

Islam

▶ The Big Picture

Key Concepts



Tawhid 'Oneness' in reference to God. The basic Muslim belief in the oneness of God.

Prophethood or 'risalah' The term used of the messengers of God, beginning with Adam and ending with the Prophet Muhammad.

Halal (permitted) Actions or things which are permitted within Islam, such as eating permitted foods.

Haram (forbidden) Any actions or things which are forbidden within Islam, such as eating forbidden foods.

Jihad Means 'to strive'. There are two forms of jihad. The greater jihad is the daily struggle and inner spiritual striving to live as a Muslim. The lesser jihad is a physical struggle or 'holy war' in defence of Islam.

Mosque or 'masjid' A 'place of prostration' for Muslims, it is a communal place of worship for a Muslim community.

Shari'ah (straight path) A way of life; Muslims believe God has set out a clear path for how Muslims should live. Shari'ah law is the set of moral and religious rules that put the principles set out by the Qur'an and the Hadith into practice.

Ummah Means 'community'. Refers to the worldwide community of Muslims who share a common religious identity.

Core Questions



The word 'Islam' means 'submission'. Why do Muslims believe they need to live their lives in submission to God?

What issues do you think Muslims face living in Britain today?

What is the difference between Sunni and Shi'a?

Is belief in angels still important for Muslims today?

Why is the Prophet Muhammad known as the 'Seal of the Prophets'?

Which holy books do Muslims use?

What are Muslim beliefs about the afterlife and God's plan for our lives?

Does belief in Al-Qadr (predestination) mean people aren't responsible for their actions?

What is meant by the greater and lesser jihad?

How do Muslims make decisions about right and wrong?

Which festivals are important to Muslims?

► Overview

This chapter begins by asking ‘What is Islam?’. It looks at the diversity of the ummah (the Muslim community) in the UK and across the world, exploring the similarities and differences between the two great branches of Sunni and Shi’a. Important beliefs such as the nature of revelation and authority in Islam are discussed.

It then moves on to look at the beliefs, teachings and practices within the religion (the foundations of faith), exploring significant aspects of both the Sunni and Shi’a traditions. Shi’a Muslims talk about the five roots of religion (Usul ad-Din), whereas Sunni Muslims refer to the six articles of faith. The following beliefs are covered in some detail: God (Allah), prophethood (risalah), angels (malaikah), holy books (the Qur’an), the afterlife (akhirah) and predestination (al-Qadr).

The second section covers some of the main practices in Islam, looking at the Ten Obligatory Acts of Shi’a Islam and the Five Pillars of Sunni Islam: the declaration of faith (Shahadah), prayer (Salah), charity (Zakah), fasting during Ramadan (Sawm) and pilgrimage (Hajj).

It then moves on to discuss jihad, exploring the difference between greater and lesser (military) jihad, and concludes with a description of Islamic festivals and commemorations: Id-ul-Adha, Id-ul-Fitr, Ashura and the Night of Power.

The spelling of words used in Islam can cause many problems, because there is often disagreement about how words should be translated from the original Arabic. This book uses the generally accepted spellings. Throughout the book the word ‘God’ has been preferred to the word ‘Allah’ to emphasise to the non-Muslim reader that Muslims worship God, not some other being*. It was the Prophet Muhammad’s belief that he was worshipping the same God as the Jews.

Task

Discuss some of the ‘core questions’ on page 219 in pairs. Write a brief answer to one of them, showing you have thought about different perspectives.



*The specification uses Allah and both/either will be accepted in the exam.

What is Islam?

Islam submission or peace.

Divine perfect or God-like.

Creator one who brings something into existence, in this case the world.

Task

In your own words, can you explain why Muslims believe they should submit to God.



Muslims believe that Islam did not begin with Prophet Muhammad; it goes right back to the earliest humans (Adam). Islam is the natural religion of all people, and while Muhammad is understood to be the final prophet, he is not the founder of Islam.

Task

In your own words, can you explain why Muslims challenge the idea that Muhammad was the 'founder of Islam'.



A useful infographic showing diagrams and statistics relating to different Islamic sects, schools and groups can be found at: <http://www.informationisbeautiful.net/visualizations/islamic-sects-schools-branches-movements/>

The word '**Islam**' means 'submission' in the Arabic language. Muslims believe in one God (Allah) and they worship him because he is the **divine creator**. Islam teaches that, through the centuries, God revealed his truth to many special people or prophets. However, most importantly, God spoke to the last and greatest Prophet, Muhammad, in special messages that were collected together in the form of the Qur'an.

Another meaning of the word Islam is 'peace' and Muslims are committed to establishing a fair and respectful society. They believe that God has set out clear laws (called the Shari'ah) to guide human beings, allowing them to live together in peaceful communities, as he has intended.

Islam worldwide

There are an estimated 1.6 billion Muslims in the world today (23 per cent of the world's population), making Islam the world's second largest religion after Christianity. It is also the fastest growing religion in the world. Islam originates from the Middle East: Muhammad lived in Arabia (modern-day Saudi Arabia) and the most important Islamic holy sites are in this part of the world. The Middle East and North Africa has the highest concentration of Muslim population today: 93 per cent of people in this region are Muslims. However, nearly two-thirds of the world's Muslims live in the Asia-Pacific region (in countries including Pakistan, India, Bangladesh and Indonesia).

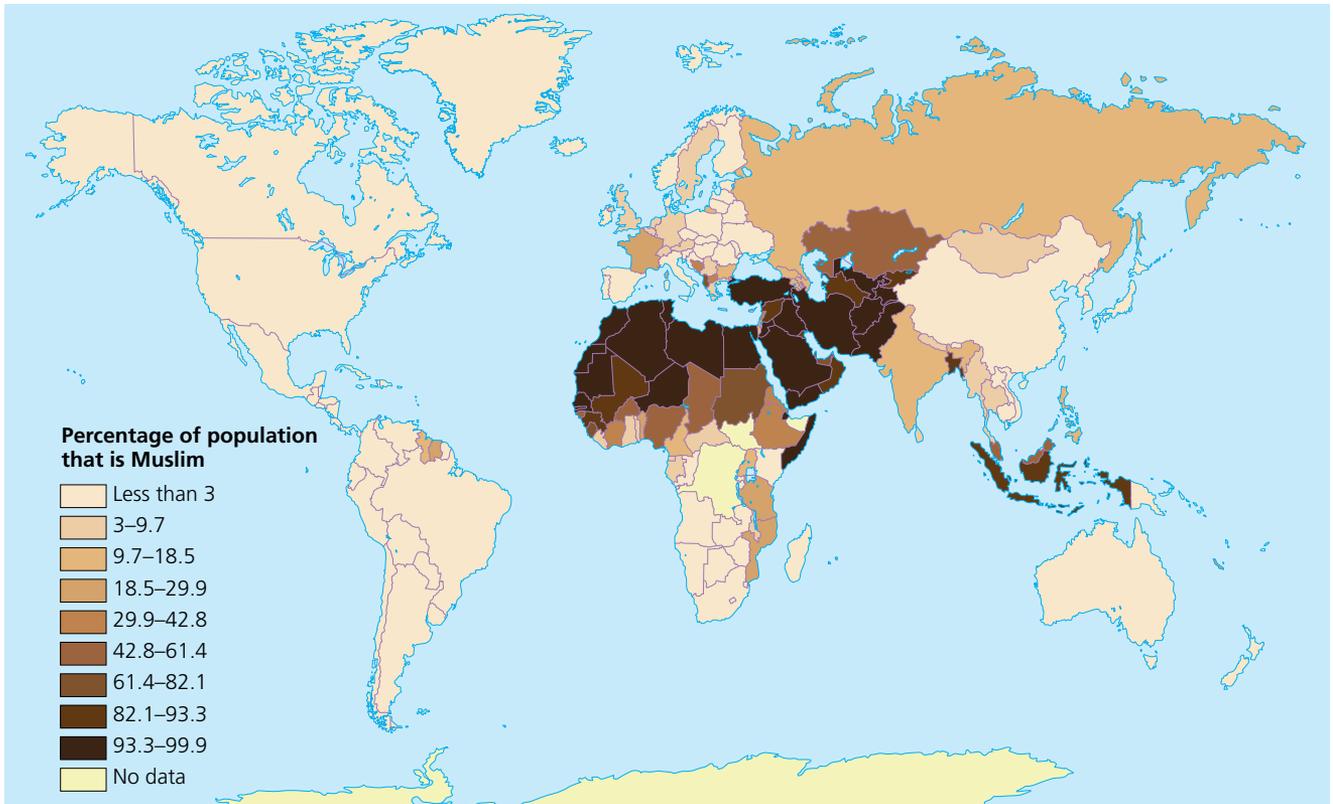
Islam in Britain

In Britain today there are nearly 3 million Muslims, making up more than 4.5 per cent of the population. Up until the mid-twentieth century there were very few Muslims in the UK, but from the 1950s onwards significant numbers of people came from the former colonies, taking up the offer of work in post-Second World War Britain. Some of the first were East African Asians, while many others came from South Asia.

The 2011 census shows that Britain is now home to one of the most diverse Muslim communities in the world. The largest groups originate from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, but many come from Arab and African communities, as well as Muslims from south-east Asia, the Balkans and Turkey. There are also many Muslims who have converted from other faiths.

Some Muslims in Britain describe themselves as Sufis. Sufis try to find the heart of the religion and they practise a more mystical version of Islam. There is also a significant Ahmadiyya community in the UK. They believe the long-awaited Messiah (Mahdi) has come in the person of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad after Muhammad. Many Muslims regard the Ahmadiyyas as non-Muslims.

The majority of British Muslims are Sunnis (95 per cent), with the remaining 5 per cent coming from the Shi'a tradition. Within the Sunni community there are groups such as the Deobandi, Barelvis and Salafi. Types of Shi'a groups include the Twelvers, Zaydis and Ismailis.



World map showing the distribution of Muslims

Authority the idea that something or someone is in charge of what is right or wrong. We look to an authority to guide our own understanding and decision-making.

‘The Qur’an is not the Qur’an unless it is heard.’

The Art of Reciting the Qur’an by Kristina Nelson

Qur’an means ‘reading’ or ‘recitation’. The Qur’an was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad as a ‘living sound’ and it must be spoken to reveal its beauty and truth.

A **Hafiz** someone who has been able to memorise the whole Qur’an in Arabic.

Task

- 1 Explain what a ‘hafiz’ is.
- 2 Why do you think it is considered to be special amongst Muslims to become a hafiz?

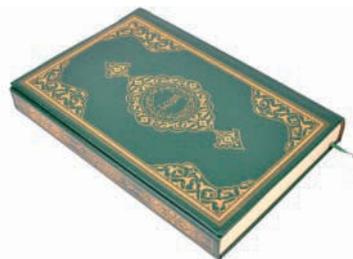
Sources of authority in Islam

Islam teaches that there is a divine law, sent by God, to guide human beings in the right way to live. They believe that this law is, set out in the Qur’an, which is the perfect communication from God to humans. However, not every single area of life is covered by its teachings, so Muslims also look to a number of other sources of **authority** to help guide them. Some of these other authorities are: Hadith, Sunnah, Shari’ah, traditions, Imams, scholars, etc.

The Qur’an is the word of God

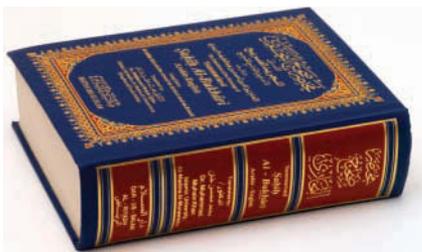
The **Qur’an** is the most important source of authority in Islam. Muslims believe that the Qur’an:

- ▶ is the complete book of guidance for all human beings
- ▶ was revealed by God to the Prophet Muhammad (through the Angel Jibril) over a period of 23 years
- ▶ was written down in Arabic by his followers and compiled into one book shortly after the Prophet’s death in 632 CE.



The Qur’an is arranged into chapters (surahs) and verses (ayat). There are 114 surahs and 6,616 ayats.

The **Sunnah** is the record of all that Muhammad said and did and this helps guide Muslims today, to live a life that is pleasing to God.



The Hadith are the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad

'The warrior who truly fights for God's cause is he who looks after a widow or a poor person.'

Hadith

'If you think of God, you will find Him there before you.'

Hadith

The Sunnah: the way of the Prophet

The Prophet Muhammad is an inspiration to all Muslims, so they try to imitate the way he lived. The **Sunnah**:

- ▶ is the second most important source of authority for Muslims
- ▶ describes the customs, practices and traditions of Muhammad
- ▶ teaches the perfect path or model of how Muslims should live.

The Hadith: the sayings of the Prophet

Muslims love and respect the words of Prophet Muhammad, because he was such an outstanding character. He had deep devotion to God, but he was also a man of enormous wisdom, kindness and compassion. The **Hadith** is a book which contains his sayings, as recorded by his family and companions. There are different collections of these sayings, each accepted by different Muslim groups.

Hadith an account describing the words and actions of the Prophet Muhammad. To 'tell' or 'narrate'.

The Shari'ah: the straight path

Key Concepts



Shari'ah (straight path) A way of life; Muslims believe God has set out a clear path for how Muslims should live. Shari'ah law is the set of moral and religious rules that puts the principles set out by the Qur'an and the Hadith into practice.

Halal (permitted) Actions or things which are permitted within Islam, such as eating permitted foods.

Haram (forbidden) Any actions or things which are forbidden within Islam, such as eating forbidden foods.

Tasks

- 1 What is the Hadith?
- 2 Although Muslims treat the Hadith with enormous respect, can you explain why you think it is not regarded as sacred in the same way as the Qur'an?



The **Shari'ah** law sets out the moral and religious rules that Muslims must follow. It puts into practice the principles set out by the Qur'an, the Sunnah and the Hadith, so by following Shari'ah law Muslims can know that they are obeying the will of God. Shari'ah lays down laws about what is **halal** (allowable) and what is **haram** (forbidden). It deals with many everyday topics, setting out rules for Muslims on personal matters like food, clothing, crime, money, sex and relationships.

In the Hadith there is an account of Prophet Muhammad's last sermon, delivered in Makkah shortly before his death. Here he instructed his followers to be obedient to the teachings set out in the Qur'an and the Sunnah.

'I have left among you that which if you hold fast to, then you would never go astray, clear things, the book of God and the Sunnah of his prophet.'

► The Islamic community

Ummah, the worldwide Islamic community

Key Concept



Ummah Means 'community'. Refers to the worldwide community of Muslims who share a common religious identity.

The **ummah** is the worldwide community of Muslims. Within the ummah all Muslims are equal, whatever their language, culture or nationality. There is great diversity across the Islamic world. There is no one, single pattern for what it means to be a Muslim, but there are certain fundamentals they all hold to. The central belief for Muslims is that there is one God (Allah) who has revealed his divine teachings to the Prophet Muhammad, in the Qur'an.

Sunni 'one who follows the Sunnah'. (The Sunnah is the book which describes the way the Prophet Muhammad lived.)

Shi'a 'from the House of Ali'. (Ali was a close relative to Muhammad.)

Sunni and Shi'a: who are they?

One of the major divisions within Islam is the split between **Sunni** and **Shi'a**. Sunnis form the majority of Muslims in the world today (87–90 per cent); they live in the countries of North Africa, the Middle East, South Asia and Indonesia. The remaining 10–13 per cent of Muslims today are from the Shi'a community (although only about 5 per cent of British Muslims are Shi'as). Shi'as live mainly in Iran, Iraq, Lebanon and India. Sunnis and Shi'as have coexisted for centuries, living peaceably side by side, often worshipping together in the same mosques, sometimes intermarrying. Although they share most central beliefs, they do have significant differences in the way they understand religious truth, laws and practices.

The Sunni and Shi'a split

Soon after the death of Prophet Muhammad a dispute arose over who should lead the emerging Muslim community. Abu Bakr had been a close companion of the Prophet and a large group of believers chose him to become the new Khalifah (leader). After Abu Bakr's death Umar became the leader, then Uthman and then Ali. These four leaders have come to be known as the Rightly Guided Khalifahs and Sunni Muslims accept that they were God's appointed leaders.

However, there was a smaller group who believed that Ali, the cousin and son-in-law of Muhammad, should have become the first Khalifah. It was their belief that the Prophet Muhammad had chosen and appointed Ali as his successor and they rejected the leadership of Abu Bakr, Umar and Uthman. They were angry that Ali had been overlooked and when Ali was later murdered they began to separate themselves, calling themselves the Shi'a (the House of Ali). They believe that the Prophet Muhammad appointed 12 successors (**Imams**) from his own descendants, who are known as the Ahl al-Bayt, 'the Family of the House' of Muhammad.

Imam a leader, but Sunnis and Shia's differ in the way they understand the term. In Sunni Islam an imam is the leader in a local mosque, where he has been chosen by the local Muslim community to lead worship. In Shi'a Islam there were only twelve Imams. They are seen as holy figures who were all divinely appointed members of Muhammad's descendants.

Tasks

Sunni Islam

- 1 What would Sunni Muslims say to explain why Abu Bakr had the best claim to be Muhammad's successor?
- 2 Who were the 'Rightly Guided Khalifahs'?

Shi'a Islam

- 3 What was Muhammad's relationship to Ali?
- 4 What is meant by the phrase 'Ayl al-Bayt'?

Choosing a future leader: what makes most sense to you?

- 5 Set out the case for who would be the best suited to become a future leader. Would it be someone who was close to the last leader or would it be the one who was part of their family and dynasty? Give your reasons.
- 6 Who do you think had the best claim to succeed Muhammad? Why?

'Fears over deepening Sunni-Shi'a divide in UK.'

BBC news, 6 March 2015

Sunnis believe that:

- ▶ Religious guidance can only come from God through the Qur'an and the Hadith. Together these holy books form the Shari'ah, Islamic law.
- ▶ There should be no religious hierarchy. Imams are not holy figures appointed by God. They are simply good teachers and leaders and should be chosen through agreement among the local community.

Following Prophet Muhammad's death in 632 CE, the Muslim community needed to decide how to choose a new leader. Shi'as said that his successor could only come from his bloodline (his close family), while Sunnis looked to those men that the Prophet Muhammad had most trusted while he was alive.

Shi'as believe that:

- ▶ God guided the Prophet Muhammad to appoint Ali as his successor.
- ▶ The leadership of the Muslim community has continued through Imams who are divinely appointed from descendants in Muhammad's family.
- ▶ The last Imam will appear at the end of the world as the Mahdi (the Chosen One who will bring justice to the world).

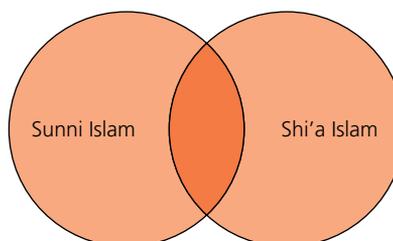
Sunni and Shi'a communities in the UK

Most Muslims living in Britain today are Sunnis, but there are many Shi'as too. When Muslims began coming to Britain, in the 1960s and 1970s, Sunnis and Shi'as often lived together as part of a single Islamic community, sharing mosques, praying and socialising together. However, as they have grown in numbers and gained confidence to explore their own heritage, these communities have begun to express their identities in different ways. This has often been fuelled by events in the Middle East, where tensions between the Sunni and Shi'a communities have become more pronounced. Recently, wars and conflict in Iraq and Syria have added to the division among these groups.

Many Muslims from both the Sunni and Shi'a traditions have friends in the other community, but some say that there are tensions developing which are spilling over from Syria and Iraq, where members of these communities are in conflict.

Task

Copy the Venn diagram below and add to it the similarities and differences between Sunni and Shi'a Muslims.





Islam: Beliefs and teachings

■ The foundations of faith

▶ The six articles of faith in Sunni Islam

Creed a set statement of faith that all religious believers follow.

There is no official **creed** in Islam, but for Sunni Muslims there are six central beliefs, or articles of faith, which define their understanding of God. This teaching can be found in the Hadith, where Muhammad is recorded as saying: ‘You must believe in Allah, his angels, his holy books, his messengers, in the Last Day and in fate (both in its good and in its evil aspects).’

- 1 Allah** (God): the unity and oneness of God is called Tawhid. Like Jews and Christians, Muslims believe in one God. The Arabic word for God is Allah, which simply means ‘the (al) God (ilah)’.
- 2 Malaikah** (angels): God created angels to interact with human lives, bringing his divine message. Each Muslim has two guardian angels who record that person’s good and bad actions.
- 3 Holy books**: God has revealed his word to humans in the Qur’an. This tells Muslims all they need to know about how to live their lives. Other inspired scriptures include the Tawrat of Musa (Torah), the Zabur of Dawud (Psalms) and the Injil of Isa (Gospels).
- 4 Risalah** (prophethood): God has spoken through numerous prophets throughout time, including Adam, Nuh (Noah), Ibrahim (Abraham), Musa (Moses), Isa (Jesus). However, Muhammad is the greatest prophet.
- 5 Akhirah** (the afterlife) Belief in the final judgement and life after death. This life is a preparation for the eternal life that follows. On the last day there will be a time of judgement, when Muslims will have to account for their lives.
- 6 Al-Qadr** (God’s predestination): God is responsible for everything and has set out a divine destiny for all things. God has written down all that has happened and all that will happen in the universe. However, this does not take away human free will.

Jihad striving to do what is right, for God. The greater jihad is the struggle that each person has, as an individual, to follow God’s will in their life. The lesser jihad is the fight to defend Islam (holy war).

Submission to the will of God Islam means ‘submission’; following the Five Pillars and the rules of Shari’ah law are a sign of being a true Muslim.

Although these six beliefs are central to the Islamic faith they are not the only important beliefs. Others include: the **jihād** and **submission to the will of God**.

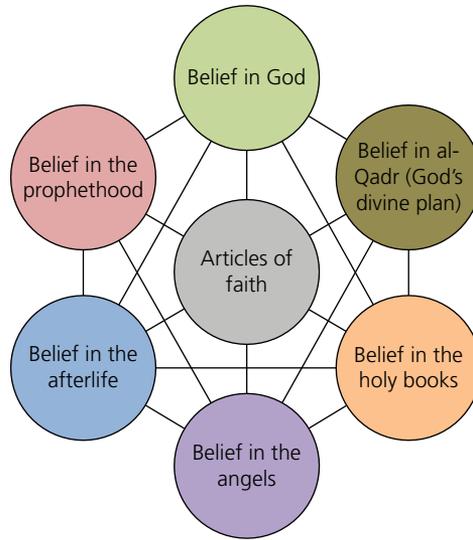
Task

The six articles of faith in Sunni Islam

Create a mind map around these six articles of faith. Write out the six key beliefs on a large sheet of paper and add in the following ideas, linking them in where you think they belong:

- Prophet Muhammad
- Angel Jibril
- The Qur'an
- Free will or predestination?
- The afterlife
- One God (Tawhid)
- Ibrahim, Musa and Isa
- Two guardian angels
- Revelation from God

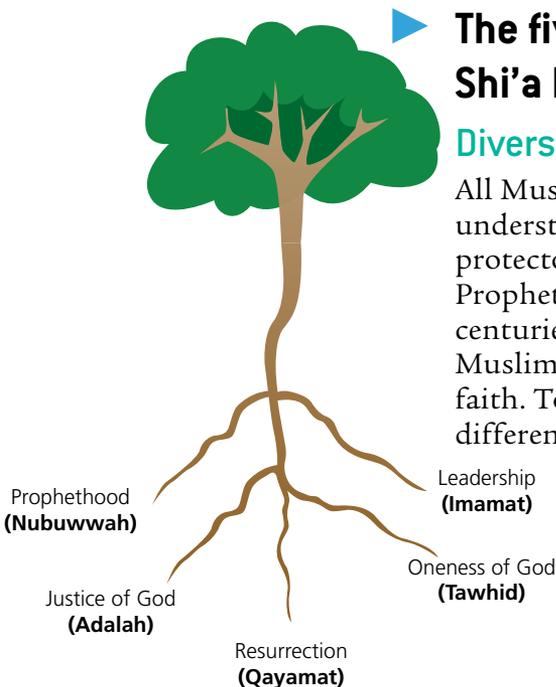
Can you think of six more of your own to add to the diagram?



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

Diversity of beliefs in Islam

All Muslims share the central beliefs of the Islamic faith: the understanding that there is one God (Allah) who is creator, protector and judge; the belief that Muhammad is the Seal of the Prophets, to whom God revealed the Qur'an. However, over the centuries, as Islam developed in different cultures and societies, Muslim scholars developed different ways of understanding the faith. Today there are some significant differences in the way different Muslim groups interpret these truths.



The five roots of religion (Usul ad-Din)

Shi'a Islam emphasises the importance of five fundamental principles which are sometimes called the 'roots of religion'. Every individual must make themselves aware of these truths as the foundation of their faith.

Usul ad-Din, the five roots of religion, can also be referred to as the ‘foundation of faith’. They are:

- ▶ oneness of God (Tawhid)
- ▶ justice of God (Adl or Adalah)
- ▶ prophethood (Nubuwwah)
- ▶ leadership (Imamate)
- ▶ resurrection (Qayamat).

1 The oneness of God (Tawhid): There is one God who has no equals; he is a divine unity. He cannot be compared to anyone or anything. He is perfect and unique and he possesses infinite power and knowledge. He is immortal (he was never born) and has no partner or children. He alone should be worshipped.

‘Say, “He is God, [who is] One, God, the Eternal Refuge.’

Qur’an 112:1–2

2 The justice of God (Adl or Adalah): God is perfect justice, fairness and wisdom. He does not wrong anyone and he will not tolerate wrongdoing. He cannot abuse his power by performing acts that go against his own nature to be just and fair. Humans must be responsible for their own actions, good or bad.

3 Prophethood (Nubuwwah): God has appointed prophets and messengers to guide human beings, showing them how to live in peace and submission to God. According to some Islamic sources, God sent 124,000 prophets; some of these brought God’s divine scriptures with them. Muhammad was the Seal of the Prophets, meaning that he brought the final, perfect and unchanging message from God.

4 Leadership (Imamate): Most Muslims believe that Muhammad was the last prophet, who brought the final scripture (the Qur’an) to humanity. Shi’as believe that, after his death, God appointed 12 infallible Imams to guide the Muslim community, leading them on the path set by the Prophet Muhammad. These Imams are part of what Shi’as call Ahl al-Bayt (the Family of the House). In other words, they are part of Prophet Muhammad’s extended household.

Of these 12, 11 have been killed. They believe that the 12th (or hidden) Imam is still alive, but is in hiding (occultation), waiting to reappear and rule on earth with justice. They sometimes refer to him as the Mahdi.

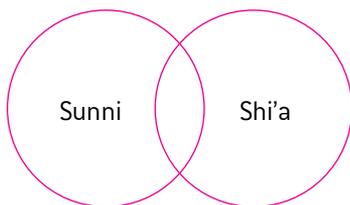
5 Resurrection (Qayamat): The belief that, on the Day of Judgement, there will be a resurrection, when all human beings will be physically raised to life to be judged by God. He will reward the good and punish the evil.

‘So whoever does an atom’s weight of good will see it, and whoever does an atom’s weight of evil will see it.’

Qur’an 99:7–8

Task

Using the information here and on page 275 (Key differences between Sunni and Shi’a beliefs and practices) compare and contrast Sunni and Shi’a beliefs about imams.



Sunni and Shi’a beliefs about imams

■ The Nature of God (Allah)

Key Concept

Tawhid 'Oneness' in reference to God. The basic Muslim belief in the oneness of God.

Allah the Arabic word meaning God. Muslims believe that they worship the same God that spoke through Musa (Moses) and Isa (Jesus).

'God witnesses that there is no deity except Him, and [so do] the angels and those of knowledge – [that He is] maintaining [creation] in justice. There is no deity except Him, the Exalted in Might, the Wise.'

Qur'an 3:18

The single most important belief in Islam is **Tawhid**, the oneness and unity of God. There is one God (**Allah**) who is the universal God of all humanity.

Muslims believe that God is:

- ▶ **Immanent:** God is always close by. The Qur'an says that God is closer to each one of us than the veins in our necks (50:16).
- ▶ **Transcendent:** God is beyond all things, not limited by the rules of nature.
- ▶ **Omniscient:** God has all knowledge, nothing can be hidden from him.
- ▶ **Beneficent:** God is always kind; he loves us.
- ▶ **Merciful:** God is always fair; he forgives us if we are sorry.
- ▶ **Judge:** on the last day, God will be our judge.
- ▶ **Creator:** God is the beginning; he is the cause of all that exists.

In Shi'a Islam there is an emphasis on **Adalat**, the Justice of God. This is one of the five roots of religion (Usul ad-Din).

The Qur'an teaches that it was God 'Who created the heavens and the earth' and that 'He has power over all things.' (46:33)

▶ Al-Fatihah, the opening

The al-Fatihah is the first surah (chapter) in the Qur'an. It means 'the opening', and many Muslims learn to recite it from memory in their daily prayers.

'In the name of God, the Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful. [All] praise is [due] to God, Lord of the worlds – The Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful, Sovereign of the Day of Recompense.

It is You we worship and You we ask for help.

Guide us to the straight path – the path of those upon whom You have bestowed favour, not of those who have evoked [Your] anger or of those who are astray.'

Qur'an 1:1–7

Tasks

- 1 Copy out the al-Fatihah in your book.
- 2 Why do you think Muslims might try to learn this passage by heart?
- 3 Choose three things it says and write down what they teach Muslims about God.



Al-Fatihah in calligraphy

▶ The 99 names of God

The word 'anthropomorphism' comes from 'anthros' meaning man and 'morph' meaning shape. In some religious traditions it is acceptable to picture God in human form (for example in some Christian art). Islam rejects this sort of anthropomorphic representation.

'Whenever I am in a difficulty, I remember God with his words and through his names. There are ninety-nine names for God and we remember them for different purposes.'

Musarat S

In Islam, God is not to be confused with any living creature; he is beyond all things and cannot be pictured as a physical being. God is outside our human understanding, but for Muslims he lies at the very centre of everything they think and do. So, how do Muslims 'see' God?

The Qur'an and the Hadith have many different 'names' for God, not as a person, but using words that describe his qualities and attributes. They use names like: King, Protector, Wise, Eternal, Light, etc. These are known as the 99 beautiful names of God.

In fact, there are different lists of these names, recorded through different traditions of Muslims, but reciting these names has been a powerful form of prayer for Muslims through the centuries.

'Vision perceives Him not, but He perceives [all] vision; and He is the Subtle, the Acquainted.'

Qur'an 6:103



Calligraphy showing the 99 names of God

Task

Here are some of the 99 names of God:

Giver of life, Protector, Just, Generous, Guide, Ever-forgiving, Watchful, Creator, Watcher, Compassionate, Avenger, Tremendous, Mighty, Finder, Patient, Knower, King, Gentle.

Copy out the table below. Put each of the 'names' of God in the list above into the column you think it most relates to.

Then compare your table with your neighbour's. Did you have different ideas? Why?

Transcendent: beyond all things	Omniscient: all-knowing	Beneficent: always loving	Merciful: kind and forgiving	Judge: decision- making, fair	Creator: maker, designer

▶ God: One, eternal and absolute God

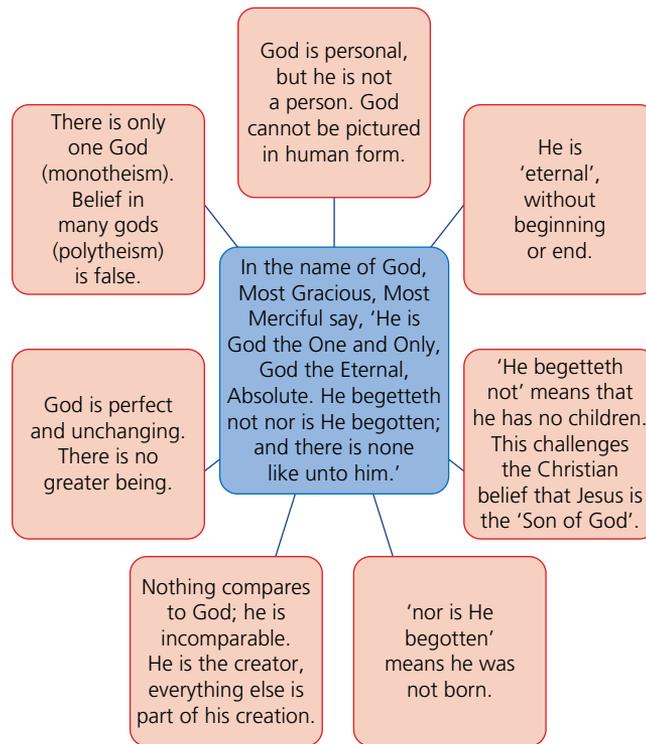
One God (Tawhid)

Islam is a monotheistic faith; it teaches that there is only one God. There are no other divine beings and it is a sin to compare God to other 'false' gods. Muslims reject the Christian belief that Jesus is the Son of God. The passage 'He **begetteth** not, nor is he begotten' (Qur'an 112:3) makes it clear that God has no children and he is not the child of anyone.

Beget to bring a child into existence, or to create offspring.
Surah a chapter from the Qur'an.

Tasks

This mind map shows **Surah 112: 1–4** from the Qur'an, with notes around it to explain some of its meaning. This passage sums up the nature of God and is one that many Muslims will learn by heart.



- 1 Make a list of the qualities and attributes of God mentioned in Surah 112.
- 2 Using the information above, write a paragraph to explain what Muslims believe about God. Include two quotations from Surah 112.

'There's nobody and there's nothing like Allah. I love him. I can't see him, but I know he's beneficent, merciful, master of the Day of Judgement.'

K Farzana (From *Committed to Islam* by Silvia Sutcliffe)

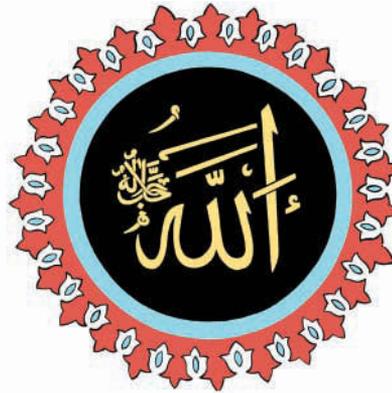
Shirk associating other beings or things with God.

The sin of shirk

Islam warns of the sin of **shirk**. This is when a person worships something else other than God. There is one God and there can be no pictures to represent him. Muslims must worship the true God, not the image of him, created by human hands.

The prophets bring the word of God, but they are only human; God is divine.

For most Muslims, it is a sin of 'shirk' to show a picture of the Prophet Muhammad.



This text means Allah in Arabic. To worship anything other than Allah is to commit the sin of shirk.

Revelation: God reveals his truth

Bringing God's message

Islam teaches that, God does not communicate directly with humans, but instead he uses special beings (humans and angels) to carry his message to us.

'We believe in God, and the revelation given to us, and to Abraham, Isma'il, Isaac, Jacob . . . Moses and Jesus, and that given to all prophets from their Lord: We make no difference between one and another.'

Qur'an 2:136

God's duty to guide us

Muslims believe that, because all humans have a duty to serve God, he must have shown us what his will is. As humans, we can only know what is truly right and wrong by understanding God's laws. Since God is just, it makes sense to believe that he must have shown us the right path to follow.

Revelation of God's inspired truth

Revelation a message sent by God and 'revealed' or 'shown' to the human mind.

Revelation is the idea that God has made known his special truth to humans. Islam teaches that the prophets received God's divinely inspired message, instructing humans how to live. God's final and perfect message was given to the Prophet Muhammad, sent down to him over the last 23 years of his life. Each passage was memorised and recorded by his followers and then later written down to form the Qur'an, the final revelation.

'This is the Book about which there is no doubt, a guidance for those conscious of God.'

Qur'an 2:2

Fitrah the natural instinct all humans have, from birth, to know and worship God.

Taqwa having an awareness of God in every aspect of life.

Hanifs people who lived in Arabia before the Prophet Muhammad and who believed in one God.

Task

Create your own word file.

Make a list of the following terms, adding a definition for each in your own words:

- shirk
- revelation
- fitrah
- taqwa
- hanif
- rasul
- risalah



Fitrah, the need for God

Islam teaches that we are all born with an instinctive need for God. This is called **fitrah**. It is the natural spirituality that connects us to our creator, making Muslims aware of God's presence and drawing them to worship him. This is where our conscience comes from, helping us discern right from wrong.

Taqwa, awareness of God

Taqwa is the desire for a personal connection with God. Muslims try to live in a state of taqwa, the awareness of God. The Qur'an refers to taqwa as the highest quality of a Muslim, leading them to show worship and submission to God. Taqwa is often understood as a shield against wrongdoing; it allows Muslims to live as God would want, protecting them from evil.

'O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of God is the most righteous of you. Indeed, God is Knowing and Acquainted.'

Qur'an 49:13

Hanifs, the devout people

Islam teaches that, long before the birth of the Prophet Muhammad, in pre-Islamic Arabia, there were groups of people known as **hanifs**. The hanifs rejected idol worship; they believed in one Supreme God, creator of the universe, the God of Ibrahim who had sent revelations to the prophets through the ages. It is said by some Muslims that Muhammad's grandfather was a hanif and through him Muhammad learnt the practice of spending time alone in the desert to fast and pray.



Fitrah is the natural instinct that all people are born with to worship God

Risalah: prophethood

A '**rasal**' a prophet. 'Risalah' means bringing prophecy from God.

Key Concept

Prophethood or 'risalah' The term used of the messengers of God, beginning with Adam and ending with the Prophet Muhammad.

Divine wisdom

Muhammad did not write the Qur'an from his own words; he was the channel through which God spoke. Islam makes a clear distinction between the divine revelation of the Qur'an and the human words of the Prophet Muhammad, which are preserved in the Hadith.

The channel of communication between God and humanity is called **risalah**; the prophets are our guides. They are human beings chosen to carry guidance from God to people, but their wisdom does not come from within themselves; it comes from God.

'And We have already sent messengers before you and assigned to them wives and descendants. And it was not for a messenger to come with a sign except by permission of God. For every term is a decree.'

Qur'an 13:38

The Qur'an teaches that every community has been given its own prophet, bringing God's message in a book. The message brought by the Prophet Muhammad is essentially the same message as had been preached by all the prophets back to Adam: the need to worship the one, true God, who will be the judge of all.

'And We send not the messengers except as bringers of good tidings and warners.'

Qur'an 6:48

'People, no prophet or messenger will come after me, and no new faith will emerge.'

Muhammad's last sermon (Hadith)

► Muhammad is the last and greatest prophet

Muslims believe that through history, God has communicated to humans through revelations and the last and greatest of these revelations was given to the Prophet Muhammad. Muhammad did not come from a rich family and it is likely that he could not read or write. He was not a learned man or a scholar, but he was very **devout**. He would take himself off for days to meditate in a cave in the desert, seeking God. Muslims believe that God chose Muhammad as a prophet because he was a humble, honest man; a man he could trust with such a special message.

'God chooses for Himself whom He wills and guides to Himself whoever turns back [to Him].'

Qur'an 42:13

Devout having deep religious feeling or commitment

Adam (Adam)
Idris (Enoch)
Nuh (Noah)
Hud (Hud)
Saleh (Salih)
Ibrahim (Abraham)
Lut (Lot)
Ishma'il (Ishmael)
Ishaq (Isaac)
Yaqub (Jacob)
Yusuf (Joseph)
Ayub (Job)
Shoaib (Jethro)
Musa (Moses)
Harun (Aaron)
Dhul-Kifl (Ezekiel)
Dawud (David)
Sulaiman (Soloman)
Ilyas (Elijah)
Al-Yasa (Elisha)
Yunus (Jonah)
Zakariya (Zachariah)
Yahya (John the Baptist)
Isa (Jesus)
Muhammad

Names of the 25 prophets mentioned in the Qur'an

▶ Bringing God's message

Key figures in the Qur'an

Islam teaches that God has sent many prophets throughout history; 25 of them are mentioned by name in the Qur'an, going right back to the creation of the world. Many of these prophets are characters from the Jewish and Christian scriptures (what Christians refer to as the Bible). However, Islam teaches that, over the centuries, the messages from these prophets have either been lost or become corrupted, so there was a need for a final revelation. Muhammad is known as the Seal of the Prophets, because his revelation of the Qur'an was God's final and absolute word.

'To every people was sent an apostle.'

Qur'an 10:47

Muslim tradition says that, in total, there have been around 124,000 prophets and that, once a prophet had been called by God, he lived a sinless life. Muslim authors put PBUH (peace and blessings be upon him) after a prophet's name to show them a deep level of respect.

In Islam the major prophets (apart from Muhammad) are: Adam, Ibrahim, Musa, Dawud, and Isa.

Adam

Adam is said to be the father of the human race. According to the Qur'an, God formed Adam from a handful of soil of many colours. This represents the diversity of people on earth. Eve was created from Adam's rib and they lived together in paradise. They were commanded not to eat from a particular tree, but the devil was able to convince them to taste its fruit. As a result, they were banished to earth. However, Adam confessed his sin and was forgiven, becoming the first prophet.

Muslims believe that Adam was created as God's 'khalifah' (his representative on earth). It was to be his job to rule in the place of God. Tradition says that he built the first **Ka'ba** in Makkah.

Muhammad is the Seal of the Prophets, because, when you put a seal on something you close it up. It is the final act, showing that nothing more can be added.

Ibrahim

Ibrahim (Abraham) is regarded as a hanif. This means that he had an inner knowledge that there is really only one true God. For this reason, he is seen as the greatest of the prophets before Isa (Jesus). He was born into a family of **polytheists**, but he rejected these beliefs in favour of monotheism and became a Muslim (one who bows down to God).

'Abraham was neither a Jew nor a Christian, but he was one inclining toward truth, a Muslim [submitting to God]. And he was not of the polytheists.'

Qur'an 3:67

Ibrahim had two sons who were both prophets: Ishma'il (the prophet to the Arabs) and Ishaq (the prophet to the Jews). For Muslims, Ishma'il is the more important, because he is an ancestor to Muhammad.

When Muslims go on Hajj they remember the distress of Hajar (Ishma'il's mother) as she ran between the hills of Al-Safa and

Ka'ba known as the House of God, the black covered, cube-shaped building at the centre of Islam's holiest mosque in Makkah.

Polytheism belief in many gods.

Al-Marwah in search of water. They also remember how God instructed Ibrahim to sacrifice Ishma'il. When Satan tried to tempt Ibrahim to disobey God, telling him to refuse to sacrifice his son, Ibrahim drove the evil one away by throwing stones at him.

There is a tradition that God revealed a holy book to Ibrahim, known as 'the scrolls of Ibrahim' or the 'Sahifah'. The Qur'an mentions this book, but no record remains of it today.

Musa

Musa (Moses) is remembered by Muslims as one of the most significant prophets. The teachings of Ibrahim had been forgotten and his book lost, so a new prophet had to be sent. Musa led the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt and into the Promised Land. Islam teaches that he was given the word of God, known as the Tawrat (Torah), but the people were disobedient and the message became distorted.

Dawud

Dawud (David) was Israel's greatest king, who made Jerusalem a holy place for Muslims. He received the word of God in the Zabur (Psalms), beautiful hymns of praise to God.

Isa

Isa is the Islamic name for Jesus. Apart from Muhammad, Isa (Jesus) and his mother Maryam (Mary) are the most prominent figures in the Qur'an. It recognises Isa as a prophet and as a successor to Moses. He was given the Injil (Gospel) and he performed miracles. However, Muslims deny the Christian teaching of the Trinity (pages 171–72) and reject the belief that Isa is God. They say God is 'one' not 'three'.

'We gave Moses the Book and followed him up with a succession of apostles; We gave Jesus ... signs (miracles) and strengthened him with the holy spirit.'

Qur'an 3:87

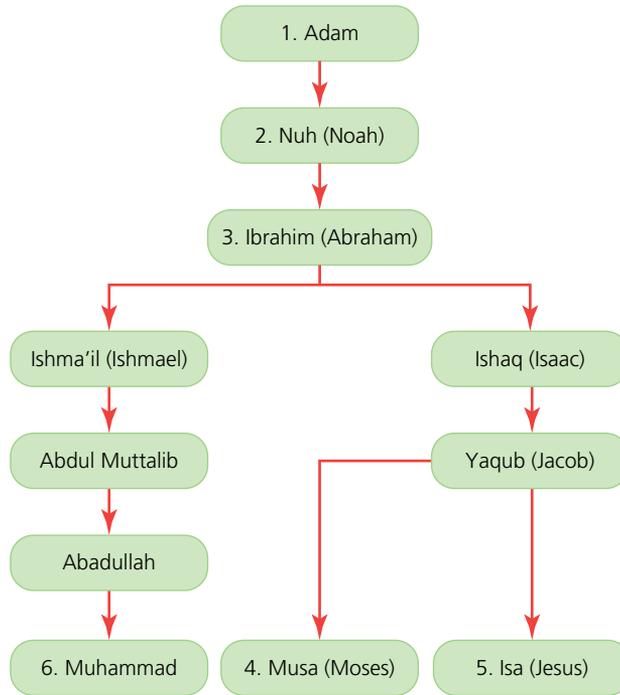
The Qur'an teaches that, although it appeared as if Isa (Jesus) had been crucified, in fact he did not die. God could not allow evil men to triumph over his prophet in such a way. Instead, Isa was taken up to heaven and will reappear in the second coming when God judges the world.

'And they did not kill him, nor did they crucify him; but [another] was made to resemble him to them.'

Qur'an 4:157

Task

Write out the name of five of these key figures in Islam and make a list of the things Muslims believe are special about each one.



■ The Tree of Prophets: Islam teaches that Ibrahim [Abraham] was father to Ishaq [Isaac] and Ishma'il [Ishmael]. Musa [Moses] and Isa [Jesus] are descendants of Ishaq. Muhammad is the descendent of Ishma'il.

► The Prophet Muhammad: his early life in Makkah

What makes Muhammad so important?

Islam teaches that Muhammad is the last and the greatest prophet, sent by God. He is a role model for Muslims because of the moral and prayerful way he lived his life. Unlike Jesus he performed no miracles; he was born, lived and died an ordinary man, but Muslims see him as the perfect example of a human being.

As a young man Muhammad was known as al-Amin, meaning the trustworthy one.

Who was Muhammad?

Muhammad was born in Makkah (in Arabia) in 570 CE, but by the age of six he had become an orphan. As he grew up he gained a reputation for truthfulness and intelligence, working as a shepherd for his uncle. In his twenties he entered the service of a wealthy merchant named Khadijah and he so impressed her with his honesty and character that Khadijah proposed marriage. They married and had four daughters, and two sons (who sadly died in infancy).

Life in Makkah

As he grew older, Muhammad began to feel troubled by the corruption and cruelty he saw in Makkah. He believed that the worship of idols by the people of Makkah was wrong and that there was really only one true God.

Laylat-ul-Qadr, the Night of Power

He started to spend more time alone in prayer and solitude and one night, in the year 610 CE, while he was praying in a cave near Makkah he had an experience that would change his life. As he sat meditating, the Angel Jibril appeared before him and ordered him to recite the words that had miraculously appeared before him. Muslims call this event Laylat-ul-Qadr, the Night of Power and they remember it today on the 27th day of Ramadan. It is one of the holiest days of the Muslim year.



Pilgrims at the Cave of Hira' where the Qur'an was first revealed to the Prophet Mohamed on Laylat-ul-Qadr, in 610 CE

'Surely We revealed it (Quran) on the Night of Qadr – And what do you know about what Night of Qadr is – The Night of Qadr is better than a thousand months – The angels and the Spirit descend in it by the permission of their Lord every command – It is peace till the break of the morning.'

Qur'an 97:1–5

The revelation of the holy Qur'an

These revelations were to continue for the next 23 years, until Muhammad's death. He did not always see the Angel Jibril; sometimes he heard a voice speaking to him; sometimes these revelations took place while he was in prayer, at other times when he was going about his everyday life.

'Not once did I receive a revelation without thinking that my soul had been torn away.'

Hadith

Prophet Muhammad's message

The message Prophet Muhammad brought to the people of Makkah was:

- ▶ There is one true God, Lord of goodness and power.
- ▶ We need to show thanks to God through worship.
- ▶ There will be a judgement day where God will judge our lives.

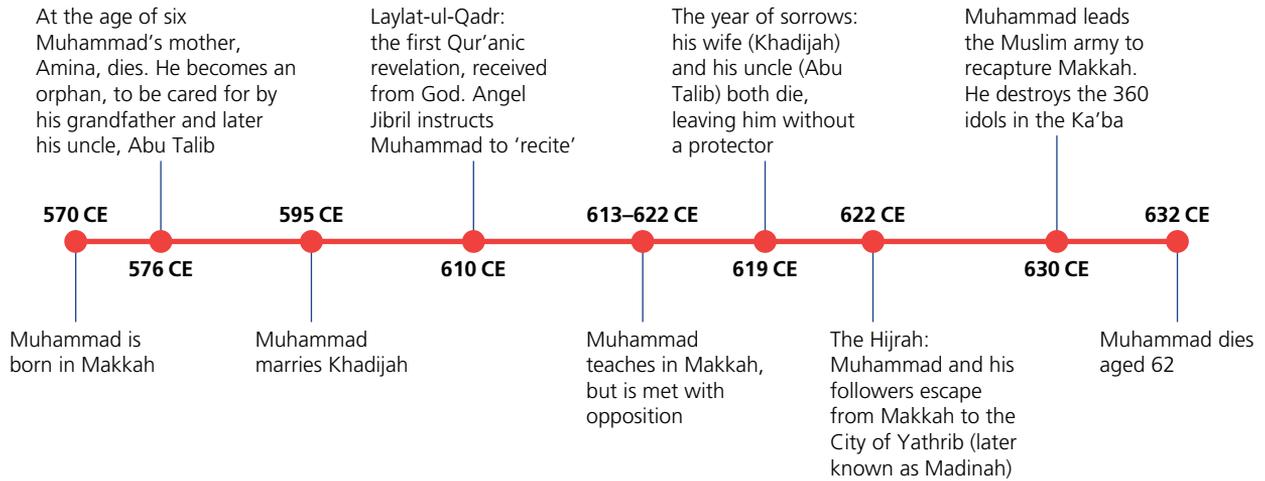
Many in Makkah did not receive this message well; he was ridiculed and insulted. However, some did follow him and they became known as 'Muslims'.

Task

Copy out the timeline in the diagram below and add your own information to it from these pages.

'Say, "I am not something original among the messengers, nor do I know what will be done with me or with you. I only follow that which is revealed to me, and I am not but a clear warner."

Qur'an 46:9



Muhammad's life

▶ The Prophet Muhammad: the Muslim community in Madinah

Opposition in Makkah

In the years following his first revelation, Prophet Muhammad gained some followers in Makkah, but his ideas also angered many. Makkah was a centre for pagan pilgrims who came to worship the idols in the Ka'ba, bringing great wealth to the city. Muhammad began preaching openly that the worship of idols offends God and that these idols were no more than useless bits of wood and stone.

His message, that God is merciful, but that there will also be a Day of Judgement caused many to turn against him and threaten violence. For nearly ten years Prophet Muhammad struggled to gain converts in Makkah, with little success and then tragedy struck: two of his closest supporters, his uncle and his wife Khadijah, died. This was a devastating blow.

The Hijrah: migration from Makkah to Madinah

Not long after, while teaching in Makkah, Prophet Muhammad was approached by some pilgrims from Yathrib, a city some distance to the north. They were impressed with his message and invited him to visit, to judge their community disputes. He agreed and sent some of his followers ahead of him.

Now, as he planned to leave, it became clear that his life was in danger; there were people plotting to kill him. Ali insisted on staying behind in Makkah, to act as a decoy, while Muhammad

Prophet Muhammad and the 'Muslims' faced fierce opposition and persecution from many in Makkah. One of his followers, Bilal, a black slave, was taken and left to die in the hot desert sun, with a huge rock placed on his chest.

Ali was Prophet Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law. Shi'a Muslims refer to him as the first Imam and look to Ali as Muhammad's rightful successor.

There is a story that tells how, as he fled from Makkah, Muhammad had to hide for his life in a cave. Soldiers hunting him came upon the cave, but a spider had miraculously woven a web over the entrance which convinced them that no one had entered recently.

Muslims follow a lunar calendar which is 11 days shorter than the Western calendar. Each year consists of 12 'lunar' months (cycles of the moon) lasting a total 354 days.

Muslims regard Prophet Muhammad as the greatest of all men: the Seal of the Prophets, the servant and messenger of God.

In Shi'a Islam, however, Muhammad's son-in-law Ali is also held in very high regard. Shi'as sometimes add his name into the Shahadah: 'There is no god but God, and Muhammad is the prophet of God, and Ali is the friend of God'.

Ahmadiyya Muslims view Prophet Muhammad as the central figure in Islam, but they also revere Ghulam Ahmad as the promised and divinely appointed Mahdi and Messiah.

The Qur'an teaches that the angels say to God: 'Glory to thee, of knowledge we have none, save what Thou hast taught'. (2:32). Angels have no knowledge of their own; they are channels for God's truth.

made the treacherous journey. This migration of Muhammad from Makkah to Yathrib is known as the Hijrah. It marks the start of the Muslim calendar.

Prophet Muhammad was welcomed into Yathrib, where he came to be seen not just as a prophet, but also as a political leader and military commander. He became the city's ruler and it was renamed Madinah (City of the Prophet). For the next ten years he worked to unite the different communities. There were a number of Jewish tribes in Madinah and he had expected them to become Muslims. However, many rejected Prophet Muhammad's belief that the revelations he received were from the same God that they worshipped. They refused to believe that they should now turn towards Makkah to pray (instead of Jerusalem) and that they should fast during Ramadan. Some of these Jewish tribes in Madinah began to plot against Muhammad and so he was forced to expel them from the city. By 630 CE he had gained enough support across Arabia to march on Makkah with an army of 10,000 men. Faced with this overwhelming force, the rulers of the city conceded defeat and opened the gates. Makkah was taken without the shedding of a drop of blood and the Ka'ba was cleansed of idols and re-dedicated to Allah.

Muhammad returns to Makkah triumphant

In 630 CE Muhammad and his followers were able to return to Makkah, where they forgave their enemies and established Islam as a permanent religion. Muhammad was now accepted as the final and true prophet of God. He continued to lead his community until his death in 632 CE.

'I leave behind me two things, the Qur'an and the example of my life (the Sunnah). If you follow these you will not fail.'

Muhammad's final sermon in Makkah

Task

- 1 What was Muhammad's message to the people of Makkah?
- 2 What roles did Muhammad take on when he arrived in Yathrib/Madinah?
- 3 Why do you think the migration from Makkah to Madinah marks the start of the Muslim calendar?
- 4 Why is it significant to Muslims that when Muhammad returned to Makkah in 630 CE he was able to destroy the pagan idols in the Ka'ba?

Malaikah (angels)

Communicating God's message

Islam teaches that angels are heavenly, immortal beings, God's first creation. According to the Qur'an, humans were formed from clay, but angels were made out of light. They are God's messengers, the channels through which we can become aware of his laws and his purposes in our lives. They are God's servants and they can take on many forms to carry out his commands, but unlike humans they have no free will. They are without sin and so they are able to enter into God's divine presence, but they can also communicate with humans.

Diversity in belief between Shi'a and Sunni Muslims regarding angels

In general, Sunnis and Shi'as share common beliefs about angels.

According to the Qur'an, angels were God's first creation, they are immortal and they always obey the commandments of God.

Sunnis believe that God created the angels from light and they have no free will.

Shi'as, however, accept that angels do have a limited free will, although this will never lead them to sin or act against the will of God.

Shi'as also believe that it was through an angel that God made it clear to Prophet Muhammad that, following his death, Ali would be the next leader of the Muslim community. Further, they say that the angel Jibril visited Fatima sharing divine wisdom with her, thus confirming the importance of Ahl al-Bayt (Muhammad's household).

Fatima was Muhammad's daughter. She was married to Ali and was the mother of Hasan and Husayn.

The nature of angels

Muslims believe that, although angels are invisible, they exist everywhere, throughout the whole universe. They are never far away and they are always in contact with humans, especially when someone prays or thinks about God. They have no physical bodies, but the Qur'an describes them as having wings and they are always described as male.

Angels mentioned by name

In the Islamic tradition there are countless angels, but the Qur'an and the Hadith mention some by name:

'The Qur'an says "Whoever is an enemy to Gabriel – it is [none but] he who has brought the Qur'an down upon your heart, [O Muhammad], by permission of God", confirming that which was before it and as guidance and good tidings for the believers.'

Qur'an 2:97

- ▶ Jibril (Gabriel) is the angel of revelation. He is the archangel who is responsible for revealing the Qur'an to Muhammad and brings messages to God's chosen ones.
- ▶ Mika'il (Michael) is the archangel responsible for keeping the devil out of heaven and protecting faithful worshippers. He brings sustenance for the body and soul and rainfall for the earth, to water the land.
- ▶ Israfil (Raphael) is the archangel who will blow the trumpet on the Day of Judgement to announce the resurrection of all from the dead.
- ▶ Azrail is the archangel that takes souls at death.
- ▶ Raqib and Atid are the angels referred to in the Qur'an as the 'noble recorders'. They sit, one on each shoulder, noting down our good and bad deeds, to be read from the book on the last day.
- ▶ Munkar and Nakir are the two terrifying, judging angels who will question each person after their death, testing their faith.

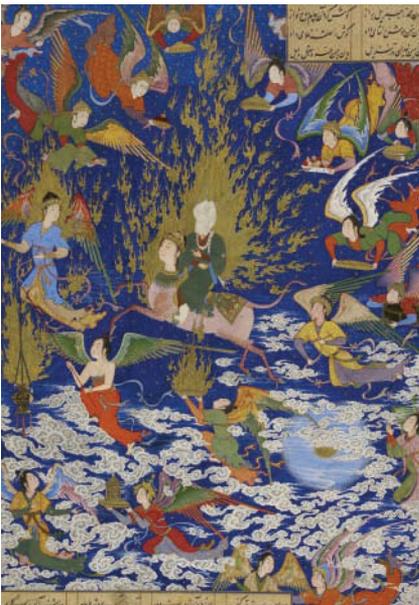
Task

Create a table and write a summary of the roles or duties performed by these angels in the Islamic tradition.

Angel	Role or duties
Jibril (Gabriel)	
Mika'il (Michael)	
Israfil (Raphael)	
Azrail	
Raqib and Atid	
Munkar and Nakir	

'The Messenger has believed in what was revealed to him from his Lord, and [so have] the believers. All of them have believed in God and His angels and His books and His messengers, [saying], "We make no distinctions between any of His messengers." And they say, "We hear and obey. [We seek] Your forgiveness, our Lord, and to You is the [final] destination."

Qur'an 2:285



Islamic art depicting angels

► Islamic holy books

God's message

Muslims believe that God has sent messages and messengers to set out the laws and moral codes by which humanity should live. These communications are called revelations and the most significant among them is the Qur'an, God's final written word.

The Qur'an is believed to be a sacred text, perfectly inspired by God and thus free from any mistakes or distortion. However, Muslims do believe that God revealed his laws in stages, through his prophets. Muslims have respect for all previous scriptures from the messengers of God, but they see the Qur'an as the completion of these earlier books.

The Arabic word for book is 'kitab' (plural 'kutub'). The Qur'an is known as Umm-ul-Kitab, 'Mother of Books' (43:4).

The Qur'an refers to Jews and Christians as the 'People of the Book' (29:46). It teaches that Muslims should show particular respect to them, because they too worship the one, true (Abrahamic) God.



The Qur'an is the perfect and direct word of God as revealed to Muhammad

God's perfect revelation

Muslims believe that the Qur'an is the direct and perfect word of God. Sunni Muslims say that it has always existed and is with God in heaven, written in Arabic on a tablet of stone. The Qur'an introduces itself as being 'the guidance for the worlds' (3:96) and Muslims believe that God has sent down this guidance in the form of a book to give a solution to any human problem.

'We have sent down to you the Book as clarification for all things and as guidance and mercy and good tidings for the Muslims.'

Qur'an 16:89

A guide to life

Muslims respect and honour the Qur'an and use it as a guide for their lives. It teaches them how to worship, how to treat other people and how to live good lives. They learn it by heart in Arabic, reading and reciting it daily; they take immense care in writing it out; they allow it to guide every action and thought.

Kutub: holy books

The Qur'an names four other holy books, known in Arabic as kutub. These are from the Jewish and Christians traditions and, according to Islam, in their original form, they were true revelations from God. However, because they were not properly written down or preserved they are now believed to be corrupted. So, unlike the perfect Qur'an, they cannot be trusted as the true word of God.

- ▶ Sahifah: the Scrolls of Ibrahim, now lost
- ▶ Tawrat (Torah): the revelation given to Musa (Moses)
- ▶ Zabur (Psalms): given to Dawud (David)
- ▶ Injil (Gospel): the teaching given to Isa (Jesus)

The Hadith: the sayings of Muhammad

There are collections of thousands of Muhammad's sayings, called hadiths, which form part of what Muslims called the Hadith. These are not revelations, because they are the words of the prophet, not the words of God. However, they have enormous significance for Muslims, because the whole of Muhammad's life is considered to be a 'living Qur'an'. As his third wife, Aisha, said of him: 'His way of life is the Qur'an'.

Tasks

- 1 The Qur'an is a uniquely holy book in Islam. What other books that are sacred to Muslims?
- 2 Can you explain why do these books have special status?
- 3 Why do they have less significance than the Qur'an?



■ Akhirah, the afterlife

For Muslims, this world, here on earth, is not all that there is. Our human existence will continue after death; our earthly life is just a preparation for the eternal life to come (Akhirah). Our mortal lives are a test and we will be judged according to how we have lived. As humans, we have been given free will, so we are able to make choices about what to believe and how to treat others. We will be held responsible for these thoughts and actions when God comes to judge us on the last day.

'Every soul shall have a taste of death.'

Qur'an 3:185

The Angel Israfil will blow a trumpet to announce the Day of Judgement. The trumpet is constantly on his lips, awaiting the command from God.

▶ Signs of the end of the world

Mahdi the long-awaited saviour who will come to rescue the world.

Islam teaches that there will be many signs to mark the end of the world, but the most important event will be the appearance of the man called the **Mahdi**. His return will coincide with the second coming of Isa (Jesus). A false messiah will also attempt to deceive the people. Other signs include: abundance of earthquakes, the spreading of killing, rejection of Islam, increase in dishonesty, drunkenness, obscenity, nakedness and fornication. Society will be full of terrible corruption and chaos.

▶ Day of Judgement: the test

Islam teaches that, on the Day of Judgement, the dead will be raised from their graves and all people will stand before God to be sentenced according to the way they have lived their lives. A book which represents everything an individual has done, is presented to each of them. If the person's good deeds outweigh the bad, then they will receive the book in their right hand and pass into heaven. If it is placed into their left hand, they will be among the damned.

On the Day of Judgement the Book of Deeds will be read, in which 'every small and great thing is recorded'. (Qur'an 54:52)

How are people judged?

The Qur'an gives many warnings about the Day of Judgement and Muslims are encouraged to question themselves: Am I ready to face death? What have I done to prepare for that day?

'The challenge for me is the future, really, because I don't really know what's ahead for me and I can't prepare for it. The only thing I can prepare for is the Day of Judgement. No-one knows when the Day of Judgement is going to come. At any moment, we could find ourselves in front of Allah, answering for our actions, for what we've done. So I've got to be prepared for that every minute of my life.'

Andleeb S

► Judgement: heaven and hell

God weighs our deeds



Muslims believe that God will weigh up our good and bad deeds and this will determine what happens to us after death.

God judges each person's actions, but intentions (**niyyah**) are also taken into consideration.

- ▶ If the person has the intention to do a good deed, but was unable to carry it out, this is counted as a good deed.
- ▶ If they intended and carried out a good deed, this is counted as ten good deeds.
- ▶ If the person intended a bad deed, but did not do it, that is counted as a good deed.
- ▶ If they intended and carried out a bad deed, God records that as one bad deed.

God tests people's faith

The two terrifying judging angels, Munkar and Nakir, will question each person, testing their faith. In order to give the correct answer to their questions, it is not enough just to learn to recite the Shahadah. If the person has not truly lived a life of submission to God, following the Five Pillars, they will be incapable of giving the right response on the day.

The three questions the angels Munkar and Nakir will ask are: 'Who is your Lord?' 'Who is your prophet?' 'What is your religion?'

Barzakh

Only God knows when the Day of Judgement will come. Muslims believe that, for those who die before that day, the angel of death, Azrail, will come to take their souls to await the day. They will be kept in a state of **barzakh** (waiting) until the sound of the final trumpet is heard.

Barzakh a place of waiting, after death until the Day of Judgement.
Niyyah the honest intention to worship God.

Life beyond death

Islam provides the most graphic descriptions of what awaits after death. Heaven and hell are described as very real places, but some Muslims interpret these descriptions symbolically, since what exists beyond death must exist in a different dimension from our own world.

The Qur'an describes heaven as a place of contentment, using images of a green garden, full of flowers, fruits and fountains.

Heaven (Janna): a state of joy, happiness and peace

After judgement, people will pass over the very narrow Bridge of As-Sirat. Those who have been blessed by God will successfully cross to heaven (Janna) on the other side. This will include those who have lived faithful and moral lives, those who have been persecuted for their faith in God and those who have fought for God.

Muslims believe that heaven is a reward for living a good life, so everything that one longs for on earth will be found in paradise: beautiful gardens, delicious food, gently flowing rivers, lovely serving maidens and reclining couches.

'In paradise, I prepare for the righteous believers what no eye has ever seen, no ear has ever heard, and what the deepest mind could never imagine.'

Hadith

Hell (Jahannam): a state of torment and suffering

The wicked, those whom God has damned, will fail to pass over the As-Sirat Bridge. In trying to cross they will fall into hell. Hell (Jahannam) is a place of terror, where the damned will face boiling

water, scorching fire and black smoke. As well as experiencing the physical torment, those condemned to hell will suffer because they are separated from God, without hope of return.

'These are two adversaries who have disputed over their Lord. But those who disbelieved will have cut out for them garments of fire. Poured upon their heads will be scalding water'

Qur'an 22:19

Task

Make a list of the following terms, adding a definition for each in your own words:

- Akhirah
- Mahdi
- Barzakh
- Janna
- Jahannam
- Bridge of As-Sirat
- Munkar and Nakir
- Day of Judgement

► Key questions about the afterlife

Does hell last forever?

Yes

Most Muslims believe that hell is forever. The Qur'an seems to teach that after judgement, those sent to hell will stay there forever.

'But whoever returns to [dealing in interest or usury] – those are the companions of the Fire; they will abide eternally therein.'

Qur'an 2:275

No

Some Muslims today believe that for certain people hell may only be a temporary experience. Bad Muslims may only be sent to hell for a short period and those who repent may be pardoned.

'So whoever has received an admonition from his Lord and desists may have what is past, and his affair rests with God.'

Qur'an 2:275

Can a God of mercy condemn people to hell?

Yes

Islam teaches that God has set fair rules to live by and the wicked have been given many opportunities to repent. The Qur'an says that God punishes those who are disobedient according to 'what they have earned' (so those who do good, earn a place in paradise; those who cause harm to others earn a place in hell). Only the most wicked and ruthless people will go to hell.

'So I have warned you of a Fire which is blazing. None will [enter to] burn therein except the most wretched one. Who had denied and turned away.'

Qur'an 92:14–16

No

Some Muslims find it hard to believe that a god of mercy would send people to an eternity of suffering. How can it be fair to give an infinite punishment for a finite sin?

Islam teaches that heaven is the reward Muslims will receive for following the Qur'an and the Sunnah.

Task

Give your own answers to the questions on this and the previous page, commenting on what you think of the Muslim viewpoints.



Muslims says one of God's great names is '**Al-Alim**' meaning all-knowing one.

Predestination and free will: diversity in belief in Islam

Although both Sunnis and Shi'as believe God is all-powerful and has a masterplan for the universe, there are differences in the way they understand the extent to which he controls the lives of human beings.

Sunnis tend to put more emphasis on the fact that everything is ordained by God. They believe that although humans have free will, nothing can happen without the will and knowledge of God.

Shi'as, on the other hand, allow more room for humans to use their own free will. Some Shi'as actually reject the idea of predestination.

They say that God cannot be responsible for evil; humans must have free will to be independent of God's authority.

Al-Qadr 'destiny', nothing takes place purely by chance. God knows and wills all future events.

Do Muslims only follow Shari'ah rules because they are frightened of God's judgement?

Yes

Some might argue that Muslims are only obedient to God's divine laws because they are fearful of the threat of hell-fire.

No

Faithful believers happily live according to the Qur'an and the example set by Muhammad.

Is suffering really a test for the next life?

Yes

Many Muslims would agree that this life is just a test. If we pass the test we will have shown that we are worthy of paradise, to live for eternity in unimaginable splendour and luxury.

No

A person with a non-religious worldview would argue that there is no evidence for the existence of an afterlife. They might also say that it is not fair to view this world as a test, because some people are born better off than others. Some people have the privilege of wealth and good health. They will suffer less than others who are born into poverty or with a disability.



Some Muslims believe suffering is a test for the next life

► **Al-Qadr, God's divine plan**

God has eternal foreknowledge

Islam teaches that God is responsible for all things and that he has a divine plan for all of us (**al-Qadr**). God has a masterplan; everything that happens is predestined to take place; it is all part of his design. He is the cause of all things and the whole of creation is under his control. God knows all things in the greatest detail, with accuracy that we, as humans, could never imagine.

Everything is part of a larger plan

Muslims believe that we can never know the reasons behind the universe, but that it is all part of a larger picture. God is the all-knowing one; his knowledge is complete and perfect. He even knows the secrets of our hearts.

'He knows what is within the heavens and earth and knows what you conceal and what you declare. And God is Knowing of that within the breasts.'

Qur'an 64:4

'O God, who knows the inmost secrets of our hearts; lead us out of the darkness into the light.'

A prayer of Muhammad

Insha' Allah, if God is willing

Muslims believe that things which some people might call coincidences are, in fact, part of God's plan. The word **insha'Allah** expresses the belief that all events are outside our own control; they are in the hands of God. When a Muslim says insha'Allah they are acknowledging that they are in submission to God. They will only succeed in their own plans if God is also willing to make it happen.

'And never say of anything, "Indeed, I will do that tomorrow," except [when adding], "If God wills." And remember your Lord when you forget [it] and say, "Perhaps my Lord will guide me to what is nearer than this to right conduct."

Qur'an 18:23-4

Insha' Allah 'if God allows it'. It comes from joining the Arabic words: 'Allah' and 'his will'. It is a very common phrase, for example: 'I will get to school on time, insha' Allah!'

Can good come out of suffering?

If all things are part of the will of God, then that must include suffering, pain, diseases and disasters. It is easy to see how good can come out of things which cause us suffering, like training to run a marathon, but harder to understand how hurricanes and wars can be seen in a positive way. Islam teaches that painful experiences need to be viewed as opportunities for our own growth as human beings.

▶ Free will

Islam teaches that we all have free will and God will hold us accountable for our decisions on the Day of Judgement. Humans are not puppets or robots; we have the ability to choose right from wrong. God wants us to follow the 'straight path', but it is up to us to make the right choices. Central to Islamic thought is the idea that life is a test and we need to learn how to turn away from evil.

'He may let them taste part of [the consequence of] what they have done that perhaps they will return [to righteousness]'

Qur'an 30:41

Tasks

- 1 Explain what Muslims mean when they say that God has a Divine plan.
- 2 How do Sunni and Shi'a beliefs differ?
- 3 Do you think humans can have free will to make their own decisions if God has a predestined plan for our lives?



▶ End of section review

Stickability

Key concepts:

- Halal
- Haram
- Prophethood
- Shari'ah
- Tawhid
- Ummah

Key teachings about:

- the nature of god
- angels
- the afterlife
- the six articles of faith in Sunni Islam
- the five roots in Usul ad-Din in Shi'a Islam

Knowledge check

- 1 Write a short paragraph (roughly three sentences) to explain what Muslims believe about God (Allah).
- 2 In your own words, explain the difference between Sunni and Shi'a Islam.
- 3 How might Muslims differ in their views about prophethood?

The Big Question

'Belief in God is the most important belief for Muslims.'

Your task

Respond to the statement above, showing that you have considered more than one point of view. Give reasoned judgements on the validity and strength of these views.

Skills Link

- 1 Explain Muslim teaching about the Tawhid (Oneness) of Allah.
- 2 'Belief in Allah is the most important Muslim belief.' Discuss this statement showing that you have considered more than one point of view. (You must refer to religion and belief in your answer.)

Task

You need to explain in detail religious teachings about **life after death**. Use the guidance below to help you to write a **developed explanation** for Islam. Ensure that you use key terms fluently and frequently.

All/many/most Muslims believe that This comes from the teaching/Qur'an quote

This means that/Because of this they

Some/other Muslims such as believe that This comes from the teaching/Qur'an quote

This means that/Because of this they

Finally, Muslims such as believe that This means that/ Because of this they

Their beliefs do/do not differ because

▶ Exam focus

Islam: Beliefs and teachings

(a) questions

These are always the first questions in each unit. They ask you to explain what the key concept means. Your explanation can include an example. There are eight key concepts you need to know for Islam.

Remember there are only two marks for these questions so it is important you are able to give an accurate definition.

Helen was asked:

(a) What do Muslims mean by 'risalah'? (2)

Her response of 'Prophethood' was only awarded one mark. Why do you think that was? Rewrite her answer to gain two marks.

Remember it must be explained for two marks. A one word answer is not an explanation.

Using religious language

To gain higher marks religious language must be used in your answers. This includes the use of key concepts where relevant, as well as any particular language specific to the religions you are writing about.

Look at the answer below. Identify religious language you could include in the areas underlined.

(c) Explain why Muhammad is important in Islam. (8)

Muhammad is important in Islam as he received the Muslim special book which is used today in Muslim homes and their holy places of worship. Stories of Muhammad's life and sayings can be found in other Muslim books. It is considered that Muhammad will be the last special person.

8

Islam: Practices

■ The Five Pillars of Sunni Islam

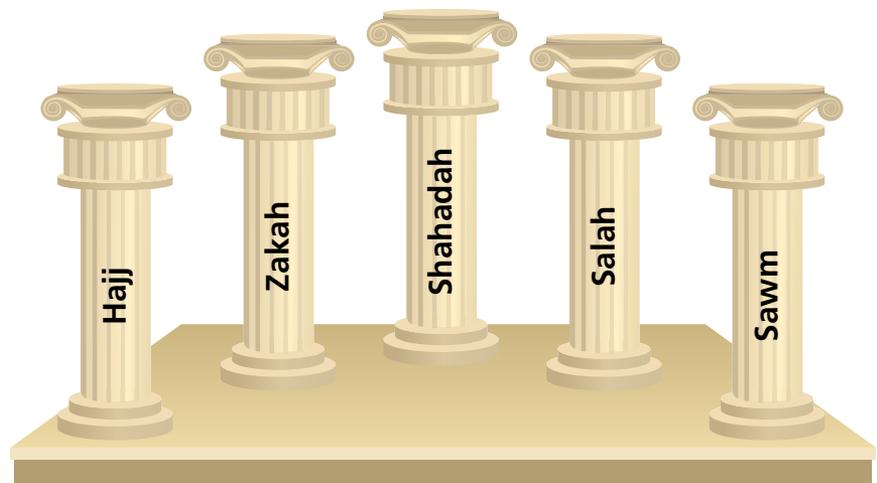
▶ Ibadah: worship

Shi'a Muslims follow a similar set of rules (see the Ten Obligatory Acts of Shi'a Islam on pages 273–74).

Ibadah acts of worship; any permissible action performed with the intention to obey God.

For Muslims, actions speak louder than words and it is not enough just to have faith in God; they believe it is necessary to show religious commitment through the way they live their entire lives. Every action is a form of worship; this is called **ibadah**. People in Western countries sometimes think that religions are just sets of beliefs, or a collection of optional faith-based activities. However, Muslims have always been very clear that Islam is a complete way of life; worship is a 24/7 reality, to be lived fully, not just as an after-thought to add on to our secular lives.

▶ The Five Pillars



Sunni Islam teaches that all Muslims have a duty to worship God by following the Five Pillars. These actions are all *ibadah*, acts of worship carried out with the intention of obeying God. They are:

- ▶ **Shahadah**: the declaration of faith which says ‘There is no god but God and Muhammad is his prophet’
- ▶ **Salah**: prayer, five times a day
- ▶ **Zakah**: charity, giving money to the poor
- ▶ **Sawm**: fasting during the month of Ramadan
- ▶ **Hajj**: pilgrimage to Makkah.

By following these rules Muslims believe that they can show their obedience to the will of God. The Shari’ah (Islamic law) sets out the Five Pillars as religious duties; they are seen as practical signs which demonstrate true submission to the divine creator.

They must be carried out with *niyyah*, the true intention to submit to the will of God.

Muslims say that there can be no doubt that they have been instructed by God to complete the Five Pillars: the Qur'an contains many references as to their importance and, in his last sermon, Prophet Muhammad makes clear mention of them.

'O People, listen to me in earnest, worship God, perform your five daily prayers, fast during the month of Ramadan, and offer Zakah. Perform Hajj if you have the means.'

Muhammad's last sermon (Hadith)

► **Niyah: intention**

Niyah means having the right intention to worship God. Muslims believe that it is important to have God consciousness (*taqwa*). They may not always be in the right mood to worship God, or they may feel unworthy to meet him, but when praying it is important to dedicate that time to being in his presence. Sometimes there may be a strong feeling that God is present and at other times he may seem distant, but God is merciful and judges the desire to communicate with him, even if we feel we do not succeed.

► **Shahadah, the declaration of faith**

The first pillar

The first pillar of Islam is the **Shahadah**. It declares that 'there is no god but God, and Muhammad is the prophet of God'. This statement forms the central support for the 'House of Islam': the other four pillars are all outward expressions of this deeply held belief.

'God witnesses that there is no deity except Him, and [so do] the angels and those of knowledge - [that He is] maintaining [creation] in justice. There is no deity except Him, the Exalted in Might, the Wise.'

Qur'an 3:18

The **Shahadah** sums up the religion of Islam: the belief in the one and only Almighty God and the acceptance of Muhammad as the final messenger, a man sent by God to reveal the divine path to life (the Shari'ah).



Calligraphy of the Shahadah

A statement of faith

For Muslims, the words of the Shahadah are heard throughout the day in countless aspects of their lives. They are announced in the adhan (the call to prayer) from the minaret in the mosque and recited in each of the five daily prayers. These words are also known as the Kalimah prayer. They are the first words whispered into a new-born baby's ear and, if possible, they are the last words a dying Muslim hears on their death-bed. Muslim soldiers have these words on their lips as they go into battle.

The words of the Shahadah ('There is no god but God and Muhammad is the prophet of God') are sometimes referred to by Muslims as the Kalimah prayer.

Monotheism

The Shahadah states the existence of one God; this is called monotheism. This means that Muslims reject belief in many gods (polytheism) and they also oppose the atheist concept of a world without God. The Shahadah also denies the Christian belief in the Trinity (God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit). Muslims have deep respect for Jesus (Isa), but to them he is a great prophet, not a divine being. Islam (like Judaism and Sikhism) declares that God is one.

Conversion or reversion

There are no ceremonies or rituals to welcome new believers to Islam. All one needs to do to become a Muslim is to recite the Shahadah. Some refer to this as conversion, to change from one religion to another; others call it reversion. They say that, because God is our creator, we were all born as worshippers of the true God and so when we discover faith we return (revert) to our natural faith.

Famous converts

Famous people who are reported to have converted (or reverted) to Islam include: Yusuf Islam (Cat Stevens), Muhammad Ali, Shaquille O'Neal, Mike Tyson, Ellen Burstyn, Janet Jackson, Malcolm X.

'The Prophet said: "Whoever says: there is no god but God enters Paradise."

Hadith

Tasks

- 1 Find out about people who have converted to Islam.
- 2 Is it more accurate to call this conversion or reversion? Explain your views.



Salah

The second pillar

Salah bowing or worship. There are over 700 verses in the Qur'an that refer to it.

'So exalt [God] with praise of your Lord and be of those who prostrate [to Him]. And worship your Lord until there comes to you a certainty [i.e. death].'
Qur'an 15:98–99

The second pillar of Islam is **Salah**, the practice of prayer. For Muslims, prayer is the most important way to worship God. It is a duty for all Muslims to pray five times a day. Muhammad called prayer the 'pillar of religion' and it reminds them to give thanks for God's blessings and of the importance of submitting to God's will. It is a physical, mental and spiritual activity that draws believers close to God.

'Recite, [O Muhammad], what has been revealed to you of the book and establish prayer. Indeed, prayer prohibits immorality and wrongdoing, and the remembrance of God is greater. And God knows that which you do.'

Qur'an 29:45

Preparation for prayer

Preparation for prayer is vital because coming into the presence of God requires a deep sense of respect and reverence. Prayer begins with a declaration of intent (niyyah). It must be a deliberate act, to set aside a few minutes to focus on God and enter into a state of 'God consciousness'. This allows Muslims to concentrate on God's greatness, to thank and praise him and ask for his forgiveness.

Wudu: ablution (washing)

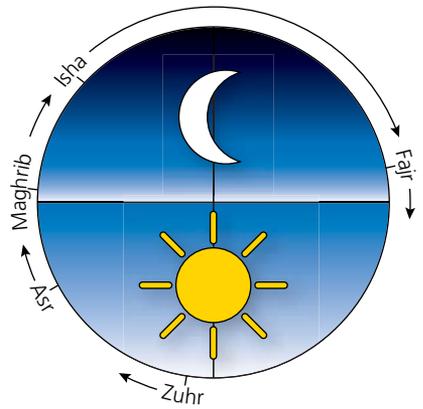
Before starting to pray, Muslims must practise wudu, washing specific parts of the body: hands, mouth, nose, face, arms, head and feet in a particular order. This is an outward sign of the inner cleanliness needed to face God.

How to pray

The Qur'an and the **Sunnah** give Muslims clear guidance on how and when to pray. Salah takes place five times a day:

- ▶ **Fajr** (just after at dawn)
- ▶ **Zuhr** (just after midday)
- ▶ **As'r** (late afternoon)
- ▶ **Maghrib** (just after sunset)
- ▶ **Isha** (after dark).

Muslims must find somewhere with room to stand, bow and prostrate themselves (kneeling with their face to the ground). This can be at the mosque, at home or anywhere safe and clean. Muslims pray facing Makkah; this direction is called **Qibla**.



Time given for each of the daily prayers

Sunnah the record of Muhammad's way of life.
Qibla the direction to face during prayer (towards Makkah).

Task

'Niyah' means having the right intention (see page 251). Why is it important for a Muslim to be in the right frame of mind as they prepare for prayer?

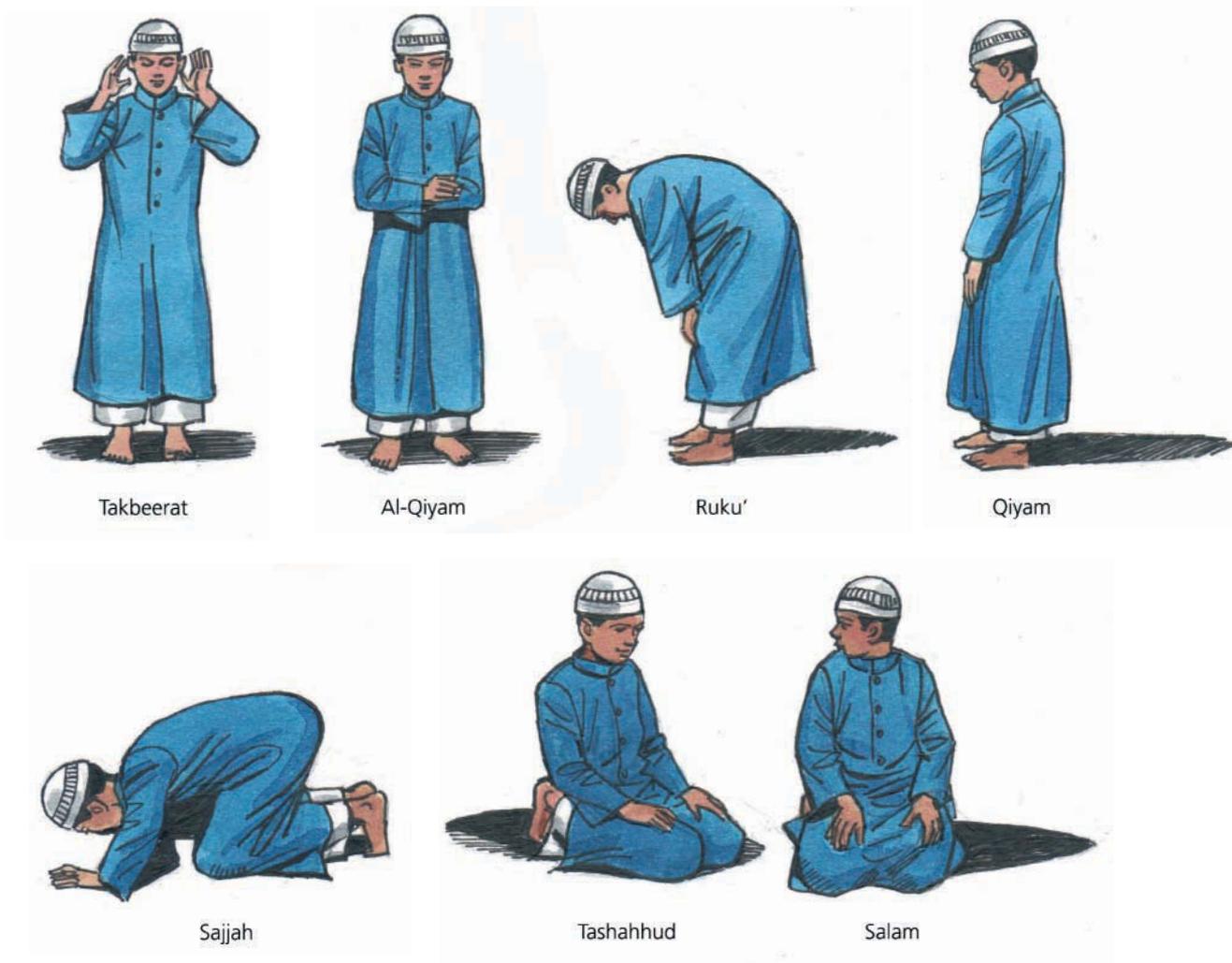


The rak'ahs

A **rak'ah** is a sequence of movements, following a set pattern, which make up the prayer routine. The different prayers during the day require different numbers of rak'ahs.

During worship the worshipper will:

- ▶ stand quietly, reciting prayers from the Qur'an
- ▶ bow low, with hands on knees
- ▶ prostrate on the floor, in submission to God
- ▶ kneel with feet folded under body
- ▶ stand, reciting 'Peace be upon you, and God's blessing', once facing to the right, once facing to the left.



The sequence of movements that make up a rak'ah

'And when you have completed the prayer, remember God standing, sitting, or [lying] on your sides. But when you become secure, re-establish [regular] prayer. Indeed, prayer has been decreed upon the believers a decree of specified times.'

Qur'an 4:103

The aims of prayer

The aims of prayer are:

- ▶ as a constant reminder of the presence of God
- ▶ to show submission to the will of God
- ▶ to cleanse away the corruption of the world
- ▶ to unite all Muslims
- ▶ to bring about peace in the world
- ▶ to remove sins, just as water removes dirt.

Jumu'ah (congregational) prayers

'Salah is the pillar of the Islamic religion and whoever abandons it, demolishes the very pillar of religion.'

Hadith

Key Concepts

Mosque or 'masjid' A 'place of prostration' for Muslims; it is a communal place of worship for a Muslim community.

Congregational all together, praying as a whole community. This emphasises the ummah.

Du'a prayers personal prayers which may be said at any time of the day.

In Islam, Friday is the day when Muslims come together at the **mosque** for Jumu'ah (**congregational**) prayers. Muslim men are expected to gather for the Friday midday (Zuhr) prayers. Women may attend these community prayers, but traditionally they pray at home. One of the main features of the Jumu'ah prayers is the sermon (khutbah) given by the imam. Unlike the Sabbath for Jews and Christians, Friday is not seen as a 'holy' day. In some Muslim countries it is a day of rest, but in Western countries it may well be a normal working day.

Du'a (personal) prayer

The Salah prayers are a duty for all Muslims, five times a day, but people who love God will often choose to find time to make their own, personal connection with God. There are no set times for **Du'a prayers**; they are spontaneous opportunities to spend time in the presence of God.

Missed prayers

Muslims should try to pray at the allocated times, set out clearly in the Islamic prayer schedule for every day of the year, but if they miss a prayer then it is acceptable to catch up later. However, it would be seen as a sin to miss prayers regularly without a valid reason.

'If one of you sleeps and misses a prayer, or forgets it, let him offer the prayer when he remembers.'

Hadith



Salah is a duty for all Muslims

Tasks

- 1 What are the key features of Jumu'ah prayers?
- 2 What are the key features of Du'a prayers?
- 3 What are the key differences between Jumu'ah prayers and Du'a prayers?
- 4 Explain which you think is the most important for a Muslim? Why?

► Why do Muslims pray five times a day?

The night journey

Both the Qur'an and the Hadith contain Prophet Muhammad's night journey. In the story, Muhammad is woken from his sleep and taken on a winged horse to Jerusalem and then up through seven levels of heaven, to the very presence of God. Here, God reveals to Prophet Muhammad that Muslims must pray continuously, 50 times a day. Worship must be a constant presence throughout life. However, Moses intervenes and says this is too much and eventually it was agreed that there must be five prayer times each day.

Tasks

- 1 Make a list of the Five Pillars.
- 2 Explain why you think Muslims believe it is so important to follow these religious duties?

► Zakah: charity, giving to the poor

The third pillar

The third pillar of Islam is Zakah, the practice of charity, giving money to the poor. All Muslims are expected to be charitable as a regular duty, giving 2.5 per cent of their wealth every year. They can be sure that God will reward them for their acts of giving. (See pages 158–59 for more on Muslim attitudes to wealth and poverty.)

Be generous and kind

The Qur'an makes a clear command: to give to those in need, to widows, orphans and travellers. It is an obligation and a form of worship, to be generous and kind for the benefit of humanity. Zakah is closely associated with prayer; what value is it to pray for others if you are not prepared to share with them?

Zakah is purity

Giving is a sign of cleansing and purity. The Qur'an teaches that money may have a corrupting influence; wealth can be an evil thing, because it may cut us off from each other and from God. Zakah is a purifying influence, giving us the opportunity to share our wealth and offering us a means of purification.

Wealth is not ours; it must be shared

According to Islam, our wealth and our property are not ours; wealth is given to us by God, for the benefit of all humans. It is our duty to share the good fortune that we have received, not to hoard it and spend it purely for selfish reasons. Islam disapproves of gambling. Money should be shared, not wasted for personal satisfaction. Gambling is seen as a great sin, because it makes people dependent on chance rather than relying on God to provide.

'O you who have believed, spend from that which We have provided for you before there comes a Day in which there is no exchange and no friendship and no intercession. And the disbelievers – they are the wrongdoers.'

Qur'an 2:254

Humans are khalifahs (stewards)

The Qur'an teaches that humans are khalifahs (God's representatives on earth). This means that we are stewards or trustees of the world; we do not own it, we are looking after it in trust, for God, to hand it on to our children and to future generations. Therefore, we should not view our possessions as our own; they are on loan to us from God, so we do not have the absolute right to spend our money as we choose.

Prophet Muhammad practised Zakah

The practice of giving Zakah began when Prophet Muhammad was the ruler in Madinah. After the first battles, there were many orphans and widows and the prophet instructed people to care for all those in need.

'The one who looks after and works for a widow and for a poor person is like a warrior fighting for God's cause.'

Hadith



How should Zakah be spent?

The Qur'an identifies a number of people who can receive Zakah: the poor, the needy and travellers. Today there are many Muslim aid agencies that distribute Zakah to support development in community projects in areas such as: water supply, sanitation, healthcare and education.

Sadaqah: giving from the heart

It is a duty for all Muslims to pay Zakah once a year, but Islam also teaches that voluntary giving is important too. Sadaqah is any good deed done out of compassion or generosity; it could be a gift of time, helping others or a donation to a charity.

'A Muslim who plants a tree or sows a field, from which man, birds and animals can eat, is committing an act of charity.'

Hadith

Tasks

- 1 Do you think it is a good attitude to think of our property as belonging to God, not us? Can you explain your views?
- 2 Why do you think Muslims disagree with gambling?
- 3 Do you agree that gambling is harmful?



▶ Sawm, fasting during Ramadan

The fourth pillar

The fourth pillar of Islam is Sawm, the practice of fasting during the month of Ramadan. For many Muslims, it is the holiest month of the year, being a time dedicated to self-discipline and spiritual reflection. Ramadan holds a special place in the Muslim calendar, because it is believed to be the month in which the Prophet Muhammad received the first verses of the Qur'an, revealed to him by God.

Fasting: self-control

Fasting is the deliberate control of the body and Muslims are expected to refrain from eating, drinking (including water), smoking and sexual intercourse from dawn to dusk for the period of 29/30 days. They must also abstain from evil thoughts, harmful actions and unkind speech.

When to fast?

The beginning of Ramadan is marked by the appearance of the new (crescent) moon in the sky, signalling the start of the new month. It ends 29/30 days later with the beginning of the tenth month, Shawwal, heralding the start of celebrations for Id-ul-Fitr (see p. 273).

According to the Qur'an, the fast must begin each day at first light and continue until dusk. At dawn, eating and drinking must cease at the moment when it becomes light enough to distinguish a black thread from a white one. Food and drink may only be consumed again at the end of the day, after dark.

A special meal, known as suhur, is eaten before dawn, and at dusk the fast is broken by the iftar meal, often consisting of dates and water, before a bigger meal is shared. These meals during Ramadan are often very social events, with family, neighbours and friends gathering in homes and mosques to provide for each other. In this way, Ramadan brings a very happy, community focus to Islamic society.

Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic year. Muslims follow a lunar calendar which lasts 354 days; it is 11 days shorter than the solar year. This means that Ramadan moves earlier every year.

Celebrating the Qur'an

During Ramadan, Muslims gather at the mosque for extra night prayers. This includes the recitation of a section of the Qur'an each day, so that by the end of the month the whole Qur'an has been recited. All Muslims should try to attend the mosque on the 27th day of Ramadan to celebrate Laylat-ul-Qadr, the night of power. This is remembered as the date of the first revelation of the Qur'an, when the Angel Jibril first visited Prophet Muhammad.

Why do Muslims fast?

Muslims believe that the fast is important because it:

- ▶ is commanded in the Qur'an by God follows the example of the Prophet Muhammad (Sunnah)
- ▶ follows the example of the Prophet Muhammad (Sunnah)
- ▶ celebrates the fact that God has given humans the Qur'an
- ▶ brings people closer to God
- ▶ is a reminder of the mercy and blessings of God
- ▶ helps Muslims to identify with the poor
- ▶ promotes self control
- ▶ helps to recharge spiritual batteries
- ▶ unites Muslim communities (ummah).

Who should fast?

God has instructed all adult Muslims to fast during Ramadan. Children, from quite a young age, often begin to fast for just a few days in the month. According to the Qur'an, if someone is ill or travelling they are exempt from fasting, although they would be expected to make up the days at a later time.

'O those of you who have believed, decreed upon you is fasting as it was decreed upon those before you that you may become righteous – [Fasting for] a limited number of days. So who ever among you is ill or on a journey [during them] – then an equal number of other days [are to be made up]. And upon those who are able [to fast, but with hardship] – a ransom [as substitute] of feeding a poor person [each day]. And whoever volunteers good [i.e. excess] it is better for him. But to fast is best for you, if you only knew'

Qur'an 2:183–184



Breaking the fast at the end of each day of Ramadan is often a social occasion, shared with family and friends.

Tasks

- 1 (a) List the benefits that Muslims say fasting can bring.
- (b) For each one explain why it is a benefit. You could present this as a mind map.
- 2 Do you think GCSE and A-level exams should be arranged to take into account the fact that Muslim students may be fasting?

'RAMADAN FAST IN UK "SHOULD BE SHORTENED" SAY SCHOLARS.'

BBC news headline

Some Muslims argue that fasting times should be standardised. Muslims who live in the Middle East (nearer to the Equator) only ever have to fast for a maximum of 15 hours, whereas in an English summer Muslims might need to fast for up to 19 hours each day. This is especially difficult for school students who are doing exams in the summer months.

▶ The Hajj, pilgrimage to Makkah

The fifth pillar

The fifth pillar of Islam is Hajj, the pilgrimage to Makkah.

This is the only pillar of Islam that Muslims don't *have* to perform. It is compulsory for those who are able to make the journey, but the Qur'an only commands it as a duty for those who:

- ▶ have enough money to leave their homes for a lengthy period
- ▶ are physically and mentally fit enough to carry out this demanding ritual.

For most Muslims, to set out for the Hajj would be the ambition of a lifetime. Those who have succeeded in completing it often count it as the greatest achievement of their lives. Hajji (male) or Hajjah (female) is the special title given to someone who has successfully completed the Hajj pilgrimage. This is a great honour.

The importance of Makkah

Makkah is considered by Muslims to be the holiest city on earth. Because it is the city of God it has immense spiritual significance in Islam. Muslims believe that it is here that:

- ▶ Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) was commanded by God, in a dream, to sacrifice his son, Isma'il.
- ▶ Ibrahim overcame a test when the devil appeared, trying to trick him into denying God's word. Ibrahim threw stones to drive the devil away.
- ▶ Ibrahim's wife, Hajar, searched frantically for water in the desert. Miraculously an angel showed her the Zamzam well.
- ▶ Ibrahim built the Ka'ba as a place of worship to the one, true God.
- ▶ Prophet Muhammad was born.
- ▶ Prophet Muhammad received the first revelations from God.
- ▶ Prophet Muhammad returned before his death to reclaim the city for God.

The route of the Hajj pilgrimage takes believers to the sacred sites where many of these events are said to have taken place.

Preparations: entering a state of ihram

On arriving in Makkah pilgrims enter a state of ihram (purity), where they dedicate themselves to humility and prayer. Normal clothing is put away and the pilgrims put on special garments: men must wear two sheets of white, unsewn cloth; women must put on a plain, ankle-length garment, but they can leave their faces uncovered, since no man will stare lustfully at a woman on Hajj.

Task

Which of the Five Pillars would you argue to be the most important to Muslims? Explain why.

The Qur'an instructs believers to go on Hajj, but it does not specify many details. The Sunnah describes the pilgrimages the Prophet Muhammad performed and how he worshipped in Makkah. This forms the pattern for today's pilgrimage.

Ihram is a sacred state of purity, symbolised by the white garments worn on Hajj. Muslims must make a special intention (niyyah) to dedicate themselves to worshipping God when they arrive in Makkah. Hajjis/Hajjahs are often buried in these white garments, at the end of their lives, to remind God of their dedication to worship him.

British Muslims undertaking Hajj

Every year about three million Muslims from around the world converge on Makkah for the annual Hajj pilgrimage. Of these, perhaps up to 100,000 will be from Britain; some will be returning having made the pilgrimage before, others will be experiencing it for the first time. For many it will be a deeply spiritual experience. Read Saleena's description below:

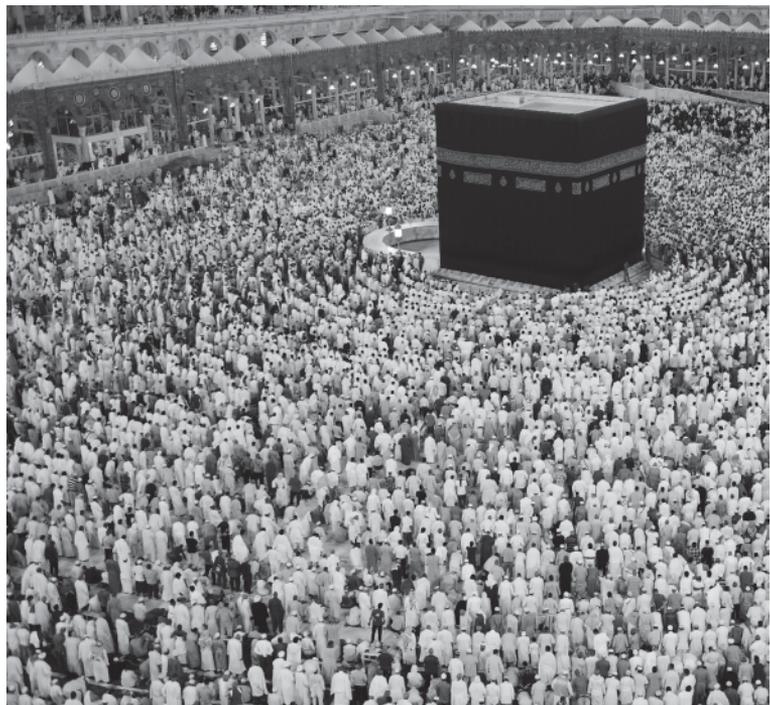
'I made my way inside cautiously, not wanting to set my eyes on the Ka'ba (House of God) until I was able to get a clear and unobstructed view, in order to properly savour the moment. I also wanted to pray for three things dear to me as prayers get granted when you first cast your eyes on the Ka'ba. Words cannot describe the emotions that are created when one looks at the Ka'ba, such a simple object structurally yet so majestic and awe-inspiring that it is difficult to take your eyes off it. After emotionally gathering myself, I started my Pilgrimage...'

Saleena Nurmohamed

Tasks

- 1 List three reasons why Muslims go on Hajj.
- 2 How and why do Muslims 'enter the state of ihram'?
- 3 What are the key features of Hajj? Copy the table below and complete the description/purpose column.

Event	Description/purpose
Doing the tawaf	
The wukuf	
Collecting pebbles at Muzdalafa	
Sacrificing an animal	
Repeating the tawaf	
At the Zam Zam well	
Standing on the Mount of Mercy	
The pillars at Mina	
Men shaving their heads	



Muslims circling the Ka'ba at Makkah

Tasks

- 1 Explore some of the other Hajj narratives on the British Museum Hajj exhibition website.
<http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/themes/hajj/narratives/modern.aspx>
- 2 Log onto the Association of British Hujjaj (Pilgrims) website to research the advice given to British people who are preparing to undertake Hajj.
<http://www.abhuk.com/preparation-of-hajj-and-umrah/>

The pilgrimage begins

With all their preparations complete, the pilgrims are now ready to begin the pilgrimage which will usually last for five days. Some of the most significant aspects of this unique physical, emotional and spiritual experience are:

- ▶ The tawaf: circling the Ka'ba seven times. If they can get close enough, pilgrims try to kiss the Black Stone.
- ▶ Walking seven times between two hills of Mawah and Safa, in memory of Hajar, Ibrahim's wife, in her frantic search for water for her son.
- ▶ Drinking from the Zam Zam well, remembering the spring of water revealed to Prophet Ibrahim's wife Hajar by the angel.
- ▶ The wukuf: standing before God on the Plain of Arafat, at the Mount of Mercy, remembering God's mercy and forgiveness. This is, perhaps, the most important part of the whole Hajj.
- ▶ Collecting pebbles at Muzdalafah.
- ▶ Hurling these pebbles at the pillars at Mina to show rejection of the devil, as Ibrahim did when faced with temptation.



Pilgrims throw pebbles at the pillars at Mina in remembrance of when Ibrahim threw stones at the devil when faced with temptation

- ▶ Camping at Mina, sacrificing an animal.
- ▶ Men shaving their heads when Hajj is complete.
- ▶ Returning to Makkah to repeat the tawaf (circling the Ka'ba).

The climax of the Hajj is the annual festival of Id-ul-Adha, the most important of all Muslim celebrations (see pages 269–70). This is a special time for the pilgrims, because this part of the Hajj is celebrated by all Muslims, whether they have made the joyful journey to Makkah or whether they have stayed at home. It is an opportunity for the Muslim community (the ummah) to join together in worship of God.

I haven't been on pilgrimage, but I do pray to God that I will have the chance. When God wants me to go, I will go.

Nazir A

Just laying my eyes on the Ka'ba and knowing that you are one of the blessed ones which God had called is overwhelming.

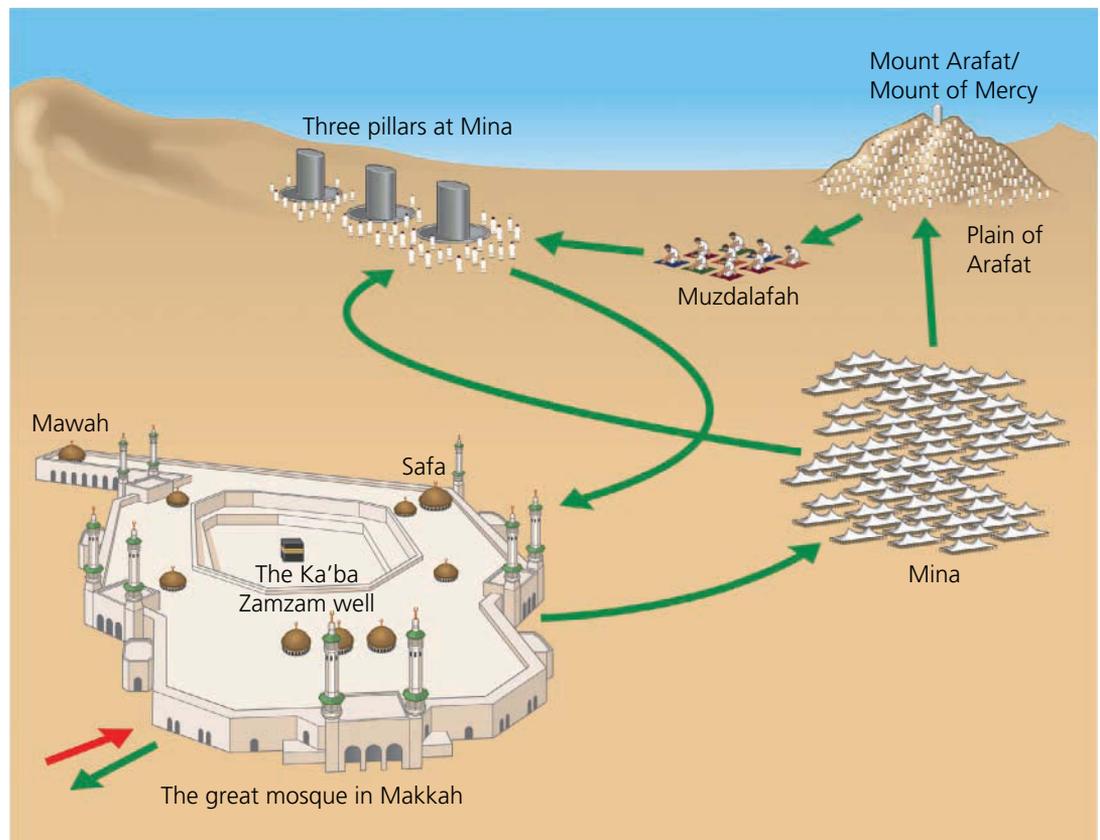
Abdul Muizz Ali

Being in Makkah and doing my Hajj was the most beautiful time of my life.

Farah Ahmed

It literally gives me the most spiritual inner peace a human can get.

Ashraf Badr



A map of Hajj

■ Jihad: striving for right

Key Concepts

Jihad Means 'to strive'. There are two forms of jihad. The greater jihad is the daily struggle and inner spiritual striving to live as a Muslim. The lesser jihad is a physical struggle or 'holy war' in defence of Islam.

▶ What is jihad?

Jihad is the struggle to live according to God's laws. It is one of the most misunderstood words in Islam, because to many people jihad simply means 'holy war', but in fact it has a deeper meaning than this.

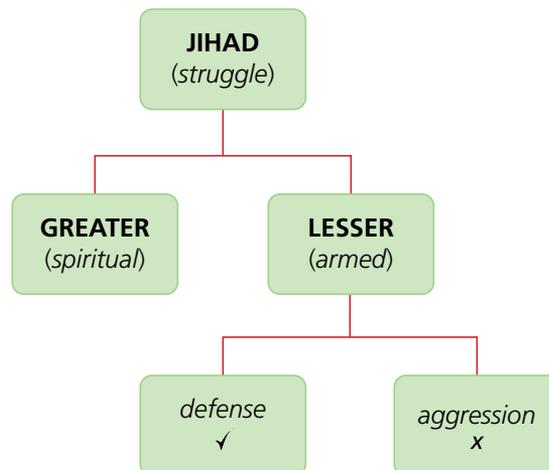
Jihad actually means 'directed struggle':

- ▶ striving to serve God
- ▶ making an effort to live a moral life
- ▶ actively trying to live in peace.

▶ The greater jihad and the lesser jihad

Many Muslims make a distinction between the greater jihad (the personal struggle for right) and the lesser jihad (the desire to remove evil from society). It is the duty of all Muslims to try to remove evil from society, but you can only fight for justice in the world when you have truly removed the evil in your own life.

The Prophet Muhammad said that the supreme jihad is against oneself.



▶ The greater jihad

The greater jihad is the spiritual struggle with oneself. It is the desire and commitment to live the perfect Muslim life:

- ▶ to perform the Five Pillars with devotion
- ▶ to practise the path set out by Prophet Muhammad (Sunnah)
- ▶ to seek justice and fairness for all
- ▶ to rise above one's own greed and selfishness.

The need to control desires

Islam teaches that Muslims need to control their own desires and behaviour, to follow the Five Pillars and live a life that is pleasing to God. This will ensure that when the last day comes, and they are brought to judgement by God, they will be worthy to receive God's favour and thus to enter paradise.

The battle against laziness

There is a prayer of Prophet Muhammad which says: 'God, I seek thy protection against helplessness and laziness, and against cowardice . . . and miserliness.' This describes the greater jihad. It is the commitment to make the effort to be a better person and live as God has instructed.

The greater jihad is the spiritual fight against the tendency to be lazy: to get up for prayers before dawn, to only eat food that is halal (permitted), to show kindness and generosity towards other people.

Encourage what is right

The Qur'an urges Muslims to 'encourage what is right (ma'ruf), and forbid what is wrong' (3:104). This process is partly about removing evil from yourself, but also about making the world a better place.

Prophet Muhammad says:

'Whoever amongst you sees an evil, he must change it with his hand. If he is not able to do so, then with his tongue. And if he is not able to do so, then with his heart, and that is the weakest form of faith.'

Hadith

Respect for the beliefs of others

The Qur'an encourages Muslims to be tolerant and respectful towards the beliefs others: 'To you be your religion, and to me mine' (109:6). Muslims should live in peace and harmony in society, celebrating differences and obeying the law.

The Qur'an makes it clear that every single life is precious:

'If anyone slew a person . . . it would be as if he slew the whole people; and if anyone saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of the whole people.'

Qur'an 5:32

Tasks

- 1 What struggles do you have to live in the right way? Do you have a battle with laziness or selfishness? Can you explain your thoughts?
- 2 What do you think it means to say: 'smiling in tough times is jihad'?
- 3 Why do you think this is called the greater jihad?



▶ The lesser jihad (holy war)

There are certain circumstances in which Islam accepts that force needs to be used, but only ever in self defence. While the greater jihad is the personal struggle against sin, the lesser jihad or holy war is the struggle to remove evil from society. This involves the whole community, rather than the individual, and there are strict rules for the use of force in jihad.

Lesser jihad or military jihad is sometimes known as 'jihad with the sword' or holy war.

'To those against whom war is made, permission is given to fight, because they are wronged.'

Qur'an 22:39

The origin of lesser jihad

The concept of lesser jihad arose during the Prophet Muhammad's lifetime, when he gave his faithful followers authorisation to fight. Muhammad's enemies in Makkah planned to wipe out all Muslims and so they believed that there was no choice other than to engage in conflict.

'Permission [to fight] has been given to those who are being fought, because they were wronged. And indeed, God is competent to give them victory.'

Qur'an 22:39

This passage from the Qur'an records the permission given by God for the Muslims to defend themselves against their enemies. Some argue that war with such a pure motive (to establish the principle of religious freedom) is a true jihad.

'Fight in the way of God those who fight against you but do not transgress. Indeed, God does not like transgressors.'

Qur'an 2:190

Jihad must never be aggressive

The Qur'an lays down the condition that the Muslims must not be the first to attack; a war of aggression is prohibited. However, if it can be agreed that a war is a 'jihad', then it is a duty to fight back, but only against those who are attacking you, never to kill civilians.

Who can declare a jihad?

Muslim law is clear that jihad can only be declared by a Muslim leader who is holy and pure and who has the support of the whole Muslim community. Some Muslim communities do believe their leaders are able to declare jihad. However many Muslims today say that it is difficult to see how these conditions for jihad could be met, because there is no one, indisputable Muslim ruler who would be eligible to declare it.

The Crusades

Many Muslims would say that it was a jihad when Muslims fought against the Christian Crusaders in the Middle Ages.

The Crusades were military campaigns by Christians between 1095 CE and 1291 CE. Their aim was to win back the Holy Land for Christianity, from Muslim control, and in 1099 CE they succeeded in re-taking Jerusalem. Muslims vowed to wage jihad (holy war) against the invaders from Europe and the Muslim armies eventually defeated the Christian Crusaders.



Some jihadists claim that the Twin Towers in New York, attacked on 9/11, was a legitimate target. Moderate Muslims reject all forms of terrorism

The Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) speaks on behalf of British Muslims. The MCB have strongly condemned the actions of IS, saying that they are 'horrified' by the group's 'twisted message' and 'barbarous' behaviour. The '#notinmyname' hashtag has been widely used to make it clear that IS does not represent the views of British Muslims. Find out more about this campaign from <http://isisnotinmyname.com>

Jihad today

Today, most Muslims agree that a holy war can only be called against an aggressor that threatens Islam. Some Islamic extremist groups argue that the attack on the World Trade Center (the Twin Towers) in New York, on 11 September 2001, commanded by Osama Bin Laden, was an act of jihad. However, moderate Muslims reject this idea, arguing that this attack was an aggressive act, which targeted innocent civilians and so fails the test set by the Qur'an.

The rise of jihadist groups

There are a number of groups who have labelled themselves as jihadists in recent years (for example, Al-Qaeda, Boko Haram, Islamic State/Daesh). They are prepared to use violence in order to create an Islamic State that would be governed in accordance with Islamic (Shari'ah) law. Western governments regard these groups as terrorist organisations and moderate Muslims reject this form of extreme Islam.

In 2014 jihadi fighters, saying they were loyal to Islam, captured large areas of Northern Syria and Iraq, setting up what they called a 'caliphate'. This is a state governed in accordance with Islamic (Shari'ah) law. Islamic State (IS) say they want to restore God's rule on earth and defend the ummah (Muslim community) against infidels (non-believers).



Jihadi fighters, from Islamic State in Northern Syria and Iraq

Tasks

- 1 Make a list of the reasons that a jihadist might give for declaring a military jihad.
- 2 Why would moderate Muslims say that violent jihad is almost always wrong?
- 3 Could the 9/11 attack on the Twin Towers be justified as a jihad? Explain your reasoning.

'Jihad and girl power: how ISIS lured three London girls.'

'Danger of foreign jihadists.' Increasing numbers of jihadists are being drawn to Syria to fight for ISIS.

'Who are the British jihadists?' Hundreds of people are believed to have travelled from the UK to Syria to fight for Islamic State. The British Government fear that some of them will try to return and create terrorist attacks here.

■ Festivals and commemoration

Feasts and festivals have always been part of human society. They are special because they mark times when families and communities can gather together to remember, celebrate and offer thanksgiving. They may be anniversaries of important events or re-enactments of ancient rituals. All Muslim festivals have special significance, often relating to events or stories from Islamic history. However, festivals in Islam are not just moments of joy and happiness, they are also occasions to worship and remember the presence of God.

Moderation not excess

Islam has relatively few holidays and Muslim festivals are usually quite restrained events. Islam is a religion of moderation: the Qur'an forbids indulgence and extravagance and Muslims are instructed not to eat so much as to fill the whole stomach. Prophet Muhammad urged his followers not to drink water greedily, in one gulp, but to pause and sip. The Prophet Muhammad said: "He is not a Muslim who goes to bed with a full stomach while his neighbour goes hungry."

One of the central features of Muslim festivals is the importance of sharing happiness with others and in particular giving to the needy and the poor.

Id the Muslim word for festival. It means 'an event that returns every year'.

▶ Festivals in Islam

There are two main festivals in Islam: **Id-ul-Adha** and **Id-ul-Fitr**, but there are also other important days to be remembered.

Mawlid an-Nabi: the birth of the prophet

Mawlid an-Nabi is the celebration of the birth of the Prophet Muhammad. It is a public holiday in many countries. In Britain, Muslims celebrate this day with joyful processions through the streets, chanting stories in praise of his life.

Laylat-ul-Qadr: the Night of Power

Laylat-ul-Qadr is one of the holiest days in the Muslim calendar, marking the date when the Qur'an was first revealed to the Prophet Muhammad. Islamic tradition is not certain of the exact day, so this event is remembered throughout the last ten days of the month of Ramadan. It is often celebrated on the 27th day of Ramadan.

During this time Muslims may stay up all night, reciting the Qur'an, praying and remembering God's mercy and forgiveness.

Laylat-ul-Miraj: the night journey

Laylat-ul-Miraj remembers Prophet Muhammad's miraculous journey on a winged horse to Jerusalem and then up through the heavens into the presence of God. Today Muslims commemorate these events at the mosque by saying particular prayers and at home by telling the story to their children and reciting special night-time prayers.

Laylat-ul-Bara'at

Laylat-ul-Bara'at is the night of the full moon in the month before Ramadan. This is the night on which Muhammad used to begin his preparations for Ramadan and many Muslims stay up all night reciting the Qur'an.

Muharram

Muharram is the first month of the Islamic calendar and it remembers the Hijrah, when Muhammad and his followers fled from Makkah, to establish the first Muslim community in Madinah. Sunnis fast on the tenth day of Muharram. Shi'as observe Muharram as the month when Husayn (Prophet Muhammad's grandson) was martyred and so they refrain from joyous events in his memory.

Tasks

- 1 Many Muslim festivals have a focus on the Qur'an and the events in the life of Prophet Muhammad. Can you explain why this is so, using examples?
- 2 Why might it be important for young Muslims growing up in Britain today to take part in festivals like this?
- 3 Why do you think many festivals in Islam involve giving to the needy and the poor?



Laylat-ul-Qadr (the Night of Power) is described in the Qur'an as, 'better than a thousand months' (97:3). Any action done on this night, such as reciting the Qur'an or remembering God, is better than acting in one thousand months which do not contain the night of Qadr

► Id-ul-Adha: the festival of sacrifice

The 'Big Id'

Id-ul-Adha is the festival of sacrifice. It is the most important event in the Muslim calendar and, to many, it is known as the Greater Id or the 'Big Id'. It marks the end of the annual Hajj pilgrimage and it is a chance for all Muslims, across the world, to worship and celebrate together. For the Hajjis/Hajjahs, who have just completed Hajj, it is the culmination of five intense days of worship, but it is also special for those who have been unable to travel to Makkah, who will celebrate in their home communities.

Adha sacrifice.

'And complete the Hajj and 'Umrah for God. But if you are prevented, then [offer] what can be obtained with ease of sacrificial animals. And do not shave your heads until the sacrificial animal has reached its place of slaughter. And whoever among you is ill or has an ailment of the head [making shaving necessary must offer] a ransom of fasting [three days] or charity or sacrifice.'

Qur'an 2:196

Ibrahim's commitment to God

At this time Muslims remember the story of Ibrahim, told in the Qur'an. Ibrahim was willing to sacrifice his son, Ishma'il, to show his love for God. Just in time he heard a voice telling him to spare his son and sacrifice a sheep instead. Today an animal, such as a sheep or goat is killed at Id-ul-Adha as part of the commemoration. The meat is shared among family and friends, as well as being distributed to the poor.

In the story it tells how the devil came to tempt Ibrahim, but his faith was too strong. This symbolises how each individual has to struggle against sin and it shows the importance of total commitment to God.

True sacrifice

The Qur'an is very clear that it is not the physical act of killing an animal which is pleasing to God. What is truly valuable is the personal sacrifice that each individual makes in their heart, offering their life in service of God.

'Their meat will not reach God, nor will their blood, but what reaches Him is piety from you.'

Qur'an 22:37

Preparations for Id-ul-Adha

This is a very important occasion for Muslim families and communities, so preparations begin in good time:

- gifts are bought
- new clothes are made
- food is prepared in advance
- arrangements are made for the sacrifice.

Celebrations

Id-ul-Adha is a public holiday in some countries where there are Muslim majority populations, such as Indonesia, Turkey and Jordan. It is not an official holiday in the UK, but some Muslim organisations and businesses may close and Muslim children have the day off school. Celebrations include:

- ▶ going to the mosque to pray and listen to an Id prayer
- ▶ wearing new clothes
- ▶ visiting friends and relatives.



Muslims gathering for Eid celebrations in London (the word for festival 'Id' is often also translated as 'Eid')

Sacrificing an animal

It is traditional for each Muslim family or community to buy and sacrifice their own animal, but in Britain it is illegal to kill an animal without a licence and most families do not have the space and skills to keep and kill a sheep or a goat! People may ask a butcher to slaughter a sheep for them; they will then share it amongst family and neighbours as a communal meal. Giving some of this meat to the poor is a sacred duty.

Tasks

- 1 List some of the key events and activities that take place on Id-ul-Adha.
- 2 Why do you think Id-ul-Adha is such a popular festival for Muslims today?

My favourite festival is Id-ul-Adha, the 'Big Id'.

What do I do at Id? I cook! Food is important on these days. It's part of celebrating Id to offer clothes and hospitality. We visit each other: friends and relatives. We wear new clothes. We exchange gifts.

▶ Id-ul-Fitr, the festival of fast-breaking

Breaking the fast

Id-ul-Fitr is a joyful three-day celebration which takes place at the end of Ramadan (see page 257), on the start of the new month of Shawwal. It is a well-deserved reward for the completion of a month of fasting, when Muslims thank God for giving them the strength and self-control needed to give up food and water over so many days. The festival begins with the new moon being observed in the sky, but in Britain, where the weather is often cloudy, Muslims often have to rely on getting the news from other countries.

A special day

In Muslim-majority countries, Id-ul-Fitr is a public holiday; in Britain, many Muslim businesses close and Muslim children are often given a day off school, especially in areas where there is a high Muslim population. It is an occasion when people feel a strong sense of generosity and gratitude towards each other and to God.

Celebrating Id-ul-Fitr in Britain

On the day of Id, Muslims will:

- ▶ decorate their houses with colourful lights, banners and flags
- ▶ dress in their finest, new clothes
- ▶ gather early in mosques or outdoors to perform congregational prayers and listen to a sermon, usually on the subject of sharing and community
- ▶ send 'Id Mubarak' greetings cards
- ▶ visit family and friends to share food and festivities
- ▶ visit the cemetery to remember loved ones who have been divided from the family through death
- ▶ give gifts and money to children
- ▶ share a delicious meal, where everyone joins in with the food preparation and organisation
- ▶ give generously to the poor.

Unusual ways to celebrate Id-ul-Fitr

Around the world there are many different ways in which Muslims celebrate Id-ul-Fitr:

- ▶ Egypt: fish recipes form the centrepiece of the feast.
- ▶ Afghanistan: men gather in parks for egg fights. Armed with hard-boiled eggs, they try to break each other's eggs.
- ▶ Turkey: children are given sweets by neighbours and relatives.
- ▶ India: women beautify themselves, applying henna to their hands and feet.

Zakat-ul-Fitr: festival tax

Islam places a high value on the whole community (ummah) experiencing the blessings and mercy of God, so in addition to the duty to pay the annual 2.5 per cent Zakah tax, Muslims are expected to pay Zakat-ul-Fitr. This donation, given at the end of Ramadan, goes to the poor. It allows everyone, even those in poverty, to eat a generous meal at Id-ul-Fitr.

Fitr means 'breaking the fast'. It shares the same root (ftr) as 'iftar' which is the light meal Muslims share when they break fast at the end of each day during Ramadan.

At Id-ul-Fitr Muslims greet each other with the phrase: 'Id Mubarak', meaning 'Happy Id'.

In the Hadith, Muhammad instructs Muslims to make a donation of Zakat-ul-Fitr 'for the purpose of providing food for the needy'.

Task

Id-ul-Fitr is sometimes called the festival of fast-breaking. Can you explain why you think Muslims would enjoy a special meal together at the end of Ramadan?

▶ Ashura: day of sorrow and inspiration

Ashura is an important festival for all Muslims, but it has enormous significance in Shi'a Islam. It is celebrated (or commemorated) on the tenth day of Muharram.

Ashura literally means 'tenth'. It falls on the tenth day of the month of Muharram, the first month of the Islamic calendar.

Sunni Islam: day of fasting

Many Muslims today fast on the day of **Ashura**. The Prophet Muhammad established Ashura as a day of fasting, based on the Jewish day of atonement, when sacrifices are made for the sins of the people. Ashura is an occasion to thank God for saving the Israelites from the Pharaoh. Sunni Muslims remember how Musa (Moses) fasted in gratitude to God for opening up the Red Sea to allow his people to escape from the Egyptian chariots.

Shi'a Islam: the martyrdom of Husayn

Ashura is of particular importance to the Shi'a Muslim community, because it remembers the death of Husayn in battle at Karbala in 680 CE. This event triggered a split between Sunni and Shi'a Muslims that continues to divide Islam today. Shi'as believe that Husayn was the rightful successor to the Prophet Muhammad, so the massacre of Husayn and his followers carries great significance. They refer to Husayn as the third Imam, following his father Ali as his older brother Hasan. Still today they remember his betrayal and death with a deep sense of injustice.

Shi'a celebration of Ashura today

For Shi'as, Ashura is an emotionally charged day, remembering the martyrdom of Husayn, the grandson of Muhammad and it is celebrated with processions, plays and public displays of grief in the streets. Blood is often spilled and people cry and wail.

How is Ashura celebrated around the world?

The death of Husayn gave rise to the Shi'a cult of martyrdom and to a sense of betrayal and struggle against injustice and oppression. Ashura is a day of great sorrow, mourning and self-mutilation, where much public grief is expressed. Central to the events is the need to share in the sufferings of Husayn. Ashura is celebrated in communities across the Shi'a world (for example, in Iran and Iraq), but many Shi'a Muslims feel the need to make the pilgrimage to Karbala every year to take part:

- ▶ Men and women dress in black and march through the streets, slapping their chests and chanting.
- ▶ There are processions and religious gatherings.
- ▶ Plays re-enact the martyrdom.
- ▶ Fervent men beat themselves with chains and cut their heads with swords.



Shi'a street processions

Task

What elements of the celebration show that Shi'a Muslims are committed to remembering the martyrdom of Husayn?

Ashura in Britain today

Ashura is not a public holiday in Britain, but Shi'a Muslim children can be given permission to have the day off school. Many people will fast and pray on this day. In cities such as Manchester and London Shi'as gather in large crowds and take part in public marches. The men often slap their chests violently, in time to their chanting, but

it is uncommon to see them drawing blood through whipping and beating themselves, as happens in many countries in the Middle East. Those who feel that they should lose blood may be encouraged, by Shi'a leaders, to donate to the blood transfusion service.

■ The Ten Obligatory Acts (Furu ad-Din) of Shi'a Islam

Five roots and ten branches of Shi'a belief

For Shi'a Muslims, Islam is often pictured as a bountiful tree. The five roots of religion (see pages 227–28) act as the source of strength for the Muslim life of faith. These are the central beliefs, with the trunk and branches growing up from these roots. There are ten branches or obligatory acts which form the key features of religious life.

▶ The Ten Obligatory Acts (Furu ad-Din)

The Ten Obligatory Acts of Shi'a Islam are known as Furu ad-Din. They are: Salah, Sawm, Hajj, zakah, Khums, Jihad, Amr-bil-Marooif, Nahil Anril Munkar, Tawalia and Tabarra.

An obligation is a duty. The obligatory acts are practices that Muslims believe God has made compulsory.

1 Salah (prayer)

There are five daily prayers (Salah), where Muslims face towards the Ka'ba in Makkah (Qibla), but many Shi'as combine these into three. These prayer times are:

- ▶ between dawn and sunrise
- ▶ just after noon
- ▶ at dusk, just after sunset.

They do this because they say that that Muhammad allowed the combination of prayers: Zuhr with As'r and Maghrib with Isha.

2 Sawm (fasting)

Like Sunnis, Shi'as practise fasting (Sawm) during the month of Ramadan, but from the 20th day of Ramadan they remember the death of Ali (son-in-law of the prophet) spending three days in mourning.

3 Hajj (pilgrimage)

Like Sunnis, Shi'as go on the annual pilgrimage to Makkah (Hajj) in the 12th month of the Muslim calendar (Dhul Hijjah). In addition to Hajj, they also make pilgrimages to Shi'a shrines and graves, in particular visiting the grave of Husayn in Karbala (in modern-day Iraq).

4 Zakah (charity)

Like Sunnis, Shi'as make a charity (Zakah) payment of 2.5 per cent of their wealth every year. This goes to support the poor and those in need.

5 Khums (wealth tax)

In addition to Zakah, Shi'as are expected to pay Khums, a wealth tax of 20 per cent of their savings. This money is paid to Muslim scholars and community leaders for the welfare of the community.

'And know that anything you obtain of war booty – then indeed, for God is one fifth of it and for the Messenger and for [his] near relatives and the orphans, the needy, and the [stranded] traveler...'

Qur'an 8:41

6 Jihad (struggle)

Jihad is the duty to struggle against sin. For the sake of God, Muslims should fight against injustice, removing any obstacles that might prevent people being able to worship God.

7 Amr-bil-Marooif (encouraging others to do good)

The central purpose of Islam is to create a society where people can live in peace and harmony. Therefore, it is the duty of all Muslims to encourage others to do good, for the sake of God. In the Hadith Muhammad promises that the person who persuades someone else to do a good deed will get the same reward as the person he persuaded.

'And let there be [arising] from you a nation inviting to [all that is] good, enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong, and those will be the successful.'

Qur'an 3:104

8 Nahil Anril Munkar (discouraging the bad)

It is the duty of all Muslims to forbid evil; when someone sees a wrong, they should correct it. It is the responsibility of the whole Muslim community (the ummah) to discourage others from harmful actions, such as bribery, corruption and dishonesty. This applies to individuals, families and the whole society.

'Whoever among you sees an evil should change it with his hand. If he is unable to do that then with his tongue. If he is unable to do that, then with his heart, and this is the weakest level of faith.'

Hadith

9 Tawalia (to love the friends of God)

Tawalia means having love for God and for the Prophet Muhammad. We should love all those who are friends of God: people who are truthful and kind, honest and fair. We should try to associate ourselves with people who are kind and trustworthy. For Shi'a Muslims it also means having love for the 'Ahl al-Bayt', the 12 infallible Imams who are the descendants of Prophet Muhammad.

10 Tabarra (to hate the evil-doers)

Muslims believe that it is important to dissociate themselves from the enemies of God. We should hate, and separate ourselves from, people who are impure and those who oppress others. However, Muslims often disagree on exactly who are the enemies of God.

Task

Copy and complete the table below.

Write each of the Ten Obligatory Acts (Furu ad-Din) in the first column. In the centre column write a definition for each term, in your own words. In the third column comment on whether the Shi'a beliefs differ from Sunni beliefs.

Obligatory act	Definition	Do Sunni and Shi'a Muslims have different views?



▶ Key differences between Sunni and Shi'a beliefs and practices

	Sunni	Shi'a
Qur'an	Sunnis believe that the Qur'an is an earthly copy of a heavenly original. Sunnis usually interpret the Qur'an literally, as it is read. They don't look for hidden meanings.	Shi'as say the Qur'an is not eternal, but was created by God as a guide for human beings. They believe that everything in it has a hidden meaning, which must be interpreted by special religious leaders (Imams).
Shahadah (statement of belief)	'I bear witness that there is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is the Prophet of God'.	Shi'as say the same Shahadah as Sunnis, but they add the phrase: 'and I bear witness that Ali was the friend of God'.
Salah (prayer)	Five prayer times every day.	Many Shi'as pray three times a day.
Zakah (giving)	Sunnis often pay Zakah to the state (government).	Shi'as pay Zakah to religious leaders. They also pay an additional Khums tax.
Sawm (fasting)	Fasting during Ramadan.	Shi'as fast in the same way, but they also spend three days during Ramadan mourning the death of Ali.
Hajj (pilgrimage)	Pilgrimage to Makkah.	Shi'as are expected to go on Hajj, but they also go on pilgrimage to other sites sacred to the Shi'a tradition (e.g. Karbala).
Prophethood	Risalah: Sunnis believe that Muhammad was the final prophet.	Nubuwwah: Like Sunnis, Shi'as believe that Muhammad was the last prophet, but they also believe that there have been 12 infallible Imams since Muhammad's death.
The appearance of the Mahdi	The Mahdi is the 'guided one' who will come on the Day of Judgement. Sunnis believe that he will appear in the end times, with Isa (Jesus), to rid the world of evil.	Shi'as too are awaiting the Mahdi, who will come on the last day, but they believe his identity will be revealed as the Hidden (or 12th) Imam.
Festivals	Sunnis celebrate Id-ul-Adha and Id-ul-Fitr.	In addition, Shi'as celebrate Ashura.
al-Qadr (predestination)	Sunnis believe that God has set out a plan or destiny for all things.	Many Shi'as reject predestination, saying that God cannot be responsible for evil. Humans have free will and are independent of God's authority in this life.
Imam (leadership)	For Sunnis, an Imam is a leader chosen by the community. He is an ordinary man.	For Shi'as an Imam is a holy figure. Most Shi'as believe that there have been 12 Imams who are all descendants of Muhammad. The first Imam was Ali, who was followed by his sons Hasan and then Husayn and passed on down through the generations.
Successors to Muhammad	Sunnis believe in the 'rightly guided' khalifahs, the four leaders who followed the death of Muhammad: Bak'r, Umar, Uthman and Ali.	Shi'as reject the 'rightly guided' khalifahs, seeing them as traitors of Islam. They believe that, Muhammad named Ali as the first Imam, not Abu Bakr.

▶ End of section review

Stickability

Key concepts:

- Jihad
- Mosque

Key teachings about:

- the Five Pillars of Sunni Islam
- the Ten Obligatory Acts of Shi'a Islam
- Id-ul-Adha
- Id-ul-Fitr
- Ashura

Knowledge check

- 1 Write a short paragraph (roughly three sentences) to explain what Muslims do on Hajj.
- 2 In your own words, explain why Muslims have different views about which festival is the most important.
- 3 Explain the importance of Zakah to Muslims.
- 4 How might Muslims differ in their views about what times fasting should start and finish during Ramadan?

Skills Link

- 1 What do Muslims mean by 'salah'?
- 2 Describe how Muslims perform Hajj.

The Big Question

'Muslims should always pray five times a day.'

Your Task

Respond to the statement above, showing that you have considered more than one point of view. Give reasoned judgements on the validity and strength of these views.

Task

You need to explain in detail religious teachings about **jihad**. Use the guidance below to help you to write a **developed explanation** for Islam. Ensure that you use key terms fluently and frequently.

All/many/most Muslims believe that This comes from the teaching/Qur'an quote

This means that/Because of this they

Some/other Muslims such as believe that This comes from the teaching/Qur'an quote

..... This means that/Because of this they.....

Finally, Muslims such as believe that This means that/Because of this they

Their beliefs do/do not differ because

▶ Exam focus

Islam: Practices

(c) questions

These questions expect you to ‘explain’ a key practice, belief or issue in the religions you have studied. There is a maximum of eight marks for this type of question. You need to use appropriate religious terms and relevant sources of wisdom or sacred texts. Look at the question below:

(c) Explain the importance of Zakah to Muslims. (8)

The question is asking you to explain the importance of Zakah. It is important that you don’t just give a description of what Zakah is. Eight marks are available, so it is important that your answer is detailed, using religious language/texts and referring to different beliefs or practices within Islam.

Draft an answer which focuses on the importance of Zakah. Remember to show the impact that Zakah might have on individuals and communities.

(d) questions

These are very important questions as they are worth 15 marks. The questions requires you to:

- ▶ read and understand a statement
- ▶ discuss this statement showing that you have considered more than one point of view. (You must refer to religion and belief in your answer.)

In your answers you are expected to apply your knowledge and understanding from the whole of your study to the question.

Take for example the following question:

(d) Discuss the view that for Muslims pilgrimage is out of date in the twenty-first century. (15)

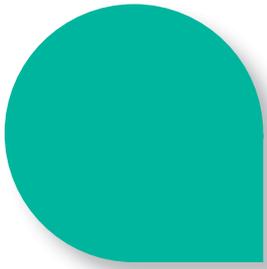
(You must refer to religion and belief in your answer.)

The evidence could come from any relevant part of your study.

For example, you might refer to your study about the importance of Muhammad and argue that pilgrimage is important because Muslims can go and see places where the Prophet lived and taught.

Look at the following four areas of your study. For each consider how this might be used as evidence in your answer:

- ▶ Ummah
- ▶ How Sunni Muslims make pilgrimage to Makkah
- ▶ Pilgrimage to Shi’a shrines
- ▶ Issues relating to Muslims in Britain



Judaism

■ The Big Picture

Key Concepts



Synagogue House of assembly; building for Jewish public prayer, study and assembly.

Shekhinah The place where God's presence rests and can be felt.

Shabbat Day of spiritual renewal and rest. Beginning at sunset on Friday and closing at nightfall on Saturday.

Kosher Means 'fit' or 'proper'. Foods that are permitted to be eaten according to Leviticus 11. It is also used to refer to the purity of ritual objects such as Torah scrolls.

Torah The five books of Moses (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy). Regarded as the holiest books of the Tenakh.

Mitzvot The term has a mix of meanings. It is often used to refer to duties (such as the 613 in the Torah) and good deeds.

Messiah The anointed one who Jews believe will bring in a new era or age for humankind. This will include rebuilding the Temple and bringing in an age of universal peace.

Covenant A promise or agreement between two parties. Covenants were made between God with Noah, Abraham and Moses.

Core Questions



What is God like?

What do Jews believe about the Messiah?

Why are Abraham and Moses important to many Jews today?

Do Jews have free will?

Why is life so special?

What do Jews believe about the afterlife?

Which is more important: the home or the synagogue?

Is keeping kosher still important for Jews today?

Why does a Jewish burial happen as soon as possible after death?

What does Pesach celebrate?

Do all Jews celebrate Shabbat in the same way?

Overview

The section on beliefs and teachings explores the nature of God in Judaism and how Jews' relationship with God influences their beliefs and daily life in twenty-first-century Britain. Throughout the chapter you will see that there are many different Jewish beliefs and practices. From a consideration of the nature of God you will then move on to explore different beliefs about the Messiah. You will consider the importance of covenants and the impact that God's covenant with Abraham and Moses has on twenty-first-century Jewish belief and practice. You will then move on to consider the importance of life in Judaism and the relationship between free will and mitzvot.

Finally, in beliefs and teachings, you will explore the different beliefs and teachings about life after death and different beliefs concerning judgement and resurrection.

As you move on to Jewish practices you will explore Jewish practices and worship in twenty-first-century Britain. You will firstly consider the importance of the worship of God in Judaism and how this happens both in the synagogue and at home. Important prayers and the role of items used for worship will be considered. You will then move on to recognise the importance of the synagogue as a place of worship, a place of study and a place for the community. Opportunities will be given for you to consider issues relevant to life in modern Britain.

Within Judaism there are many different rituals as part of the lifecycle. You will study the importance and meaning of practices connected with brit milah, bar mitzvah, bat mitzvah, marriage and mourning. The importance of the Tenakh will be considered – not only the practice of keeping kosher but also for the origins and celebrations of Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Pesach and Sukkot.

Throughout this chapter you will see there are many differing views, which reflect not only the branches of Judaism, for example Reform and Orthodox, but also personal conviction and family tradition.

Task

Discuss some of the 'core questions' on page 278 in pairs. Write a brief answer to one of them, showing you have thought about different perspectives.



In the next two chapters you will look at Jewish beliefs, teachings and practices in modern Britain.

▶ What do Jews believe?

This is not an easy question to answer! As we will see there is a great diversity of beliefs and practices among Jews. In the twelfth century Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon (known as Maimonides) put together 13 principle beliefs that were in the Torah. For many Orthodox Jews these remain central beliefs. Some principles are accepted by all Jews, such as the belief in one God. For some principles, such as a belief in a Messiah, there are many different views and interpretations.

Maimonides' 13 principles of faith

- 1 God exists, is perfect and created everything in existence
- 2 Belief in God's unity
- 3 God does not have a physical body and so is not affected by the same needs as humans
- 4 God is eternal
- 5 Only God should be worshipped
- 6 God communicates with people through prophets
- 7 Moses is the most important prophet
- 8 The Torah was given to Moses by God
- 9 The Torah is God's law and cannot be changed
- 10 God is all knowing and knows everything that is going to happen
- 11 God will reward good and punish evil
- 12 The belief that the Messiah will come
- 13 The dead will be resurrected

▶ Diversity of Judaism in Britain

As we will see throughout this chapter, Judaism is a worldwide religion with many different Jewish communities. Britain has the second largest Jewish population in Europe and the fifth largest worldwide. Often Jewish people are labelled as if they all share the same beliefs and practices, but they don't. Although you belong to a certain class in your school, each student in that class will have different views and practices, as well as similarities. Sometimes these views have been shaped by their family traditions or beliefs, sometimes from the area they come from and sometimes from their own reasoning.

This is the same with Judaism. As we will see, there are many different views, beliefs and practices, some of which change over time and some that don't. Throughout the chapter, key questions will be identified, about which there are many different views and considerations.

The main Jewish groups in the UK include:

- ▶ Orthodox Jews – the largest branch of Judaism in Britain. Orthodox Jews believe that God gave the Torah at Mount Sinai and Jews must follow it.
- ▶ Reform Jews – believe that Jewish practices have to be harmonised with modern life.

Within each of these there is a diversity of beliefs and practices.

There are also differences in practices based on country of origin including:

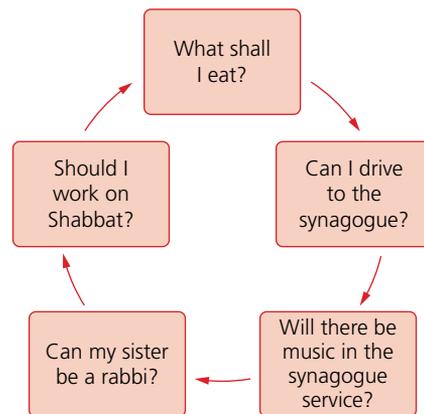
- ▶ Ashkenazi Jews who have descended from Jews from France, Germany and Eastern Europe.
- ▶ Sephardic Jews who have descended from Jews from Spain, Portugal, North Africa and the Middle East.

Key Concepts

Torah The five books of Moses (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy). Regarded as the holiest books of the Tenakh.

Mitzvot The term has a mix of meanings. It is often used to refer to duties and good deeds.

There are many different views among Jews concerning the degree of observance that is paid to the teachings of the **Torah**. Each Jew must decide if they will follow it all as originally intended or whether they believe that religion should adapt and change. The decision will make a difference to the way in which they live their lives.



What Jewish people think on issues like these will be based on their interpretations of teachings from the Torah.

Orthodox Jews

Orthodox Jews try to live as close to the teachings of the Torah as possible. They believe it came from God and so it cannot be changed. God is the law-giver whose words must be obeyed rather than interpreted. They will try to observe the 613 **mitzvot**. They believe that God gave rules about how lives should be lived and those rules are constant. Any technological or scientific advances must be considered within Jewish teachings. Society may change but Jewish teachings don't.

It must be remembered that within the Orthodox community there are many different communities. A growing movement in Britain are the Charedi, sometimes known as ultra-orthodox, whose ideal lifestyle is dedication to the study and practice of the Torah.

Talmud commentary on the Mishnah, which includes teachings and stories. The term usually refers to the Babylonian Talmud, although there is also a Jerusalem Talmud which is older.

Reform Jews

It wasn't until the Reform movement that large numbers of Jews departed from more traditional Orthodox teachings. Most Reform Jews believe that only the ethical laws of the Torah are binding. Additionally, they believe that other laws, like those in the **Talmud**, were products of their time and place, and so it is not necessary to treat them as absolute. Jews from the Reform movement consider the Torah and its teachings important but they believe that religion should move with the times and do not take the teachings of the Torah literally. How far they interpret teachings depends upon their own reasoning and conscience.

Secular Jews

Some Jews do not believe in God and do not see that the teachings of the Torah are sacred. They are secular Jews who are born to Jewish parents but do not observe the religious practices or teachings of Judaism.

▶ Country of origin

Throughout history Jews have been forced to move between countries. This is one of the reasons why there are small communities of Jews throughout the world.

Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jews are two distinct communities of Jews. Although they have some different practices and use some different terms in worship, they have the same basic beliefs.

- ▶ **Ashkenazi Jews** are the Jews of France, Germany, and Eastern Europe and their descendants. Most British Jews today are Ashkenazi and descend from Jews who emigrated from Germany and Eastern Europe from the mid-1800s to the early 1900s.
- ▶ **Sephardic Jews** are the Jews of Spain, Portugal, North Africa and the Middle East and their descendants. Sephardic Jews are often subdivided into Sephardim, from Spain and Portugal, and Mizrachim, from North Africa and the Middle East. In Britain there are about ten Sephardic synagogues with the oldest being Bevis Marks Synagogue in London, which was built in 1701.

Tasks

- 1 What is the Torah?
- 2 Consider the quotes below. Decide whether a Reform or Orthodox Jew is more likely to say one or the other. Copy and complete the table below.

Quote	Reform or Orthodox?
The Torah is important but we have to move with the times.	
The Torah came from God and must not be changed.	
God gave the rules to live by and those are eternal.	
We need to interpret the mitzvot of the Torah according to the circumstances in which we live.	

- 3 In your own words explain why there are different beliefs and practices among Jews.