

ISLAM

PRIMARY SOURCES: The Qur'an ("Recitation"), which Muslims believe is the record of the exact words revealed by God (in the Arabic language, "Allah") through the Angel Gabriel to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), is the primary source for Islamic beliefs and practices. It was memorized by Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), dictated to his companions and written down by scribes as it was revealed during his lifetime. A complete compilation was made immediately after the Prophet's death and 10 years later a series of additional copies were made from the original and distributed throughout the lands under Islamic rule. Two of these copies are known to exist today. In addition, the Qur'an was preserved through memorization by the Prophet's companions and by countless Muslims throughout history. Secondary sources of Islam beliefs and practices are the life example ("Sunnah") and sayings ("Hadith") of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh).

BRIEF HISTORY: Islam does not regard itself as a new religion, but rather as the same truth that God has revealed through all His prophets to every people. The Arabic word "Islam" simply means "submission", and also derives from the Arabic word meaning "peace". In a religious context, it means complete submission, through internal and external acts, to the will of God. A "Muslim" is one who submits to the will of God and also derives from the same root word as "Islam." Muslims also identify their spiritual heritage with Prophet and Patriarch Abraham (pbuh). The three prophets associated most closely with the Judaeo-Christian-Islamic faiths are directly descended from his two sons – Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) from Prophet Ishmael (pbuh) and Prophets Moses (pbuh) and Jesus (pbuh) from Prophet Isaac (pbuh). Prophet Abraham (pbuh) established the settlement, which today is the city of Mecca in Saudi Arabia, and together with his son Prophet Ishmael (pbuh) built the Kaaba towards which all Muslims turn when they pray.

Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), who Muslims believe was the last Prophet of God, was born in Mecca in approximately the year 570. His father died before his birth and his mother when he was six. He was raised by his grandfather for two years until he died and then by an uncle. As he grew up, he became known for his truthfulness, generosity and sincerity, so much so that he was sought after for his ability to arbitrate in disputes and was called "Al-Ameen" – the trustworthy. Muhammad was described as calm and meditative. He also detested the decadence of his society. It became his habit as an adult to meditate from time to time in the Cave of Hira near the summit of Jabal al-Nur, the 'Mountain of Light' near Mecca. At the age of 40, while engaged in a meditative retreat, Muhammad received his first revelation from God through the Angel Gabriel. This revelation, which continued for the next twenty-three years, is known as the Qur'an ("Recitation"). When he began to preach the truth that God had revealed to him, he and his small group of followers suffered bitter persecution from his tribe, the Quraysh, which eventually grew so fierce that in the year 622 God gave them the command to emigrate. This event, the "Hijra" ("Migration"), in which the Muslims left Mecca for the city of Yathrib - later known as Medina, some 260 miles to the north, marks the beginning of the Muslim calendar. After 10 years and several unsuccessful efforts by the Quraysh and other enemies to exterminate the Muslims, Prophet Muhammad and his followers were able to return to Mecca, where they peacefully took the city, forgave their enemies, saw many

tribes accept Islam in droves and cleansed the Kaaba of the pagan idols. Before the Prophet Muhammad died a little more than a year later at the age of 63, the greater part of Arabia had accepted Islam. Within a century of his death, Islamic rule had spread as far as Spain in the West and China in the East. Among the reasons for the rapid spread of Islam was the simplicity of its doctrine - Islam calls for faith in only One God worthy of worship. It teaches that all men and women are equal before God and that the only person who is better than another is one who is more pious and God-conscious. It also repeatedly instructs man to use his powers of intelligence and observation.

PRINCIPLE BELIEFS: Muslims believe in One, Unique, Incomparable God; in the prophets through whom His revelations were brought to mankind; in the Angels created by Him; in the Day of Judgment; in individual accountability for actions; in heaven and hell; and in God's complete authority over human destiny. While Muslims believe in a chain of prophets starting with Adam and that includes Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus, peace be upon them, they believe that the Qur'an is God's final message to man and is a reconfirmation of His eternal message, a correction of the errors that had crept into previous revelations and a guidance for mankind to follow.

WORSHIP: Islam is both a religion and a complete way of life for 1.7 billion people from a vast range of races, nationalities and cultures across the globe. Many people misunderstand the concept of worship in Islam. Worship is commonly taken to mean only performing ritualistic acts such as the five daily prayers, paying the annual poor due, fasting during the month of Ramadan, performing pilgrimage to Mecca and observing certain clearly specified rules, such as the forbidden consumption of pig products or intoxicating drink or injunctions concerning dress. This limited understanding of worship is only one small part of the meaning of worship in Islam. Worship is an all-inclusive term for all that God loves of external and internal thoughts and actions of a person. In other words, worship is everything one says or does for the pleasure of God. This, of course, includes the foregoing ritual acts of worship as well as social justice and other personal contributions to the welfare of one's fellow human beings.

TOLERANCE: Freedom of conscience is laid down by the Quran itself: *"There is no compulsion in religion."* (2:256) The life and property of all citizens in an Islamic state are considered sacred whether a person is Muslim or not. Islam is a religion for all people from whatever race or background they might be. Islam emphasizes that all local attachments to a particular tribe, race, or language are subservient to the universal brotherhood and sisterhood of Islam. The Quran says: *"O mankind! We created you from a single soul, male and female, and made you into nations and tribes, so that you may come to know one another. Truly, the most honored of you in God's sight is the greatest of you in piety. God is All-Knowing, All-Aware."*(49:13)

MUSLIMS IN MILWAUKEE: The Islamic Society of Milwaukee (ISM), the largest Islamic organization in Wisconsin, was founded in 1976 and purchased an old school building that became the Islamic Center in 1982. It also opened a mosque in Brookfield and another one near UWM in 2015. The ISM runs a full-time school, Salam School, part-time adult and children's programs and participates in interfaith dialogue.