

The Religion of All the Noble Prophets عَلَيْهِمُ الصَّلَاةُ وَالسَّلَامُ Was Islam

By: Mufti Muhammad Qasim Qadri



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The simple meaning of Islam is that a person bows before Allah Almighty, accepts the command of Allah Almighty, leaves all forms of denial and rebellion, and adopts obedience.

Islam is the only acceptable religion before Allah Almighty. Fundamentally, Islam does not only refer to the religion brought by the Holy Prophet ﷺ; rather, in principle, every religion sent by Allah Almighty is "Islam." This is because the foundation of every Prophet's call was to accept the guidance sent by Allah, to obey Him, and to embrace faith in beliefs such as Tawhid and the Hereafter. All the noble Prophets عَلَيْهِمُ الصَّلَاةُ وَالسَّلَامُ were sent with this call. After the arrival of Sayyidunā Muhammad al-Muṣṭafā ﷺ, the name "Islam" refers to the fundamental guidance and detailed teachings brought by him until the Day of Judgment. Now, this is the only path to salvation and success.

It should be clear that the religions of Prophet Mūsā عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام and Prophet ʿĪsā عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام were not named "Judaism" and "Christianity" by the noble Prophets عَلَيْهِمُ الصَّلَاةُ وَالسَّلَام themselves. These names were given by their followers in later times. Whereas, the Holy Quran refers to the followers of these Prophets using the terms "Muslim," "Muslimūn," and "Muslimīn."

In the light of *sharʿ* terminology, the meaning of Islam is the news and commands brought by the Prophet of Allah عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام from Allah Almighty are testified to and accepted with heart and soul. It is also commanded to acknowledge the truth of all these matters. This affirmation of the heart is the real and terminological meaning of Īmān. From this perspective, Īmān and Islam are two names for the same reality. However, there is a difference between them in terms of language.

The beliefs and basic principles and commands that remained common in the teachings of all the noble Prophets عَلَيْهِمُ السَّلَام are collectively called Dīn. Some details of the sharias continued to change, but these were actually partial details of Islam. It was necessary to accept them and act according to them in their time, as those changing *shar'ī* commandments were also the commandments of Allah Almighty, and Islam is the name of obeying every commandment of Allah Almighty. Despite partial differences in *shar'ī* commandments, the religion remained the same in its essence: servitude to Allah Almighty, His tawhid, obedience to His Messengers, and belief in the Hereafter.

Islam is the name of complete surrender, obedience, and due following. Islam has always been the only acceptable religion before Allah Almighty, as Allah Almighty made a very comprehensive and decisive announcement in the Holy Quran:

إِنَّ الدِّينَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الْإِسْلَامُ¹

Indeed, the only 'acceptable' religion before Allah is Islam.¹

In this blessed verse, Allah Almighty has made it clear that no religion other than Islam is acceptable to Him. Islam means that a person surrenders himself completely to Allah Almighty, worships only Him, bows only before Him, obeys only Him, believes in His Messengers, and accepts the books revealed by Him.

Allah Almighty gave every Messenger عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام a sharia along with the fundamental guidance of Islam. Every Prophet called his respective nation to worship Allah Almighty and obey all instructions, until Allah Almighty sent Muhammad al-Muṣṭafā صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ as the final Prophet. Now, after the Holy Prophet صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ, Allah Almighty will not accept any religion from any person other than the religion he brought. This is because, in essence, Islam means following the Messenger sent by Allah Almighty in every age. However, once the chain of Prophethood was completed through the arrival of the Holy Prophet صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ, all other paths to Allah Almighty were closed, and only

¹ Al-Quran, Āl 'Imrān, verse 19; translation from Kanz al-'Irfān

one path remained: the path of following the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Therefore, anyone who now chooses any sharia or religion other than the sharia of the Holy Prophet ﷺ will not be acceptable to Allah Almighty, because that other path will no longer be Islam now. The Holy Quran mentions this in another place as follows:

وَمَنْ يَبْتَغِ غَيْرَ الْإِسْلَامِ دِينًا فَلَنْ يُقْبَلَ مِنْهُ وَهُوَ فِي الْآخِرَةِ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ ﴿٨٥﴾

And whosoever will desire a religion other than Islam, then that will never be accepted from him; and he will be among the losers in the Hereafter.¹

The fact that the religion of the previous Prophets عَلَيْهِمُ الصَّلَاةُ وَالسَّلَام was Islam and the religion of the Holy Prophet ﷺ is Islam can also be explained in another way. In a general sense, Islam is the name of that obedience which is performed according to the teaching and sharia of every Prophet of Allah from after Prophet Ādam عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام until the Day of Judgment. In this sense, all the noble Prophets and their true followers were Muslims. However, in a specific and defined sense, Islam is now the name of the religion granted to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. After the arrival of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, all previous sharias have now been abrogated. Therefore, now only that person is a Muslim who follows the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

This is why in the time of Prophet Mūsā عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام, his true followers were Muslims; in the time of Prophet 'Isā عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام, his true followers were Muslims, as mentioned in the following verses. However, when the Holy Prophet ﷺ arrived, it became necessary for all people to believe in him. Therefore, even someone who believes in another heavenly revealed religion, but does not believe in the Holy Prophet ﷺ, will not be called a Muslim.

Now, in the light of the Holy Quran, we mention the noble Prophets عَلَيْهِمُ الصَّلَاةُ وَالسَّلَام and their Islam according to the chronological order of time.

¹ Al-Quran, Āl 'Imrān, verse 85; translation from Kanz al-'Irfān

First comes the mention of Prophet Nūḥ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام. The Quran states that Prophet Nūḥ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام said to his nation:

وَأْمَرْتُ أَنْ أَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ ﴿٥١﴾

and I have been commanded to be from the believers.¹

This verse signifies that the call of Prophet Nūḥ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام was also the invitation of Islam, and he himself was among the obedient servants of Allah Almighty.

After this comes the era of Prophet Ibrāhīm عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام, who holds an exalted rank among all the Prophets. Mentioning his Islam and perfect obedience, Allah Almighty said:

إِذْ قَالَ لَهُ رَبُّهُ أَسْلِمْ^١ قَالَ أَسْلَمْتُ لِرَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٣١﴾

And remember when his Lord said to him, "Obey", and he said, "I have obeyed the Lord of all the worlds."²

The term "Muslim, Musalmān" has been explicitly stated for Prophet Ibrāhīm عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام in the Holy Quran. It is stated:

مَا كَانَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ يَهُودِيًّا وَلَا نَصْرَانِيًّا وَلَكِنْ كَانَ حَنِيفًا مُسْلِمًا وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ﴿٣١﴾

Ibrāhīm was neither a Jew nor a Christian, rather, he was pure from all falsehood, a Muslim (a believer); and he was not among the idolaters.³

Then the dua of Prophet Ibrāhīm and Prophet Ismā'īl عَلَيْهِمَا السَّلَام is narrated, which further clarifies that their religion was "Islam." Both of them prayed:

رَبَّنَا وَاجْعَلْنَا مُسْلِمَيْنِ لَكَ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِنَا أُمَّةً مُسْلِمَةً لَكَ

¹ Al-Quran, Yūnus, verse 72; translation from Kanz al-'Irfān

² Al-Quran, Al-Baqarah, verse 131; translation from Kanz al-'Irfān

³ Al-Quran, Āl 'Imrān, verse 67; translation from Kanz al-'Irfān

O our Lord! And keep both of us obedient, and make from our children a nation that is obedient to You,¹

Moreover, Allah Almighty tells the Muslims about the religion of Ibrāhīm عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام:

مِلَّةَ أَبِيكُمْ إِبْرَاهِيمَ ۖ هُوَ سَمُّكُمُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ ۚ

the religion of your father Ibrāhīm. He named you Muslims²

From this verse, it is clear that the title of "Muslim" is also proven for Ibrāhīm عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام.

In this sequence, the event of Prophet Ya‘qūb عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام is also worth mentioning. When his time of passing drew near, he asked his children:

مَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِن بَعْدِي ۖ

“My sons,³ who will you worship after me?”

The children replied:

نَعْبُدُ إِلَهَكَ وَالِلَّهِ أَبَاءُكَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَاقَ إِلَهًُا وَاحِدًا ۚ وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُسْلِمُونَ ﴿١٣٣﴾

They said, “We will worship your God, and the God of your forefathers Ibrāhīm, Ismā‘īl, and Ishāq, One God; and we are obedient to Him.”³

This verse makes it clear that the original call of Prophet Ya‘qūb عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام and his children was also Islam and tawhid.

Prophet Ya‘qūb عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام said to his children:

فَلَا تَمُوتُنَّ إِلَّا وَأَنْتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ ﴿١٣٣﴾

“then do not die except as Muslims”.⁴

¹ Al-Quran, Al-Baqarah, verse 128; translation from Kanz al-‘Irfān

² Al-Quran, Al-Hajj, verse 78; translation from Kanz al-‘Irfān

³ Al-Quran, Al-Baqarah, verse 133; translation from Kanz al-‘Irfān

⁴ Al-Quran, Al-Baqarah, verse 132; translation from Kanz al-‘Irfān

This will be a proof that the original message in the lineage of the Israelites was Islam. This clarifies that religion is not just a name for temporary commands, but it is a continuity of obedience to Allah, which was passed down from generation to generation.

After Prophet Ya‘qūb عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام, the era of Prophet Mūsā عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام comes in chronological order. Allah Almighty described the summary of his call also as Islam, tawhid, and complete trust in Allah Almighty. Allah Almighty says:

وَقَالَ مُوسَى يَقَوْمُ إِن كُنْتُمْ آمَنْتُمْ بِاللّٰهِ فَعَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلُوا إِن كُنْتُمْ مُّسْلِمِينَ ﴿١٠٠﴾

And Mūsā said, “O my nation, if you have believed in Allah, then place your trust in Him if you are believers.”¹

This verse clarifies that the centre of Prophet Mūsā’s عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام call was also Islam. Faith in Allah Almighty, trust in Him, and bowing in submission before His commands is the reality of Islam.

Similarly, mentioning the Torah and the Prophets عَلَيْهِمُ السَّلَام of the Israelites, Allah Almighty said:

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَا التَّوْرَةَ فِيهَا هُدًى وَنُورٌ يَحْكُمُ بِهَا النَّبِيُّونَ الَّذِينَ أَسْلَمُوا لِلَّذِينَ هَادُوا

We revealed the Taurāt (Torah) in which there is guidance and light. The obedient prophets commanded the Jews according to it.²

Here, Allah Almighty called the Prophets of the Israelites (الَّذِينَ أَسْلَمُوا), meaning the Prophets who adopted complete obedience to Allah Almighty. This denotes that the religion of the Prophets of the Israelites was also Islam.

After this comes the era of Prophet Sulaymān عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام. In his time, the Queen of Sheba embraced faith, and the words she spoke also clarify the universal reality of Islam:

¹ Al-Quran, Yūnus, verse 84; translation from Kanz al-‘Irfān

² Al-Quran, Al-Ma‘idah, verse 44; translation from Kanz al-‘Irfān

قَالَتْ رَبِّ إِنِّي ظَلَمْتُ نَفْسِي وَأَسْلَمْتُ مَعَ سُلَيْمَانَ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١١١﴾

”She said, “My Lord, indeed I have wronged my soul and I submit, with Sulaymān, to Allah, Lord of all the worlds.”¹

Here too, the mention is of repenting from disbelief and accepting Islam, and the Queen of Sheba announced bowing before Allah, the Lord of the worlds, which in fact is Islam.

Then comes the time of Prophet ‘Īsā عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام. The Holy Quran tells us that the sincere companions of Prophet ‘Īsā عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام, namely the Hawāriyyūn, also called themselves Muslims. Allah Almighty says:

وَإِذْ أَوْحَيْتُ إِلَى الْحَوَارِيِّينَ أَنْ آمِنُوا بِي وَبِرَسُولِي قَالُوا آمَنَّا وَاشْهَدْ بِأَنَّا مُسْلِمُونَ ﴿١٠٩﴾

And when I inspired the disciples (hawāriyyūn) to believe in Me and My Messenger, they said: “We believe, and ‘O ‘Īsā, ‘bear witness that we are Muslims.”²

This verse is a clear proof of the fact that Prophet ‘Īsā عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام and his sincere followers were also callers to Islam. Their religion was the tawhid of Allah Almighty, belief in His Messenger, and obedience to His commands.

If all these verses are gathered, this reality comes to surface that from Prophet Nūḥ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام to Prophet Ibrāhīm, Prophet Ismā‘īl, Prophet Ishāq, Prophet Ya‘qūb, Prophet Mūsā, Prophet Sulaymān, and Prophet ‘Īsā عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام, the religion of all the Prophets was one. Some partial details of sharias were different in some places, but the original religion, meaning servitude to Allah Almighty and Islam, always remained the same.

Allah Almighty described this fact in Surah Al-Shūrā’ as follows:

شَرَعَ لَكُمْ مِنَ الدِّينِ مَا وَصَّى بِهِ نُوحًا وَالَّذِي أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ وَمَا وَصَّيْنَا بِهِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَ

¹ Al-Quran, Al-Naml, verse 44; translation from Kanz al-‘Irfān

² Al-Quran, Al-Ma‘idah, verse 111; translation from Kanz al-‘Irfān

مُوسَىٰ وَعِيسَىٰ أَنْ أَقِيمُوا الدِّينَ وَلَا تَتَفَرَّقُوا فِيهِ^١

He has specified for you the very same path of religion which He emphasized for Nūḥ, and which We revealed to you and emphasized for Ibrāhīm and Mūsā and ʿĪsā that establish the religion, and do not cause division therein.¹

Similarly, He says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الرُّسُلُ كُلُّوَا مِنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَاعْمَلُوا صَالِحًا إِنِّي بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ عَلِيمٌ^(٥١) وَإِنَّ هَذِهِ
أُمَّتُكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً وَأَنَا رَبُّكُمْ فَاتَّقُونِ^(٥٢)

O Messengers! Eat from the pure things and do righteous deeds. Indeed I know all that you do. And surely this religion of yours is one religion and I am your Lord so fear Me.²

The Holy Prophet ﷺ also described this fact. Accordingly, it is narrated in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*:

”عن أبي هريرة رضي الله عنه قال: قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه واله وسلم: أنا أولى الناس بعيسى ابن مريم في الدنيا والآخرة، والأنبياء إخوة لعلات، أمهاتهم شتى، ودينهم واحد.“

"I am the closest of people to ʿĪsā b. Maryam in this world and the Hereafter, and the Prophets are paternal brothers; their mothers are different, but their religion is one."³

The status of the Prophets as paternal—or consanguine—brothers implies that their fundamental principles are uniform, whereas the reference to their mothers being different signifies that their respective legal codes (sharias) are distinct. In summary, the religion of all the Prophets was one, but some commandments in their sharias were different. Allah Almighty, according to

¹ Al-Quran, Al-Shūrā, verse 13; translation from Kanz al-ʿIrfān

² Al-Quran, Al-Mu'minūn, verses 51-52; translation from Kanz al-ʿIrfān

³ Sahih Bukhari, Kitab Ahadith al-Anbiya, Vol 02, Page 458, Hadith 3443, Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, Beirut

His wisdom, gave one commandment in one era and then gave another commandment based on another wisdom. This is called abrogation (*naskh*). One clear example of this is the change of the qibla. Many previous Prophets عَلَيْهِمُ السَّلَام, and even Muslims for some time, were commanded to pray facing Bayt al-Muqdis. Later, Allah Almighty made the Holy Ka'ba the qibla. Both commandments were true and mandatory (*wājib*) to obey in their respective times. Acting upon the first commandment was Islam at that time, and later, acting upon the new commandment became Islam. This shows that the true essence of the religion is obedience. Whichever commandment Allah gives at whatever time, following it is Islam. If a person insists on an abrogated commandment and does not accept the new one, he is not deemed as obedient.

In light of this principle, it should be understood that acting upon previous sharias was right in their own times. However, when the Holy Prophet صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ arrived, the previous sharias were abrogated, and acting upon them became against the commandment of Allah Almighty. Now, the only person Muslim in the sight of Allah is the one who follows the Holy Prophet صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ. This is because Islam is the name of accepting complete obedience to Allah, and Allah Almighty has made it clear by revealing the Quran that complete obedience to Allah Almighty now means that from the revelation of the Quran until the Day of Judgment, all people in the world must accept Muhammad al-Muṣṭafā صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ as the final Prophet of Allah Almighty and accept complete obedience to him. Therefore, whoever deviates from this will now deviate from Islam, and his religion will not be the religion of Islam, but some other religion that will not be accepted by Allah Almighty. For this reason, Allah Almighty said:

وَمَنْ يَبْتَغِ غَيْرَ الْإِسْلَامِ دِينًا فَلَنْ يُقْبَلَ مِنْهُ ۚ وَهُوَ فِي الْآخِرَةِ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ ﴿٨٥﴾

And whosoever will desire a religion other than Islam, then that will never be accepted from him; and he will be among the losers in the Hereafter.¹

¹ Al-Quran, Āl 'Imrān, verse 85; translation from Kanz al-'Irfān

It is necessary for all humans until the Day of Judgment to accept the religion of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, because the arrival of the Holy Prophet ﷺ was not only for the Arabs but for all humans. The Holy Quran mentions this fact in several places. Allah Almighty says:

قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنِّي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ إِلَيْكُمْ جَمِيعًا

*"O people! I am a Messenger of Allah to all of you!"*¹

تَبَرُّكَ الَّذِي نَزَّلَ الْفُرْقَانَ عَلَى عَبْدِهِ لِيَكُونَ لِلْعَالَمِينَ نَذِيرًا ۝

*The Possessor of Infinite Blessings is He Who revealed the Criterion to His chosen one that he becomes a warner for all the worlds.*²

This subject is also discussed with great clarity in hadith traditions. In Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, it is narrated from Sayyidunā Abū Hurayrah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

والذي نفس محمد بيده، لا يسمعني أحد من هذه الأمة يهودى ولا نصرانى، ثم يموت ولم يؤمن بالذي أرسلت به، إلا كان من أصحاب النار.

"By the One in whose hand is the soul of Muhammad (ﷺ)! Whoever from this nation hears about me, whether he be a Jew or a Christian, and then dies without believing in that which I have been sent with, he will certainly be among the people of the Fire."³

In fact, he even said:

لو كان موسى حياً ما وسعه إلا اتباعي

Even if Mūsā عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام were alive, there would be no path for him except following me.⁴

¹ Al-Quran, Al-A'raf, verse 158; translation from Kanz al-Irfān

² Al-Quran, Al-Furqān, verse 1; translation from Kanz al-Irfān

³ Sahih Muslim, Kitab al-Iman, Page 90, Hadith 153, Dar Ibn Hazm, Beirut

⁴ Shu'ab al-Iman, Bab Zikr Hadith Jam al-Quran, Vol 01, Page 347, Hadith 174, Riyadh

In another Hadith, he ﷺ said:

بعثت إلى كل أحمر وأسود

I have been sent to every red and black.¹

And in another Hadith, he ﷺ said:

وكان النبي يبعث إلى قومه خاصة وبعثت إلى الناس عامة

Previously, Prophets used to be sent specifically to their own nation, whereas I have been sent to all people.²

As a result of this universal prophethood, the Holy Prophet ﷺ sent letters to the kings of Arabs and non-Arabs, the People of the Book, and the leaders of various nations, inviting them all to Islam. He ﷺ is the Final Prophet. No new Prophet can come after him, and no new sharia can come either. The chain of revelation (*wahī*) has been completed, and the people have been granted a sharia that is sufficient for all times and all regions until the Day of Judgment.

We pray to Allah Almighty to grant us steadfastness upon the religion of Islam.

أَمِينَ بِجَاوِزَاتِ النَّبِيِّينَ ﷺ

¹ Sahih Muslim, Kitab al-Masajid wa Mawadi al-Salah, Page 265, Hadith 521, Dar Ibn Hazm, Beirut

² Sahih Bukhari, Kitab al-Tayammum, Bab al-Tayammum, Vol 01, Page 137, Hadith 335, Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, Beirut



Faizan-e-Madinah, Muhallah Sodagaran, purani sabzi mandi, Karachi.

UAN +92 21 111 25 26 92   0313-1139278

 www.maktabatulmadinah.com / www.dawateislami.net

 feedback@maktabatulmadinah.com / ilmia@dawateislami.net