

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.