

Special Topics

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9 Independent Topics

9.1

Muslim Converts - Welcome to Islam!

Question : As a new convert, I can't find someone to marry, what can I do?

Answer : Online matrimonial sites are good places to start with if centers are not working for you.

Question : If I can't judge Islam by its followers, what should I judge it upon?

Answer : The merits of Islam come from the Prophet (s) and his Ahl al-Bayt (as), not regular followers.

Question : As a new Muslim, what happens to my past sins?

Answer : God forgives all of your past sins when you convert to Islam

9.2

Basic Dos and Don'ts of Being a Muslim

Question : What are some tips to help me wake up for Fajr prayers?

Answer : Sleep earlier at nights.

Question : Is it permissible to go back to sleep after waking up for Fajr prayers?

Answer : Yes, it is permissible according to Islamic law.

Question : What happens if I don't have water or I don't have enough time to do ghusl before prayer slots end?

Answer : One should do tayammum which can be used with earth or dust. See the tawzeeh al-Masa'il of your marja on the rulings pertaining to this.

Question : Is it permissible to eat the zabiha of Sunnis?

Answer : Yes, as long as the zabiha is hand slaughtered.

Question : What can I do if there are no halal restaurants or halal meat markets around me?

Answer : For restaurants, you always have fish or vegetarian options. For meat markets, a good tip

is to go to one of the further markets once in a while and buy a large amount of halal meat, then bring it back home and store it in a freezer. If this is not possible, there are plenty of vegetarian meat substitutes that are made with soy.

9.3

Halal Food and Zabiha

Question : Can I eat zabiha that is slaughtered by machines?

Answer : No

Question : Can I eat the zabiha of the Ahl al-Kitab (People of the Book)?

Answer : Most Shia scholars say that it is not permissible. However, a small minority of them, along with many Sunni scholars, say that it is permissible. Those Shia scholars that permit it have much stricter conditions than the Sunni scholars who permit it.

Question : Is it permissible to eat the zabiha of Sunnis?

Answer : Yes, as long as the zabiha is hand slaughtered.

Question : Is any animal that has been properly slaughtered halal according to Islam?

Answer : No, only animals that are first permissible to eat can be slaughtered. Pigs for example, even if slaughtered through zabiha, are not permissible to eat.

Question : What can I do if there are no halal restaurants or halal meat markets around me?

Answer : For restaurants, you always have fish or vegetarian options. For meat markets, a good tip is to go to one of the further markets once in a while and buy a large amount of halal meat, then bring it back home and store it in a freezer. If this is not possible, there are plenty of vegetarian meat substitutes that are made with soy.

9.4

Family, Parents and Marriage in Islam

Question : I am tired and I don't have the energy to teach Islam to my kids, is it enough to send them to an Islamic school?

Answer : Kids must see passion for Islam in their parents. If the passion is not there and the responsibility is delegated elsewhere, they won't take Islam seriously. If they see that Islam isn't good enough for their parents, why should it be good enough for them?

Question : Is it enough to teach my kids the basics of Islam only and leave it to them to practice?

Answer : As a parent, you must make the effort in practicing yourself. If parents don't take practicing Islam seriously, the children won't either.

Question : Can both mother and father teach gender specific laws to their kids?

Answer : Yes, but it is better if mothers teach female specific laws to their daughters, same with

fathers to sons. The reason for this is practical experience which theory alone won't give.

Question : What are some of the religious obligations mothers have in Islam when a child is born?

Answer : Breastfeeding at the time of birth.

Question : Do mothers have to contribute financially to the wellbeing of their kids and family?

Answer : The responsibility is with fathers only according to Islam. This does not mean, however, that women are not allowed to contribute. The difference is that it is optional for women.

9.5

Marriage in Islam

Question : What is the primary legal responsibility of a husband?

Answer : To provide his wife with maintenance, that is, among other things, food, shelter and clothing. This is in addition to his responsibility of providing intimacy for his wife.

Question : Is the husband responsible for encouraging Islam in his family?

Answer : Yes, he is the person who is primarily responsible for the health of Islamic practice in his family.

Question : What is the wife's primary responsibility to her husband according to Islam?

Answer : Providing intimacy to her husband.

Question : Does a wife have to cook and clean the house according to Islam?

Answer : No, she is under no such obligation.

Question : If a wife wants a maid and her husband can afford one, is the husband obligated to provide his wife with one?

Answer : Yes

Question : If a husband cannot afford to hire a maid for his wife when she wants one, what is the ruling in Islam?

Answer : The husband must become the housemaid himself for his wife.

9.6

Islam and Sex

Question : What is zina?

Answer : Sexual intercourse through fornication or adultery

Question : What is liwat?

Answer : Homosexual acts, more specifically, the act of sodomy.

Question : In Islam, what is worse, zina or liwat?

Answer : Liwat is a greater sin in Islam

Question : Can zina or liwat be forgiven in Islam?

Answer : If one sincerely repents, yes.

Question : Is homosexual orientation a sin in Islam?

Answer : No, only homosexual acts are sins

9.7

Modesty in Islam

Question : As a woman, do I have to cover my face (niqab) according to Islam?

Answer : No, it is not necessary to cover the face according to Islamic law.

Question : What parts of the body do women have to cover in Islam?

Answer : Everything except for the hands and face.

Question : If all parts of the body are covered, is it ok to wear tight clothing?

Answer : No, that is not considered appropriate hijab. Clothes covering the body must be loose fitting.

Question : Does the Burqa have any precedent in early Islam?

Answer : No, only the chador has early precedent. The Burqa is culturally specific.

Question : Is modesty in Islam only in clothing?

Answer : No, modesty also includes behavior.

9.8

Women's Menstruation in Islam

Question : Isn't it unfair that women are considered ritually impure when they are menstruating? What about the men?

Answer : Men also have biological events that make them ritually impure, such as ejaculation. The prohibitions that apply to menstruating women also apply to men who have ejaculated.

Question : Can women pray or fast when they are menstruating?

Answer : No

Question : What is the difference between hayd and istihada?

Answer : Istihada is irregular bleeding, such as bleeding during menopause whereas hayd is menstrual bleeding.

Question : If a girl gets her period before 9 lunar years, will this be considered hayd?

Answer : No, hayd is a legal category in Islam. Strictly speaking, biology for most jurists is not necessarily a determining factor.

Question : What are the signs of menstruation or hayd in Islam?

Answer : They are three: 1) warmth of the blood 2) the blood is dark red or black in color 3) there is pressure or slight burning in the discharge

9.9

Music, Alcohol, Drugs and Pork in Islam

Question : Is all music forbidden in Islam?

Answer : Islam is very cautious when it comes to music. If you want to know if all music is forbidden in Islam, please refer to your Marja.

Question : Why is alcohol forbidden in Islam?

Answer : Because it causes heedlessness of God and pollutes the human soul

Question : Can I drink a small cup of beer if it doesn't cause drunkenness in me?

Answer : No, not even a single drop is permissible.

Question : Are mind altering drugs permitted in Islam?

Answer : The only mind altering drugs that are permissible in Islam are those that are prescribed by a doctor and necessary for health reasons.

Question : Under what circumstances can I drink alcohol or eat pork in Islam?

Answer : If you are dying of hunger or thirst

9.10

Islam and Science

Question : Is faith incompatible with science?

Answer : It is incompatible if one assumes that faith means to "believe in something without evidence," but that is not the Islamic definition of faith.

Question : What is faith in Islam?

Answer : Faith, or īmān in Islam means having deep trust in God in all things, including His justice, mercy or in times when things around you seem completely hopeless. Faith is therefore a moral category in Islam, it has something to do with having a right attitude, character and disposition towards Allah. It is to believe that everything He says is true.

Question : Can science get us closer to God?

Answer : Yes as it is a study of God's creation. The wonder created by God's creation is a means to appreciating Him and growing closer to Him.

Question : According to Islam, can science be bad?

Answer : Yes, if it is used as a tool for evil, like the creation of atomic bombs.

9.11

A Reading List of Islamic Knowledge

Question : Can I read any Tawdih al-Masa'il book?

Answer : It is better to read the one produced by your own Marja

Question : How can I make sure that I will understand the Qur'an properly when I'm reading it?

Answer : Read it with a credible commentary like al-Mizan by Allamah Tabatabai or Ayatullah Puya Yazdi's commentary.

Question : Is Nahj al-Balagha written by Imam Ali (as)?

Answer : No, it is a compilation of his sermons, letters and sayings by a later scholar called al-Sharif al-Radi who died in the early 11th century C.E

9.13

Ritual Prayers and Supplications in Islam

Question : N/A

Answer : N/A

9.14

Death & Burial Rituals in Islam

Question : What is salat al-mayyit?

Answer : Prayer for the dead in Islamic funeral laws

Question : What is ghusl al-mayyit?

Answer : Ritual washing of the dead in Islamic funeral laws

Question : Do Muslims need to be put in a coffin during burial?

Answer : No, only a shroud is needed

Question : Are people's souls conscious in the grave after they die?

Answer : Yes

Question : What happens in the grave once you die?

Answer : You are interrogated by the angels Munkir and Nakir concerning the kind of life you lived while you were alive on earth.

9.15

The Battle of Armageddon: An Islamic View

Question : In the end of times, who will reappear first, Jesus or Imam al-Mahdi?

Answer : Jesus

Question : What will Jesus do in the end of times?

Answer : He will preach the unity of God, refute the trinity and ally himself with Imam al-Mahdi

Question : Is the Dajjal a person or a system?

Answer : The Dajjal is most likely a jinn working under Satan, but he may also be a system.

Question : What does Dajjal mean?

Answer : It means the great liar or deceiver

Question : What happens when Imam al-Mahdi dies?

Answer : The world will end and the Day of Judgment will begin

9.16

The Muslim Calendar

Question : What does the word Hijri mean?

Answer : The word hijri comes from the word Hijrah, which means migration. More specifically, it refers to the Prophet Muhammad's (s) migration from Mecca to Medina when he was fleeing his assassins.

Question : How many months are there in the Hijri calendar?

Answer : 12

Question : When did the Hijrah begin?

Answer : When the Prophet (s) migrated to Medina from Mecca.

Question : How many days is the Muslim calendar?

Answer : 354-355 days.

Question : What is the hijri year now?

Answer : As of today, the year 2016, it is 1437

9.17

Muslims and non-Muslims in the Shariah

Question : What is the Sharī'ah?

Answer : God's law as revealed through the Prophet Muhammad (s)

Question : What is the Jizyah?

Answer : Poll tax for non-Muslims living under Islamic government

Question : What is a dhimmi?

Answer : Protected non-Muslim living under Islamic government

Question : Can a Muslim force a non-Muslim to convert to Islam?

Answer : No, that is not allowed.

Question : Does a Muslim who lives in a non-Muslim country have to respect its laws?

Answer : Yes

9.18

A Timeline of Major Events in Islamic History

Question : N/A

Answer : N/A

9.19

Introducing the Qur'an: Why it is the way it is

Question : Does the Qur'an follow a chronological order?

Answer : No

Question : How many chapters are there in the Qur'an?

Answer : 114

Question : How many verses are there in the Qur'an?

Answer : 6, 232

Question : Is the Qur'an the words of the Prophet Muhammad (s)?

Answer : No, they are the words of God which the Prophet repeated

Question : Did the Qur'an change over time?

Answer : No, the Qur'an we have today is the same one that was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (s) with nothing less and nothing added to it.

Question : Who first compiled the Qur'an into a standard book format?

Answer : Imam Ali (as)

9.20

The School of Imam Jafar al-Sadiq

Question : Why is Imam Jafar so important?

Answer : He turned the teachings of the Ahl al-Bayt (as) into a systematic school

Question : Why do we have so many more hadiths from Imam Jafar (as)?

Answer : During his time, the Umayyads and Abbasids were busy fighting each other, so this gave the Imam more space to teach given their distraction.

Question : Why is Shi'ism also called the Jafari school of Islam?

Answer : Because most of our teachings go back to Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (as)

Question : When did the formative period of Islam begin?

Answer : 8th century

Question : Who was Imam Jafar's (as) father?

Answer : Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (as)

9.21

Major Fields in Islamic Studies

Question : What is ilm al-kalam?

Answer : Science of discourse, as in discourse about God. It's the equivalent of theology in the West.

Question : What is mantiq?

Answer : The science of logic

Question : What is akhlaq as a discipline in Islamic studies?

Answer : The study of spiritual ethics like anger, jealousy etc.

Question : What is fiqh?

Answer : Study of Islamic law

Question : What is falsafah?

Answer : Islamic philosophy that is inspired by Greek philosophy (especially Aristotle and Plato).

9.22

The Caliphate in Sunni and Shia Islam

Question : What is a Caliph?

Answer : Caliph means successor, as in the successor of the Prophet (s)

Question : What is the difference between the caliphate in Sunni Islam and Shia Islam?

Answer : The caliphate in the former is largely a political leadership. A caliph in Sunni Islam is selected by humans. In Shia Islam, the primary function of a caliph is religious and he can be selected by the Prophet Muhammad (s) and God only.

Question : What is nass?

Answer : Nass literally means designation, as in the designation of an Imam and Caliph by God.

Question : According to Sunni Islam, can someone appoint himself as a Caliph?

Answer : Yes, as long as there are people around who are willing to give him their oath of allegiance. As long as he declares himself a Muslim, he can do this.

Question : Who were the first Caliphs in Sunni and Shia Islam?

Answer : In Sunni Islam, the first Caliph was Abu Bakr, whereas in Shia Islam it was Imam Ali (as).

9.24

Islam, Racism and Anti-Semitism

Question : What does Islam say about racism?

Answer : Racism is a sin and may lead a person to hell.

Question : Are all humans equal in Islam?

Answer : In terms of value in the eyes of God, yes. However, they have different responsibilities and duties, depending on their social position, gender and age.

Question : Does Islam hate Jews?

Answer : No, Islam believes that Jews can be sincere believers in God and can be a source of God's favor if they are faithful to God and act morally.

Question : Does the Qur'an single out Jews as evil people?

Answer : No. If Islam criticizes Jews, it criticizes Muslims and Arabs even more.

Question : Does Islam think women are inferior to men?

Answer : There is not a single verse in the Qur'an that suggests that. To the contrary, the Qur'an often mentions both males and females together when offering them advice and addresses them on equal footing.

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10 Islam, Religion, and Modern Controversies

10.1

Modern Fallacies about God: where Theists and Atheists Agree

Question : What is Tawhīd?

Answer : Tawhīd is the oneness and unity of God. It means that He is absolutely one and there is nothing imaginable like Him.

Question : What is objectifying God?

Answer : Objectifying God or Allah means to consider Him as a being who exists like we do, that is, as a limited object among other objects that currently exist.

Question : How does the Abrahamic God differ from the gods of polytheism?

Answer : The Abrahamic or Muslim God is the non-conditional, non-contingent source of all of existence, He is the condition of possibility for anything to exist. The gods of polytheism are contingent beings like any other except that they are immortal.

Question : If I reject the existence of a contingent God, am I an atheist?

Answer : Not unless you believe in a God who is non-contingent.

Question : What does it mean when you say "God is the fountain of all of existence"

Answer : It means that the totality of reality and existence depends upon Him.

10.2

Tawhīd: The Muslim God according to the Prophet Muhammad and the Ahl al-Bayt (as)

Question : N/A

Answer : N/A

10.3

God's Existence: The Argument From Being (Wujūd)

Question : Can't there be a third form of existence, something that is between necessary and contingent?

Answer : The only other alternative is an impossible existence, that is, a logical absurdity, like the whole of a thing being greater than its part, or a "square-circle." These kinds of absurdities are only mental creations and have no existence.

Question : How do atheists reject this argument?

Answer : One can reject the argument, but the only way to do so is to accept its alternative, namely the logical absurdity of infinite regress, which cannot be justified in any way. This is why rejection of God, according to the Qur'an, can only be done with the lack of 'aql, or proper intellect.

Question : What is wujūd?

Answer : Wujūd is the simple fact of existence, it is the "something is there" part of our understanding of the world.

Question : What is māhiya?

Answer : Māhiya is the makeup or "whatness" of the existent being, that is, its details, how it is understood, parts, origins, end, etc.. When you ask "what is this" concerning a particular object, you're talking about māhiya.

Question : Can science one day disprove God?

Answer : No, God's existence depends on the fact that there is such as "existence" which we are consciously aware of, and not the discoveries of science.

10.4

God's Existence: The Kalam Cosmological Argument

Question : How is God conceived in Islam?

Answer : A He is spaceless, timeless, immaterial, uncaused, very powerful and has an unembodied conscious and intelligent mind.

10.5

God's Existence: The Argument From Design

Question : What is the argument from design?

Answer : It is the argument that the world as we know it is designed which means that the world has an intelligent designer.

Question : Does the fine-tuning of the universe prove God's existence?

Answer : The fine-tuning argument is an argument, not a mathematical proof. Real proof of God comes from the experience of the heart, that is, the heart's vision of God.

Question : If God designed the universe, who designed God?

Answer : God is timeless and eternal. Only things that exist in time are created at some point in time. If you are timeless and eternal, you cannot be created.

Question : What is a multiverse?

Answer : The multiverse is the hypothetical set of finite and infinite possible universes, including the universe in which we live.

10.6

The Problem of Evil, Suffering and Pain

Question : What is the emotional problem of evil?

Answer : It is people's dislike or even hatred of God who permits suffering in the world. They are angry that God doesn't do anything about it.

Question : What is the intellectual problem of evil?

Answer : This problem sees God and evil as mutually incompatible from a logical perspective.

Question : What is one of the main reasons why God allows evil in this world?

Answer : Human evil is produced by free will. By preserving human free will, God allows humans to flourish and reach their highest potential of the good. But free will also means that humans can choose the wrong path.

Question : Why doesn't God punish people who do evil?

Answer : He does punish them, but that can take place in this world (if they are lucky) or take place in the Hereafter if they are unlucky as punishment in the next life is much worse.

Question : Are there rewards for people who suffer from evil in this world?

Answer : Yes, one of the rewards is having sins forgiven.

10.7

Why did God Create Us? The Purpose of our Creation

Question : What is true servitude to God?

Answer : It is to submit your heart to God, to synchronize your soul with His will and being.

Question : Why isn't the world filled with only good people?

Answer : Because God gave humans free will, and free will means that people can choose evil as well as good. If there is no free will, people cannot choose good either.

Question : Why did God create bad people?

Answer : God did not create bad people, bad people chose to be bad by themselves.

Question : Why is our purpose in this life?

Answer : To submit our hearts to God and thereby purify them and reach spiritual perfection and

wisdom.

Question : What is the reason God create us humans?

Answer : He created us out of His love and compassion.

10.8

Why Humans Need Religion according to Islam

Question : What is the purpose of religion?

Answer : It is to purify our hearts and put us on the straight path to eternal salvation in God.

Question : What is īmān?

Answer : It is a deep relationship of trust with God

Question : What does “deen” mean in Arabic?

Answer : It comes from the old Persian word dā’ina, meaning “way of life”

Question : What is the purification of the heart?

Answer : It is the purification of the heart from spiritual diseases such as pride, arrogance, anger, hatred etc.

Question : What is the point of Islam?

Answer : To create a system and grounds whereby īmān can grow.

10.9

Jahl and Spiritual Ignorance in Islam

Question : What is ignorance in Islam?

Answer : Ignorance of God

Question : What is jahl and who is the jāhil?

Answer : Jahl is foolishness when it comes to truth. The jāhil is the fool.

Question : Can a jāhil have knowledge?

Answer : Yes, he can have a lot of information, but still be a fool, like the Devil.

Question : What are other words similar to jahl in Islam?

Answer : Safaahah is one, which means foolishness or idiocy.

Question : What is wisdom in Islam?

Answer : Wisdom is to be able to put knowledge to relevant use to the benefit of the greater good.

10.11

Do Non-Muslims Go to Hell?

Question : Do non-Muslims go to hell?

Answer : Only God knows, but Allah is just. He only sends to hell people who are evil or who reject the truth knowingly.

Question : Do all Muslims go to heaven?

Answer : No, Muslims who are evil may go to hell.

Question : Does hell last forever?

Answer : Only for those who do not truly and sincerely want God's love and forgiveness

Question : Can a non-Muslim enter heaven on the Day of Judgment?

Answer : If the non-Muslim is spiritually pure and sincere, and accepts Islam on the Day of Judgment, God may let him or her enter heaven.

Question : What can I do if my family doesn't convert to Islam?

Answer : Be kind and pray for them.