

# ISLAM: BELIEFS AND TEACHINGS

## THE ONENESS OF GOD AND SUPREMACY OF GOD'S WILL

Islam is a **monotheistic** religion. This means that Muslims believe there is only one God (**Allah**). The belief in one, indivisible God is known as **Tawhid**. Muslims believe in the **supremacy** of God's will: the idea that God's will is above all things. This means that things only happen if God wants them to.

Belief in Tawhid means that Muslims should:

- worship only one God
- never make anything in their lives more important than God, as God has no equal
- not use images or pictures of God, as it is impossible to portray God accurately.

Muslims believe **God's will is supreme** (most powerful). This means God can make anything happen that he wants to happen. It also means that **nothing happens unless God allows it to happen**. This helps to give Muslims confidence when something goes wrong, because they know it is part of God's plan for them. Muslims try to live according to God's will in their everyday lives, accepting that God knows best.

Sunni Islam	Shi'a Islam
The Sunni leader (called the Caliph) should be elected	The Shi'a leader (called the Imam) should be a descendant of Muhammad and chosen by God
Only the Qur'an and the <b>Sunnah</b> (Muhammad's teachings and actions) have the authority to provide religious guidance	The Qur'an, Sunnah <i>and</i> the Shi'a leader have the authority to provide religious guidance
Abu Bakr, Muhammad's advisor, was the rightful leader after Muhammad died	Ali, Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law, was the rightful leader after Muhammad died
The six articles of faith give the main beliefs for Sunni Muslims	The five roots of 'Usul ad-Din give the main beliefs for Shi'a Muslims

There are many shared beliefs in Sunni and Shi'a Islam. For example, both Sunni and Shi'a Muslims:

- believe in the same God
- follow the teachings in the Sunnah
- follow the teachings in the Qur'an
- acknowledge the importance of the prophets.

<b>ANGELS</b>	constantly serve and praise God
are pure and sinless	are able to take on a human form to give messages to people
are spiritual beings, created by God from light	have no free will, so can only do what God wants them to do

Muslims believe that angels have a number of different roles:

- Some act as **messengers of God**. They receive God's words directly from him and pass them on perfectly to the prophets.
- Some **take care of people** throughout their lives.
- Some **record everything a person does** in their own 'book of deeds'. This book is presented to God on the Day of Judgment, who will use it to judge the person and decide whether to send them to paradise or hell.
- Some **take people's souls to God** after they die, and escort them into paradise or hell.

**LIFE AFTER DEATH/AKIRAH:** Muslims believe that after death, they enter a state of waiting until the Day of Judgement, when God sends them to **heaven (jannah)** or **hell (jahannam)**. Belief in Akhirah encourages Muslims to **take responsibility for their actions**, because they know God will hold them accountable for their actions and reward or punish them accordingly. This motivates Muslims to follow the teachings in the Qur'an and to dedicate their lives to God. Belief in Akhirah helps to **give hope to Muslims who suffer**, as they know there is something better to look forward to. It also helps Muslims to **accept unjust situations**, because they know God will provide justice in the afterlife, and everyone will be fairly rewarded or punished for their actions on the Day of Judgement.

Muslims believe that after death the following three stages happen:

**Barzakh**

- After death, the state of waiting until the Day of Judgement is called **barzakh**, which means a 'barrier'. People are unable to come back across the barrier to right wrongs or to warn people
- While they are waiting, God sends two angels to question them about their faith
- Depending on how they answer, they will either see the rewards that will come or the punishments they will have to endure after the Day of Judgement

**The Day of Judgement**

- When God's purpose for the universe has been fulfilled, the world will be destroyed
- Everyone who has ever lived will be raised from the dead (**resurrected**)
- Everyone will be given their own 'book of deeds', which is a record of everything they did during their lives
- If they are given the book in their right hand, they will go to heaven; if they are given it in their left hand, they will go to hell

**Heaven and hell**



- People who have kept their faith in God and done good deeds will be rewarded with heaven (paradise)
- Heaven is described as a beautiful garden - it is a state of eternal happiness in the presence of God
- People who have rejected God and done bad things will be punished with hell
- Hell is described as a place of fire and torment, where people are separated from God

**THE NATURE OF GOD**

There are 99 different names for God in the Qur'an and Hadith (Muhammad's sayings). These names describe God's characteristics, and help to give Muslims some idea of what God is like.

Some of God's most important qualities are: **immanent, transcendent, omnipotent, beneficent, merciful, fair and just.**

**ANGELS** are spiritual beings who serve God and pass on his word to people through the prophets. **Jibril** is the angel of revelation, who revealed the Qur'an to Muhammad. **Mika'il** is the angel of mercy, who rewards good deeds and provides nourishment for the earth and human life.

<p><b>Mika'il</b></p> <p>The angel of mercy</p> <p>Responsible for sending rain, thunder and lightning to earth</p> <p>Brings nourishment to earth, and helps to provide food for humans, by sending rain to the ground</p> <p>Believed to reward people who do good deeds</p>		<p><b>Jibril</b></p> <p>The angel of revelation</p> <p>Purified Muhammad's heart when he was a child, so he would later be able to receive God's revelation</p> <p>Recited the Qur'an to Muhammad and continued to pass on God's messages to Muhammad to guide him through the rest of his life</p> <p>Therefore played an important role in communicating the final version of Islam to humanity</p>	
--	---	---	---

**PREDESTINATION** is the idea that God knows or determines everything that will happen in the universe.

In Islam, ideas about predestination vary. Some Sunni Muslims believe that **God has already determined everything that will happen in the universe**. They believe that:

- God has written down everything that will happen in a 'book of decrees'
- because God created people, they must act according to his will
- God's will is so powerful that he is able to make anything happen that he wants to happen
- humans do not have the freedom to change their destiny, or the overall plan that God has set for them; but they do have some choice over how they behave. Surah 9:51 from the Qur'an is sometimes used to support the view that God has already determined everything that will happen.

In contrast, many Shi'a Muslims believe that **God knows everything that is going to happen**, but this does not mean he *decides* what is going to happen. They believe that:

- as God is the creator of time, he is outside time and so not bound by it. This means that God can see everything that happens in the past, present and future
- God knows what choices people will make, but they still have the free will to make these choices for themselves.

Surah 13:11 from the Qur'an is sometimes used to support the view that people have the free will to change their own future.

God does not change the condition of a people [for the worse] unless they change what is in themselves. <b>Qur'an 13:11</b>	Only what God has decreed will happen to us. <b>Qur'an 9:51</b>
---	---

**THE DAY OF JUDGMENT:** Muslims (who believe they have the free will to make their own choices) believe that God will judge them for things they have done during their lives. Even though God knows everything that will happen, people are still responsible for their actions, and will be rewarded or punished for them on the Day of Judgement.

Verse in Surah 112	Meaning
'He is God the One'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is only one God</li> <li>God is a unified, undivided being; God cannot be divided into different persons</li> </ul>
'God the eternal'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>God has always existed</li> </ul>
'He begot no one nor was He begotten'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>God was not born or came into being out of something else</li> <li>God does not have any children</li> </ul>
'No one is comparable to Him'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>God is unique</li> <li>No other person or thing has God's qualities and attributes</li> <li>No one can accurately picture or describe God because there is nothing to compare him to</li> </ul>

## THE SIX ARTICLES OF FAITH in Sunni Islam

**Tawhid:** belief that there is only one God.

**Angels:** belief in angels, who passed on God's message to the prophets.

**The holy books:** respect for the holy books and particularly the Qur'an, which is the highest authority in Islam.

**The prophets:** respect for the prophets and particularly Muhammad, who received the final revelation of Islam from God.

**The Day of Judgement:** belief that at the end of the world, every person will be judged by God and sent to paradise or hell.

**The supremacy of God's will:** belief that nothing happens unless God wants it to happen.

## THE FIVE ROOTS OF 'USUL AD DIN in Shi'a Islam

**Tawhid:** belief that there is only one God.

**Prophethood:** respect for the prophets and particularly Muhammad, who received the final revelation of Islam from God.

**The justice of God (Adalat):** belief that God will judge everyone on the Day of Judgement in a fair and just way, and hold them to account for their actions.

**The Imamate:** respect for the twelve Imams, who were chosen by God to lead Islam after Muhammad died.

**Resurrection:** belief that after death, Muslims will be resurrected and judged by God.

**Akhirah:** everlasting life after death

**Allah:** the Arabic name for God

**angels:** spiritual beings believed to act as messengers of God

**beneficent:** benevolent, all-loving, all-good; a quality of God

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

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

**fairness:** the idea that God treats people fairly and impartially without favour or discrimination

**Gospel:** a holy book revealed by God to Jesus

**Hajj:** the annual pilgrimage to Makkah that every Muslim should try to make at least once in their life

**heaven:** the state of eternal happiness in the presence of God; also called paradise (Jannah)

**hell:** the state of total separation from God (Jahannam)

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

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

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

**Imamate:** the divine appointment of the Imams

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

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

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

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

# ISLAM: BELIEFS AND TEACHINGS

**PROPHETHOOD AND ADAM:** Prophethood refers to when someone is made a prophet. Risalah is belief in the prophets and their importance as messengers of God. Muslims believe that Adam (the first human) was the first prophet.

Muslims believe that:

- prophethood is a gift from God to help humans to understand his message
- when people have forgotten, misunderstood or changed God's message, God has sent prophets to call people back to the right path there have been around 124,000 prophets, who have been sent to every nation on earth
- Muhammad was the last and most important of the prophets

Prophets are important in Islam because they are good role models and help Muslims to understand how to follow God. They do this both by conveying God's words and by setting a good example for how to live a life in obedience to God.

**IBRAHIM** (Abraham) is an important prophet in Islam. He is a good role model for Muslims because...

- he fulfilled all the tests and commands given to him by God
- he showed great faith in God
- Muhammad was one of his descendants through his son, Ishmael
- he proclaimed belief in only one God at a time when people worshipped many different gods and idols

**THE QUR'AN** is the most important holy book in Islam, and highest source of authority for all matters relating to Islamic teaching, practice and law. It was revealed to the prophet Muhammad by the angel Jibril. Other holy books in Islam are the Torah, Psalms, Gospel and Scrolls of Abraham.

Muslims believe there are **other holy books** that have been revealed by God. (These holy books are mentioned in the Qur'an.) Some think these books have been lost and no longer exist. Others think they can be found to some extent in the Bible. However, the original text has been corrupted or distorted, so it does not have the same authority as the Qur'an.

Adam is considered to be the father of the human race and the first prophet. The Qur'an teaches the following about Adam's beginnings:

God created Adam from the dust of the ground, and breathed his Spirit into him

God gave Adam knowledge and understanding and he taught Adam the names of all things

God told the angels to bow down to Adam out of respect for his knowledge

Iblis (Satan) refused to bow down to Adam, so God threw him out of paradise. Iblis vowed to always tempt humans to sin against God

God created Hawwa (Eve) to keep Adam company, and they lived together in the Garden of Bliss

God told Adam and Hawwa they could eat anything in the garden, except for the fruit from the forbidden tree

Iblis deceived Adam and Hawwa into eating fruit from the tree

God expelled Adam and Hawwa from the garden and their actions brought sin into the world

God forgave Adam after he accepted his mistake, and he became the first prophet

Adam is important to Muslims because God gave him knowledge and understanding. God taught Adam how to live a good life in obedience to God, and Adam passed on this knowledge to the rest of the human race through his descendants.

**MUHAMMAD AND THE IMAMATE:** Muhammad is the last and most important prophet in Islam. He received the final revelation of Islam from God, which is recorded in the Qur'an. Shi'a Muslims believe in the importance of the **Imamate:** the leadership of the **Imams.** Shi'as believe that as the Imams have been appointed by God, they are able to maintain and interpret Islamic teachings without fault.

Muhammad is the most important prophet in Islam because he is 'God's messenger' (**Qur'an 33:40**). He received the Qur'an from God, which all Muslims use as the basis of their faith. He is also remembered for helping to fully establish the religion by conquering Mecca, and for having travelled to heaven where he was in the presence of God.

### Revelation of the Qur'an

- Muhammad grew up in Makkah (Mecca) and he would sometimes visit a cave in the mountains nearby to meditate and pray
- In 610 CE, Muhammad visited the cave and experienced a revelation from the angel Jibril
- Over the next 22 or so years, Muhammad continued to receive revelations from Jibril
- These were combined together to form the Qur'an



### Conquering Makkah

- After the first revelation from Jibril, Muhammad started challenging people in Makkah to follow God's teachings
- Muhammad was persecuted for his preaching and fled with his followers to Madinah
- In Madinah he united the warring tribes, and with their help he conquered Makkah, converting the city to Islam
- This helped to bring harmony to the region, and firmly established Islam as a religion



### The Night Journey

- Before Muhammad fled to Madinah, the angel Jibril took him on a miraculous journey to Jerusalem and then into heaven, where he spoke to prophets and saw great signs of God
- In heaven, Muhammad agreed with God that Muslims should pray five times a day
- Sunni Muslims still follow this practice (see page 61)



## THE IMAMATE

- The leader of Shi'a Muslims is called the Imam. The leadership of the Imams is known as the Imamate.
- Shi'as believe the Imam should be a **descendent of Muhammad and chosen by God.**
- The Twelver branch of Shi'a Islam teaches there have been **twelve Imams in total.** Each has been related to Muhammad in some way. The twelfth Imam has been kept alive by God and hidden somewhere on earth. He will return in the future to bring justice and equality to all.
- Because the Imams have been appointed by God, they are able to **interpret the Qur'an and Islamic law without fault.**
- Shi'as believe the Imams are necessary because people **need divine guidance on how to live correctly.** Although the final version of God's law was received by Muhammad, the Imams are important for helping to preserve and explain this law.

How was Ibrahim a good role model?	Further explanation
He refused to worship idols and instead preached that there is only one God	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When Ibrahim was a young man, many people worshipped a number of different gods and idols</li> <li>• Ibrahim questioned their beliefs and decided there was only one God who had created everything in the universe</li> <li>• Ibrahim became determined to stop idol worship. One day, he took an axe and destroyed all the idols in the temple of his town</li> <li>• People were furious and demanded that Ibrahim be burned alive. He was thrown into a huge fire, but the fire only burned his chains and he walked out of it alive</li> <li>• This miracle prompted many people to start following Allah</li> </ul>
He rebuilt the Ka'aba	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The <b>Ka'aba</b> is a small, cube-shaped building in the centre of the Grand Mosque in Makkah (Mecca). It is considered to be the house of God and the holiest place in Islam</li> <li>• The original Ka'aba was built by Adam but destroyed in the great flood</li> <li>• Following God's command, Ibrahim rebuilt the Ka'aba on the same site (see page 65)</li> <li>• When Muslims take part in Hajj (see pages 65-66), which starts at the Ka'aba, they remember Ibrahim and the steadfastness of his faith</li> </ul>
He was willing to sacrifice his son to God	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ibrahim had a dream in which God asked him to sacrifice his son to him</li> <li>• Ibrahim was willing to do this, but just before he carried out the sacrifice God stopped him, and told him he had passed the test</li> <li>• During the festival of Id-ul-Adha each year, Muslims kill an animal to remember Ibrahim's willingness to sacrifice his own son out of obedience to God</li> </ul>

What is the Qur'an?
contains 114 surahs (chapters), roughly arranged in order of length
nearly every chapter starts with the words 'In the name of God, the Lord of Mercy, the Giver of Mercy'
includes a mixture of historical accounts and advice on how to follow God

	Name of the book	Who it was revealed to	Its authority in Islam
the foundation of every believer's faith	The Torah	Moses (Musa)	Some Muslims think the Torah is the first five books of the Bible, but altered from the original text
	The Psalms	David	Many Muslims accept that the Psalms mentioned in the Qur'an are similar to the ones in the Bible
written in Arabic	The Gospel	Jesus (Isa)	Muslims believe the Gospel has been lost but some of its message is still found in the Bible
	The Scrolls of Abraham	Ibrahim	These are considered to be one of the earliest scriptures in Islam, and no longer exist

1 The Qur'an was revealed to Muhammad by the angel Jibril. Jibril was directly passing on God's words, so the Qur'an is considered to be the word of God. Jibril's revelations occurred over a period of about 22 years.

2 Muhammad learned by heart each revelation he received. He recited them to his followers and scribes later wrote them down.

3 As Islam spread, there was a danger that the original words would be distorted. The third Caliph asked a team of scholars to compile an official version of the Qur'an that everyone could use. This was completed around 650CE.

**Ka'aba:** the black, cube-shaped building in the centre of the Grand Mosque in Makkah; the holiest place in Islam

**merciful:** the quality of God that shows compassion or forgiveness to humans

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

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

**omnipotent:** almighty, having unlimited power; a quality of God

**predestination:** the idea that God knows or determines everything that will happen in the universe

**prophethood:** when God makes someone a prophet to communicate his message to people

**prophet:** a person who proclaims the message of God

**Psalms:** a holy book revealed by God to David

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

**resurrection:** rising from the dead or returning to life

**Risalah:** the belief that prophets are an important channel of communication between God and humans

**Scrolls of Abraham:** a holy book revealed by God to Abraham

**Shi'a (Shi'i):** Muslims who believe in the Imamate, the successorship of Ali

**shirk:** the sin of regarding anything as an equal or partner of Allah

**Sunnah:** the teachings and deeds of Muhammad

**Sunni:** Muslims who believe in the successorship to Muhammad of Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman and Ali

**supremacy:** supreme power or authority; a quality of God

**Tawhid:** the Oneness and unity of God

**Torah:** the five books revealed by God to Moses

**transcendent:** the idea that God is beyond and outside life on earth and the universe