

Some facts about Islam

Compiled by Dr. Mohamed Esa, McDaniel College, mainly from the following 3 sources:

The Meaning of the Holy Qur'an by 'Abdullah Yūsuf 'Alī. Amana Publications, New Edition, 2001

Ira G. Zepp, *A Muslim Primer*, 2nd ed., Univ. of Arkansas Press, 2000

Arab World Studies Notebook. Edited by Audrey Shabbas. AWAIR, 1998

For more on Islam see the attached bibliography.

Islam is a world religion which has approximately 1.3 billion followers. That means that one in every five people on the planet is a Muslim. In short, Islam is not a minority phenomenon.



What is Islam?

The word Islam is best translated into English as 'commitment'. Followers of Islam, called Muslims, commit their lives to truthfulness, good works, charity, harmony, neighborliness, almsgiving, acceptance of religious pluralism, and diversity. Islam is a way of life. Islam is a religion of peace, mercy and forgiveness. One of the basic precepts of Islam is the equality of all people regardless of race, ability, or gender.

What is a Muslim?

A Muslim is a person who follows the precepts of Islam. Muslims believe in one God called Allah. Muslims believe in a chain of prophets beginning with Adam and including Noah, Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, David, and Jesus. The word Muslim, like Islam, comes from the three-letter Arabic root **s-l-m**, and literally means "one who submits (to God)." Salaam is an Arabic/Islamic greeting. It means also peace.

What does the word "Allah" mean?

"Allah" is an Arabic word used by Arabic-speaking Christians, Muslims, and Jews as the word for God. As a matter of fact the fusion of the definite article *Al* (the) with the word *ilah* (God) is done in a unique way to emphasize the uniqueness of God in Islam.



What is the Qur'an



Muslims believe the Qur'an is God's word as revealed through the Prophet Muhammad. Statements by Muhammad himself are collected in the **Hadith**, not the Qur'an. Recounting many Judaic and Christian traditions such as those about Abraham and Isaac, Joseph, Mary and Jesus, the Qur'an also states that Christians and Jews are "People of the book" (**Ahl al-Kitab**) who, as believers, hold juridical rights under Islamic law to live as protected people. The Qur'an accepts religious pluralism as a fact of life and sees strength in diversity.

Who are Muslims?

Muslims are of every ethnicity on earth, in Africa, Asia, Europe, in North and South America. There are more than 50 million Muslims in China and more than 150 million in Indonesia. It is estimated that there are more than 8 million Muslims in the United States. Islam is the fastest growing religion in the United States. The United States Postal Service recognized the growing presence of Islam in the US mainstream by issuing the first U.S. stamp bearing Arabic writing and wishing "Eid Mubarak" or "Happy Feast", and referring to the two main Muslim religious holidays.



How do you become a Muslim?

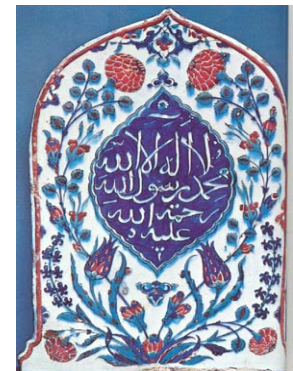
You are either born to a Muslim mother, or father or by saying the 'Shahadeh' (pronounced La-Ilaha Illa Allah, Muhammad-un Rasool Allah) witnessing that "there is no deity but Allah (God), and Muhammad is His Messenger."

Who are Arabs?

'Arab,' on the other hand, is an ethnicity; it refers to a person from the Arabian Peninsula. Of the 1.3 billion Muslims in the world, only 15% are Arabs. Many Arabs are not Muslims. There are large Christian populations in Egypt, Syria, Palestine and Lebanon.

What is Arabic?

Arabic is a language spoken throughout the world. Not every speaker of Arabic is an Arab, just like not every speaker of English is an Englishman.



What are the articles of faith (Islamic values)?

1. sanctity of life
2. sanctity of religious freedom
3. sanctity of mind and intellect
4. sanctity of property and wealth
5. sanctity of personal honor

What are the "five pillars" of Islam?

1. **Declaration (Shahadeh):** Since Islam is a monotheistic religion, i.e. Muslims believe in only one God, each Muslim declares that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is his final prophet. Islam recognizes the prophethood of Jesus, Moses, Abraham, Noah, etc.
2. **Prayer (Salāt):** Muslims perform ritual prayer five times per day.
3. **Fasting (Siyam):** During the ninth month of the lunar Islamic calendar, Ramadan, Muslims who are old enough and healthy enough fast for 29 or 30 days from sun-up to sun-down.



4. **Giving to the Poor (Zakat):** It is incumbent upon every Muslim to donate a certain portion of his or her earnings to the less fortunate.
5. **Pilgrimage (Hajj):** Each Muslim should make a pilgrimage to Mecca once in his or her lifetime if he or she has the means to do so.

What is a “Muezzin”?



One of the most characteristic- and stirringly evocative- symbols of Islam is the **adhan**, the Arabic call to prayer, dramatically intoned by a muezzin from high atop a lofty minaret. The use of the **adhan** goes back to the time of the lifetime of the Prophet Muhammad, and is mentioned once in the Qur'an, in connection with the Friday assembly.

Islam's first muezzin was Bilal Ibn Rabah, an Ethiopian, who also was one of the first to accept the religion. He was a slave by Umayyad Ibn Khalaf who treated him cruelly. Bilal was bought and freed by Abu Bakr, later the most distinguished of the Prophet's Companions and the first Caliph after Muhammad's death.

Which Holidays do Muslims celebrate?

Strictly speaking, the only holidays, which are considered “religious”, are **Ramadan**, **Eid Al-Fitr** and **Eid Al-Adha**. Prophet Muhammad recommended some other days as fasting days in addition to Ramadan. The holidays of **Laylat Al-Isra wa Al-Miraj** (The night journey and ascension) and **Laylat Al-Qadr** (the night of power) are celebrated in various ways throughout the Muslim world, while the Prophet's birthday, Mawlid Al-Nabi is celebrated according to local custom in some regions and not in others. Many Muslims would respond: “We do not celebrate the Prophet's birthday. He was after all, just a man.”



Ramadan: Of the Muslim year, Ramadan, the ninth month, is the holiest, for it is the month “in which the Qur'an was revealed for the guidance of mankind.” The month of Ramadan is not only a month of “moral abstinence,” it also has the social virtue of creating new bonds of understanding between all classes of people. The fast, practiced by the rich and the poor alike, reminds the more fortunate members of society of the pangs of hunger which the poor suffer. It is a month of seclusion, generosity and charity. Ramadan is also a joyful month. The daily fast is broken at sunset with a meal called *iftar*. Two hours before sunrise, Muslims have an early light meal called *suhur*.

“The Month of Ramadan was chosen for the annual period of personal spiritual renewal because it was in the last ten days of Ramadan that Muhammad experienced his “Night of Power” [Laylat ul-Qadr] and first received revelation from Allah which were to become the Qur'an.” (Zepp, p. 87)

By fasting, Muslims learn to be patient and control themselves and their bodies. This is called “self-discipline”. Fasting is important because it makes the rich equal to the poor. It gives them a chance to realize what life is like for the less fortunate, those who have little or no food. In the month of Ramadan, Muslims are especially generous to the poor.

The Muslim year is a sequence of 12 lunar months totaling 354 days, so that 33 Muslim years equal about 32 solar years. Consequently, the month of Ramadan sometimes falls in the heat of the summer months, making the burden of the fast heavier and perhaps the sense of fulfillment greater.

Eid Al-Fitr is the feast/ festival that marks the end of the month of Ramadan fasting, expressing happiness in having completed the fast. It is also the first day of the month of Shawwal of the Islamic calendar. At the beginning of the day each member of the family performs an act of charity for the poor. The early morning prayers are said and the day is celebrated with visiting family members and friends, making special foods. Eid Al-Fitr includes new clothes for everyone, gifts to children from parents and relatives, plays, folktales, games, puppet shows and trips to amusement parks for children.



Eid Al-Adha, or Feast of the Sacrifice, commemorates Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son Ishmael, in obedience to God. This feast is part of the Hajj (pilgrimage), and takes place in the 10th of Dhu Al-Hijja of the Islamic calendar. For those on the Hajj and many others the day begins with the sacrifice of an animal in commemoration of the Angel Gabriel's substitution of a lamb as Abraham's sacrificial obligation. One third of the meat is given to the poor, with the remainder shared with neighbors and family members.



Laylat Al-Qadr (the night of power) falls on one of the ten days of Ramadan on an odd numbered day (such as the 23rd, 25th or 27th). In the Qur'an this night is said to be equal to one thousand months and on this night the prayers of the sincere Muslim are certain to be answered.

Laylat Al-Isra wa Al-Miraj (the night journey and ascension) commemorates the journey of the Prophet Muhammad from Mecca to Jerusalem, his ascension into the seven heavens, and his return in the same night. These events acknowledge that all the Abrahamic faiths (Judaism, Christianity and Islam) have one and the same God as their source. On this night, Muslims believe, the Prophet was instructed to establish the five daily prayers in their current form. On this night, Muslims believe, Muhammad prayed together with Abraham, Moses and Jesus in the area of the Al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem. The rock from which he is believed to have ascended to heaven to speak with God, is the one seen inside the Dome of the Rock. „Isra wa Al-Miraj“ as it is sometimes called is celebrated on the 27th of Rajab of the Islamic calendar.

Shared Beliefs of the Judaism, Christianity and Islam

- ◆ All three religions are "monotheistic."
- ◆ The Middle East is the birthplace of all three.
- ◆ Many individuals and places sacred to Jews and Christians are equally sacred to Muslims.
- ◆ Accept the Ten Commandments as a law code.
- ◆ Accept the story of Adam and Eve as part of their tradition.
- ◆ Have a creation story about God creating the universe out of nothing.
- ◆ They are universal in scope, claiming to transcend differences of race, ethnicity, nationality, and color.
- ◆ All three faiths make absolute claims to perfect truth about God. In this way they resemble most religions founded on divine revelation.
- ◆ They all believe in the sacred Rock in Jerusalem, where Abraham prepared to sacrifice his son.
- ◆ Arabs are descendent from Abraham, prophet and father of the Jews (and Christians)
- ◆ John the Baptist and Jesus are accepted and revered to by Moslems as prophets.
- ◆ The Events of the Day of Judgment will occur in Jerusalem.
- ◆ The need for total submission to God's will.
- ◆ The clash of Good and Evil.

What are the rules governing Muslims – Non-Muslims?

- ♦ Universal Ukhuwah (brotherhood and sisterhood)
- ♦ No forced conversion: Muslims believe that there is no compulsion in religion and that individuals are free to choose their own religion and beliefs.
- ♦ Peaceful coexistence
- ♦ Acceptance of pluralism
- ♦ High status given to Jews and Christians (One generic religion for all, core readings are the same)
- ♦ Interfaith dialogue



Islam and Violence

The religion of Islam does not support, preach, or advocate violence, discrimination, or terrorism in any way, shape, or form. Extremist groups who claim to follow Islam are no more representative of Islam than David Koresh is of Christianity, or Rabbi Kahana is of Judaism.

Contrary to popular belief in the West, *jihad* is not one of the five pillars of Islam. In the West, the concept of jihad has been improperly translated as 'holy war.' Instead, jihad means 'struggle' or 'striving' and refers, in particular, to the personal struggle that every Muslim engages in to live a peaceful and good life. Islam teaches Muslims that they must "strive" or work hard to make their religion real in their lives and in their societies. This should be done by JIHAD on four levels:

1. **jihad of the tongue:** speaking about faith;
2. **jihad of the hand:** putting their faith into action by good works;
3. **jihad of the heart:** making their faith real as a spiritual force in their lives;
4. **ihad of the sword:** defending their faith when they fear it to be under attack.

From the Qur'an: Sura 2, Vers 190: "Fight in the cause of Allah those who fight you, but do not transgress limits; for Allah loveth not transgressors." There are several occasions which would prompt Muslims to apply the jihad of the sword. They are: 1) to defend oneself, one's family, country, and religion (4:75); 2) to defend fellow Muslims who are helpless and oppressed (8:72); and 3) to secure religious freedom.

"War is permissible in self-defense, and under well defined limits. When undertaken, it must be pushed within vigor (but not relentlessly), but only to restore peace and freedom for the worship of Allah. In any case strict limits must not be transgressed." (*The Meaning of the Holy Qur'an*, page 76)

Some of the rules about war and fighting are:

1. purity of intention;
2. declaration of war;
3. It must be a legitimate authority and not an individual declaring that war. (The last Khilafeh or Jammaa'h (highest Muslim Council, like our Congress) was abolished in 1924.)
4. War should be the last resort.
5. responding to peaceful initiative;
6. no attacks on non-combatants (children, men, women, trees, crops, buildings, natural resources);
7. human treatment of all those who are injured;
8. Peace should not be withheld when the enemy comes to terms.

Islam and Women

Before Islam, women in Arabia had few rights, Islam's reform included a woman's right to possess and dispose of property, to keep her name after marriage, to become a guardian for a minor, to undertake trade or profession, to sue in court without her husband's approval, and to individually tailor a marriage contract. Centuries before the women's movement in the West, Islam granted women the right to own property, to be educated, and the right to inherit. In the West, in many instances, women did not receive these rights until centuries later. (Ira Zepp)



The Veil

"The custom of veiling predated Islam in Arabia and the Mediterranean region, but it was by no means universal. Aisha Bint-Talhah, an eighth-century noble beauty "of proud and lofty spirit," was married three times. When her second husband criticized her for not wearing a veil, she replied that the public had the right to see God's gift of beauty to her, and under no condition would she veil herself.

The veil may have had its origin in the context of protection rather than subjugation of women, its purpose being to shield her from the prying and covetous gaze of the unworthy or to identify her as free-born. Only women of upper-class families could wear the veil, a status symbol. Under Western influences, many Arab women discarded the veil during the first half of the twentieth century. It reappeared in a different form in the late 1960s. The new version, which is referred to as "Islamic dress," has gained wider acceptance among many educated and professional women. It consists of a long dress, or long skirt with long-sleeved blouse, and a head cover, usually of colorful bright material." (Arab World Studies Notebook, page 112) My mother and grandmother wear a long white veil similar to those that Indian women wear (remember Indira Gandhi.)



"The veil has always created a sense of sisterhood among its wearers. Early Arab feminists used it to their advantage. Still remembered is the 1919 „March of the Veiled Women“ in Cairo. Organized by Huda Shaarawi who later organized the powerful Egyptian Feminist Union, the veiled women protested British colonial rule, and successively foiled a British plan to exile four Egyptian nationalist leaders, including Huda Shaarawi's husband." (Arab World Studies Notebook, page 113)

Polygamy

Before Islam, men in Arabia could have many wives. Limiting the number to four was an Islamic reform of the practice; another restriction was that there be absolute equality in a husband's treatment of several wives. This being impossible, it may be said that the Qur'an indirectly discouraged polygamy.

Today, polygamy is illegal in many Arabic countries. A trend began with Tunisia outlawing the practice in 1956. Several Arabic countries permit polygamy under certain conditions such as the approval of the first wife, the approval of the judge, financial ability to support two wives, or a medical document certifying that the first wife cannot bear children. Today, polygamous marriage represents less than 5% of all marriages and is rapidly disappearing as these countries become more developed and literate.

"However inadequate the teachings and practices of Islam ... seem to be, they were significant step forward. Comparatively speaking, against the backdrop of 7th century Arabia, the Qur'an was a virtual champion of women's rights. Much of what the Quran advocates for women was

not seen in the West until proximately a hundred years ago." (I. Zepp, p. 129) Here is a list of teachings from the Qur'an, Muslims are proud of:

- ◆ Female infanticide was abolished
- ◆ Primogeniture, when inheritance goes only to the oldest male heir, is banned.
- ◆ Women can inherit property from husbands, fathers, brothers, mothers, and sons, and it is their personal property to keep and use as they please.
- ◆ Women retain their maiden names. In Islamic law there is no precedence or basis for changing the last name of a married woman.
- ◆ Divorce may be initiated by women.
- ◆ A woman has final approval on a marriage partner arranged by her parents.

Islam's Gifts to the World

"Islam's major legacy to the world is the gift of its religion. That would have been quite sufficient by itself. But there are many other assets spawned by this cultural tradition which deserve recognition and which daily influence our lives." (I. Zepp, p. 139)

"From the eighth to the thirteenth century A.D. the Muslim empire extended across North Africa, the Middle East, and Central Asia, from Spain to the borders of China. Unified and inspired by the religion of Islam, its people met a new society, a multi-ethnic "Muslim World" whose members were Arab, Afghan, Aramaean, Berber, Egyptian, Indian, Persian, Spanish, and Turk - Muslims, Christians, Jews, Hindu, and Zoroastrians. Diverse cultures flourished within the Empire and made great achievements in many fields. ... Arabic was the lingua franca of the Empire, the language of commerce, culture, diplomacy, and science, just as Latin would be in medieval Europe, and English in our times.

Capital of the Arab (and Muslim) Empire, Baghdad was for several centuries the cultural center of the medieval Muslim world. Its brilliant intellectual life revolved around **Beit al-Hikmeh** (House of Wisdom), an academy, library, museum, observatory, and translation center. Founded by the scholarly Caliph Mamoun in 830 A.D., the Beit al-Hikmeh was the most important institution to be established since the Alexandrian Library in Egypt in the third century B.C. Before any existed in northern Europe, great universities and libraries also developed in other Muslim and Arabic cities such as Damascus, Alexandria, Fez, Cordoba, and Palermo. In just one of Cordoba's seventy libraries, for example, 400,000 books were collected." (Arab World Studies Notebook, page 273)

The greatest single contribution of the Muslims and Arabs to Western civilization was their recovery and subsequent introduction to the West of ancient learning. At Beit al-Hikmah, hundreds of Greek, Persian, Sanskrit, and Syriac manuscripts were preserved and carefully translated into Arabic. Had the priceless manuscripts been lost, "the world would have been as poor as if they had never been produced." (Phillip Hitti, *The History of the Arabs*. N.Y.: St. Martin's Press) In some cases only the Arabic translations remain, such as the seven books of Galen's Anatomical Procedures, and in many instances the Arabic translations were far more accurate than the Latin versions which succeeded them.

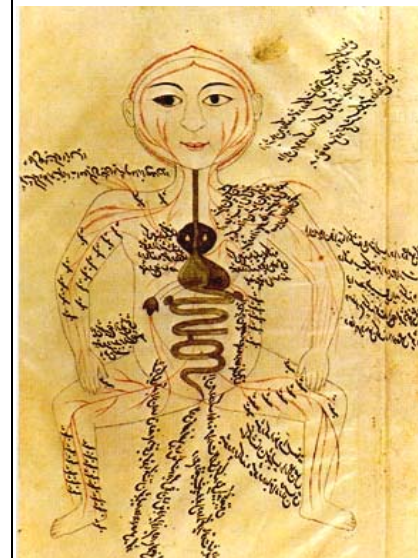
Here are some of the most important contributions Islam made to Western and Eastern civilizations:

- ◆ Techniques of irrigation developed by Muslims working in the fertile crescent were imitated by European farmers.
- ◆ Muslims were excellent cartographers; their maps were far more accurate than those of Europe.
- ◆ Arabs brought paper into Europe.

- ♦ Arabs and Muslims invented the pointed arch, without which the Gothic cathedral would have been impossible. Note the vaulted ceilings, the endlessly unfolding arcades, and the high-niched portals in many Muslim buildings, especially mosques and palaces.
- ♦ Under inspiration of Islam, Arabs were known for various forms of ornamentation, carving, weaving, damask, embossing, leather craft, and wood and metal work.
- ♦ Muslims invented the clock pendulum, the magnetic compass, and the astrolabe. They were the first to create instruments to measure special weights and gravities of elements and did so with great precision.
- ♦ Ibn al-Haytham (died 1039), sometimes called Alhazen in the West, was the first to suggest the damming of the Nile River at Aswan, a project accomplished in the 20th century." (Zepp, p. 153) He is also considered the founder of optics.
- ♦ Without the simplicity and flexibility of Arabic numerals, the decimal system, and the concept of zero - all adopted by the Arabs from the Hindus - Western science could have advanced as it did.
- ♦ The Muslims developed the concept of irrational numbers, made algebra an exact science, founded analytical geometry, plane and spherical trigonometry, and incorporated into mathematics the dimension of time.
- ♦ Arabs and Muslims introduced the letter "x" for an unknown quantity.
- ♦ Muhammad ibn Musa al-Khwarizmi (780-850), a Persian compiled the oldest known astronomical tables in Arabic and the oldest Arabic works on arithmetic and algebra, words that come from Arabic. Arithmetic called after al-Khwarizmi, and algebra from al-jabr, which in Arabic means "to restore broken parts." al-Khwarizmi introduced the Hindu-Arabic numerals to replace the Latin numbers, and this established the system of counting.
- ♦ The Crusades in the eleventh and twelfth centuries introduced Europe to Arab Medicine. Wounded crusaders lucky enough to be treated by the Arab hakim (wise men) observed humane and effective techniques and discovered a highly developed profession. The Muslims were the first to:
 - organize public health services, and doctors attended patients in hospitals, at home, in prison, and in rural areas.
 - use anesthesia in surgery;
 - cauterize wounds;
 - discover that epidemics arise from contagion through touch and air;
 - endow special institutions for lepers, the lame, and the blind
 - discover that fever was not a disease, but a result of the body's fight against disease;
 - carry ambulatory hospitals on a camel's back (a kind of eighth century MASH);
 - to separate pharmacology from medicine and the writing of prescriptions.



Book of the Ten Treatises on the Eye
by Hanayn ibn Ishāq, 9th century



Anatomical plate from a Persian Medical
Treasury

- Abu Bakr Muhammad **al-Razi** (865-925) has been called "the unchallenged chief physician of the Muslims." He wrote 100 major scientific works, including the first clinical account of smallpox. His enormous encyclopedia of medical wisdom was translated from Arabic into Latin in 1279 and was reprinted in Venice as late as 1542, almost 700 years after his birth.
- ♦ The first "Renaissance Man," Abu Ali al-Husayn **ibn Sina** (980-1037), known as Avicenna in the West, was master of philosophy, poetry and diplomacy as well as pharmacy, medicine and natural science. In 997, at the age of 17, he became a physician and won esteem throughout the Arab world and Europe for the most famous medical encyclopedia in Arabic. Summarizing Greek, Arabic, Hindu, and Persian medicine, Ibn-Sina's **Canun** described every known disease, both physical and mental, and every method of treatment, and all medications, evaluating 760 drugs in use at the time. The Canun was the West's basic medical text for more than five centuries, with thirty editions in Latin and several in Hebrew.
- ♦ Another "Renaissance Man" who pre-dated Europe's Renaissance was **Ibn-Rushd** (Averroes), an Arab Muslim of the 12th century Cordoba. Philosopher, astronomer, and court physician. Ibn-Rushd greatly influenced Christian theology, encouraging it to accept the harmony of faith and reason that had long been an integral part of Muslim culture. I would highly recommend the beautiful film "**Destiny**" (Al Masir) about this great Muslim scholar.
- ♦ **Ibn-Khaldun** (1332-1406), the father of modern historiography and sociology, who also did works in economics, anthropology, and political science. *In Al-Muqaddamah*, Ibn Khaldun applied the methods of Aristotle and sought to prove the cause and effect pattern of events. In doing so, he developed an unprecedented "science of civilization" to explain the rise and fall of societies in their turn. The first to insist that events do not happen in a vacuum --but depend upon such factors as social customs, food, climate, economics, religion, etc.-- Ibn-Khaldun dealt extensively with the nature of society, labor conditions, and methods of education.

There are many other contributions in the fields of **astronomy** (developing instruments as the compass, quadrant, sextant, and astrolabe); in the field of **geography** (the famous map of **Al-Idrisi** of Europe, Asia, and Africa, circa 1150 A.D., the professional traveler **Ibn-Battuta** (1304-1377) who journeyed 75,000 miles in 30 years, **Hassan Al-Wazzan**, known in Europe as **Leo Africanus**, the world's greatest expert on Africa.



The Astrolabe



A spherical astrolabe, the only one known to exist today.

Foods introduced to the West by Arabs and Muslims:

apricots	artichokes	asparagus	bananas
buckwheat	cherries	dates	eggplants
figs	ginger	grapefruit	lemons
limes	oranges	pomegranates	quinces
rice	spinach	strawberries	sugar

The following are English words from Arabic

admiral	adobe	alchemy	alcove
alfalfa	algebra	algorism	alkai
almanac	arsenal	atlas	average
azure	baroque	barracks	caliber
candy	cane	carafe	check
check-mate	cipher (sifr=zero)	coffee	cotton
crimson	damask	elixir	gauze
gypsum	hazard	jar	jasmine
lute	macabre	magazine	magnet
marzipan	mattress	nadir	racquet
saffron	sash	satin	sherbet
sugar	sumac	syrup	tambourine
tariff	traffic	zenith	zero

List of Books and Films on Islam

Recommended by Dr. Mohamed Esa

All books and films can be purchased on-line through Amazon.com at <http://www.amazon.com>

Books on Islam

- Abdullah Yūsuf 'Alī: **The Meaning of the Holy Qur'an**. 'Amana Publications: Beltsville, MD, New Edition, 2001 (Best Interpretation of the Qur'an; Bilingual: Arabic-English)
- Karen Armstrong: **Islam. A Short History**. The Modern Library: New York, 2000
- John Esposito: **Islam- The Straight Path**. 3rd edition. Oxford University Press: New York/Oxford 1998
- John Esposito: **The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?** 3rd edition Oxford University Press: New York/Oxford 1998
- John L. Esposito (editor): **The Oxford History of Islam**. Oxford University Press: New York/Oxford, 2000
- Caesar E. Farah: **Islam**. Barron's: Hauppauge, 6th edition, 2000
- Phillip Hitti, *The History of the Arabs*. N.Y.: St. Martin's Press 1943. 2nd edition 1996
- Bernard Lewis. **The Middle East: A Brief History of the Last 2,000 Years**. Touchstone Books, 1997
- Bernard Lewis (editor) **The World of Islam: Faith, People, Culture**. Thames and Hudson: London 1992.
- Thomas W. Lippman: **Understanding Islam. An Introduction to the Muslim World**. Meridian: New York, 2nd edition 1995
- Sayyed Hossein Nasr: **The Heart of Islam. Enduring Values for Humanity**. HarperSan Francisco: New York, October 2002
- John Renard: **Responses to 101 Questions on ISLAM**, Paulist Press: New York, 1998
- Ahmed Rashid: **Taliban**. Yale Nota Bene: New Haven/ London 2001
- Edward Said: **Covering Islam**. Vintage: New York. 1997
- Ira Zepp: **A Muslim Primer**. 2nd ed., Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press. 2000

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- J.R. Hayes, ed. **The Genius of Arab Civilization: Source of Renaissance**. NY: New York University Press. 3rd edition 1992
- Cyril Glassé. *A Concise Encyclopedia of Islam*. San Fransisco: Harper and Row Publishers, 1989
- Bernard Lewis (editor) **The World of Islam: Faith, People, Culture**. Thames and Hudson: London 1992.

Films on Islam

- **The Message** with Anthony Quinn (The best film as a great introduction into the beginnings of Islam.)
- **The Wisdom of Faith** with Huston Smith
- **Islam** with Ben Kingsley (an excellent short film about many aspects of Islam.)
- **Women in Islam** by Leila Ahmed. Film for the Humanities, Islamic Conversation Series. 1994
- **Destiny**, a Film by Youssef Chahine about Averroes, 1998

A few websites about Islam in English:

- <http://www.islamcity.com> (a very good site to better understand Islam and Muslims)
- <http://www.gss.org> (Qura'n and Sunnah Society: a great site with extensive information on Islam)
- <http://www.cair-net.org> (Council on American-Islamic Relations.)
- <http://www.holidays.net> (a great site about Muslim holidays and more)
- <http://www.cie.org> (Council on Islamic Education)
- <http://www.soundvision.com> (Islamic Information and Products)

GLOSSARY OF ARABIC TERMS

Compiles from:

A MUSLIM PRIMER: Beginners Guide to Islam, Second Edition
by Ira G. Zepp, Jr., 2000 University of Arkansas Press

ALLAH	the one and Only God
AYA	a verse of the Koran – literally, a “sign of ‘miracle’”; hence, “ayatollah” is a “mark of Allah”
CALIPH	successor to Muhammad, or one who rules a Muslim nation
DAR-AL-ISLAM	House of Islam (House of Peace), or land where Islam is in majority
DAR-AL-HARB	House of War, or land where Islam is in minority and where Muslims are persecuted
DHIKR	remembrance or recollection: a Sufi mediation practice
DHIMMIS	non-Muslims who are “people of the Book”, especially Jews and Christians, who live as protected minorities in an Islamic state
DUA	spontaneous supplication, as contrasted with prescribed prayers of salat (more like the “free prayer” of Christians)
HADITH	a report of a saying or activity of the Prophet
HAJJ	Pilgrimage to Mecca; one of the five pillars of Islam
HIJRA (HEGIRA)	Muhammad’s flight or emigration from Mecca to Medina in 622; the Muslim calendar begins with this year
IMAM	in general, a leader of prayer; in particular, for Shiite Islam, a spiritual guide
JIHAD	struggle or striving in the name of Islam for a moral, spiritual, or political goal; one who struggles is a “mujahid”
JINN	invisible spirits referred to in the Quran
KAABA	cube-shaped building in Mecca; the “Holy of Holies” for pilgrims and the place toward which all Muslim prayers are directed
MADRASA	a school designed for religious education, usually associated with a Mosque
MAHDI	a messianic figure many Muslims believe will come at the end of time to establish a brief period of righteousness before the world ends
MASJID	mosque’ literally, a “place of prostration”
MIHRAB	arched niche in wall of mosque which is the QIBLA, or direction of Mecca
MINBAR	pulpit from which sermons are preached at Friday noon prayers
MIRAJ	Muhammad’s ascent to heaven or his famous “Night Journey”
QIBLA	the direction of the Kaaba, toward which Muslims turn for their daily prayer
QURAN	God’s revelation to Muhammad; literally, recitation; Islam’s Scripture
RAKAH	a unit of prayer which involves a Muslim’s bodily action and verbal recitation
RAMADAN	the month of fasting
SALAM	peace; also a greeting Muslims often exchange with each other (in Hebrew language is “shalom”)
SALAT	literally, worship; used to denote prescribed, ritual prayer performed five times a day; one of the five pillars of Islam
SAWM	fasting, usually associated with Ramadan; one of the five pillars of Islam
SHAHADAH	the affirmation or witness: “There is no god but God, and Muhammad is the Prophet of God”; one of the five pillars of Islam

SHARIAH	Islamic law derived from the Quran and Muhammad's teaching and example
SHEIKH	literally, "mature" or "full of wisdom"; also a Sufi spiritual leader
SHIITE	Muslim who is a "partisan" of Ali and who shares his understanding of who should be the successor to the Prophet
SHIRK	associating any other reality with Allah; hence, idolatry
SUFI	one who represents the mystical dimension of Islam; a Muslim who seeks direct experience of God
SUNNA	the tradition and custom of Muhammad; second in authority only to the Quran
SUNNI	one who follows the tradition of the Prophet
TAKBIR	recitation of the phrase "Allahu Akbar," or "God is most great"
TARIQA	Sufi path leading to direct knowledge of God; also a community or school of Sufism
TAWHID	the divine unity of God
ULEMA	learned scholars or religious specialists who are sought for the knowledge of Islamic law and teaching
UMMA	the Muslim community
WUDU	act of ritual ablution or purification by water before "salat"
ZAKAT	almsgiving for the poor; one of the five pillars of Islam