

Muslim Beliefs and Teachings Revision Guide



Check through the list below to make sure you have revised all content.

Key Beliefs	✓ Done
The six articles of faith in Sunni Islam and five roots of Usul ad-Din in Shi'a Islam, including key similarities and differences.	
Tawhid (the Oneness of God), Qur'an Surah 112.	
The nature of God: omnipotence, beneficence, mercy, fairness and justice/Adalat in Shi'a Islam, including different ideas about God's relationship with the world: immanence and transcendence.	
Angels, their nature and role, including Jibril and Mika'il.	
Predestination and human freedom and its relationship to the Day of Judgement.	
Aakhirah (life after death), human responsibility and accountability, resurrection, heaven and hell.	
Authority	
Risalah (Prophethood) including the role and importance of Adam, Ibrahim and Muhammad.	
The holy books:	
Qur'an: revelation and authority	
the Torah, the Psalms, the Gospel, the Scrolls of Abraham and their authority.	
The imamate in Shi'a Islam: its role and significance.	

NAME: _____

Key terms and definitions

Adalat - The concept of justice in Shi'a Islam

Adam - One of the prophets of Allah. The father of humankind. He built the Ka'aba.

Allah - The Islamic name for God.

Akhirah - Belief in life after death.

Angels - They are spiritual beings created from elements of light. They gave Gods messages to the prophets and watch over humans.

Authority - As the direct Word of Allah, the Qur'an has supreme authority. This means its truths must be believed and its commands obeyed.

Beneficence - Literally 'doing good'. One of the 99 Beautiful Names of Allah, it refers to the generosity that Allah shows to humans.

Day of Judgement - The day when Allah will decide about individual deeds, good and bad, and on reward or punishment.

Fairness - This refers to Allah's justice. He treats all humans equally and as they deserve.

The five roots of Usul ad-Din - The foundations of the faith in Shi'a Islam. They consist of five key beliefs: *Tawhid* (the Oneness of Allah), *Adalat* (justice), *prophethood* (nubuwwah), *imamate* (leadership).

The Gospel - The term means 'good news' and it is the good news about Isa (Jesus), one of the prophets of Islam. It was written down by his disciples.

Heaven - Referred to by Muslims as paradise. It is Allah's reward after death to those who have been faithful to Allah and who have repented of their sins.

Hell - It is a place of great suffering after death for those who have rejected the Qur'an's teachings and have led a wicked life. For some it will last forever.

Human accountability - The belief that everyone must take responsibility for their actions and will be questioned about them on the Day of Judgement.

Human freedom - Humans have control over their thoughts, feelings and actions.

Human responsibility - Humans are responsible for most of what they do because they have free will and so will be accountable on the Day of Judgement.

Ibrahim - One of the prophets of Allah. He rebuilt the Ka'aba.

The imamate - It means 'leadership' and refers in Shi'a Islam to the twelve imams who succeeded Muhammad as the leaders of Islam.

Immanence - The belief that Allah is close to humanity and involved in the world.

Islam -

The name of the religion followed by Muslims.

To surrender to the will of God.

Peace.

Jibril - The most important of the angels and spoke with many of the prophets of Allah. Jibril dictated the Qur'an to Muhammad. On Judgement Day he will assist with the weighing of a person's deeds.

Life after death - Akhirah. Muslims believe that death is not the end.

Mercy - One of Allah's 99 Beautiful Names. It refers to Allah's willingness to forgive the sins of those who repent.

Mika'il - One of the most important angels. He gives spiritual and material help to humans. On Judgement Day he will assist with the weighing of a person's deeds.

Mosque - The Muslim place of worship.

Muslim - One who has submitted to the will of Allah and has accepted Islam.

Muhammad - The last and greatest of the prophets of Allah. He received the Qur'an and his Sunnah and Hadiths are also important sources of authority.

The Night of Power - The name for the night on which Muhammad received the first revelations of the Qur'an.

Omnipotence - One of the 99 Beautiful Names of Allah. It refers to Allah's ability to do anything.

The Oneness of God - Tawhid. It refers to the unity of Allah. Islam is a monotheistic religion.

Predestination - This is the idea that everything that happens has been decided already by Allah.

Prophethood - Risalah. Channel of communication with God. Three prophets are set for study: Adam, Ibrahim and Muhammad.

The Psalms - Sacred prayers/poems written by King Dawud (David) who was himself a prophet of Allah.

The Qur'an - The Holy Book revealed to the Prophet Muhammad by the angel Jibril. Allah's final revelation to humankind.

Resurrection - After death, all people will be raised from the dead to face Allah's judgement. This is a physical resurrection.

Revelation - Allah shows his nature and his will to believers through the words of the Qur'an.

Risalah - Prophethood. The channel of communication between Allah and humanity. Three prophets are set for study: Adam, Ibrahim and Muhammad.

The Scrolls of Abraham - These were individual revelations to Ibrahim that were written on parchment but have perished. They were given on the first day of Ramadan and consisted of stories.

The Shahadah - Muslim declaration of faith. It is a statement of faith in Allah as the only God and in Muhammad as Allah's prophet. The 1st of the Five Pillars for Sunni Muslims. In Shi'a Islam it is not a separate Pillar and it has two additional statements relating to Ali as beloved of Allah and the rightful trustee and successor of Muhammad.

Shi'a Islam - Muslims who believe in the Imamah, successorship of Ali.

Surah - A division (chapter) of the Qur'an. There are 114 in all.

Sunni Islam - Muslims who believe in the successorship of Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman and Ali.

Tawhid - The oneness and unity of Allah. Islam is a monotheistic religion.

The Torah - This was given by Allah to Musa (Moses), who was a prophet of Allah. It was given on Mt. Sinai.

Key Beliefs

The six articles of faith in the Sunni tradition of Islam (arkan al-iman)

These are the fundamental beliefs accepted by all Sunni Muslims:

1. *Belief in the divine unity of Allah (Tawhid)*. There is only one God, Allah.
2. *Belief in angels (Malaikah)*. Angels communicate the message of God to humans.
3. *Belief in the prophets (Risalah)*. Muhammad, whose name means 'highly praised', is the most important prophet of God.
4. *Belief in the revealed books/scriptures (Kutub)*. The Qur'an (meaning recitation) is the most important writing and the highest authority in Islam.
5. *Belief in the afterlife/resurrection (akhirah) and the Day of Judgement (Yam al-Qiyamah)*. The Day of Judgement is when all humanity will be judged by God and sent to paradise or hell.
6. *Belief in predestination/determining (al-Qadr)*. The supremacy of God's will means that God already knows everything but also makes everything happen in the world and in human lives.

These six articles underpin religious life for Muslims. They influence all aspects of life. If Muslims believe in the absolute power of Allah, then they will live their lives according to His will. The angels are writing up all thoughts and actions, and people will have to justify them, so this makes Muslims think about how they approach life and the people around them. This shows that life here is a test for the afterlife and few have a guaranteed place in paradise because it has to be earned.

To know what the right thing to do is, Muslims have the teachings of the prophets, along with the examples of the lives of the prophets, such as Muhammad and Ibrahim, and the ultimate guide in the Qur'an. If they are to live according to how Allah wants, then paradise is on offer to them. Muslims know what they can easily follow the wrong path and that they have to make the right choices with the free will they have been given. Allah knows our actions before we even think about what we do.

The first five of these articles are mentioned in the Qur'an:

“The truly good are those who believe in God and the Last Day, in the angels, the Scripture and the prophets.”
(2:177)

“You who believe, believe in God and His Messenger and in the Scripture He sent down to His messenger, as well as what he sent down before. Anyone who does not believe in God, His angels, His Scriptures, His messengers, and the Last Day has gone far, far, astray.”
(4:136)

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

These are the five fundamental beliefs that should be accepted if one wishes to follow the Shi'a tradition. Although some of these overlap with the six articles, there are some differences in their contents and understanding. For example, Shi'as accept the belief in the Imams, and they have a different understanding of free will. The five roots are:

1. *The belief in the oneness and divine unity of Allah (Al-Tawhid)*. Tawhid means that God is One, that God is **not** made up of different persons.
2. *The belief in the divine justice of Allah (Adalat)*. God is just and wise, cannot do wrong, and holds humans accountable for their actions.
3. *The belief in prophethood (Al-Nubuwah)*. Prophethood means accepting that Muhammad is God's last prophet, and that God's revelations through him are true.
4. *The belief in the Imamate (Al-Imamah)*. The Imamate means accepting that the twelve Imams are the leaders of Islam and guard the truth of the religion without error.
5. *The belief in the day of resurrection (Al-Mad'ad)*. Shi'a Muslims believe that after death they will be resurrected to be judged by God.

Usul ad-Din means 'the foundations of the faith'. The Ten Obligatory Acts stem from these foundations. The Twelver Shi'a (the largest group within Shi'a Islam) follow these roots and are encouraged to understand why they follow them, what they mean and how the roots link to the way they practice their faith.

Similarities and differences between Sunni and Shi'a beliefs

- ✓ Tawhid of Allah: Both agree that Allah is one, the God for all and that shirk (the worship of other gods) is wrong and a grave sin.
- ✓ Adalat of Allah: Although both accept that Allah is just, Shi'as have a different understanding of how he is just. This is tied to their different view of free will, and is one of the main ways which these two branches differ.
- ✓ Angels: Both believe that angels perform the duties of Allah and that they have no free will. Especially important is Jibril who brings the revelation to the prophets.

- ✓ Prophets: Both believe that Allah sent the same message of Islam to different prophets since the creation of the first human, Adam.
- ✓ Revealed books: Both accept the same list of revealed books and that only the Qur'an is the true unaltered words of Allah. There are differences over how the Qur'an should have been organised.
- ✓ Akhirah: Both believe in the Day of Resurrection and the Day of Judgement, and in heaven and hell. However, there are different views over whether humans are truly free or if their views are predestined.
- ✗ Imams: This is the main difference between Sunnis and Shi'as. To Sunnis the Imam is an educated male who leads the prayers (especially Friday prayers.) In the Shi'a tradition it is Muhammad's successor who is infallible, has divine wisdom and comes from the Ahl al-Bayt.

The Nature of God

Everyday Muslims hear and say the words 'Allahu Akbar', which means 'God is the greatest.' Muslims believe that God is so great that he is beyond all human understanding, and greater than anything humans can imagine. Yet Muslims have firm beliefs about what God is like. Muslims believe God has revealed himself to people through Muhammad and the holy books. There are 99 names of God in the Qur'an and the Hadith (collection of sayings by Muhammad). Each name describes a quality that God has revealed about himself. Many Muslims memorise the names of God and recite them when they are praying privately. Each name helps them to feel God's presence. Some names show God's power, might and authority; others show God's love and care for human beings.

"The Most Excellent Names belong to God: use them to call on Him." (7:180)

"He is with you wherever you are." (57:4)

"This is God, you Lord, there is no God but Him, the Creator of all things, so worship Him; He is in charge of everything. No vision can take Him in, but He takes in all vision. He is the All Subtle, the All Aware." (6:102-103)

Qualities of God

- **Oneness** (tawhid): Muslims believe that Allah is One God, indivisible and absolute; nothing comes close to Him as the ultimate source of power and creation. He is totally supreme. There is nothing that can be likened to Him. Everything belongs to Allah; everything humans have is on loan from Allah. Humans only exist because Allah wills them to. Muslims are what Allah makes them. They believe any talents come from Allah, so it is wrong to be arrogant. Nothing happens without Allah allowing it. Allah has absolute compassion, so even suffering is Allah's will and for a reason. Muslims should not question this and should never forget His power. Humans cannot obstruct Allah or indeed try to fool Allah as He knows their every thought and intention. Anything that goes against these beliefs breaks tawhid. If Muslims liken themselves to Allah or to His qualities, then they have committed the sin of

shirk. For example, Muslims believe that Jesus could not have been the Son of God, as he could not have had God's qualities.

- Muslims also believe that God is **omnipotent** (all-powerful), as God is the creator, sustainer and owner of all things. He is also all-knowing, aware of everything including human actions and thoughts.
- God is **beneficent** (charitable), the source of all goodness. His generosity is seen in his gift to humans of life on earth. God's beneficence is linked to his mercy and compassion. In their daily prayers, Muslims begin by saying, 'In the name of God, the Lord of Mercy, the Giver of Mercy'. This phrase is called the 'Bismillah' and Muslims say it to dedicate everything they do to God. They believe that God is **merciful**: he understands their suffering, care for them and forgives them if they are truly sorry for any wrong they have done.
- God acts with **fairness** and **justice**. He treats people equally and justly, and requires that they do the same to their fellow human beings. God will judge people in fairness on the Day of Judgement.
- Muslims believe that God is **immanent**, within all things, and close to his people. But God is also **transcendent**, beyond all things. Our limited human thinking makes us wonder, 'How can God be both?'. For Muslims, God can be both because God is creator of the universe, therefore outside and not limited by the physical world, yet he is also within all things and compassionate towards people.

Angels

The belief in angels is accepted by all Muslims and forms one of the six articles in the Sunni tradition. They are discussed more than a hundred times in the Qur'an, with some mentioned by name. They are believed to have been created before humans, out of light, with the primary purpose of worshipping, glorifying and obeying Allah – an act they never tire of as "they glorify him tirelessly night and day." They also act as communicators between Allah and humans, with each angel having a specific role designed to help creation run smoothly. These roles include: maintaining the order of the planet by overseeing the seasons/rain/provisions; looking after paradise; overseeing hell and the torment of the wicked; recording the actions of humans and so on. They also constantly visit and watch over humans and the Qur'an makes it clear that if a person is an enemy of the angels, then Allah is also their enemy. Angels have no free will and are sinless, never making any mistakes in their work and always obeying the will of Allah.

Name	Role
<p><i>Jibril</i> (<i>Gabriel</i>)</p>	<p>Jibril is the angel most familiar to Christians and Jews as well as Muslims. He is an archangel (a special angel with higher status than others) who is a trusted messenger of God. Jibril was the angel who relayed the Qur'an to Muhammad from God.</p> <p>Muslims believe that Jibril first appeared to Muhammad when the prophet was a child. In one story, Jibril, together with Mika'il, came to Muhammad during the night and purified his hear so that later in life Muhammad would be able to receive God's revelation. When Muhammad was 40 years old, Jibril returned to him in a blaze of light when he was meditating at Mount Hira. Jibril told Muhammad what God wanted him to do and inspired him</p>

	with the revelations of the Qur'an. God continued to guide Muhammad throughout his entire life, often communicating through Jibril.
<i>Mika'il</i>	Mika'il is another high-ranking archangel who is also known to Christians and Jews. Muslims believe that Mika'il is an angel of mercy. God has assigned Mika'il to reward righteous people for the good they do during their lives on earth. God has also given Mika'il responsibility for sending rain, thunder and lightning to earth. Muslims believe that Jibril and Mika'il have brought nourishment to human beings: Jibril brought the spiritual nourishment of God's words in the Qur'an and Mika'il brings nourishment for the earth and human life through the rain.
<i>Izra'il</i>	In the Qur'an Izra'il is only mentioned through the duty he performs as the angel of death. Thus, he is responsible for ending human life at the time Allah decides by grasping their soul: "The Angel of Death put in charge of you will reclaim you, and then you will be brought back to your Lord." It is believed they 'never fail in their duty'.
<i>Israfil</i>	In the Qur'an Israfil is only mentioned through the duty he performs – the blowing of the trumpet. This trumpet will be blown twice: firstly, to announce the end of time and secondly to announce the Day of Resurrection and the Day of Judgement. His name, which means the burning one, is given in different Hadiths where it is also said that he constantly has a trumpet at his lips waiting for Allah's command. Because of this role he is seen as being one of the important angels in Islam.
<i>Munkar and Nakir</i>	These angels are not mentioned directly in the Qur'an but there is information about them in different hadiths. In English their names mean the unknown and the unrecognised because humans do not see them whilst they are alive.

Predestination and Human Freedom

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

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

Humans are not forced to follow their purpose; they can freely choose for themselves whether this is how they wish to live. The decision they make is significant because it will be written down by the angels and read on the Day of Judgement in order to determine whether they go to heaven or hell in the afterlife. Thus, this life is seen as a preparation for the next as: "Your Lord will give everyone full due for whatever they have done. He is aware of everything they do." Although these ideas are accepted by all Muslims, there are differences between Sunni and Shi'as surrounding ideas of predestination (al-Qadr), human freedom and accountability.

“Say, ‘Never will we be struck except by what Allah has decreed for us; He is our protector.’ And upon Allah let the believers rely.” (Surah 9:51)

Al-Qadr means that everything happens as a result of Allah’s will and nothing is ever random or without reason. It means predestination of the will of Allah; that Allah is in charge of everything in life and has a purpose for everything as part of His plan. Often Muslims use the words ‘Insha’Allah’ (if Allah wills). However, everything cannot just be left to Allah, humans have to take responsibility for as much as they can and then put their trust in Allah. Being responsible also means being accountable for actions. Surah 16:93 states ‘...**and most certainly you will be questioned as to what you did.**’ This will lead to paradise or hell.

Shi’as believe that things are only possible if Allah wills it. However, they claim that because Allah is just (adlat), he has willed that humans should have a genuine free choice over whether they wish to follow Islam Allah has provided guidance to help in this choice e.g. the Qur’an, prophets and imams, as well as giving humans reason. However, people can choose to ignore this help. The decisions people make will be recorded by the angels Al-Kiram Al-Katibun and will be used on the Day of Judgement but Allah to decide their fate, as the Qur’an says: “Whoever does good does it for himself and whoever does evil does it against himself: your Lord is never unjust to His creatures.” (41:46) Shi’as do not believe a person’s destiny is completely fixed before the creation of the world and claim that humans can change their destiny, although Allah does know what this will be due to his foreknowledge and that it is only possible because he allows it to occur. (A majority of Sunnis hold a similar belief and that the good actions of a Muslim and du’a – supplication – can result in a positive change in their predestination.) Thus, in the Shi’a tradition, individuals are fully responsible and accountable for their own actions because these have not been predestined, and Allah is therefore just in the rewards and punishments given on the Day of Judgement.

Life after death (akhirah)

Muslims believe that Allah knows and determines when people die. However, death is not the end of life and Muslims accept that there is an afterlife, which is made possible by the power and grace of Allah. Where a person will go is determined by the choices they make on earth, thus this life is seen as a preparation for the next life. Akhirah is a significant theme in the Qur’an with about a quarter of it dedicated to this topic.

“No soul may die except with God’s permission at a

Muslims believe do not believe that person will go immediately to heaven or hell. Rather, their soul will Barzakh (a sort of middle ground between earth and the afterlife) while their body will decompose in the grave. In the grave the soul will be tested by the two angels Munkar and Nakir who will ask: Who is your Lord? What is your religion? Who is your prophet? Depending on how these questions are answered, the soul’s time will either be pleasant or unpleasant, giving an indication of what the next life will be like. This will continue until Allah ends the world and unites souls with resurrected bodies on the Day of Resurrection. It does not matter what state a person’s body is in when this occurs as Allah

can resurrect bodies that are just “bones and dust as hard as stone or iron.” On the Day of Judgement Allah will decide where the resurrected person goes.

- Muslims believe that Akhirah definitely exists. The Qur’an says it does as the Word of Allah, is right.
- Life after death makes sense of our short existence on earth – why we are here at all.
- On Earth, Muslims' lives are rested by Allah and the end result is akhirah in one form or another.
- Most of the prophet's state that Muslims were created deliberately, people will be accountable for their actions in order to complete the journey back to Allah.

Day of Judgement

The Day of Judgement is accepted by all Muslims, forming one of the five roots in the Shi’a tradition and one of the six articles of faith in the Sunni tradition. It is the day when the fate of humans will be decided according to the choices they made while they were alive on earth (although it is also believed that Allah will forgive sins and allow undeserving people to go to paradise.) The book of deeds that the angels have kept while a person was alive on earth and in which “every action, great or small, is recorded” will be opened. This will be used by Allah to judge all humans by weighing their good deeds against their bad deeds to see which is heavier. The righteous will be sent to heaven and the unrighteous to hell. Shia's believe that the twelfth Imam (the Al-Madhi) will appear before this day in order to defeat the evil ones. He and other Imams can intercede on a person's behalf while their book is being read.

Heaven and Hell

<i>Paradise (Jannah) and heaven (Samawat)</i>	<i>Hell (Jahannam)</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the Qur’an, paradise is described as a garden of bliss, with rivers flowing with non-intoxicating wine, milk or honey. • It is timeless • Everyone's desires will be realised • No grief • Peaceful place where Allah's attributes shine forth • Martyrs, prophets and the most pious will go the highest level of heaven 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Said to have seven levels, monitored by 19 angels (or in Shi’a Islam, millions of angels) under the leadership of Malik • Each level is said to be more horrendous than the one before • People will be sent to the level that best matches their crime • All levels will be pitch black and filled with scorching winds, screams of the damned and black smoke from the blazing fires • Some of the torments will involve stinging snakes and scorpions whose venom will last for years

Authority in Islam

Prophethood (Risalah)

Muslims believe that God has chosen many prophets to bring the message of Islam to people. Risalah is a key element of iman forming one of the six articles and the five roots. The exact number of prophets Allah sent is unknown. The Qur'an mentions 25 by name (21 of which also appear in the Bible). They are considered equally important because they all received the same message. All prophets had the same role, which was:

1. To act as intermediaries between Allah and humans by receiving and passing on Allah's message in its pure unaltered form to everyone in their community
2. To be a perfect example of how this message applies in practice by living their lives according to Allah's will. Allah will rightly guide them in this role
3. To lead the community so that they too will live in accordance with this message

The prophets are important for Muslims because they provided a method of communication between God and human beings. In order for Muslims to know how to live in the way God desires, it was necessary for instructions to be conveyed to people through the prophets. When humans forgot, misunderstood or changed God's message, he sent prophets to call people back to the right path. Muslims also believe that the prophets and messengers are important role models to follow, as they were good people who lived according to God's will. Some of the most important prophets in Islam include Adam, Ibrahim (Abraham), Musa (Moses) Isa (Jesus) and Muhammad.

Adam:

- The first human, prophet, Muslim and caliph
- Allah taught Adam the names of everything and ordered all of the angels and jinn to bow down to him.
- Adam had a wife, Hawwa (Eve), who he lived with in a garden/paradise
- The Qur'an says that before creation Allah took all of their offspring and asked them to bear witness that Allah was their Lord.

Ibrahim (Abraham):

- Abraham is seen as a significant prophet because he always remained obedient to Allah.
- *"Abraham was truly an example: devoutly obedient to God and true in faith."* (16:120)
- Classed as a Hanif (absolute monotheist), was known as Khalil (friend of Allah) and is called a 'Resolute One', being the father of the Arabs and of all the prophets
- Ibrahim and Isma'il (his son) built the Ka'aba – the most important building in Islam. According to the Qur'an this was the first building dedicated to Allah build under the command and direction of God.
- Ibrahim is also said to have established Hajj, along with certain practices undertaken during the pilgrimage

Isa (Jesus):

- A prominent prophet sent to guide the people of Israel
- Given the titles: Al-Masih or Messiah (meaning anointed with the blessings and honour of Allah)
- Unlike other prophets, he never married or had children, but he did have people who helped him to deliver his message
- He is known as a 'Resolute One' because he spread his message to a large community and because he faced hardship and rejection but still remained loyal to Tawhid.
- He is said to have been 'strengthened ... with the Holy Spirit' to undertake his prophecy
- In Islam Isa is not the Son of God. He is a messenger like all of the other prophets

Muhammad:

- The last and final prophet of Islam – also known as the Seal of the Prophets who should give his message to all humans rather than just one group
- His revelation is found in the Qur'an which is seen as being an exact and unaltered account of Islam.
- His status as a prophet can be seen in the Shahadah, where a Muslim must testify that Muhammad is the messenger of Allah
- He is viewed as the ideal human, husband and leader. Many Muslims will emulate his life by undertaking additional prayers, living simply and giving to the poor
- He challenged the way the people of Makkah were living. The leaders at that time did not want to hear it and persecuted Muhammad
- After many battles, Muhammad united the tribes and conquered the city of Makkah in the name of God.
- Muhammad's teachings and practices (Sunnah), which are found in the Hadith and Sira texts, are still used as sources of Islamic law (Shariah).
- Muhammad died in 632 CE

The Imamate

When Muhammad died it wasn't clear who should succeed him. Muslims were split into two groups: Sunni and Shi'a. Sunnis elected Abu Bakr as their first Caliph. He was Muhammad's best friend and was with Muhammad when he was travelling and teaching. Shi'as believed that Muhammad named his cousin and son-in-law, Ali, as his successor, so he became the first Imam for Shi'a Islam. Shi'as believed that Imams should be appointed by divine instruction and that leadership should follow the family line.

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

Twelvers believe that the Imams not only rule justly but:

- are able to maintain and interpret the Qur'an and Shariah law without fault
- They are able to guide people

- Preserve and explain the divine law
- Were appointed by Allah
- Are immune from sin or error
- Role models
- Perfect knowledge of Islam

The Imamate is important because people need divine guidance to know how to live correctly. Twelvers believe that the first eleven Imams were all martyred but as the final one is hidden, there haven't been any more. They also do not recognise the Caliphs within Sunni Islam.

Holy Books (Kutub)

The belief in holy books is accepted by all Muslims and is one of the six articles of faith in the Sunni tradition. These books are said to record the same words of Allah (kalam), which were given to all of the prophets in their hearts, and subsequently written in the language that the messengers and their community spoke. Sunnis believe kalam is eternal but Shi'as claim it came into existence when Allah created the world Five books are named in the Qur'an as:

1. *The Scrolls of Ibrahim*: This account is said to have been written in Hebrew and is referred to in the Qur'an, but is now lost. These are thought to be the oldest scriptures within Islam, which were revealed to Ibrahim.
2. *The Torah (Tawrat) of Musa*: This is believed to be recorded in the book called the Torah and written in Hebrew, which he gave to the Jews. It is mentioned 18 times in the Qur'an. Muslims believe that the revelation was given directly to Musa, rather than through Angel Jibril.
3. *The Psalms (Zabur) of Dawud*: Zabur means song. Dawud was given the gift of composing melodies that glorify Allah. Many Muslims believe that these are similar to the Psalms in the Bible.
4. *The Gospels (Injil) of Isa*: Injil means good news. While they believe it was given to Isa for the Jews/Christians, Muslims don't believe that it is the same as the gospel followed by Christians today. Despite this, some believe that some of its message still exists in the Bible.
5. *The Qur'an*: This holds central position and is seen as the authoritative guide on Islam. This is because it is considered to be the only book that contains kalam in its original and unaltered form. The Qur'an says: "We sent to you the Scripture with the truth, confirming the Scriptures that came before it, and with final authority over them: so judge between them according to have God has sent down." It is seen as a miracle and proof of Muhammad's prophethood.

The importance of the Qur'an: Muslims believe that the Qur'an is the word of God, which was revealed to Muhammad via the angel Jibril over a period of around 22 years. It contains the foundation of every believer's faith and is the most sacred text of Islam. It is believed to be an infallible source of authority for all matters of doctrine, practice and law. The name Qur'an means 'the Recital', as Muhammad recited by heart each revelation that he received, and passed it on to his followers. His followers memorised them and scribes wrote them down.

Similar to the Christian Bible, the Qur'an contains a mixture of historical accounts and advice on how to follow God. The content is not arranged in the order it was revealed. Apart from the ninth surah, each chapter begins with the words 'In the name of God, the Lord of Mercy, the Giver of Mercy'.

Muslim children are encouraged to learn Arabic so they can read the Qur'an in its original language. Qur'anic recitation is highly valued as Muslims believe that it brings blessing. Those who are able to recite the whole Qur'an from memory are given the title 'hafiz'.

The first four books were given to the Jews and the Christians, which is why the followers of these faiths are also known as people of the book (Ahl al-Kitab). However, it is believed that these accounts were altered over time and are not authentic. The Qur'an, on the other hand, is considered to be an exact record of kalam, which is for all people, not just one group as previously.

Revision Activities

One-mark questions:

- What is meant by Tawhid?
 - Life after death
 - Oneness of Allah
 - Prophethood
 - Declaration of faith
- Who were the Zabur written by?
 - Moses
 - Ibrahim
 - David
 - Jesus

Two-mark questions:

- Give two Muslim beliefs about akhirah.
- Give two reasons why the Qur'an is important.
- Give two of the roles of angels in Islam.

Four-mark questions:

- Explain two ways in which beliefs about Allah being Just (Adalat) might influence Muslims today
- Explain two ways in which believing in Risalah (Prophethood) influences Muslims today.

Five-mark questions:

- Explain two Muslim teachings about the imamate in Shi'a Islam.
- Explain two Muslim teachings about paradise.

Twelve-mark questions:

- 'For a Muslim, believing that Allah is all-powerful is not important.'
- 'Muslims should be more concerned with this life than the next.'