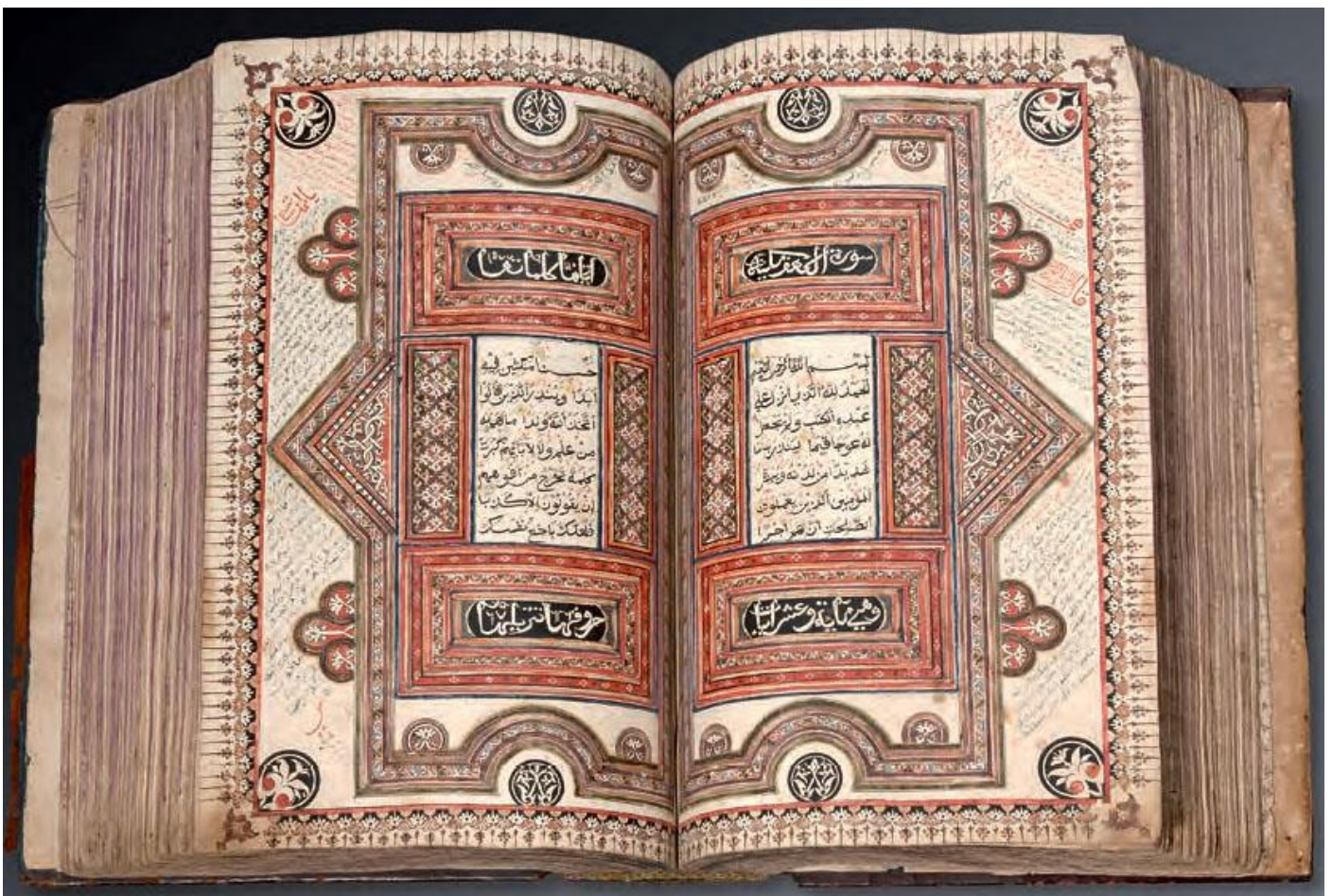


GCSE Religious Studies

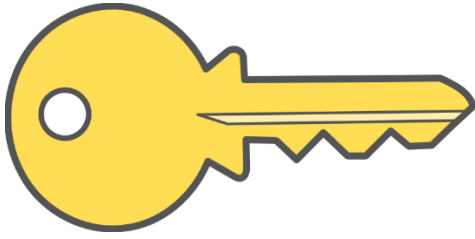
Islam:

Beliefs and Teachings

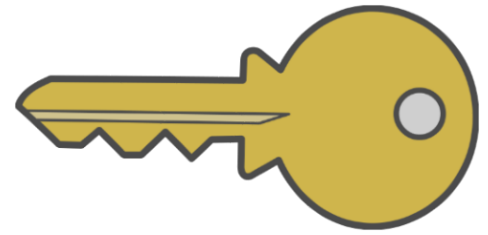


Name:

Key Concepts in



Islam



1. **Tawhid:** 'Oneness' in reference to The basic Muslim belief in the oneness of God.
2. **Prophethood or 'risalah':** Messengers of God, beginning with and Eve and ending with the Prophet Muhammad.
3. **Halal (permitted):** Actions or things which are permitted within Islam, such as eating permitted
4. **Haram (forbidden):** Actions or things which are within Islam, such as eating forbidden foods.
5.: To 'strive'. There are two forms of jihad. The jihad is the daily struggle to live as a Muslim. The lesser jihad is a physical struggle or 'holy war' in of Islam.
6. **Mosque or 'masjid':** A place of for Muslims. It is a communal place of worship for the Muslim community.
7. **Shari'ah (straight path):** A way of; Muslims believe God has set out a clear for how Muslims should live. Shari'ah law is the set of moral and religious that put the principles set out by the Qur'an and the Hadith into practice.
8. **Ummah:** Means 'community'. Refers to the worldwide of Muslims who share a common religious

Word Box

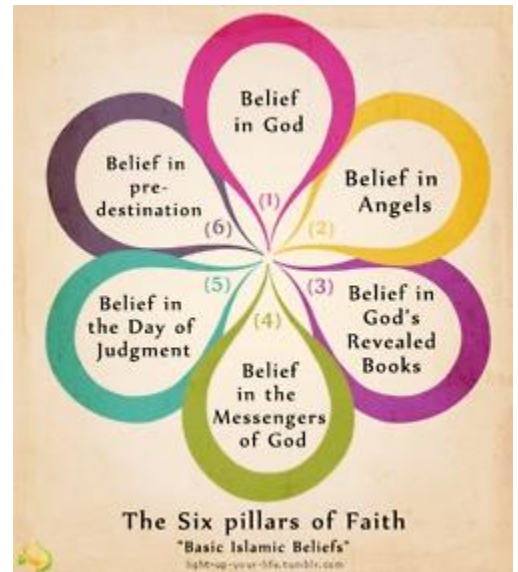
foods
identity
Jihad
path
defence
Adam
rules
God
greater
forbidden
prostration
life
community



You will need to learn these words and definitions for your exam! In our a) style questions, you will have to give a definition and an example for each word!

Six Articles of Faith in Sunni Islam

There is no official creed in Islam. (A creed is a set statement of faith that all religious believers follow.) However, 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 or 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.

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

Six Articles of Faith: Questions

1. What is a creed?

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2. What, for Muslims, define their understanding of God?

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3. What is Muhammad recorded as saying?

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4. What is the Muslim belief about Allah?

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5. What is the Muslim belief about angels?

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6. What is the Muslim belief about holy books?

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7. What is the Muslim belief about prophethood?

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8. What is the Muslim belief about the afterlife?

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9. What other important beliefs exist?

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10. What is the difference between the greater and lesser jihad?

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Five Roots of Religion in Usul ad-Din in Shi'a 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.

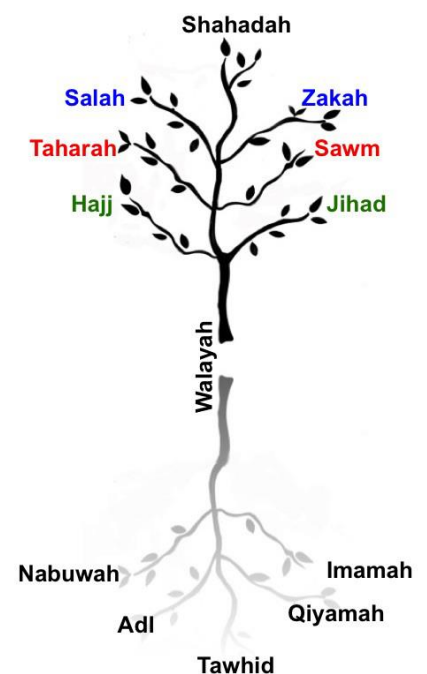
Usul ad-Din, the five roots of religion, can also be referred to as the 'foundation of faith'. These are:

1. 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 possesses infinite power and knowledge
- He is immortal (he was never born) and has no partner or children
- He alone should be worshipped
- "He is God [who is] One, God, the Eternal Refuge."** (Qur'an 112:1-2)

2. Justice of God (Adl or Adalah)

- God is perfect justice, fairness and wisdom. He does not wrong anyone and will not tolerate wrongdoing
- God 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 and bad



3. Prophethood (Nubuwwah)

- a. God has appointed prophets and messengers to guide humans, showing them how to live in peace and submission to God
- b. God sent 124000 prophets; some of these brought God's divine scriptures with them
- c. Muhammad was the Seal of the Prophets, meaning that he brought the final, perfect and unchanging message of God

4. Leadership (Imamate)

- a. Muhammad was the last prophet (most Muslims believe). Shi'as believe that after his death, God appointed 12 infallible Imams to guide the Muslim community, leading them on the path set by Prophet Muhammad. These Imams are part of what Shi'as call Ahl al-Bayt (the Family of the House)
- b. The Imams are part of Prophet Muhammad's extended household
- c. Of the 12 Imams, 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. This 12th Imam is sometimes referred to as 'Mahdi'

5. Resurrection (Qayamat)

- a. The Day of Judgement will bring the resurrection, when all humans will be physically raised to life to be judged by God
- b. God will reward the good and punish the evil
- c. **"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)



Five Roots of Religion: Questions

1. Who is God reveal the Qur'an to?

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2. What can 'Usal ad'Din' also be known as?

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3. Explain the Muslim belief in the Oneness of God.

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4. Explain the Muslim belief in the justice of God.

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5. Explain the Muslim belief in prophethood.

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6. Explain the Muslim beliefs about leadership.

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7. Explain the Muslim belief about the resurrection.

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The Nature of God (Allah)

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:** Close by
- **Transcendent:** Beyond all things; not limited by nature
- **Omniscient:** All-knowing
- **Beneficent:** Always kind; loving
- **Merciful:** Fair; God forgives 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.

The 99 names of God

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 of 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 throughout the centuries.

"Vision perceived Him not, but He perceives [all] vision; and He is the Subtle, the Acquainted." (Qur'an 6:103)

Al-Fatiha
In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful (1)
Praise be to Allah, Lord of the Worlds, (2) The Beneficent, the Merciful. (3) Owner of the Day of Judgment, (4) Thee (alone) we worship; Thee (alone) we ask for help. (5) Show us the straight path, (6) The path of those whom Thou hast favoured. Not (the path) of those who earn Thine anger nor of those who go astray. (7)

The Nature of God: Questions

1. What is the most important belief in Islam?

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2. What does 'immanent' mean?

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3. What does 'transcendent' mean?

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4. What does 'omniscient' mean?

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5. What does 'beneficent' mean?

.....

6. In Shi'a Islam, what is the emphasis on?

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7. What is the al-Fatihah?

.....

8. Give three examples of the 99 names of God.

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.....

9. Why do Muslims use many names for God?

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God: One, Eternal, Absolute

Islam is a monotheistic faith; it teaches that there is only one God. 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.

The sin of shirk

Islam warns of the sin of shirk (associating other beings or things with God). 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.

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.

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 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.

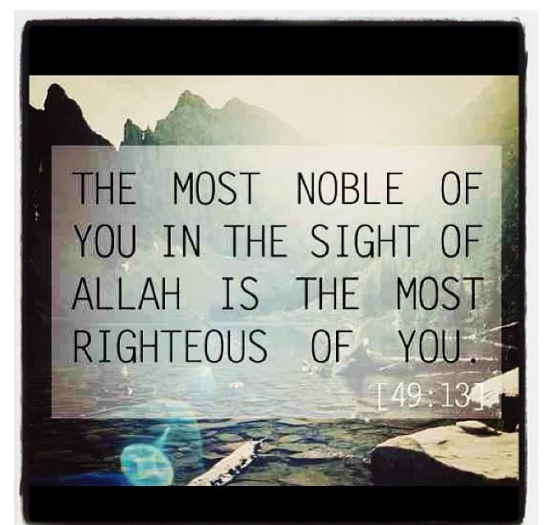
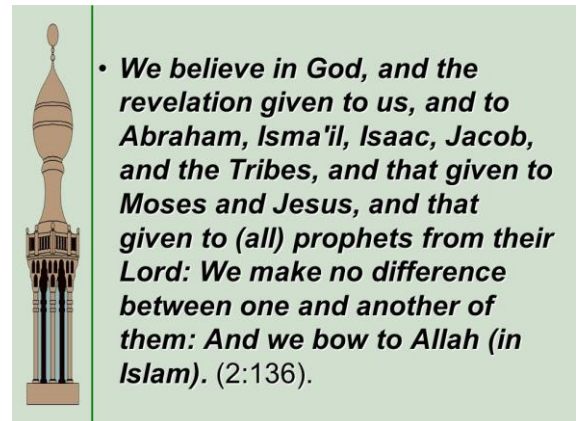
"This is the Book about which there is no doubt, a guidance for those conscious of God." (Qur'an 2:2)

Fitrah, the 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 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.

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.

God: Questions

1. What does 'monotheistic' mean?

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2. What is the sin of shirk?

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3. How does God communicate with humans?

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4. Why do Muslims believe that God has a duty to guide humans?

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.....

5. What is 'revelation'?

.....

6. Who was God's final and perfect message given to?

.....

7. Explain the Muslim belief about 'fitrah'.

.....

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8. Explain the Muslim belief about 'taqwa'.

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9. Who are hanifs and what did they believe?

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10. What do some people say about Muhammad's grandfather and what was learnt from him?

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Risalah: Prophethood

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

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.

"We have already sent messengers before you and assigned to them wives and descendants."
(Quran 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.

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)



Bringing God's message

Islam teaches that God 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 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.

Muslim tradition says that, in total, there have been around 124,000 prophets and that, once a prophet has 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.

Risalah: Questions

1. What is 'risalah'?

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2. What are the prophets chosen to do?

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3. What is the message preached by all the prophets?

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4. How was Muhammad devout?

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.....
5. How many prophets are mentioned by name in the Qur'an?

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.....
6. Approximately how many prophets have there been?

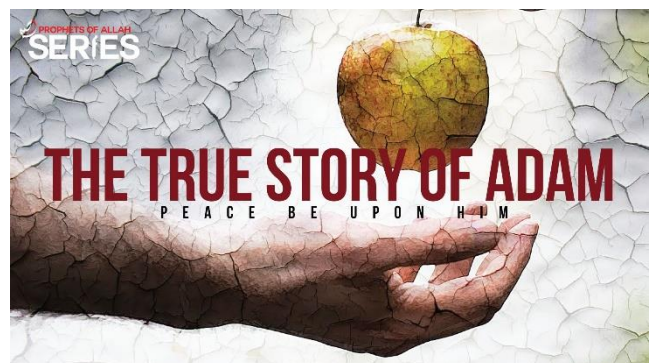
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7. What does PBUH mean?

The Prophets

In Islam, the major prophets (apart from Muhammad) are: Adam, Irbahim, 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.

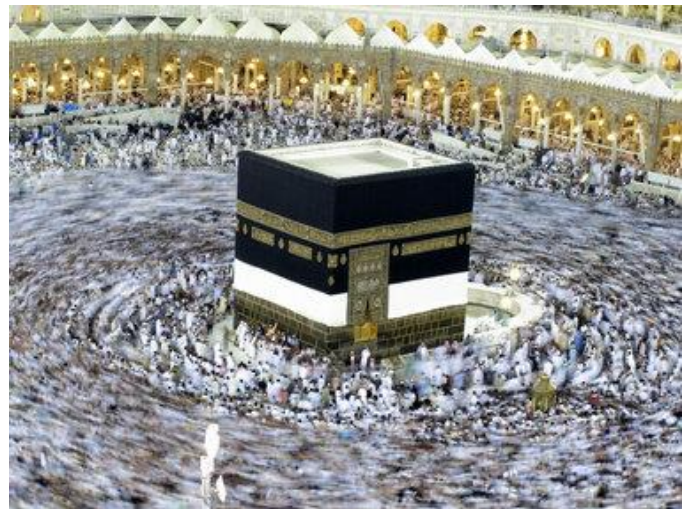
Muslims believe that Adam was created as God's "khalifah" (his representative on earth). It was his job to rule in the place of God. Tradition says that he built the first **Ka'ba** (House of God – the black covered, cube-shaped building at the centre of Islam's holiest mosque) in Makkah.

Ibrahim

Ibrahim (Abraham) regarded himself as a hanif. This means that he had an inner knowledge that there is 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 (people who believe in many Gods), 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 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 (Jesus) and his mother Maryam (Mary) are the most prominent figures in the Qur'an, after Muhammad. It recognises Isa as a prophet and as a successor to Moses. He was given the Injil (Gospels) and he performed miracles. However, Muslims deny the Christian teaching of the Trinity and reject the belief that Isa is God. They say God is 'one' not 'three'.

The Qur'an teaches that, although it appeared as if Isa 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)



The Prophets: Questions

1. Who are the major prophets in Islam?

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2. What does 'khalifah' mean?

.....

3. What did Adam build?

.....

4. What are polytheists?

.....
5. Who were Ibrahim's two sons?

.....
6. What is the belief about the 'scrolls of Ibrahim'?

.....
7. Why is Musa considered important?

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8. Why is Dawud considered important?

.....
9. Who are the most prominent figures in the Qur'an, after Muhammad?

.....
10. What does the Qur'an say about Isa's crucifixion?
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The Prophet Muhammad:

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.

Who was Muhammad?

Muhammad was born in Makkah (in Arabia) in 570CE, but by the age of 6 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

Muhammad started to spend more time alone in prayer and solitude and one night, in the year 610CE, 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 even 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.



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 every day life.

"Not once did I receive a revelation without thinking that my soul had been torn away." (Hadith)

Prophet Muhammad's message

The message 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'.

Early Life in Makkah: Questions

1. What makes Muhammad so important?

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2. Who was Muhammad?

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3. What did Muhammad see in Makkah as he grew older?

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4. What happened on the Night of Power?

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5. How long did it take Muhammad to receive the Qur'an?

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6. What are the three elements of Prophet Muhammad's message?

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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 into 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 (Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law) insisted in staying behind in Makkah, to act as a decoy, whilst Muhammad made the journey. The migration of Muhammad from Makkah to Yathrib is known as the Hijrah. It marks the start of the Muslim calendar.

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 of 354 days.

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 are 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 630CE he has 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.



Madinah today

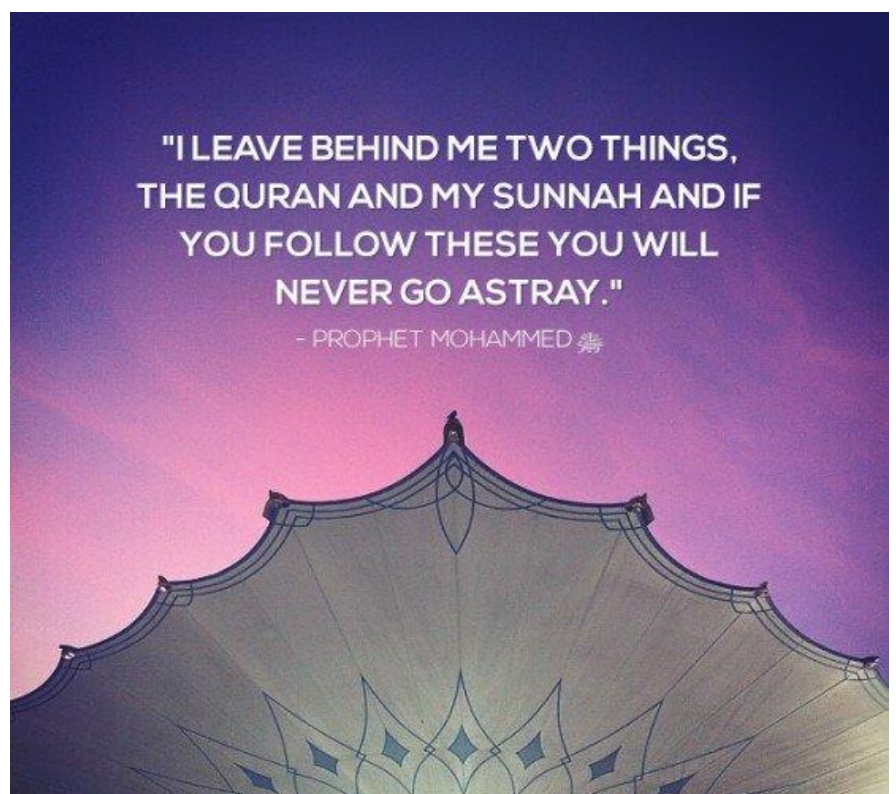
Makkah was taken without the shedding of a drop of blood and the Ka'ba was cleansed of idols and re-dedicated to Allah.

Muhammad returns to Makkah triumphant

In 630CE Muhammad and his followers were able to return to Makkah, where they forgave their enemies and established Islam as a permanent religion. Muhammad was not accepted as the final and true prophet of God. He continued to lead his community until his death in 632CE.

"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)



Madhinah: Questions

1. What tragedy struck Muhammad in Makkah?

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2. What is Hijrah?

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3. Explain the Muslim calendar.

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4. Who stayed in Makkah to act as a decoy?

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5. In Yathrib, what did Muhammad become?

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6. What was Yathrib renamed as and what does it mean?

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7. How many men did Muhammad have to march on Makkah?

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8. What was amazing about Muhammad's victory over Makkah?

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9. What happened after Makkah was established as a centre for Muslim worship?

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10. What did Muhammad say he left behind?

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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 purpose 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 also communicate with humans.

The nature of angels

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 are always described as male.



Angels mentioned by name

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

1. **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
2. **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
3. **Israfil** (Raphael) is the archangel who will blow the trumpet on the Day of Judgement to announce the resurrection of all from the dead
4. **Azrail** is the archangel that takes souls at death
5. **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
6. **Munkar** and **Nakir** are the two terrifying, judging angels who will question each person after their death, testing their faith

Malaikah (angels): Questions

1. What does Islam teach about angels?

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2. What is the role of angels?

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3. Describe the nature of angels.

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4. Where are the angels mentioned by name?

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5. Who is Jibril and what is he responsible for?

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6. What is Mika'il responsible for?

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7. What is Israfil responsible for?

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8. What is Azrail responsible for?

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9. What do Raqib and Atid do?

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10. What do Munkar and Nakir do?

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Islamic Holy Books

God's Message

Muslims believe that God has sent messages 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 Arabic word for book is 'kitab' (plural 'kutub'). The Qur'an is known as Umm-ul-Kitab: 'Mother of Books'

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 the prophets. Muslims have a respect for all previous scriptures from the messengers of God, but they see the Qur'an as the completion of the earlier books.

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 as guidance and mercy and good tidings for the Muslims." (Qur'an 16:89)

GUIDANCE FOR THE WORLDS

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 Christian 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.

1. **Sahifah**: The Scrolls of Ibrahim, now lost
2. **Tawrat** (Torah): the revelation given to Musa (Moses)
3. **Zabur** (Psalms): given to Dawud (David)
4. **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 call 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.'



Holy Books: Questions

1. What are communication from God known as?

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2. What is the Qur'an free from?
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3. What do Sunni Muslims say about the Qur'an?
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4. How do Muslims use the Qur'an in their lives?
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5. What are 'kutub'?
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6. Why are the 'kutub' not trusted to be the word of God?
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7. What are the four holy books taken from Judaism and Christianity?
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8. What is the Hadith?
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9. Why is the Hadith not a revelation?
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10. What did Muhammad's third wife say about Muhammad?
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Akhirah: the afterlife

For Muslims, this world is not all there is. Our human existence will continue after death; our earthy 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

Many signs will mark the end of the world, but the most importance will be the appearance of 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.

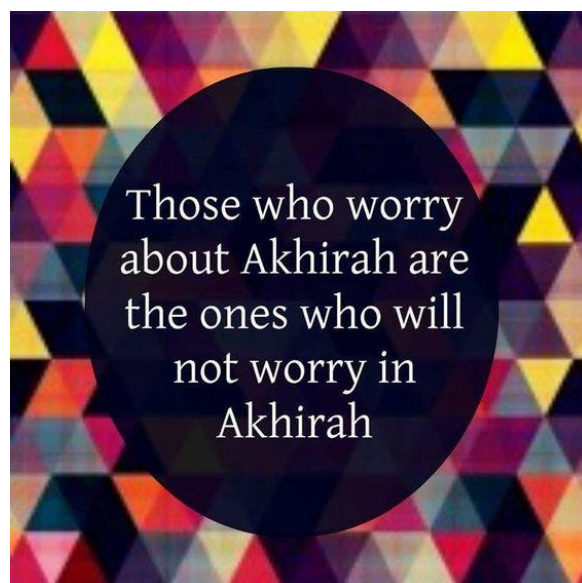
Day of Judgement: the test

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?



Akhirah: Questions

1. What is our earthly life a preparation for?

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2. What is Akhirah?

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3. What role will the Angel Israfil play?

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4. State at least three signs of the end of the world.

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5. What will happen on the Day of Judgement?

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6. On the Day of Judgement, a book is placed in your hand. What is its importance?

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7. What is in the book?

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8. How are people judged?

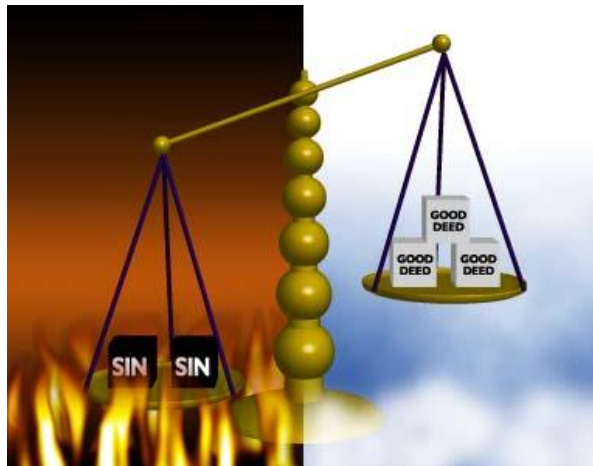
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Judgement: heaven and hell

God weighs our deeds

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 to just 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.

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.

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.

Heaven (**Janna**) is 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.

Hell (**Jahannam**) is 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, which 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.

Judgement: Questions

1. Which action will be written down by God as a bad deed?

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2. How does God test people's faith?

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3. What is Barzakh?

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4. Explain the Muslim idea of heaven (Janna).

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5. Explain the Muslim idea of hell (Jahannam).

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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 human, 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 the earth and knows what you conceal and what you declare. And God is Knowing of that within the breasts." (Qur'an 64:4)

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 of 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 plans if God is also willing to make it happen.

Insha'Allah: 'if God allows 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, disease and disasters. It is easy to see how good can come out of things which cause 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)



Al-Qadr: Questions

1. What is al-Qadr?

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2. What does the Qur'an tell us about God's knowledge?

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3. What does 'Insha'Allah' mean?

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4. What does saying 'Insha'Allah' express belief in?

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5. According to Islam, how can good things come out of suffering?

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6. What are we accountable for?

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7. What does God want us to follow?

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8. What is central to Islamic thought?

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