**Introduction to Islam**

September 22, 2015

**Mahmoud Jamil Abu Eid**

Originally from Jerusalem, educated at Ramallah in economics, MA in philosophy in Sofia, Bulgaria. Since 2002, Director of the Oriental Museum, Former Editor at several Arabic newspapers in East Jerusalem, Former Projects Coordinator at the Jerusalem Media and Communication Center, Former Correspondent of Alsharq Alawsat News Paper in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Former Projects Coordinator at Freidrich Ebert Stiftung (Civic Education), Former Advisor at Willy Brant center in East Jerusalem, Co-Founder of the Jerusalem Tourism Cluster (Specializing in developing different Touristic trails all around the country and mainly in Jerusalem).

Introduction

1. Complication of the topic.
2. Mahmoud’s feelings, his commitments, his reality, as a Muslim – and also the political, economic life, social life of Islam.
3. Islam is an ideology, a way of life, a faith, more than a stereotype. It is a practice.
4. Is there one kind of Islam, or many kinds? I’m going to present Palestine and the Holy Land from an Islamic perspective.
5. Anecdote. Mahmoud is friends on Facebook with Nassar Adal, who works with an American broadcasting company, CBS, and he posted photos of immigrants from Syria. Today we see hundreds of thousands of people fleeing to Europe. People ask, “Will Europe become an Islamic continent?” Today Nassar wrote:
6. Many Western activists are offering gifts to the immigrants. One refugee walked 40 km. Activists who welcomed them. “Arabs should do more and talk less.”
7. Some people who call themselves Muslims, especially in Eastern Europe, are not showing hospitality.
8. Question: We Muslims have to ask about the relation between our own commitments and our practices. We have to ask about the reality of the faith. Can Islam give the answers we need today? Or is Islam even able to give the answers to the questions of today?

Meaning of Islam

* + - 1. Etymology and Meaning.
				1. The early and late periods of Islam (before the modern period).

At first, Islam was led by the Arabs. Later, led by the Fatimids, Mamluks, and Ottomans.

The difference between Arabs and non-Arabs is often emphasized, but the unifying principle is Islam itself.

* + - * 1. Definition. Islam is a monotheistic, Abraham religion. It does not use the word “God” but rather Allah. Allah is defined through 99 realities or names. He is the incomparable and majestic. (*Mahmoud uses an Arabic word that means incomparable.*)

Islamic life focuses on the prophets, especially Adam, Noah, Abraham, Jesus. The Quran mentions Jesus 38 times. Virgin Mary is mentioned 44 times.

There is one creator with 99 names.

* + - * 1. The basic principles of Islam are shared by Sunnis and Shia. “Voluntary submission to the God.” Muhammed’s *hadith*: “The Muslim is the one from whom the others will be saved, by his speech and by his actions.”

Distinction between faith and Islam. The Arabs said to Muhammed: “We accept your faith.” Muhammad replied: “Don’t say you came to faith through me. Say instead that you came to faith by submitting to God.”

Islam is shown by actions, not by words alone. When you are devoted to God, to Allah, you have reached the highest level. Faith is seen through the practices. We are given the religion as a concept, but the concept does not mean that we are “believers.” Islam is also a practice.

Anecdote: Mahmoud once heard a lecture about Islam from a Romanian. He presented Muhammad and his life, and then moved immediately to Osama Bin Ladin. This led to a controversy in the classroom. The professor defended his idea, but the Palestinian students were unhappy with him. The professor was presenting a stereotype.

* + - 1. Articles of Faith: *Aqidah* (i.e., the ideology of Islam and its principles).
1. God. Muslims believe in one God. Chapter 112 of the Quran says there is a correct way to understand Allah.

God taught Muhammad to say that God is the one, the holy, the eternal. There is no one like him. He is also defined as the compassionate and merciful.

Allah means (grammatically) singular, without gender.

Immediate History of Islam after Muhammad.

Ummayad Caliphate (661-750). It was affected by the Byzantinian and Persian culture. The Ummayads, the people of Mecca who ruled, were merchants. They contacted the Byzantine and the Persian civilizations. They were open to other cultures. The Ummayads (in Damascus) were dislodged by the Abbasids.

Abassid Caliphate (750-1288). After Byzantine culture collapsed, the Abbasids opened conversation with the Western world. The center of Islamic culture was Dar es Salaam or Baghdad.

Ayyubid dynasty. Saladin (1137 - 1193) was the first [sultan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sultan) of [Egypt](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ayyubid_Egypt) and [Syria](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bilad_al-Sham) and the founder of the [Ayyubid dynasty](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ayyubid_dynasty).

* + - 1. Achievement. Saladin led the Muslim opposition to the European [Crusaders](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crusaders) in the [Levant](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Levant). At the height of his power, his sultanate included Egypt, Syria, [Mesopotamia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mesopotamia), [Hejaz](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hejaz), [Yemen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yemen) and other parts of [North Africa](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/North_Africa).
			2. Rise. Originally sent to [Fatimid Egypt](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fatimid_Caliphate) by his [Zengid](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zengid) lord [Nur ad-Din](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nur_ad-Din%2C_atabeg_of_Aleppo) in 1163, Saladin climbed the ranks of the Fatimid government by virtue of his military successes against Crusader assaults on its territory and his personal closeness to the caliph [al-Adid](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Al-Adid).
			3. Sunni Loyalty. When Saladin's uncle [Shirkuh](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shirkuh) died in 1169, al-Adid appointed Saladin [vizier](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vizier), a rare nomination of a [Sunni Muslim](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sunni_Muslim) to such an important position in the [Shia Muslim](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shia_Islam)-led [caliphate](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caliphate).
			4. During his term as vizier Saladin began to undermine the Fatimid establishment, and following al-Adid's death in 1171 he took over the government and realigned the country's allegiance with the [Baghdad](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baghdad)-based [Abbasid Caliphate](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abbasid_Caliphate). .
1. Angels. *Malak*.
2. The Angels include Gabriel (gave word of God to Muhammad), Michael, and others. Each has a responsibility. Israfil, for example, is the Angel of Death.
3. In the second chapter of the Quran, we read the story of creation. Adam and Eve’s sin. Satan did not consider Adam as an angel. He insisted that Adam should obey his orders.
4. Holy Books. The [Qur'an](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Qur%27an) – the revelation [Muslims](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muslim) believe was given to the [prophet](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prophets_in_Islam) [Muhammad](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muhammad) as a remedy – identifies three sets of books from the Bible as genuine divine revelation given to [trusted messengers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prophets_and_messengers_in_Islam):
	* + 1. the [Tawrat](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tawrat) ([Torah](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Torah)) given to [Musa](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moses_in_Islam) ([Moses](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moses)),
			2. the [Zabur](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zabur) ([Psalms](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Psalms)) given to [Daud](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_in_Islam) ([David](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David)), and
			3. the [Injil](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Injil) ([Gospel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel)) given to [Isa](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jesus_in_Islam) ([Jesus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jesus)). Together, the Qur'an, these books and the now-lost [Suhuf Ibrahim](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suhuf_Ibrahim) ("Scrolls of Abraham") constitute [Islam's scripture](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islamic_holy_books). Belief that this scripture is [divinely inspired](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Revelation) is one of [Islam's fundamental tenets](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iman_%28concept%29), but, since all scripture before the Qur'an is also held to have become corrupted, Muslims are directed to take guidance from the Qur'an alone.
5. Prophets. The Quran names 25 prophets.
6. The Quran also notes that there are other prophets, beyond the 25 who are mentioned. Islam does not neglect the predecessors, the Prophets and the Apostles.
7. In the OT, we have a chronology of time. One prophet succeeded another. But in the NT, the Apostles are not presented chronologically. The Quran has no chronology except:

Before the Hejirah.

After the Hejirah.

1. Judgment Day (Revelation).
2. We have heaven and also Gehennah.
3. Faithfulness leads to heaven.
	* + 1. Pillars of Islam.
				1. *Shahada* or declaration of faith. There is one God, Muhammad is prophet.
				2. *Salat* or praher. Prayer is done five times a day.
				3. *Zakat* or alms-giving. There is the practice of charitable giving.
				4. *Sawm* or fasting (Siyam).
				5. *Hajj* or the pilgrimage to Mt. Moriah. This is the *Hajj* and the sacrifice. There is a chapter on pilgrimage and *Hajj*, which is based on the Jewish word *hag*.

Coffee Break

* + - 1. Quran as the Word of God – Historical Background.
				1. It includes laws that are absolute.
				2. They must be obeyed.
			2. *Hadith*. They are the collections of the reports purporting to quote what the Islamic prophet [Muhammad](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muhammad) said verbatim on any matter.  The term comes from the [Arabic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arabic) word meaning "report", "account" or "narrative."
				1. The *Wahabis* (followers of Ibn Taymiyyah, 1263-1328) are using the *hadith* to make Islamic society more and more closed.  They do not accept the existence of the other. Today these oral laws can be dangerous and controversial. There are more than 30,000 Hadith. Out of these, only 5,000 are accurate, that is, universally accepted. The gap between the two collections is very serious and controversial.
				2. *Sunnah* and its interpretations. The Sunnah is the verbally transmitted record of the teachings, deeds and sayings, silent permissions (or disapprovals) of Muhammad.
				3. The *Fatwah* is the law of “those who know,” *Ulul-amr*. The Shi'a believe that if Abu Bakr angered Fatima, he also angered Muhammad, therefore he did not have any right to the caliphate. Fatimah openly refused to recognize the first caliph as Ulul-amr, the one with authority and to be obeyed as the Qur'an.

*Ijtihad*. It is an Islamic legal term that means "independent reasoning" or "the utmost effort an individual can put forth in an activity." It is to put the law within the frame of the holy book and the Hadith.

*Qiyas*. It is the process of [deductive analogy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Analogy) in which the teachings of the [Hadith](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hadith) are compared and contrasted with those of the [Qur'an](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Qur%27an), in order to apply a known [injunction](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Injunction) ([*nass*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nass_%28Islam%29)) to a new circumstance and create a new injunction. It will “measure” the law, according to whether or not it was mentioned in the time of Muhammad. For example the Quran forbids alcohol.

* + - 1. Laws – Shariaa and Fiqh. These are the laws based on both Quran and Hadith.
			2. Traditions.
1. Etiquette and diet.
2. Family life.
3. Women. There is a chapter in the Quran about women.
	* + 1. Economy.
4. State and individuals.
5. Banking and Riba.
	* + 1. Statehood. Islam and Palestine.
				1. Early History.

In the year 637 AD, Abu Ubidah ibn al-Jarrah was the leader of the Rashidun army and captured Jerusalem.

Patriarch [Sophronius](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sophronius_of_Jerusalem) refused to surrender Jerusalem except to the Caliph [Omar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Umar) (Umar ibn al-Khattab, 579-644) himself. Omar traveled to Jerusalem and accepted the surrender. He then visited the Church of the Holy Sepulchre where Sophronius invited him to pray inside the Church, but Omar declined so as not to set a precedent and thereby endanger the Church's status as a Christian site. Instead he prayed outside in the courtyard, in a place where [David](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David) was believed to have prayed.

* + - * 1. Islamic Renaissance in the Twentieth Century.

End of World War I. There were Zionist settlers.

A Moslem leader acknowledged the existence of “the other,” the Jews. He was afraid of the British colonizers. They supported the nationalist aspirations of the Jews.

In the 1940s and 1950s, the Palestinians were not able to establish their state. They created the PLO.

In 1987, there was the Islamic Palestinian Resistance.

* + - * 1. In Palestine, there are two projects:

The Secular Project. The conflict should be solved democratically, through border discussions.

The Islamic Project. Hamas wants *jihad* against the Israeli state. This is a conflict within Palestine. Palestinians wonder what it means.

* + - 1. Islam and Democracy. The important thing is belief in the one God, and the steadfast refusal to go against God’s Word.
			2. Islam and Secularism.

History of Islam

1. Muhammad (610-632). He created his state in 622. He was concerned about security, relations to other religions, and the role of Medina.
	* + - 1. Key Moments.

Muhammad received the message in 612, in Mecca.

He emigrated to Medina and died in 632.

* + - * 1. After him, the caliphs: Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, and Ali.
1. Rashidun Caliphate (632-661). I was established after Muhammad:
	* + - 1. Who were the caliphs?

Abu Bakr. The Sunni follow him.

Umar ibn al-Khattab.

Uthman ibn Affan.

Ali ibn Abi Talib. The twelve groups of Shia follow him. He was a relative of the prophet Muhammad. Ali believed in the principle of choice (somewhat like Hosni Mubarak, who wanted to give Egypt to his son).

* + - * 1. Conclusion. The caliphate ended in 660. When all is said and done, the difference between Sunni and Shia is a conflict over who speaks for Islam, who has the right to inherit leadership. The topic is hard to grasp outside of the context of Islamic history.
1. Ummayad Caliphate (661-750). It was affected by the Byzantinian and Persian culture.
2. Classical era (750-1258).
	* + - 1. Abassid Caliphate (750-1288).
				2. Fatimid Caliphate (909-1171).
				3. Ayyubid Caliphate (1174-1254). This was the time of Saladin and his followers.
3. Pre-Modern Era (1258-20th century).
	* + - 1. Mamluk Sultanate of Cairo (1261-1517).
				2. The Ottoman Caliphate (1517–1924)
4. Modern Times (20th century to the present).
5. Types and Groups of Islam.

Bibliography

* The Muslim Home- Dar el salam
* Muhamad- His life based on early Sources- Martin Lings
* A Brief illustrated Guide to Islam -
* Islam- A Short History by Karin Armstrong.