam, the first human, he sent His message to him. Throughout the history of human presence on earth God chose to use the method of communication with us to be the revelation through our fellow humans appointed by Him as His messengers.

After the passing away of the Messengers, the people including the religious authorities deviated away from the message and at times wilfully changed the original message to suit their interests. This lead to people losing the true message on one hand, and on the other lead to creating a new way, system and belief, that was totally different from its original form. God then sent another Messenger to revive and renew the original message but this was met with the same fate. The humans were given the freedom to choose or to refuse from the very outset therefore, this process lead to an unending battle of ideas between the original forms of the message and the deviated views and methods of the clergy of all times.

New messengers had to fight battles of ideas and at times wars with the upholders of the deviated views. God continued to make sure that despite all our choices and freedom we always had the message in its original form available for us to choose it. Thus Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus were chosen to guide mankind towards the eternal truths; which people kept messing up with, once the relevant Messengers had passed away. Quran describes 25 different such Messengers that were sent to various parts of the earth.

The last of these messengers was Muhammed pbuh who said that more than one hundred and twenty thousand Messengers came down to our earth at various times from the beginning of our societies. These messengers were sent down with the code of conduct for their respective times. It is an important article of faith therefore for a Muslim to believe in all the Messengers and the books revealed to them (Including but not limited to Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Jesus peace be upon all of them, and the books revealed to them including but not limited to Bible, New Testament, Psalms and all revealed books to all the previous Messengers). In our day and age, however, Quran is the only book, revealed by God, which is preserved in its original form. The original texts of most of the former divine Books were lost altogether, and only their translations exist today. The Qur'an, on the other hand, exists exactly as it had been revealed to the Prophet; not a word - nay, not a dot of it - has been changed. It is available in its original text and the Word of God has been preserved for all times to come.” And further, “So well has it [the Qur'an] been preserved both in memory and in writing, that the Arabic text we have today is identical to the text as it was revealed to the Prophet. Not even a single letter has yielded to corruption during the passage of the centuries. And so it will remain forever, by the consent of Allah.”

The Islamic concept of prophet hood is very clear and unlike the views of many manmade deviations of the original truths, some religions would have it that even God Himself becomes incarnate in human shape, and that his prophets are in some way superhuman or

other-worldly. But a prophet in the Islamic sense is no different from any other human being. His uniqueness lies simply in his being the chosen messenger of God.

God's Apostles were born into this world just like any other human beings. They led their lives just as others did, thus demonstrating to their people how God's servants should, in practice, conduct themselves on earth, and showing them clearly what path they must tread in order to make this world a better place to live in and to qualify for a blissful life in the hereafter.

Quran was revealed to the last of His Messengers with a view to guiding mankind for the rest of the age of our planet.

Islam invites all mankind to reflect on the message of the Quran and find for them the true guidance thus ending all the man made divisions in the name of religions and ways of life. Quran repeatedly asks people of other faiths to go back to the original books and teachings of the messengers and that they all taught the same truths. The truths that there being only one creator and the purpose of our lives being to test us as to who does best deeds in order to qualify for an everlasting blissful life in the hereafter. By accepting the invitation of the Quran, a man or woman can take a beautiful journey to discovering the reality about our creator as well as the creation, getting answers in the process, to the most puzzling questions that come to one's mind like the ones described at the start of this discussion.

Islam is the most natural way of life that encourages humans to give due attention to their relationship with God and His creation. Islam teaches that it is through the doing of good deeds and seeking the pleasure of God that souls find true happiness and peace. It is in this

context that the word Islam derives from the root word “salaam,” or peace.

Let’s understand the true meaning of Islam by looking at the eight different roots of the word Islam in Arabic.

### S-L-M

Since this is the root from which the word (Islam) is derived, its basic meanings must be comprehended properly, because these meanings will be used to explain various aspects of the word Islam.

1) (sa-lima): he **became clean (or free) from all sorts of faults**, limitations, weaknesses. All his shortcomings were removed.

2) The other meaning of this root is to **be protected from dangers**, accidents, or disasters.

(salima minal aafateh salamah): he remained safe

3) (as-sullam) means **a ladder, i.e, a safe and dependable** means for climbing. Thus the third meaning of this root is the means through which somebody can reach new heights safely and reliably.

4) (as-silm) means to **live peacefully and amicably**. It means amity and thus the fourth meaning of this root would be to live peacefully and to establish peace and security for all in the world.

5) (as-silmu), (Tasleem): **acceptance, obedience, to bow** before. Therefore, the fifth basic meaning of the root would be to completely and willingly follow the laws of the Quran.

6) (istaslam akamat tareeq): he walked in the middle of the road and kept straight path.

Thus the sixth meaning of this root would be to **adopt the balanced path** of moderation and to avoid things which have negative influences and are obstructive.

7) (istalamz zar-u): the ears of corn came out. This is the seventh meaning of this root which refers to the **multiplied reward of human righteous** efforts and fruitfulness of those efforts.

8) (as-salimah): refers to a woman who is **extremely pretty and attractive**. Thus the eighth meaning of this root refers to beauty and pleasant looks.

To summarise all these aspects of Islam (Al-Islam) is the way of life by which:

- All shortcomings of an individual are addressed and his potentials are fully developed.
- He/she is given protection from the negative forces and influences and he/she feels secure.
- This is the most dependable way to achieving success and reach heights of true development and progress.
- The individual lives in peace and works to extend this peace to his fellow human beings across the world. He lives in complete harmony with others in his society and does nothing to cause annoyance to others and thus prevents imbalance in the society.

➤ This is only possible when he willingly follows the permanent values of the Quran. Same values and laws that govern and maintain perfect balance in the rest of the universe. He does not cross the defined limits knowingly and believes in the working of the law of requital.

➤ He adopts a balanced view in life and does not take extreme views or steps.

➤ This way his efforts will be fruitful and do not go waste. Not only will his own personality be balanced and develop further, but he will contribute effectively for the well being of others.

➤ This is the path and journey that is beautiful and attracts our very heart and mind.

## **Fundamental Principles of Islam**

There are three basic & fundamental principles of Islam:

- Tauheed    belief in oneness of God.
- Risalah    belief in the prophets.
- Aakhirah    belief in the afterlife.

These fundamental principles are vital to understanding Islam. They are the dominant themes in the Qur'an and can be found being discussed on any page of the Quran. Basic understanding of Islam depends on how well a person understands these concepts and leads a life based on these principles.

Islamic principles are the most natural and straight forward way of understanding our relationship with our creator and the rest of His creation. Knowing about Islamic principles makes all the aspects of our own existence as well as that of the universe very easy to comprehend and judge.

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## Tauheed: Oneness of God

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Allah is just the Arabic word for God, not a different God. Allah is one and the same God for Muslims, Christians, Jews or anyone else. Allah is the one and only God and has no partners. He does not need anyone to help him carry out any action that he wishes to carry out. God is free from wants and needs.

God cannot be compared to anything; therefore we can't think that God has a particular shape or form. Islam disallows imagining a particular shape or form of God.

God is the beginning and the end. He was there before the beginning of time and will be there at the end of time as well. He

is not bound by time and space, he was always there and he will always be there for time to come.

Islam teaches us to have a direct relationship with God so we don't need to go to any priest or imam to confess our sins, to intercede with God on our behalf. Instead we communicate and pray directly to God without anyone in between.

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## Risalah: The Message

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The method that god chose to communicate with the humans is known as Revelation. He chose to reveal the message to his chosen

messengers, the prophets. His message is passed to the prophets by the Angel Gabriel. The prophets in turn pass on the message to their people so as to guide them towards the straight path.

God started communicating his message with the creation of the first human being; Adam, who was also the first prophet. Throughout history God has continued to send his prophets, well known ones include Abraham, Jacob, David, Moses, Jesus and Muhammed (peace be on all of them), for the betterment of mankind and to remind them of the purpose of their lives.

The prophets that God chose are known for their truthfulness and upright character. They are protected by God from committing major sins, although they can make minor mistakes.

All the prophets brought the same message of worshipping one God to humanity. People will be judged on the Day of Judgement based on their response to God's message.

All the messengers brought the same message of trying to establish balance in the lives of humans by attaching them to their creator and implementing the same balance which is established in the rest of the universe around us. The Quran repeatedly mentions the lives and struggles of the previous prophets in order for us to emulate their great conduct and behaviour. By adopting the lifestyle based on this eternal balance we become part of the same symphony that is seen in and around the unending cosmos! This brings peace, stability, purpose and direction to all of us based on solid and reliable foundations.

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# Aakhirah: The Afterlife

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Allah has given humans free will; people are able to choose between right and wrong, and are responsible for their actions. People have one life and it is up to them how they choose to live it. This life is a preparation for the eternal life to come. The life hereafter is a much better world than this one and is everlasting, this world is finite and all its allurements are temporary and short lived.

On the Day of Judgement God will resurrect us all and judge us based on how we conducted ourselves in this life.

On that day we will be held accountable for all the good or bad we did in this life. Allah will balance the good deeds a person has done in their life against the bad deeds.

If the good deeds outweigh the bad, the person will go to paradise, a place of joy and bliss. If the bad things outweigh the good, then the person will be punished in hell for a time.

It is the belief in the Day of Judgement that provides us with the motivation to improve our lives and gives us something to live for. A sense of purpose and direction in life!

Thus these three fundamental principles establish

Oneness of our Creator

Oneness of the message sent for human development and

Oneness of the purpose of our lives; i.e. to work towards a better life in this world and in the hereafter.

## **Five basic Duties**

Once a person accepts Islam as his or her way of life he/she has to perform five basic duties as part of worship.

- Shahadah or declaration of His/her faith in the fundamental Principles
- Salah or pray five times a day (5-10 minutes each time)
- Saum or fast during the month of Ramadhan (9th month of Lunar calendar)
- Zakah or charity (pay 2.5% of our annual savings every year)
- Hajj or once in a life time journey to Makkah (kabah)

Declaration and prayers five times a day is obviously obligatory on every Muslim, Saum, Zakah and Hajj are obligatory only on the ones who can afford to do so.

The crux of Islam however is the behaviour and attitude that a person adopts in his/her life.

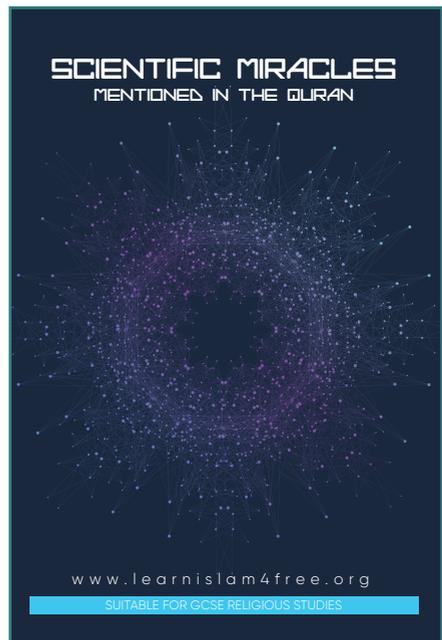
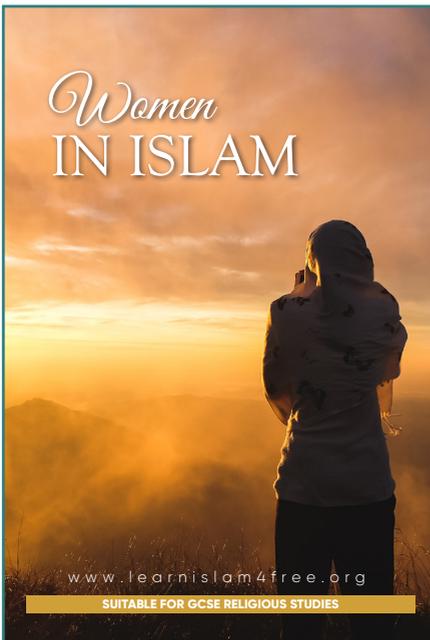
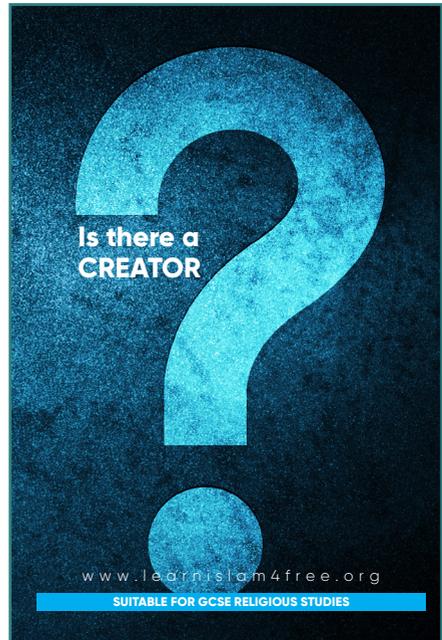
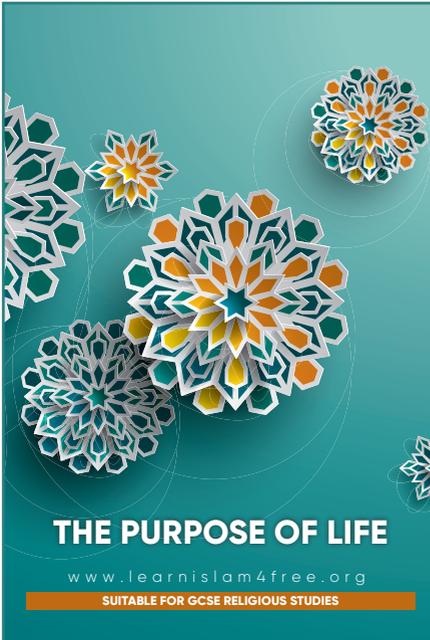
The quality that the Quran has highlighted the most about Prophet Muhammed pbuh is

**(68:4) and you are certainly on the most exalted standard of moral excellence**

To attain this excellent level of our conduct Islam has given us detailed guidance in the verses of the Quran and the life history of the last of the messengers Muhammed pbuh. In addition we have the glaring examples of the previous prophets in the Quran as a source of achieving this high moral standard. Islam divided the rights and duties of an individual into two broad categories- Rights of the Creator and Rights of the creation. Fulfilling the rights of our Creator and those of His creation is what Islam is in a nutshell! This very fulfilling of rights will be the criteria to judge a person on the day of Judgement and the decision about reward and punishment will be dependent on this very aspect.

Islam makes the relationship with our creator very easy to understand and we can relate to Him and His creation in a very clear and unambiguous manner; free from any doubts and confusions and with full faith and conviction.

## 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
15. Scientific Miracles Mentioned In The Quran
16. Message To Mankind
17. Islam's Solution To Terrorism
18. Islam For The 21st Century
19. Muhammed pbuh The True Role Model
20. Muhammed pbuh As A Teacher
21. Morals And Manners Of Muhammed pbuh
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

