

**The Origins of Islam:  
There is no god but God**

I. Principles and Tenets of the Religion

A. Five Pillars of Islam

1. *Shahada* — “There is no god but God, and Muhammad is his messenger”
2. *Salat* — prayer toward Mecca five times a day
3. *zakat* — alms (2½% of income above that for your own needs)
4. *Sawn* — fasting during the month of Ramadan
5. *hajj* — pilgrimage to Mecca; *ihram*; *tawaf*

B. Important People, Places, and Events

1. Muhammad (570–632) — last and greatest of the prophets of God
  - a. Revelation in cave of Hira (611)
  - b. Night journey (621)
2. Mecca — birthplace of Muhammad
  - a. Ka’aba — “cube” built by Ibrahim (Abraham) and Ismail (Ishmael)
  - b. Zamzam — well found by Ismail and Hagar
  - c. Mt. Arafat — site of first revelation
  - d. Mina — three pillars of the devil
  - e. *Quraysh*
3. *Hijra* (622) — flight from Mecca to Yathrib
  - a. date of beginning of Muslim calendar
  - b. Yathrib later renamed Medina (Medinat un-Nabi = City of the Prophet)
4. Battle of Badr (624)
5. Battle of Uhad (625)
6. Seige of Yathrib (626)

7. Mecca falls (630)
8. *Qur'an* (or *Koran*) — the word of God
9. *Hadith* — sayings of Muhammad
  - a. *silsilah* — chain of authority
10. *jihād* — struggle (external and internal)

C. Sufism (Suf- < “wool” [?])

1. Central practice — *dhikr* — “remembrance”
  - a. stirring the heart — heart as epistemological organ
  - b. piercing the solar plexus (seat of the ego)
  - c. movements of the head
  - d. repeating the *shahada*: “La ilaha illa ’llah.”  
–understood as “There is nothing but God”
2. Nothing in this ephemeral world is real except God
3. God is closer to you than the carotids; God is within you

*Recommended Reading:*

- A. J. Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted* (New York: Macmillan, 1955).
- Karen Armstrong, *Muhammad: A Biography of the Prophet* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992).
- Patricia Crone, *Meccan Trade and the Rise of Islam* (Princeton University Press, 1987).
- *The Encyclopedia of Islam*, new edition, edited by B. Lewis, V. L. Ménage, Ch. Pellat, and J. Schacht, 7 vols. (Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1960–1971).
- Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975).