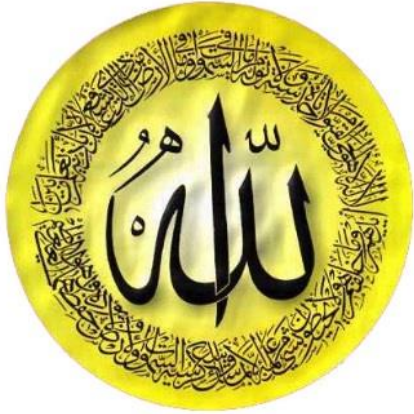


MUSLIM BELIEFS AND TEACHINGS



INFORMATION BOOKLET

Muslim belief and teachings -The Oneness of God and the supremacy of God's will



The word 'Allah' in Arabic

Introduction to Islam

Muslims believe **Islam** was gradually revealed to humanity through various prophets over many centuries. It was first revealed to Adam, the first man. The final and most complete revelation was made to Muhammad in the 7th century.

The word 'Islam' in Arabic means 'surrender', 'obedience' or 'submission'. Muslims believe that they should surrender to the will of **Allah**. Islam also means 'peace', as it through obeying

God's will that a person will achieve peace in themselves.

Tawhid - The Oneness of God

One of the most important beliefs in both Sunni and Shi'a Islam is **Tawhid**: the belief that there is only one God. This makes Islam a **monotheistic** religion. The Arabic word for God, 'Allah' means 'the God'. This belief is expressed in Surah 112 of the Qur'an:

"He is Allah the one, Allah is eternal and absolute. None is born of Him, He is unborn. There is none like unto him." (Qur'an 112:1-4)

This belief is repeated daily in the Shahadah (The confession of faith) which says: 'There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is his prophet.'

A Muslim's most important duty is to declare faith in the one God. Muslims believe that God is an undivided entity. This means that God is not made up of different persons nor has a son. No one else and no other object has God's attributes or qualities. Muslims believe the only sin that God will not forgive is attributing God-like qualities to any other being or thing.

God is unique. There is nothing like God. No one can picture or describe God because there is nothing to compare God to. This is one reason why there are no images or pictures of God in mosques (the Muslim place of worship) or in Muslim books or homes. Mosques are often beautifully decorated with verses from the Qur'an instead.



Mosques are often highly decorated inside, but with patterns or text from the Qur'an rather than images of God.

The supremacy of God's will

For Muslims, God is the one and only creator and controller of everything; therefore nothing takes place unless God allows it to happen. No matter whether something is good or bad, Muslims believe it is God's will, and that God must have a good reason for letting it happen. For Sunni Muslims, the **supremacy** of God's will is an article of faith.

Muslims believe they should accept whatever happens as the will of God, trusting in God's good intentions for people. God's will is supreme (above all things). What God wants and expects of people is the most important thing.

Muslims often add the words 'God willing' (inshallah) after a promise to do something. This shows their belief that they are not in control of what happens: only God is in control. This idea leads some Muslims to believe that God controls everything human beings do and that humans do not have free will. Others think that God does not force people to act in certain ways, but that God has allowed people freedom to choose how to behave.

"You who believe, obey God and the messenger" (Qur'an 4:59)

The impact of these beliefs on Muslims

For Muslims, it is not enough just to believe in one God: they must show that belief in the way they live their lives. This means that only God should be worshipped. Muhammad is respected as a prophet but he is not worshipped. That would be idolatry (worshipping an idol), which is forbidden in Islam. Muslims must never make anything in their lives more important than God, including their family, money or jobs.

Believing in the supremacy of God's will means that Muslims have to try to accept that even the bad things that happen in life are 'meant to be'. God's plans are mysterious and cannot be fully known to humans. The word Muslim means 'one who has submitted to God', and so a Muslim tries both to accept God's will and to live according to God's will in everyday life.

"Misfortunes can only happen with God's permission" (Qur'an 64:11)

Key terms:

Muslim: one who has submitted to the will of God and has accepted Islam.

Islam: the name of the religion followed by Muslims: to surrender to the will of God; peace.

Allah: the Arabic name for God.

Tawhid: the Oneness and unity of God.

Monotheistic: a religion that believes there is only one God.

Supremacy: supreme power or authority; a quality of God.

Summary: You should be able to explain Muslim beliefs in the Oneness of God and the supremacy of God's will.

A simple flow chart to show how Sunni and Shi'a Islam came to be

SUNNI ISLAM

SHIA ISLAM

Muhammad (570 - 632)

Caliph 1 - Abu Bakr (632 - 634)

Caliph 2 - Umar (634 - 644)

Caliph 3 - Uthman (644 - 656)

Caliph 4 - Ali (656 - 661) - Imam 1

Caliph 5 - Hassan (661) - Imam 2

Caliph 6 - Muawiyah (661 - 680)

Husayn (d. 680) - Imam 3

Umayyad Caliphate

More Imams

Remember that both groups are Muslim and believe in Allah and Muhammad. They split who should take Islam forward after Muhammad had died

— Rashidun Caliphate —

Key beliefs of Sunni Islam and Shi'a Islam

Sunni and Shi'a Islam

Sunni Islam

When Muhammad died, the majority of Muslims thought that only the **Qur'an** (the Muslim holy book) and the **Sunnah** (Muhammad's teaching and actions) had authority to guide the beliefs and behaviour of Muslims. They elected Abu Bakr to be their leader (Caliph), to act on behalf of God and Muhammad to make sure people followed God's laws.

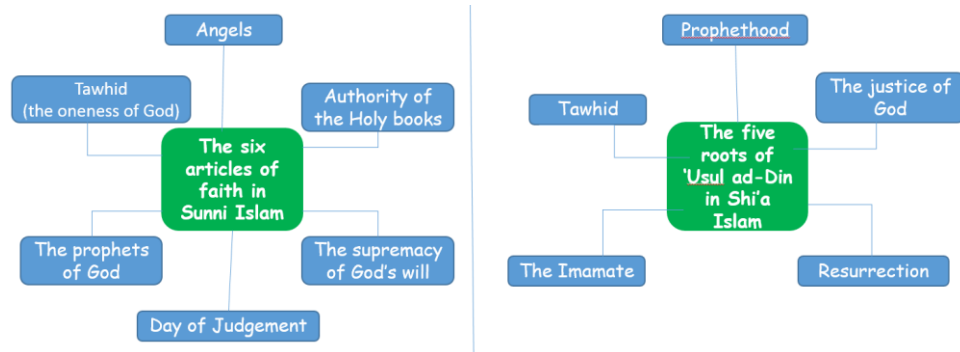
The Caliphs did not make the laws; they enforced them once the community had considered the views of scholars who studied the Qur'an and the Sunnah. This group of Muslims came to be called '**Sunni**', meaning followers of the Sunnah.

Shi'a Islam

Another group of Muslims believed that Muhammad had named his cousin Ali as his successor. Ali was one of the earliest converts to Islam and was married to Muhammad's daughter Fatima. Ali and his supporters thought that the true leader (called the Imam) had to be a descendent of Muhammad and chosen by God. Each Imam would identify the next one before he died.

Ali's claims to be leader were ignored by many Muslims. Over time a split developed between the followers of Ali's party, known as the **Shi'a**, and the Sunni Muslims. Today, the Shi'a have their own interpretation of Islamic laws and only accept sayings that have been passed down through Ali and his followers.

Sunni and Shi'a Islam hold many elements in common such as belief in God, the prophethood of Muhammad, the guidance of the Qur'an and following the Sunnah. They only differ in interpretations of certain aspects of belief and law, and in the emphasis they put on expressing key beliefs, as you will see in the rest of this sheet



The key beliefs of Sunni and Shi'a Islam

The six articles of Faith in Sunni Islam

Sunni Muslims hold six main beliefs:

1. **Tawhid**: There is only one God. 'The Oneness of God' is the concept of Tawhid meaning 'oneness, absolute, alone'. Surah 112:1-4 says:

"He is Allah the one, Allah is eternal and absolute. None is born of Him, He is unborn. There is none like unto him."

This means that Allah is the creator and sustainer of life. He is beyond any human limitations like age and death because He was not born and cannot die. He has no partners or children and nothing is like him.

2. **Angels**: Angels communicate the message of God to humans. They do the work of Allah. They deliver revelations via the prophets so that Muslims know what Allah wants them to do. They record the words and actions of each individual person, so they have a book to account for their lives. They receive souls at death. Angels do not have free will like humans and they obey Allah's commands.

3. **Authority of the Holy books**: Sunni Muslims believe that five sources of authority are books: the Torah of Moses; the Psalms of David; the Gospels; the scrolls of Abraham and the Qur'an. According to Muslims, the first four books have been lost in their original form or changed. The Qur'an is the only revealed scripture still in its original form. It is the direct Word of Allah as given through Angel Jibril. The Qur'an is the most important writing and the highest authority in Islam.

4. **Prophets**: Prophets and messengers are chosen by Allah to deliver His message to humankind. Muslims believe that Allah revealed messages throughout time to guide humanity and that Prophet Muhammad was the last (Seal) of the prophets; he was given the ultimate guidance in the Quran. He is the most important prophet of God. As a result of this there is no need for any more prophets.

'Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but the messenger of Allah and the Seal of the Prophets.' (Qur'an 33:40)

5. **The Day of Judgement**: Muslims believe that there will be a day (the Day of Judgement) when all Muslims and others stand alone in front of Allah, who decides whether they go to heaven or hell based on their deeds. Everyone must answer for themselves and must accept the consequences of their thoughts and actions on Earth. Human life acts as a test for the eternal life to come.

6. **The supremacy of God's will**: Muslims believe in the supremacy of Allah's will. Sunni's believe that Allah knows everything. Qadr means that everything is ordered by Allah; nothing is random or by chance. Humans do have free will though, but as Allah knows the past, present and future, their choices are already known to Him, but not to them.



Sunni Muslims follow the Quran and the Sunnah

Key terms:

Qur'an: the holy book revealed to Muhammad by the angel Jibril; God's final revelation to humankind.

Sunnah: the teachings and deeds of Muhammad.

Allah: the Arabic name for God.

Sunni: Muslims who believe in the successorship to

Muhammad of Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman and Ali.

Shi'a (Shi'i): Muslim who believes in the imamate, the successorship of Ali

The five roots of Usul ad-Din in Shi'a Islam

Usul ad-din means the 'principles (or roots) of religion'. The roots of a tree keep it alive and firmly attached to the source of its life. For Shi'a Muslims, these five principles keep them firmly rooted in God, the source of life.

1. Tawhid - 'oneness': this means the same as in Sunni beliefs, that Allah is One. Allah is the Almighty and unique in His Oneness. Shi'a use Qur'an Surah 112 to explain why they believe Allah is One. Allah cannot be associated with anything as 'none is like Him'; to do so is to commit the greatest sin, 'Shirk'. This means 'association' in Arabic and therefore nothing and no one can be compared to Allah. Allah is the creator of all, pre-existent, beyond time and space and beyond all human understanding.

2. Prophethood: Shi'as believe that Allah sent messengers to guide people to the right path and Prophet Muhammad was the last of them. The 'right path' means a peaceful way of life, lived in total submission to Allah. Prophets deliver the messages to spread the religion. The imam protects the messages so that people do not forget and leave the faith in the absence of prophets.

3. The Justice of God (Adalat): Allah is 'The Just' and 'The Wise' which means He does no wrong. The Shi'a believe they need to be aware there is good and evil in everything, but that Allah commands them to do good. Surah 16:90 says 'Indeed Allah commands you towards Justice.' Humans will be held responsible for all their actions, good and bad. Allah acts with a purpose which humans cannot understand. Sometimes justice can be hard to see but the Shi'a should try to understand as much as they can.

4. The Imamate: This means accepting that the twelve imams are the leaders of Islam and guard the truth of the religion without error. Some believe that Prophet Muhammad said that twelve imams from his own tribe (The Quraysh) would succeed him as leaders. Shi'as believe that the first eleven led the community, some were killed, but that the twelfth disappeared after his father's death. This imam will appear again when Allah decides at the end of time. Currently he is alive and in hiding. All imams are seen as infallible (can do no wrong) and must be obeyed. They are protectors of the faith, ensuring the teachings do not become corrupted or spoiled.

5. Resurrection: Shia Muslims believe that after death they will be resurrected to be judged by God. The Shi'a believe that there will be a Day of judgement. Every Muslim and non-Muslim will be judged by Allah. Humans will be physically resurrected to stand to be judged and they will be asked to account for the words and actions of their lives on Earth. The events of this day are described in both the Qur'an and the Hadith.



Millions of Shi'a Muslims visit the burial place of Imam Ali (the Imam Ali Mosque in Najaf, Iran), whom they believe was Muhammad's true successor.

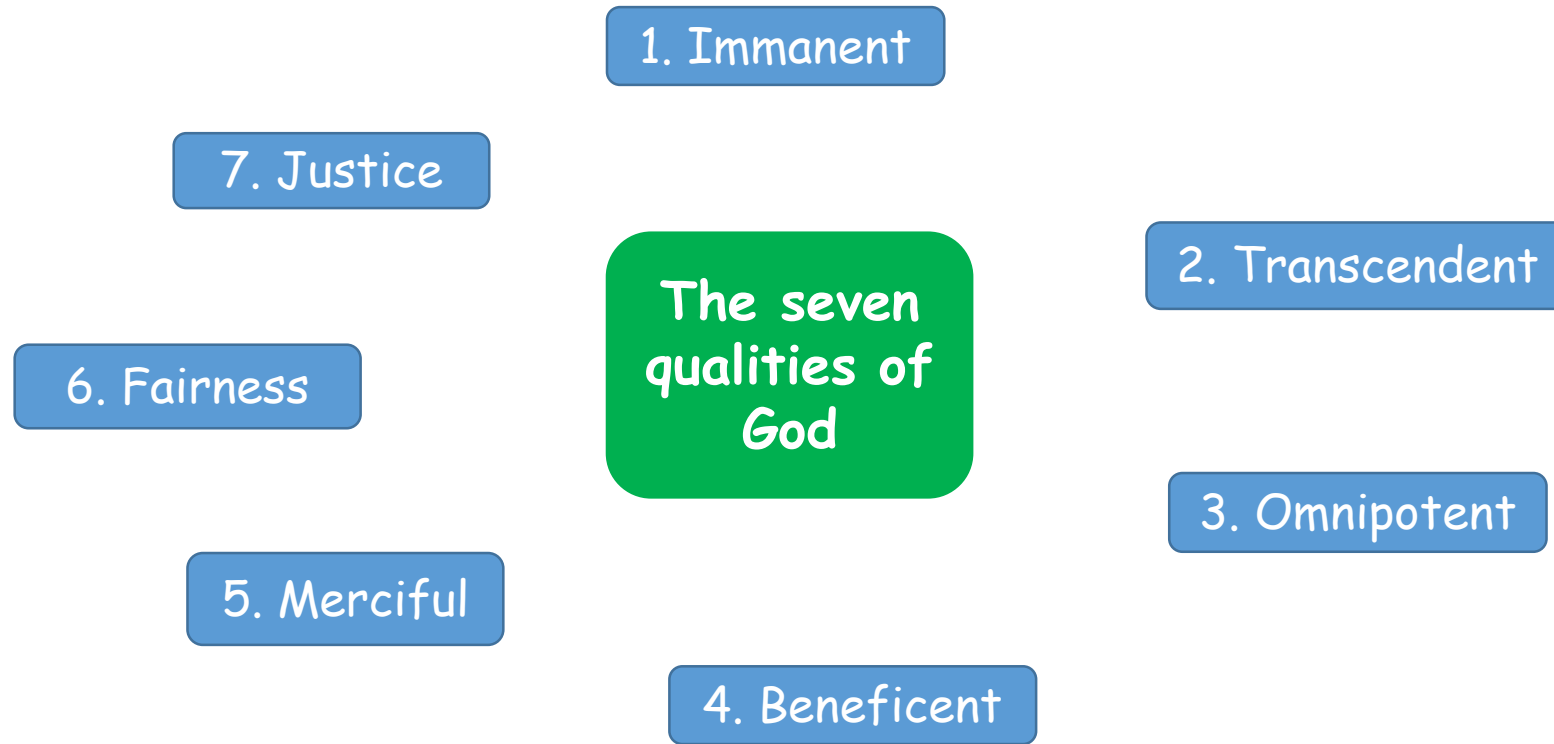
Look at the information sheet and then complete the following in your book.

1. Give two beliefs that Sunni and Shi'a share.
2. Explain the three ways Allah communicates with humankind (according to Sunni Muslims).
3. Explain ways in which belief in the six articles of faith influence Sunni Muslims in their lives today.
4. Explain 2 of the five roots of Usul ad-Din clearly. Use this template to help:
One of the roots is.....
This means.....
5. 'Belief in the Oneness of Allah and the supremacy of His will is all a Muslim needs to have'.
What do you think about this statement? Give arguments for and against and explain your answer.



Summary: You should be able to identify the six articles of faith in Sunni Islam and the five roots of 'Usul ad-Din in Shi'a Islam. You should also be able to explain the origins of Sunni and Shi'a Islam.

The seven qualities of God



The nature of God

'God is the Greatest'

Every day Muslims hear and say the words 'Allahu Akbar', meaning 'God is the greatest'. Muslims believe that God is so great he is beyond human understanding, and greater than anything humans can imagine. Yet Muslims have firm beliefs about what God is like. Where do these ideas come from?

The names of God

Muslims believe that God revealed himself to people through Muhammad and the holy books. There are 99 names of God in the Qur'an and Hadith (Muhammad's sayings), which can help Muslims to understand something of God's nature. Each name describes a quality that God has revealed about himself.



Muslims use prayer beads to help them recite the names of God

Many Muslims memorise the names of God and recite them when they are praying privately. Each name helps them to feel God's presence. Some names show God's power, might and authority; others show God's love and care for human beings.

"The Most Excellent Names belong to God: Use them to call on Him" (Qur'an 7:180)

Qualities of God

A person may ask 'Where is God?'. This is not an easy question to answer. Muslims believe that God is **immanent**, within all things and close to his people. But God is also **transcendent**, beyond all things.

There are several quotes in the Quran which support the idea of God's immanence:

'We are closer to human than his jugular vein.' (Qur'an 50:16)

'And He is with you wherever you may be.' (Qur'an 57:4)

These quotes show Allah is vital to human existence. If the jugular vein is cut, humans die so trying to live without Allah is worse than death. Allah knows humans so well that, for example, he knows what someone will say even before they say it.

Muslims believe that Allah must be in this world to help and guide, to give people the purpose and ability to live this life. This is what immanence means; that Allah is very active in the world.

There are also quotes that show God's transcendence:

'No vision can grasp Him...He is above all comprehension.' (Qur'an 6:103)
'Nothing there is like Him.' (Qur'an 42:11)

These quotes show how Allah is outside this world, outside everything that He created. Allah is outside time, whereas humans are subject to time. Allah has no beginning or end, so He cannot be part of time. Allah is beyond human understanding, limitless and therefore He is not part of this world.

Transcendence is being separate to the world, beyond it, which allows Allah to control and act in the world, but not be affected by it.

Our limited human thinking makes many people wonder, 'How can God be both immanent and transcendent?' For Muslims, God can be both because God is the creator of the universe, therefore outside and not limited by the physical world, yet He is also within all things and compassionate towards people.

Muslims also believe that God is **omnipotent** (all-powerful), as God is the creator, sustainer and owner of all things. He is also all-knowing, aware of everything including human actions and thoughts.

'This is God, your Lord, there is no God but him, the creator of all things, so worship Him; He is in charge of everything. No vision can take Him in, but He takes in all vision. He is the All subtle, the All Aware.' (Qur'an 6:102-103)

The idea that God is able to do all things ensures a Muslim's submission to Him. Humankind will always need Him and there is a reason for everything that happens. Muslims can be secure in knowing that Allah knows what is happening in the world. He sees their every action and knows their innermost thoughts and desires and He hears when they call Him. There are hidden blessings to everything that happens.

The following quote from a Muslim sums up the importance and impact that God's omnipotence has on a believer's life:

Key terms:

Immanent: the idea that God is present in and involved with life on earth and in the universe; a quality of God.

Transcendent: the idea that God is beyond and outside life on earth and the universe; a quality of God.

Omnipotent: almighty, having unlimited power; a quality of God.

Beneficent: benevolent, all-loving, all-good; a quality of God.

Merciful: the quality of God that shows compassion or forgiveness to humans, even though he has the power to punish them.

Fairness: the idea that God treats people fairly and impartially without favour or discrimination.

Justice (Adalat in Shi'a Islam): the idea that God is just and fair and judges human actions, rewarding the good and punishing the bad.

The nature of God continued

'As a Muslim I believe that the omnipotence of Allah affects my life because He is always there for me. To me, the impossible is never impossible. I know I can trust Allah, and that trust brings me peace. I am weak; Allah strengthens me. It is all part of His design and weakness is for my own good, so that I always come back to Allah even if I stray. I cannot be without Allah.'



God is **beneficent**, the source of all goodness. His generosity is seen in his gift to humans of life on earth.

God's beneficence is linked to his mercy and compassion. In their daily prayers, Muslims begin by saying 'In the name of God, the Lord of Mercy, the giver of Mercy.' This phrase is called the 'Bismillah' and Muslims say it to dedicate everything they do to God. They believe that God is **merciful**: He understands their suffering, cares for them and forgives them if they are truly sorry for any wrong they have done.

'God's beneficence is seen in his many gifts to humans'

In the Qur'an, Allah is referred to 57 times as the Beneficent and over 160 times as the Merciful. In daily prayers the names are recited 17 times. So how is Allah beneficent and merciful in a world of suffering and evil?

1. He sent prophets as guides to the right path...so He is compassionate and humans have free will to follow his path.
2. The mercy of Allah is reflected in the rules within the Qur'an.
3. Making mistakes is part of being human, but Allah forgives those who repent. Out of mercy Allah forgives and even repeated sin is forgiven. Muslims have the chance to make up for bad deeds.
4. Allah's mercy allows humans to exist, to live, to love and to care. Muslims are never alone. Allah's compassion surrounds them and mercy helps them deal with being human.
5. Suffering clearly exists, but it is a test of faith to see how humans respond even where it seems beyond comprehension.
6. Humans should focus on the good (charity, loving kindness, family, togetherness, selflessness) of which there is much. They should not think only of the bad, for example, war, crime, poverty and disease.

God acts with **fairness** and **justice**. He treats people equally and justly, and requires that they do the same to their fellow human beings. God will judge people in fairness on the Day of Judgement.

One of the five roots of Usul ad-Din in Shi'a Islam is the justice of God (Adalat). Since God is perfect, he is just and therefore never acts unjustly to his creations. Also, God is not happy when people do wrong and will hold them to account. Humans have full responsibility for their own actions and God will judge them accordingly.

Look at the information sheet and then complete the following in your book.

1. Make a list of the seven qualities of God and explain them in your own words. Try to learn these qualities by heart.
2. Explain why Muslims believe Allah is omnipotent and what this means.
3. Explain how Allah shows mercy and beneficence.
4. Explain why some people might doubt Allah's mercy and beneficence in the world we live.
5. How might the belief of Shi'a Islam in the justice of God (Adalat) affect people's attitude towards suffering in life?
- 6 'God cannot be both immanent and transcendent'. Evaluate this statement. Be sure to include more than one point of view, and refer to Muslim beliefs and teachings in your answer



Summary: You should now be able to explain Muslim beliefs about the nature of God

ANGELS

What are angels?

Muslims believe that **angels** bring the word of God to the prophets or messengers of God. For Sunni Muslims the belief in angels is one of the six articles of faith.

Angels are part of the unseen world. They are supernatural beings, created by God from light.

"Praise be to God, Creator of the heavens and earth, who made angels messengers with two, three, four (pairs of) wings" (Qur'an 7:180)

What do angels do?

Muslims believe that angels are able to receive God's words directly from him and pass them on to the prophets of God. They can do this because they are pure and sinless. Angels have no free will so they cannot do anything to displease God. They ceaselessly praise and worship God.

For Muslims, angels are involved in the lives of human beings from soon after conception until the moment of death. Some are guardian angels who take care of each person throughout their lives (Qur'an 13:11). Others are responsible for recording in a 'book of deeds' everything each person thinks, says or does (Qur'an 18:49). The book will be presented as evidence on the **Day of Judgement**.

"Each person has angels before him and behind, watching over him by God's command."
(Qur'an 13:11)

"The record of their deeds will be laid open and you will see the guilty, dismayed at what they contain, saying, 'Woe to us! What a record this is! It does not leave any deed, small or large, unaccounted for!' **They will find everything they ever did laid in front of them:** your Lord will not be unjust to anyone."
(Qur'an 18:49)

According to tradition, the angel Israfil will blow a trumpet to announce the Day of Judgement. The angel of death and his helpers take people's souls to God (Qur'an 32:11). Angels also escort people into paradise and guard the gates of hell.

Muslims believe that God has given the angels power to take on human form when appearing to people to whom he wishes to give a message. For example, angels appeared to Ibrihim (Abraham) and to Maryam (Mary) as men.

Jibril

Jibril (Gabriel) is the angel most familiar to Christians and Jews as well as to Muslims.

He is an archangel (a special angel with higher status than others) who is a trusted messenger of God. Jibril was the angel who relayed the Qur'an to Muhammad from God.

Muslims believe that Jibril first appeared to Muhammad when the prophet was a child. In one story, Jibril, together with Mika'il, came to Muhammad during the night and purified his heart so that later in life Muhammad would be able to receive God's revelation. When Muhammad was 40 years old, Jibril returned to him in a blaze of light when he was meditating at Mount Hira. Jibril told Muhammad what God wanted to do and inspired him with revelations of the Qur'an. God continued to guide Muhammad throughout his entire life, often communicating through Jibril.



An early handwritten copy of the Qur'an, which is a record of the message that Jibril brought to Muhammad.

Mika'il

Mika'il (Michael) is another high ranking archangel who is also known to Christians and Jews. Muslims believe that Mika'il is an angel of mercy. God has assigned Mika'il to reward righteous people for the good they do during their lives on earth. God has also given Mika'il responsibility for sending rain, thunder and lighting to earth.

The Qur'an mentions Mika'il when it warns that anyone who is an enemy of God's angels, Jibril and Mika'il, is also an enemy of God (Qur'an 2:98).

Muslims believe that Jibril and Mika'il have brought nourishment to human beings: Jibril brought spiritual nourishment of God's words in the Qur'an, and Mika'il brings nourishment for the earth and human life through the rain.

Key terms:

Angels: Spiritual beings believed to act as messengers of God.

Day of Judgement: A time when the world will end and every soul will be judged by God, and either rewarded or punished.

Jibril: The Arabic name for Gabriel, the archangel who brought God's message to the prophets, particularly to Muhammad.

Mika'il: The Arabic name for Michael, the archangel of mercy who rewards good deeds and provides nourishment to people.

1. Write down three Muslim beliefs about angels.
2. Explain the importance of Jibril for Muslims.
3. Who was Mika'il? What does he do?
4. 'Mika'il is more important than Jibril.' Do you agree?
5. Muslims believe that angels record every one of your thoughts, words and actions throughout your life. What are the advantages and disadvantages of this for Muslims? Make a list.
6. 'Belief in angels has no impact on the life of Muslims'. Evaluate this statement. Be sure to include more than one point of view, and refer to Muslim beliefs and teachings in your answer.

PREDESTINATION AND LIFE AFTER DEATH

Predestination in Islam

There are different beliefs about **predestination** in Islam. Some Sunni Muslims believe that God has already determined everything that will happen in the universe. He has written down everything that will happen in a 'book of decrees.' God creates all things, including the actions of his creatures, so they must act according to his will.

"Only what God has decreed will happen to us. He is our Master: Let the believers put their trust in God" (Qur'an 9:51)

This is linked to the Sunni belief in the supremacy of God's will. Some Sunni Muslims believe that because God's will is so powerful, he can determine everything that is going to happen. This view places greater emphasis on God's omniscience (having unlimited power) and less on human freedom, but it does not mean that people have no choice about how they behave.

Human freedom

Many Shi'a Muslims believe that God knows everything that is going to happen, but this does not mean that he decides what is going to happen. This means people still have free will, so they can make their own choices.



A mother knows what her child will choose.

Here is one way to think about it: a mother of a little boy knows her child very well, and knows in advance what he is going to do. If he is given a choice between a bowl of peas or an ice cream, she is very sure that he will choose the ice cream - it was his choice. Another time he might be offered peas or spinach, and he might choose the peas then if he likes them better. Just because a mother might be able to predict what will happen does not mean the boy is not being given a real choice.

Or imagine you have to travelled in time 100 years into the future. You spend some time observing what people are doing and writing down their actions. You take this written record back with you to the present year. Does this mean that the people you observed 100

Years in the future suddenly have no free choice? No; those people are still deciding for themselves what they want to do - you just happen to have been able to see in advance what they are going to decide.

Another way to think of it is this: God is the creator of time so is not bound by it. For God there is no past, present and future - for him it is as if everything has already happened. Human events happen in time due to cause and effect or human free will, but God is outside time. Therefore many Muslims do not see any conflict between the supremacy of God's will, and human freedom to act freely and make choices.

"God does not change the condition of people (for the worse) unless they change what is in themselves." (Qur'an 13:11)

Life after death

All religions believe that there will be a time of perfect peace and happiness that can be reached by living a good life on earth. For Muslims, death is not the end but the beginning of a new stage of life called **Akhirah**.

Many Muslims believe that after death the person still has a conscious existence in the grave. Here they will enter a state of waiting called 'barzakh', which means 'a barrier': no one can cross the barrier to amend things they have done wrong or warn the living. They are waiting for the Day of Judgement.

Muslims believe that as they lie in the grave, God sends two angels to question them about their faith. If people answer correctly, they will see the rewards to come, but if they deny God, they will see the punishments they will have to endure. Some believe the punishments start right away. Others think that people sleep in their graves until the end of the world when the Day of Judgement will come.

The Day of Judgement and resurrection

Muslims believe that on the Day of judgement, God will judge humans according to everything they have done throughout their lives. Many Muslims believe that as God has given humans free will, they themselves are responsible for whether God rewards or punishes them for the choices they have made. This emphasises the point that even though God knows everything that is going to happen, people are still responsible for their actions and will be rewarded or punished because of them.

Muslims believe that the Day of Judgement will come when God's purpose for the universe has been fulfilled. Only God knows when that will be. On this day the angel Israfil will blow a trumpet to announce that the world will be destroyed. The present world will be totally transformed into a new world (Akhirah) and then the angel Israfil will blow the trumpet again. Everyone who has ever lived will be raised from the dead (**resurrection**) and judged by God.

People will be given new bodies and the book of their life will be handed to them to read out. Just as human DNA is a sort of 'book' that dictates how the body develops, the book of deeds dictates how one lives in the afterlife. If people are given it in their right hand they will go to **heaven**; if they receive it in their left hand they will go to **hell**.

Key terms:

Predestination: The idea that God knows or determines everything that will happen in the universe.

Akhirah: everlasting life after death.

Resurrection: Rising from the dead or returning to life..

Heaven: The state of eternal happiness in the presence of God; also called paradise.

Hell: The state of total separation from God



Muslims believe they are questioned by angels while lying in the grave.

PREDESTINATION AND LIFE AFTER DEATH (continued)

On this day everyone will be faced with their good and bad deeds and realise what they have done. If they are believers who have shown sorrow for their failings, God will forgive them. God sorts the souls by making them cross the narrow 'Sirat Bridge' that spans the fires of hell. Good people are transported across the bridge quickly and enter heaven.

Heaven and Hell

Heaven is described in the Qur'an as gardens of happiness (Qur'an 22:23). It is the reward for faith and good deeds.

"On couches of well-woven cloth they will sit facing each other; everlasting youths will go round among them with glasses, flagons, and cups of a pure drink that causes no headache or intoxication; (there will be) any fruit they choose; the meat of any bird they like; and beautiful-eyed maidens like hidden pearls: a reward for they used to do."
(Qur'an 56:15-24)

The Qur'an describes hell as a place of fire and great torment. It is the punishment for those who reject God and do evil.

"They will dwell amid scorching wind and scalding water in the shadow of black, neither cool nor refreshing." (Qur'an 56:42-44)

Muslims accept God's word in the Quran but have different interpretations of these verses. Some think they are exactly what heaven and hell are like. Others think they are just hints or suggestions because heaven and hell are beyond human understanding. Others think they are symbolic of the spiritual life a person will live after their death, either in the presence or absence of God.

The importance of belief in life after death

Belief in life after death is one of the six articles of faith for Sunni Muslims and one of the roots of Usul ad-Din in Shi'a Islam. It is an important belief because it encourages human responsibility and accountability: the idea that people must be responsible for their own actions as they will be held accountable for them by God.

Belief in life after death urges people to avoid sin and do the right thing. It also satisfies a deep human need for justice. Sometimes it seems that some people get away with almost anything in life; the belief in God's judgement means that one day they will be held accountable and punished for their wrongdoing. For those good people who have suffered in life, there is something better to look forward to.

Look at the information sheet and then complete the following in your book.

1. Explain the Muslim idea of predestination.
2. 'Predestination means that humans have no freedom.' Evaluate this statement. Refer to religious views in your response.
3. Explain what is meant by Akhirah.
4. Describe what happens after a person's death, according to Muslims.
5. Explain how a belief in the afterlife could influence the life of a Muslim today.
6. Can God be both merciful and a judge who punishes? Explain your opinion.
7. 'If there is no life after death, there is no point in living a good life.' Evaluate this statement. Refer to religious views in your response.

CROSSING THE SIRAT BRIDGE



Summary: You should now be able to explain Muslim beliefs about predestination and human freedom. You should also be able to explain belief and life after death and the impact these beliefs have on the lives of believers

Prophethood: Adam and Ibrihim

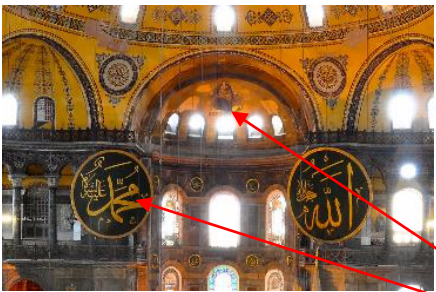
What is prophethood?

Muslims believe that God has chosen many **prophets** to bring the message of Islam to people. This belief in the prophets and their importance is known as **Risalah**. **Prophethood** - when someone is made a prophet - is a gift given by God to help humankind understand his message.

The prophets are important for Muslims because they provided a method of communication between God and human beings. In order for Muslims to know how to live in the way God desires, it was necessary for instructions to be conveyed to people through the prophets. When humans forgot, misunderstood or changed God's message, he sent prophets to call people back to the right path.

Many Muslims believe there have been around 124,000 prophets, of which 25 are named in the Qur'an. The most important prophets are called messengers or apostles. These have been sent by God to every nation on earth.

Muslims believe that the prophets and messengers are important role models to follow, as they were good people who lived according to God's will. Some of the most important prophets in Islam include Adam, Ibrihim (Abraham), Musa (Moses), Isa (Jesus) and Muhammad.



Images of God or the prophets are not allowed in Islam, so often mosques are decorated instead with Arabic calligraphy. The Hagia Sophia museum in Istanbul, Turkey, was originally a church that was later converted to a mosque, so displays both Christian images and Arabic calligraphy.



Adam

Muslims believe that Adam was the first man on Earth and the first prophet of Islam. Created by God from the dust of the ground, he is regarded as the father of the human race and so is treated with reverence and great respect.

"One of His signs is that He created you from dust and - lo and behold - you became human and scattered far and wide." (Qur'an 30:20)

"He first created man from clay...Then he moulded him; He breathed from His Spirit into him; He gave you hearing, sight, and minds." (Qur'an 32:7&9)

God gave Adam understanding and the names of all things:

"He taught Adam all the names (of things), then He showed them to the angels and said, 'Tell me the names of these if you truly (think you can).' They said, 'May You be glorified! We have knowledge only of what You taught us. You are the All knowing and All wise.'" (Qur'an 2:31-32)

God then asked Adam to tell the angels the names of some objects that they did not know but he did. God told the angels to bow down to Adam out of respect and admiration for his knowledge, but **Iblis** refused. His defiance resulted in him being thrown out of paradise and he vowed to tempt humans to sin against God.

In order to prevent Adam from being lonely, God created Hawwa (Eve) and they live in the Garden of Bliss. There was one rule they had to obey: 'O Adam! Dwell thou and thy wife in the garden, and enjoy (its good things) as ye wish: but approach not this tree, or ye run into harm and transgression' (Qur'an 7:19). Iblis deceived them into eating the fruit from the tree and they were thrown out of the garden.. Their actions brought sin into the world. All humans would now be judged on the Day of Judgement.

Adam is important to Muslims as a prophet because God gave him understanding and Adam in turn passed on his knowledge to the rest of the human race through his descendants. He was the first person to learn to plant seeds, harvest crops and cook food. God revealed to him the food that Muslims are allowed to eat, how to repent for wrongdoing and how to bury the dead. He built the Ka'aba as the first place of worship, with the help of the angels after he was sent to earth. Adam and Hawwa (Eve) had many children including Cain and Abel. The two brothers continued the evil side of humankind when Cain killed Abel, fulfilling a prophecy in the Quran.

What can Muslims learn from Adam?

Iblis and Adam both disobeyed Allah (God). However, Adam repented his sins straight away and regretted it all his life, so finding salvation. He openly criticised himself for falling into Iblis' trap but he hoped he could make amends and receive Allah's mercy. Iblis did not show repentance or regret. He lost all hope and was forever tormented.



Adam was the first person to learn how to plant seeds and harvest crops.

Key terms:

Prophet: A person who proclaims the message of God.

Risalah: The belief that prophets are an important channel of communication between God and humans.

Prophethood: When god makes someone a prophet to communicate his message to people.

Iblis (Satan): A spiritual being, created from fire, who was thrown out of paradise for refusing to bow to Adam.

Ka'aba: The black, cube-shaped building in the centre of the Grand Mosque in Makkah (Mecca); the holiest place in Islam.

Id-ul-Adha: A Muslim festival that celebrates the prophet Ibrahim's willingness to sacrifice his son to God.

Hajj: The annual pilgrimage to Makkah (Mecca) that every Muslims should try to make at least once in their life.

Why is Ibrihim important?

"Who could be better in religion than those who direct themselves wholly to God, do good, and follow the religion of Abraham, who was true in faith? God took Abraham as a friend." (Qur'an 4:125)

Ibrihim is the Arabic name of the prophet Abraham. Muslims believe that he fulfilled all the tests and commands given to him by God, and so was promised to be the father of all nations. They believe that the prophet Muhammad was descended from Ibrihim through his son, Ishmael.

The Qur'an presents Ibrihim as a role model because of his obedience to God, his kindness and compassion, and his refusal to worship idols. (His close relative Aazar was a sculptor who carved statues and idols, which at the time were worshipped widely by the people of Arabia.)

Ibrihim (or Abraham) is an important religious figure in Islam, Christianity and Judaism; for this reason these three faiths are called 'Abrahamic religions'.

Ibrihim and idol worship

As a young man, Ibrihim was determined to discover who created the universe. He wanted his people to know who made the stars, moon and sun, which many people worshipped in those days. He declared his belief in one God and was determined to stop idol worship.

One day when there was a big feast on the riverbank he saw his opportunity. As everyone left the town, he took an axe and destroyed all the idols in the temple except the largest one. He left the axe tied around the neck of this statue. When the people returned they were angry and demanded to know what had happened. Ibrihim replied that the biggest statue had destroyed all the rest and they could ask the statue if this was so. When the people objected that their idols could not speak, Ibrihim rebuked them, asking why they worshipped statues that cannot speak, hear, see or defend themselves.

The people were furious and demanded that Ibrihim be burned alive. An enormous fire was prepared on the orders of the king and Ibrihim was thrown into it. A miracle occurred and the fire only burned his chains and he walked out completely unscathed, much to the amazement of the people. As a result many began to follow God.

The Ka'aba, Ishmael and Hajj pilgrimage

The Ka'aba is a small building in the centre of the Masjid al-Haram mosque in Makkah (Mecca). It is considered to be the house of God and the holiest place in Islam. Muslims believe that the original Ka'aba was built by Adam but it was destroyed by the flood at the time of Noah. With his son Ishmael, Ibrihim rebuilt it on the same site.

Many Muslims believe that Ibrihim had a dream in which God asked him to sacrifice his son to him. God did not take the boy although Ibrihim was willing to sacrifice him, showing his willingness to be obedient and that he was a man of faith. During the festival of Id-ul-Adha each year, Muslims slaughter an animal to remember Ibrihim's willingness to sacrifice his son.

Ibrihim is also remembered when Muslims go on Hajj pilgrimage. For some Muslims this pilgrimage is a way to return to the perfection of Ibrihim's faith. At Mina, Muslims often throw stones at the pillars in the same way that Ibrihim threw stones at the devil that tempted him to disobey God. When pilgrims run between the two hills and drink the water of Zamzam, they remember the story of Ibrihim's wife Hagar. She searched desperately for water for her young son Ishmael and God rewarded her search with the gift of the well. Makkah is sometimes referred to as 'the city of Ibrihim.'

Ibrihim is important in Islam because he was a man of faith who denounced the worship of idols, rebuilt the Ka'aba and gave the message that there is only one God. In Arabia at that time people worshipped many gods and statues.

Look at the information sheet and then complete the following in your book.

1. Explain what is meant by prophethood (Risalah).
2. What, according to Muslims was the main purpose of the prophets?
3. Who are the five most important prophets in Islam?
4. Why did Iblis get thrown out of heaven?
5. Explain the importance of the prophet Adam for Muslims.
6. "Prophet Adam can teach Muslims all they need to know." Evaluate this statement.
7. How is Ibrihim presented in the Qur'an?
8. Briefly explain what Ibrahim did to stop idol worship.
9. What event does Id-ul Adha remember? Why is it important for Muslims to remember this event in their daily lives?
10. "Ibrahim is the perfect role model for Modern Muslims." Evaluate in detail why many people would agree with this statement.



Pilgrims surround the Ka'aba in the Masjid al-Haram mosque in Makkah.



Pilgrims walking to Mina to throw stones at the pillars, representing the stones that Ibrihim threw at the devil.

Muhammad and the Imamate

Muhammad

Muslims believe that Muhammad received the final revelation of Islam from God. He is known as the last and greatest of the prophets.

"Muhammad is not the father of any one of you men; he is God's messenger and the seal of the prophets: God knows everything." (Qur'an 33:40)

Born around 570CE in Makkah (Mecca), a city in present-day Saudi Arabia, Muhammad became an orphan at an early age and was brought up by his uncle Abu Talib. He became a merchant and gained a good reputation for honest dealing. When he was 25 he married his employer, a wealthy widow named Khadijah.

From an early age he was religious and on occasions he went to a cave in the mountains for meditation and prayer. (Muhammad spent time in the cave as he became disillusioned with the way people were living their lives in Makkah). There on Mount Hira in 610CE he had an experience that changed his life. The angel Jibril (Gabriel) appeared to him with a message from God. This was his first revelation from God. For more than 20 years, Muhammad received further revelations and these were combined together to form the Qur'an, the Muslim's' most holy book



Pilgrims at the cave on Mount Hira where the angel Jibril revealed the Qur'an to Muhammad.

Muhammad's preaching

Three years after the first revelation, Muhammad began preaching the words he had received and he spent the remainder of his life proclaiming that God is One, and that complete surrender to God is the only acceptable way to live. He challenged the people of Makkah to give up cheating, drinking alcohol, gambling and idol worship. This was not a message the leaders of Makkah wanted to hear and he fled persecution with his followers to Medinah in 632CE. This event is known as the Hijrah (departure), and marks the beginning of the Ummah (the worldwide family of Islam). The Islamic calendar starts from this date and the years are numbered AH (after Hijrah).

Muslims believe that before the Hijrah, Muhammad had an amazing experience which is recorded in the Qur'an. The angel Jibril took Muhammad on a miraculous

Journey to Jerusalem. In this event, known as the Night Journey, Muhammad was carried on a horse-like creature with wings, called al-Buraq. From Jerusalem he ascended into heaven, saw magnificent signs of God and spoke to prophets such as Isa (Jesus). He was told that people should pray five times every day.

In Madinah, Muhammad united the tribes and gathered an army of 10,000 Muslim converts. He marched on Makkah and conquered the city in the name of God. The 360 idols at the Ka'aba were destroyed and Muhammad set about introducing Muslim law. Muhammad's teachings and practices (Sunnah), which are found in the Hadith and Sira texts, are still used as sources of Islamic law (Shariah). Muhammad won many battles but in 632CE he returned to Madinah, became ill and died. He was buried in a simple grave.

The Imamate

When Muhammad died it wasn't clear who should succeed him. Muslims split into two groups, Sunni and Shi'a. Sunnis elected Abu Bakr as their first **Caliph**. Shi'as believe that Muhammad named his cousin and son in law Ali, as his successor - so Ali became the Shi'as first **Imam**. For Shi'as, it was important that Ali took control because they believed the prophet had appointed him by divine instruction, and that leadership should follow the family line. When Ali died, his son became the Imam. Each Imam that followed was the son of the previous imam (with the exception of Husayn ibn Ali, who was the brother of Hasan ibn Ali).

The Twelver branch of Shi'a Islam believes that there have been twelve Imams in total. The last of the Imams is Muhammad al-Mahdi, who they believe has been kept alive by God and hidden somewhere on earth, and who will return with Jesus to bring justice and equality.

The Twelvers believe that the Imams not only rule justly but are able to maintain and interpret the Qur'an and Shariah law without fault. They believe that receiving God's law was completed through Muhammad, but that guiding people, and preserving and explaining the divine law, continued through the Imams. The **Imamate** is important because people need divine guidance to know how to live correctly. The Twelvers believe that, in each generation, there has always been an Imam who is the divinely appointed authority on all matters of faith and law, and is part of the Ahl al-Bayt (family of Muhammad).

Key terms:

Prophet: A person who proclaims the message of God.

Caliph: A person considered to be a political and religious successor to the prophet Muhammad, and the leader of the Sunni Muslim community

Imam: 1. A person who leads communal prayer; 2. (Iman) in Shi'a Islam, the title given to Ali and his successors.

Imamate: The divine appointment of the imams.



One of the largest mosques in the world now sits above Muhammad's grave.

Muhammad and the Imamate continued

What impact does Muhammad have on Muslims today?

Muhammad the individual

Muslims believe Muhammad is the perfect example of a man serving Allah without question. Firstly, that he was a man without godlike qualities, means there is no reason why they themselves cannot aim to live as good a life as Muhammad did. He did not have it easy; he had to be determined to succeed all his life. He had to have patience in his prophethood before it brought results. He rejected the immorality he saw around him. He always focussed on Allah. He was humble, modest, caring, prayed and knew Allah would help when difficulties arose. He is the best example to follow for all those reasons. He was a better human being because of his sense of morality, of duty and his belief in the importance of his community. Regardless of a person's position in society, Muslims believe everyone could learn from him, then and now.

Muhammad the Leader

Muslims claim that Muhammad was the greatest political and religious leader of all time, managing to combine the two roles perfectly. He set up a community where individuals were respected. He allowed religious freedom, gave women rights, looked after the elderly and sick, welcomed strangers and created rules which allowed the best possible outcomes for everyone. He had charisma as a leader so that people followed him in religion, in ordinary life and militarily. Ten thousand men went into battle for him in Makkah. The Islamic Empire spread from Southern Europe to northern Africa and across Asia, in his name and the name of Islam. Today, thirteen centuries later, 1.3 billion Muslim followers repeat his name daily and many people study his life worldwide.

Muhammad the family man

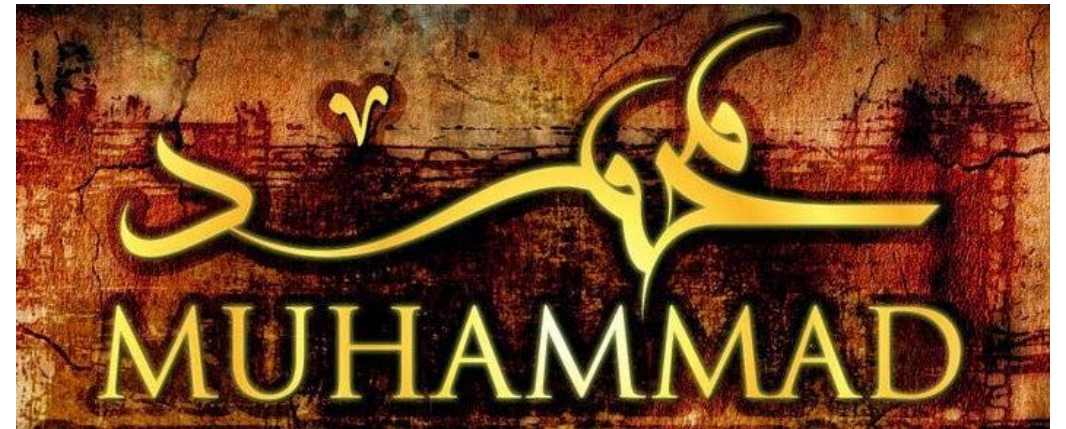
Muhammad was the ultimate family man, carrying on from other prophets. In the Qur'an there is a theme of good fathers: Adam, Noah, Lut, Jacob, Ibrihim and then Muhammad. Islam sees the family as the basic unit for the well-being of society. If family works well, society works well. Muhammad said 'The best of you is he who is best to his family' (Hadith). Muhammad led a strong family unit. He loved his wife, and still cared for the extended family after she died. He was caring to his other wives, spending time with them, was never harsh with them and did his duties around the house. He kept all his wives happy, dealing with any issues justly. He had four daughters whom he educated (not the tradition at the time), marrying them to decent men, and he was a good grandfather. He also suffered the loss of his own sons and needed his faith in Allah to help him through this. As a loving father, he never forgot his sons.

Muhammad the teacher

He was the greatest teacher, because of what he said. He lived every aspect of Islamic life, so others could learn and follow. He spoke with authority, but made it easy for others to learn. He spoke clearly and precisely, making learning easier. He spent thirteen years in Makkah teaching people the Word of Allah. Many initially rejected his teachings and though he faced hatred and violence, he carried on. Muhammad realised that everyone can learn with the right method and patience to succeed. His determination to teach Allah's way meant he had the patience he needed.

Look at the information sheet and then complete the following in your book.

1. Describe what happened in 610CE that changed the life of Muhammad.
2. What was the main message that Muhammad started to preach?
3. Describe what happened to Muhammad in 632CE and explain its importance to Muslims.
4. Explain the importance of Muhammad for Muslims today (think about his influence on them etc).
5. Explain the importance and significance of the imamate for Shi'a Muslims.
6. "Muslims can never lead their lives as well as the prophet Muhammad did." Evaluate this statement.



Summary: You should now be able to explain the importance of Muhammad for Muslims and why the Imamate is important in Shi'a Islam.

The holy books in Islam

The Qur'an

The importance of the Qur'an

Muslims believe that the Qur'an is the word of God, which was revealed to Muhammad via the angel Jibril over a period of around 22 years. It contains the foundation of every believer's faith, and is the most sacred text in Islam. It is believed to be an infallible source of authority for all matters of doctrine, practice and law. Islamic scholars regard the Qur'an as a literary work that is beautifully written in perfect Arabic. The original Qur'an was believed to be in heaven, so when Muslims read the Qur'an they believe that God's words are speaking directly to them.

"This is the Scripture in which there is no doubt, containing guidance for those who are merciful of God." (Qur'an 2:2)

"This is truly a glorious Qur'an (written) on a preserved Tablet." (Qur'an 85:21-22)

The name 'Qur'an' means 'the recital', as Muhammad recited by heart each revelation that he received., and passed it on to his followers.

His followers memorised them and scribes wrote them down. After Muhammad died, his successor Abu Bakr commissioned an official copy to be compiled by Zayd ibn Thabit, one of Muhammad's companions. Soon converts of different nationalities started to read and write the Qur'an and some parts were in danger of being misread or miswritten. So Uthman, the third Caliph, commissioned a team of Muslim scholars to oversee the compilation of one official written version to be followed everywhere. They completed their work around 650CE.

The contents of the Qur'an

Similarly to the Christian Bible, the Qur'an contains a mixture of historical accounts and advice on how to follow God. There are 114 surahs (chapters) in total. It begins with a short surah called 'al Fatihah', which means 'The Opener'. This is a prayer to God for guidance, and is used in daily prayers. The remaining surahs are arranged approximately in order of length with the longest first (286 verses) and the shorter chapters last. The content is not arranged in the order it was revealed. Apart from the ninth Surah, each chapter begins with the words 'In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.'

Muslim Children are encouraged to learn Arabic so they can read the Qur'an in its

Original language. Qur'anic recitation is highly valued as Muslims believe it brings blessings. Those who are able to recite the whole Qur'an from memory are given the title 'hafiz'.

Other holy books

Muslims believe there are other holy books that have been revealed by God. These include the Torah (revealed to Moses), the Psalms (revealed to David) and the Gospel (revealed to Jesus). Some Muslims think that these books have been lost, while others believe they can be found in the Christian Bible (although the original text has been corrupted or distorted, so does not have the same authority as the Qur'an).

The Torah (Tawrat)

Muslims believe that the Torah was given to Moses (Musa). It is mentioned 18 times in the Qur'an. Some Muslims think the Torah is essentially the first five books in the Bible, but over time additions and subtractions have been made to the original text. The Torah (Tawrat) does not exist in its original language or its original text. It was put together by the followers of Moses after his death. The compilers changed the text, so some is the Word of Allah and some is human addition.

The Psalms (Zabur)

The Psalms were revealed to David, and are mentioned on three occasions in the Qur'an. Many Muslims believe these are similar to the Psalms in the Bible. The Psalms are a collection of prayers to Allah (some refer to them as poems). David was a great king, whose people were God-fearing and righteous. They contain lessons of guidance for the people.

The Gospel (Injil)

The Gospel is mentioned in the Qur'an and it is believed that this refers to a book divinely revealed to Jesus (Isa). It is thought that this Gospel has been lost but that some of its message is still found in the Bible. The word Injil occurs 12 times in the Qur'an.

"We sent Jesus, son of Mary, in their footsteps, to confirm the Torah that had been sent before him: We gave him the Gospel with guidance, light, and confirmation of the Torah already revealed - a guide and lesson for those who take heed of God." (Qur'an 5:46)

The Scrolls of Abraham (Ibrihim)

The Scrolls of Abraham (Ibrihim) are also referred to in the Qur'an, but these have been lost and no longer exist. They are thought to have been one of the earliest scriptures of Islam, which were revealed to Ibrihim. The revelations to Ibrihim were said to have been received by Ibrihim on the first day of Ramadan and contained parable-like stories about worship, reflection and building a livelihood.



Muslim children are encouraged to learn Arabic from an early age so that they can read the Qur'an in its original language

Key terms:

Qur'an: the holy book revealed to Muhammad by the angel Jibril; God's final revelation to humankind.

Torah: The five books revealed by God to Moses.

Psalms: A holy book revealed by God to David.

Gospel: A holy book revealed by God to Jesus.

Scrolls of Abraham: A holy book revealed by God to Abraham

Summary: You should now know Why the Qur'an is important and some of the other holy books in Islam



Muslims often study the Qur'an in a mosque