



## 1 Muslim beliefs

Islam is estimated to be the second largest religion, representing approximately 20 per cent of the world's population. It is also the fastest growing. It originated in Saudi Arabia in the 7th century CE. The word 'Islam' means 'voluntary submission to God', and followers are called Muslims, which means 'someone who surrenders themselves to the will of God'. It is a monotheistic religion, accepting belief in one God, who Muslims call **Allah**. Muslims follow the teachings of **Muhammad**, their prophet. He was born in Makkah in 570 CE and was a messenger of Allah, who brought the Qur'an, the Islamic holy book.

There are two main branches, or denominations, within Islam: the **Sunnis** and the **Shi'as**. Sunni Islam represents approximately 90 per cent of the world's Muslims, and Shi'a Islam about 10 per cent. While the two groups share many beliefs and practices, they differ in their ideas on leadership, their interpretation of the Qur'an and some ritual practices.

A third group is **Sufism**. This is a small group of Muslims who believe it is important to learn about Islam from teachers rather than holy books. Sufis have helped to shape Islamic thought.

## Learning objectives:

In this chapter you will find out about:

- the Six Beliefs of Islam
- the Five Roots of 'Usul ad-Din in Shi'a Islam
- the nature of Allah
- Risalah (prophethood)
- Muslim holy books
- Malaikah (angels)
- al-Qadr (predestination)
- Akhirah (life after death).

## Check point

### Recall

Before starting this chapter, you should remember:

- Islam is a major world religion which is continuing to grow
- there are two main branches in Islam – Sunni Islam and Shi'a Islam
- different Muslims may practise and interpret their faith differently
- all Muslims are united by shared beliefs such as the acceptance of Muhammad as the final prophet, the Qur'an as their holy book and the importance of Islam being a 'way of life'.

### Look ahead

In future chapters you will find out about:

- what it means to live a Muslim life
- about Islamic beliefs and attitudes towards marriage and the family
- about Islamic beliefs and attitudes towards matters of life and death.

## Activity



Use the information on this page as well as any prior knowledge you may have of Islam to start a fact file about the religion. Use different colours and pictures where appropriate. As you continue to study the religion, add ideas to your fact file so that when you have completed your studies, you will have a detailed guide to the key elements of Islam.

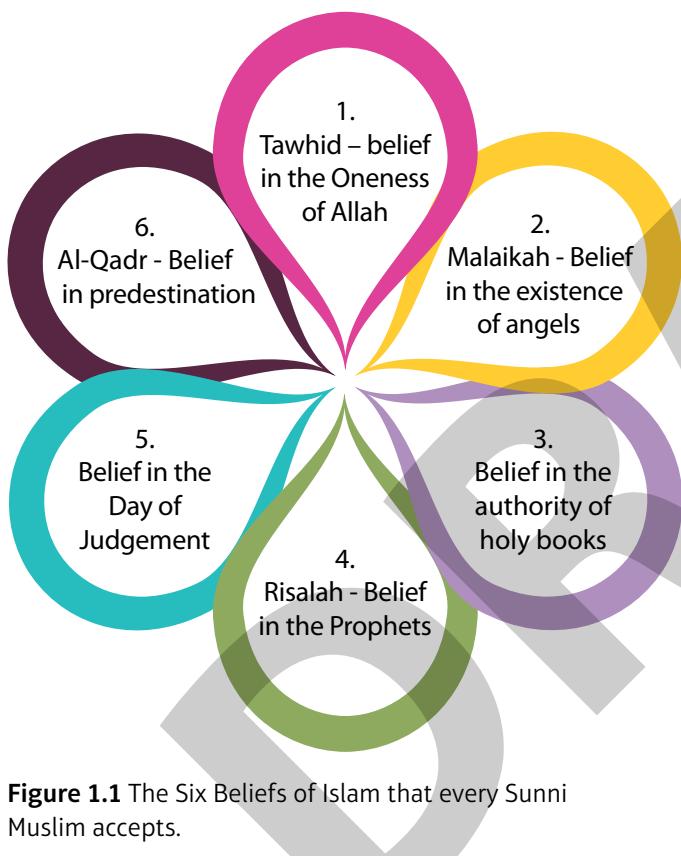
## 1.1 The Six Beliefs of Islam

### Learning outcomes:

- To understand the nature, history and purpose of the Six Beliefs of Islam, including the Kitab al-Iman.
- To recognise the importance of these principles for Muslims.
- To explore how they are understood and expressed in Muslim communities today.

### The Six Beliefs

The Six Beliefs of Islam are the basic beliefs which every Sunni Muslim holds to be true. They are:



**Figure 1.1** The Six Beliefs of Islam that every Sunni Muslim accepts.

#### 1. Tawhid – belief in the oneness of Allah

This is a central belief in Islam. Islam is a **monotheistic** faith, meaning Muslims accept that there is only one God. Muslims call their God Allah and believe that part of being a Muslim is to carry out Allah's will, to submit or surrender themselves to him.

#### 2. Malaikah – belief in the existence of angels

Muslims accept the existence of angels. Angels are believed to be created from light and have no physical bodies although they do have the ability to take on human form. Islam teaches that Angels have no

**free will**, which means that they cannot make their own choices. Instead they are completely obedient to Allah's commands. They are important to Muslims as it is through them that Allah is believed to have communicated messages to his **prophets**, or messengers, who in turn share them with human beings.

#### 3. Belief in the authority of holy books

The name of the Islamic holy book is the **Qur'an**. It is believed to be the final perfect message received from Allah by the Prophet Muhammad. Islam is centred around these teachings. Muslims also recognise the importance of other holy books shared with the other **Abrahamic** religions of Judaism and Christianity. These include the scrolls of Abraham, the scrolls of Moses, the Torah, the Psalms and the Gospels. This is because Islam is an Abrahamic faith (meaning that it traces its roots back to the Prophet Abraham).

#### 4. Nubuwwah and Risalah – belief in the prophets

Muslims believe that one of the ways Allah communicates with human beings is through prophets. A prophet is a messenger from Allah and the link between Allah and humans. Messages are usually communicated to the prophets through angels. The prophets' messages are considered to be the word of Allah and are recorded in the holy books. **Nubuwwah** is the Islamic term for prophethood. The Islamic word **Risalah** literally refers to the communication link or channel between Allah and humans. Prophets recognised in Islam include Nuh (Noah), Ibrahim (Abraham), Musa (Moses), Isa (Jesus) and Muhammad, the most important, who is considered the founder of Islam. As a sign of respect to Muhammad, Muslims say 'peace be upon him' after his name.

#### 5. Belief in the Day of Judgement

Muslims believe in the afterlife and that after death they will have to account for their actions. They accept

that there will be a **Day of Judgement** when the whole world ends. The Day of Judgement is a day in the future where every human that has ever existed will be judged by Allah on their actions in their life on earth. Allah will decide who should be rewarded with a place in al-Jannah (Paradise) and who should be punished in Jahannam, or Hell. The belief in the Day of Judgement is important to all Muslims because it directs their behaviour in their lives on earth, knowing that their future life is dependent on this.

### **6. Al-Qadr – belief in predestination**

**Predestination** is the idea that Allah knows everything, and Muslims believe that although human beings have free will to make their own choices, Allah anticipates and knows what will happen. Muslims believe that they need to trust Allah to know what is best for them. Although this idea appears to contradict that of the idea of humans having free will, it does not mean that Allah influences their decisions, only that he is aware of the decisions every human will make before they are made.

The Six Beliefs of Islam are found in the **Kitab al-Iman** ('The Book of Faith'). This is a book that brings together these key beliefs and focuses on them, explaining the Six Beliefs of Islam for Sunni Muslims in detail. It was written in the 13th century by an Islamic scholar called Ibn Taymiyyah and acts as a guide to the practice of holding these key beliefs.

### **What is the purpose of the Six Beliefs of Islam?**

The Six Beliefs of Islam are seen to:

- unite all Sunni Muslims as they share them in common – they show what it means to be a Muslim and help Sunni Muslims all over the world feel part of the Muslim community, or **ummah**
- help Sunni Muslims to understand their religion better – they identify the key ideas and beliefs of the religion, highlighting the importance of those things that are important which might direct their behaviour in life. For example, Sunni Muslim beliefs about Allah and the Day of Judgement will encourage them to be more aware of how they treat others and how they follow the rules of Islam within their lives as they believe that after death, Allah will judge them on the Day of Judgement to determine their reward or punishment
- support Sunni Muslims in directing how they should live, as the Six Beliefs will impact on their actions and

behaviour. The Six Beliefs guide them to understand what Allah wants and how they should try to act within the world.

### **How important are the Six Beliefs of Islam for Muslims?**

The Six Beliefs of Islam are the fundamental beliefs which every Sunni Muslim must accept in order to be considered a Muslim. The most important of these beliefs is **Tawhid** – a belief in the oneness of Allah. This is at the centre of Muslim faith and connects all other beliefs.

### **How are the Six Beliefs of Islam understood and expressed in Muslim communities today?**

Islam affects every aspect of the life of a Muslim, so the Six Beliefs of Islam are daily considerations for every Muslim. Muslims are always aware of their key beliefs, and try to live according to them.

- Muslims think about the belief in Tawhid – the oneness of God – every day. It is stated in the Shahadah (Declaration of Faith) and forms part of their prayers, which happen five times a day.
- Muslims turn to holy books, especially the Qur'an, for advice on what they should believe about issues such as the nature of Allah and **resurrection**. Holy books contain the messages of the prophets, as well as other essential beliefs about predestination, angels and the Day of Judgement.
- Muslims try to follow the example of the Prophet Muhammad in the way they live. They look to his example of how they should behave. They also refer to **Hadith**, which is another Holy Book that contains accounts of reports about Muhammad.
- Muslims live their lives believing that after death, Allah will judge them on their actions. If they live as Allah wants them to, they believe they will be rewarded with paradise in the afterlife. If they do not live as Allah wants, Muslims believe they will be eternally punished in hell.
- Muslims try to be aware of every action they perform in their lives. They are constantly aware that their behaviour will determine their afterlife and they consider whether their actions are what Allah would wish them to do. Their religion and beliefs cause them to consider the way they live according to the laws of Allah.

Activities	?
<p><b>1</b> Write down what your top six beliefs are. Think of an example for each one to illustrate how you express your beliefs in your daily life.</p> <p><b>2</b> Copy the flower design from this page and use your own words to summarise each of the Six Beliefs of Islam.</p> <p><b>3</b> Get into groups of six and give each person in your group one of the beliefs to concentrate on. Make sure you learn the information about your belief thoroughly, as you are your group's 'expert'. Complete a 'hot seat' activity where members of your group ask you questions about your belief.</p>	

### Exam tip

Make sure you show that you understand what the Six Beliefs of Islam are and why they are important. Be specific in your answer to demonstrate your knowledge to the examiner.

### Exam-style questions

Outline three ways the Six beliefs of Islam are expressed for Sunni Muslims today. **(3 marks)**

### Sources of authority

*Abu Huraira reported: 'One day the Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him) appeared before the public that a man came to him and said: "Prophet of Allah [tell me] what is Iman?" Upon this he (the Holy Prophet) replied: "That you affirm your faith in Allah, His angels, His books, His meeting, His Messengers and that you affirm your faith in the Resurrection hereafter." (Kitab al-iman 1:4)*

### Extend your knowledge

'Iman' is the Arabic word for 'faith' or 'belief'. It is the term used for belief in the Six Beliefs of Islam. Care should be taken with this term, as it does not mean 'blind belief' but more the idea of faith through reason, where Muslims accept the key ideas because they make sense rationally.

### Summary

- The Six Beliefs of Islam are the key beliefs held by every Sunni Muslim. They are:
  - Tawhid – the oneness of Allah.
  - The existence of angels.
  - The authority of holy books.
  - Prophethood.
  - The Day of Judgement.
  - Predestination.
- Sunni Muslims express their acceptance of these beliefs in different ways. The beliefs are considered to be important and affect the way Sunni Muslims live and behave.

### Check point

#### Strengthen

**S1** Can you name the Six Beliefs of Islam and explain each one?

**S2** How could Sunni Muslims express the Six beliefs of Islam in their lives today?

**S3** How do the quotes in the Sacred Texts box show the importance of the Six Beliefs of Islam?

#### Challenge

**C1** In your own words, summarise two reasons why the Six Beliefs of Islam are essential.

**C2** Why might some Muslims argue that all of the Six Beliefs of Islam are equally important, while others feel that Tawhid is most important?

**C3** What reasons might some non-believers give to explain why the Six Beliefs of Islam are not important in their lives?

## 1.2 The Five Roots of 'Usul ad-Din in Shi'a Islam

### Learning outcomes:

- To understand the nature, history and purpose of the Five Roots of 'Usul ad-Din in Shi'a Islam.
- To identify the importance of these principles for different Shi'a communities today.

### The Five Roots of 'Usul ad-Din

All Muslims accept the same basic beliefs within Islam. However, one key difference between Sunni and Shi'a Muslims is their understanding of the beliefs.

All Sunni Muslims accept the Six Beliefs of Islam. In contrast, Shi'a Muslims accept similar ideas but refer to them as the Five Roots of 'Usul ad-Din. This translates literally as 'foundation of faith', showing that they are the essential beliefs which all Shi'a Muslims accept.

The Five Roots of 'Usul ad-Din in Shi'a Islam are:

#### **1. Tawhid – the oneness of God**

All Muslims accept the idea that there is one God – known as Tawhid or monotheism. Shi'a Muslims believe the Qur'an is clear on al-Tawhid, stating that Allah is the one and only God who has no peers, no match and no partners. He is believed to be eternal, the first and the last.

#### Sources of authority

*Say: He, Allah, is One. Allah is He on Whom all (beings and things) depend. He does not beget, nor is He begotten. And none is like Him. (Qur'an 112:1-4)*

#### **2. Adalah – justice and fairness**

Shi'a Muslims believe that there is good and bad in everything. They believe that Allah commands human beings to do the good things and avoid the bad things. They accept that Allah acts in a just and fair way at all times to ensure equality. This idea is also held by Sunni Muslims, although it is not formally part of their belief system.

#### Sources of authority

*Say: O Muslims): We believe in Allah and that which has been sent down to us and that which has been sent down to Ibrahim (Abraham), Isma`il (Ishmael), Ishaq (Isaac), Ya`qub (Jacob), and to Al-Asbat (the offspring of the twelve sons of Ya`qub), and that which has been given to Musa (Moses) and `Isa (Jesus), and that which has been given to the Prophets from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and to Him we have submitted (in Islam). (Qur'an 136)*

#### **3. Nubuwwah – prophethood**

As in Sunni Islam, Shi'a Muslims believe that Allah has appointed prophets and messengers to teach his message to humanity. This message involves instruction on how to live a life of submission to Allah, behaving as he wants. This would include Shi'a Muslims accepting and believing in the Five Roots of 'Usul ad-Din. They believe Muhammad was Allah's final messenger and brought the complete message to humanity. Islam teaches that Allah often communicates to his prophets through angels. Muslims call the channel of communication between Allah and humanity Risalah.

#### **4. Imamah – Imams as a source of authority**

In Sunni Islam, an imam is a religious leader or teacher, for instance someone who might lead prayers in the mosque. Shi'a Muslims, however, believe that there have been twelve imams specially appointed by Allah throughout history as leaders to lead and guide humanity. They believe that imams were chosen by Allah to continue to teach his message correctly and they accept that there is only ever a single imam at any one time. The

last of these imams is believed to be the final prophet, Muhammad, which is why Muslims believe that his message should not be altered or changed in anyway. Muslims accept that eleven of the imams were murdered before the next imam took their place, but they believe that the twelfth, Muhammad, is still alive but hidden by Allah. They believe that one day he will appear to bring an end to tyranny and oppression.

### 5. Yawm al Qiyyamah – the Day of Resurrection

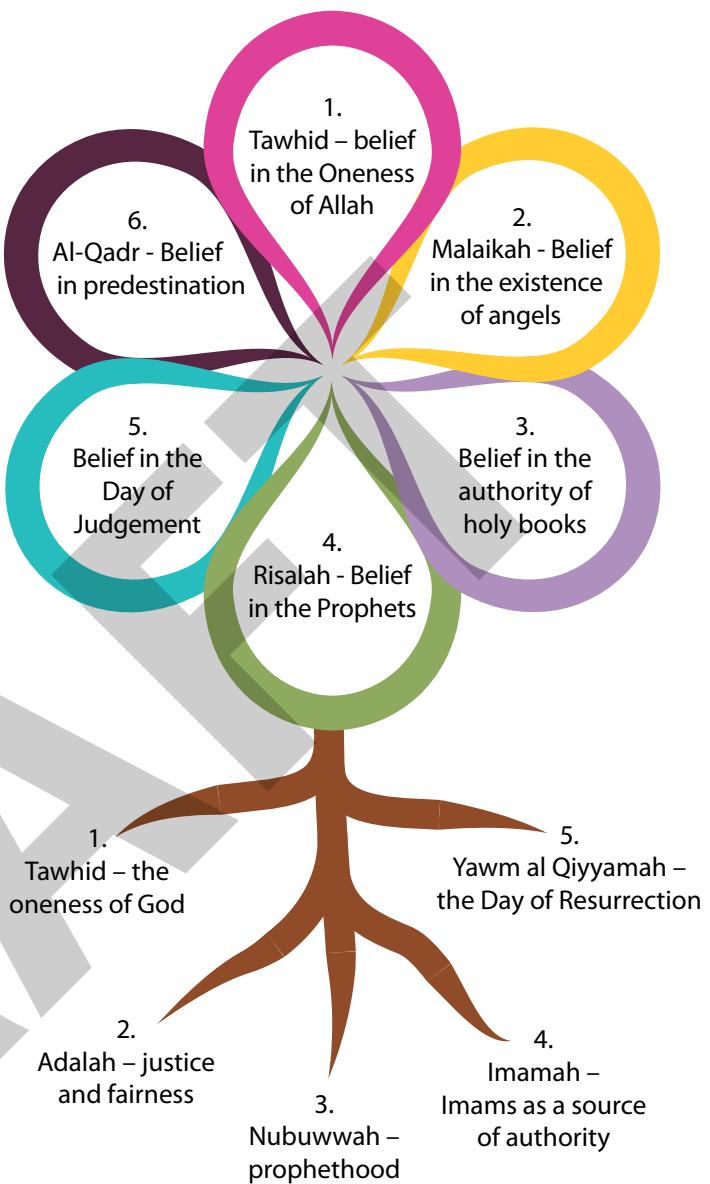
Shi'a Muslims believe that one day in the future every human being that has ever existed will be brought back to life, or resurrected, before being judged by Allah. They believe the Qur'an makes it clear that there will be a resurrection of both soul and body and all humans will be judged on the way they acted and behaved within their lives. The acceptance of resurrection after death and the belief that there will be a Day of Resurrection is fundamental to Muslims. It promotes the idea of a life after death and how Muslims live their lives now will affect whether Allah rewards or punishes them after their resurrection.

#### Sources of authority

*I swear by the Day of Resurrection. (Qur'an 75:1)*

### Why are the Five Roots of 'Usul ad-Din important to Shi'a communities today?

- They unite all Shi'a Muslims as a community (ummah) and form the basis of the religion. They show what it means to be a Muslim as they share these beliefs in common.
- They are often considered to be the foundations of the religion of Islam, holding it together. It helps to support the faith in establishing its key beliefs.
- They help Shi'a Muslims to understand their religion by identifying those beliefs that teach what they should accept and how they should behave. For example, accepting belief in Yawm al Qiyyamah – the Day of Resurrection – means they consider every action they make as it will contribute towards this day when they will be judged.
- They help Shi'a Muslims understand their religion better and allow them to live as Allah intended. They guide Shi'a Muslims on understanding how Allah wants them to behave and act within the world.



**Figure 1.2** The Five Roots of 'Usul ad-Din are believed by all Shi'a Muslims.

#### Activities

- 1 Why are beliefs important to people? Think about your own beliefs – how might they affect your life?
- 2 Write down five of your own beliefs about how you should live your life. Share them with a partner. Does it matter if you have different beliefs from them? Why or why not?
- 3 Which of the Five Roots of 'Usul ad-Din do you think is most important to a Muslim? Give two reasons for your answer. Share your ideas with other people to see if their answers are different.

?

### Can you remember?

- Can you remember what the six beliefs of Islam are for Sunni Muslims?
- Can you explain each one?
- Can you compare them to the Five Roots of 'Usul ad-Din for Shi'a Muslims and consider which are similar and which are different?

### Exam-style questions

Outline three reasons why the Five Roots of 'Usul ad-Din are important to Shi'a communities today.  
**(3 marks)**

### Exam tip

This question asks for three reasons, so make sure you include three different ideas in your answer. Make sure you express them clearly.

### Summary

- Shi'a Muslims accept the Five Roots of 'Usul ad-Din. These are:
  - Tawhid, the oneness of Allah
  - Adalah, that Allah is just and fair in all things
  - Nubuwwah or prophethood
  - Imamah, that imams are a source of authority
  - Yawm al Qiyyamah, meaning the Day of Resurrection.
- These beliefs are important for Shi'a Muslim communities as they help to unite them and give them understanding of their faith.

### Check point

#### Strengthener

- S1** What are the main two branches of Muslims in Islam and which branch accepts the Five Roots of 'Usul ad-Din?  
**S2** Can you name the Five Roots of 'Usul ad-Din and explain each one?  
**S3** Why do you think Shi'a Muslims believe each of these beliefs is important?

#### Challenge

- C1** Which belief do you think Shi'a Muslims consider to be the most important of the Five Roots of 'Usul ad-Din and why?  
**C2** How do you think the Five Roots of 'Usul ad-Din affect the life of a Shi'a Muslim?  
**C3** Why do you think Sunni and Shi'a Muslims hold slightly different beliefs?

## 1.3 The nature of Allah

### Learning objectives:

- To understand what Muslims believe about Allah.
- To consider how the characteristics of Allah are shown in the Qur'an.
- To explore why the characteristics of Allah are important to Muslims.

### Islamic beliefs about Allah

Muslims believe there is only one God. They call him Allah, and they direct their worship and praise towards him. They believe that he is a supreme being with supernatural powers and that he is extremely special compared with human beings, so he must be shown the utmost respect. Muslims accept that Allah is the sole creator and designer of the world and everything in it. Moreover, they believe that Allah is also the sustainer of the universe, as he continues to rule and control everything.

Muslims also accept that Allah is transcendent. This means that he is above and beyond anything else that exists on earth, and because of this the nature and actions of Allah are difficult for human beings to understand. Muslims use the word Tawhid to describe the idea that they believe in only one God. This is the most fundamental idea of Islam accepted by all Muslims. They believe Allah has certain characteristics which help them to understand what he is like:

Characteristic	Definition
<b>Transcendent</b>	He is above and beyond anything that exists in the world. This can make Allah difficult for Muslims to understand fully or describe.
<b>Immanent</b>	He is close to every human and acts within the world daily. Muslims believe that everything within the universe can point to Allah.
<b>Omnipotent</b>	He is all-powerful. This shows that Allah is in control of everything that happens and there is nothing more powerful than him.
<b>Beneficent</b>	He is all-loving and cares for his creations on a personal level.
<b>Merciful</b>	He forgives the things that people do wrong. He is compassionate when people are sorry.
<b>Just</b>	He judges people in a fair and unbiased way.

### Sources of authority

*And your Allah is One Allah.  
There is no god but He, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.  
(Qur'an 163)*

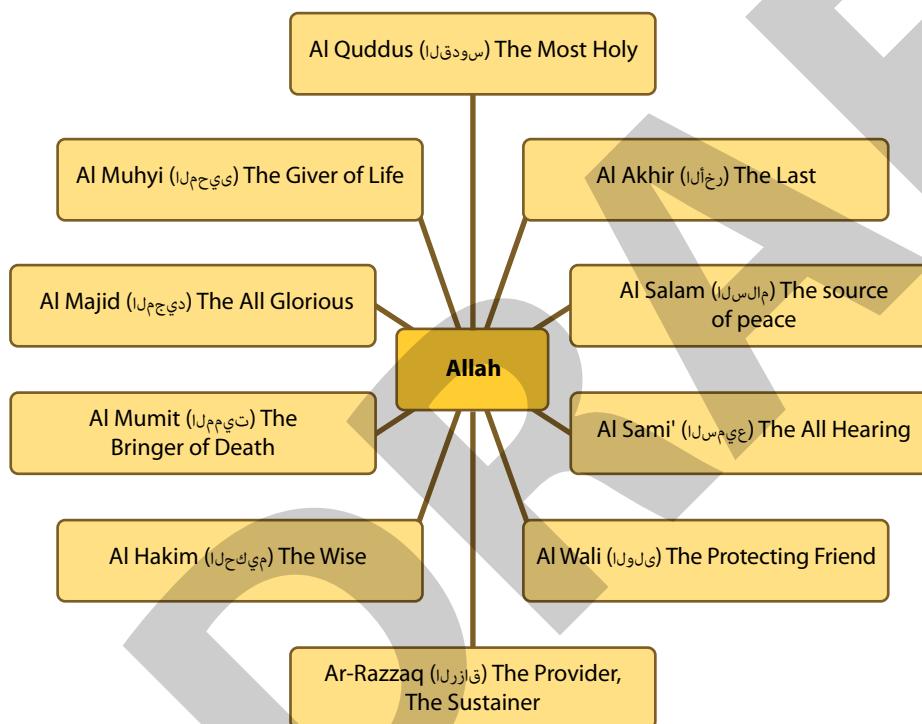
Shi'a Muslims also believe in **Adalat** – the idea that Allah is equitable and just. This term refers to how Shi'a Muslims believe Allah created the world in a just and fair way. Allah behaves in a fair and merciful manner at all times.

## Allah and the Qur'an

A key Islamic belief for all Muslims is the oneness of Allah, or Tawhid. However, there are many different descriptions and therefore it can be difficult for Muslims to combine them into one clear understanding. Muslims also believe that Allah is transcendent and therefore cannot be described fully by words. The Qur'an teaches that Allah has 99 names which are words or characteristics used to describe Allah. They help Muslims to think about the nature of Allah and make ideas about Allah easier to comprehend and relate to. Muslims may use a **subhah** when they pray, which is a set of 99 prayer beads to help them to remember and recite the 99 names. Muslims believe that being able to recall all 99 names of Allah strongly shows their devotion to him. This idea is reinforced in the Hadith: Abu Huraira reported the Prophet Muhammad as saying 'There are 99 names of Allah: he who commits them to memory will get into paradise.' (Hadith 35: 6475).



**Figure 1.3** Muslims use subhah beads like these to help them in prayer when they are remembering the 99 names of Allah.



## Why are these characteristics important?

- They help Muslims to gain some understanding of the 'unknowable' nature of Allah. By having more understanding, Muslims can show Allah more respect, which they believe is an important part of being Muslim.
- They allow Muslims to get closer to Allah and develop a meaningful relationship with him.
- They are accepted by everyone in the worldwide Muslim community. This brings the community together and allows Muslims to talk about Allah and their shared beliefs in a meaningful way.
- They are contained in the Qur'an, which is the Islamic holy book revealed to Muhammad, so Muslims believe Allah wants them to know these characteristics.

Activities	?	Sources of authority
<p><b>1</b> If you had to describe yourself in five words, which words would you choose? Why would these words be appropriate? Share your words with a partner and see whether they agree with them.</p> <p><b>2</b> Write a response to the question, 'What do Muslims believe about God?'</p> <p><b>3</b> Work in groups to discuss the idea of whether it is good to have names to describe Allah. Split your group equally, with one side agreeing that it is and the other disagreeing. Make sure you give reasons and examples for each argument you present. Once you have considered all the arguments, individually write down your own opinion.</p>		<p><i>In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful, Praise be to Allah, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the Worlds</i></p> <p><i>Most Gracious, Most Merciful; Master of the Day of Judgement, Thee do we worship, And Thine aid we seek. Show us the straight way. The way of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy Grace, Those whose (portion) is not wrath And do not go astray. (Qur'an 1) The most beautiful names belong to Allah: so call on him by them. (Qur'an 7:180)</i></p>

### Exam tip

Make sure you give two different reasons to answer this question. For each reason, explain your ideas fully, giving examples to show what you mean.

### Exam-style questions

Explain two reasons why prophets are so important in Islam. (**4 marks**)

### Summary

- Muslims believe Allah is unknowable and indescribable.
- Muslims give Allah characteristics to be able to talk about him and try to overcome the difficulties of not being able to know him.
- Muslims believe Allah is transcendent, immanent, omnipotent and all-loving.
- The key beliefs about the nature of Allah are contained in the Qur'an.
- Muslims use 99 names to describe the different characteristics of Allah.
- Muslims may use subhahs to help them remember the 99 names of Allah.

### Check point

#### Strengthen

**S1** Where do Muslims get their beliefs about Allah from?

**S2** Look at the passages in the Sacred Text box and use them to describe what Allah is like and what Allah is believed to be able to do.

**S3** Why are the 99 names of Allah important for Muslims?

#### Challenge

**C1** Why might some people feel that Allah's characteristics of transcendence and immanence contradict each other?

**C2** What can you learn about Allah from the names he is given?

**C3** Why might some people not accept Islamic ideas about God?

## 1.4 Risalah: prophethood

### Learning outcomes:

- To understand the nature and importance of prophethood for Muslims.
- To explain what the roles of prophets teach Muslims.
- To explore specifically the examples of Adam, Ibrahim, Isma'il, Musa, Dawud, Isa and Muhammad.

### Risalah in Islam

Risalah literally means 'message' in **Arabic**. Muslims believe that it is the communication channel between Allah and humanity. They believe that Allah gave messages to prophets (nubuwwah), or messengers, and thereby revealed himself and his word. This is called **revelation**. The messages that Allah sent to the prophets are recorded in the Islamic holy books and the religion is based on these messages.

Muslim tradition states that there have been 124,000 prophets in total. The Qur'an names 25 prophets, many of whom also appear in the holy books of Judaism and Christianity.

Muslims recognise that the prophets were chosen by Allah to reveal his truth and therefore should be shown respect. They do not, however, worship the prophets because they believe that Allah is the one true god and only he is worthy of worship. Whenever Muslims mention any of the prophets, they say 'peace be upon him' as a sign of respect. Muslims believe that Allah sent his messages to the prophets via angels. While some prophets simply give messages, others – called **rasuls** – were given holy books, or scripture, where their messages were written down. Belief in prophethood is therefore closely linked to the Six Beliefs of Islam as prophethood is often understood to be the source of how these beliefs were given to humanity.

Some of the prophets are listed below. Some are important in other religions; for example, Ibrahim and Isa are significant to the Jewish and Christian religions.

Qur'anic name	Biblical name
Adam	Adam
Nuh	Noah
Ibrahim	Abraham
Isma'il	Ishmael
Ishaq	Isaac
Yusuf	Joseph
Musa	Moses
Dawud	David
Sulayman	Solomon
Yunus	Jonah
Yahya	John
Isa	Jesus

### What do the roles of prophets teach Muslims?

Muslims believe that all the prophets brought the same message: that Allah called people to worship him as the one true God. However, many messengers were needed as the message was distorted or ignored. Muslims accept that prophets are the link between Allah and humanity, and this is how Allah revealed what he is like and how he wants people to live.

Muslims believe that the role of the prophets teaches them that:

- Allah loves them and wants to communicate with them through people and holy books
- Allah wants to share his message about how he wants them to live
- humanity is important to Allah and he is omnipresent, watching over them.

## Adam

Muslims believe that Adam was the first Muslim as well as the first prophet. Allah created Adam as the first human and gave him the task of **khalifah** – looking after the world. This is a key idea within the Qur'an and Muslims claim this responsibility is a duty that they should perform within the world, caring for what Allah has created and provided. Muslims believe that they can learn about their role on earth from the example of Adam.

## Ibrahim

Islam is an Abrahamic religion. This means it has a lot in common with Christianity and Judaism, as they both recognise the prophet known as Abraham. In Islam he is known as Ibrahim, and he is seen by Muslims as the father of the Arab people as well as the Jewish people through his two sons – Isaac and Isma'il. The story of Ibrahim having his faith tested by God by being asked to sacrifice his son teaches Muslims to be prepared to submit to Allah just as Ibrahim was willing to do. Muslims believe that Ibrahim brought a scripture to humanity (the Scrolls of Abraham), although these are now believed to be lost.

## Ishma'il

Isma'il is one of Ibrahim's two sons. He is regarded as a prophet and an ancestor of Muhammad. Muslims believe that Ishma'il was associated with Makkah and the construction of the Ka'bah – the sacred shrine in Makkah which all Muslims face when they pray.

## Musa

Musa is seen by Muslims as a prophet who taught and practised the religion of his ancestors, thereby confirming the scriptures and prophets who came before him. The Qur'an states that Musa was sent by Allah to give guidance to the pharaoh of Egypt and the Israelites. Israel holds religious significance for Muslims as a number of key prophets prior to Muhammad were associated with the land.

## Dawud

Dawud is recognised by Muslims as a prophet, leader and law-giver of Allah. He is known in Islam for defeating Goliath when he was a soldier. Goliath was a fighter who challenged any soldier in single combat. Dawud, a youth from Bethlehem, was initially mocked for standing to fight Goliath until, using his slingshot, he killed Goliath before he could even raise his sword. The Psalms of Dawud are

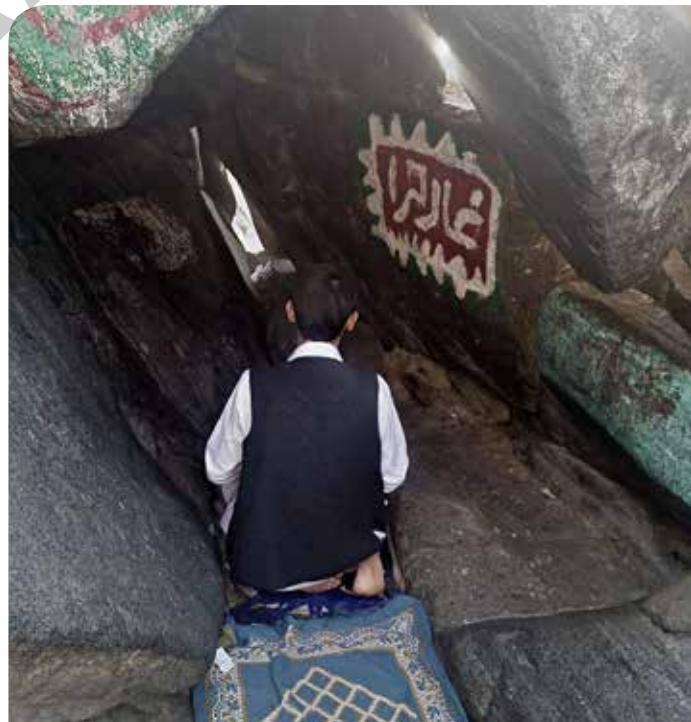
referred to in the Qur'an as having been revealed to him by Allah, and are recognised as one of the holy books of Islam. Dawud is recognised as a prophet who brought the message from Allah to humanity before to Muhammad.

## Isa

Isa is mentioned in 15 chapters of the Qur'an, showing his importance as a prophet. In Christianity he is called Jesus. Muslims recognise his miraculous virgin birth to Mary, but do not accept that he died on the cross or was resurrected as Christians do. Muslims refer to Isa as the 'son of Mary' rather than the 'son of God', as they view him as a human being only. They believe that there is only one god in Allah, and so Isa cannot be divine. Muslims understand the stories of Isa from the Gospels, which are part of the Christian holy book, the Bible. Not all Muslims accept the stories as true – many think they have been corrupted throughout time, and that Allah's original message has been altered.

## Muhammad – the last prophet

Muhammad is seen as the final prophet and is often considered the founder of Islam. He is referred to as the 'Seal of the Prophets' as he is accepted as the final messenger and his message from Allah is contained in the Qur'an. Muslims accept that this is the complete message to humanity, and the central beliefs of Islam



**Figure 1.4** The cave on Mount Hira where Muhammad is believed to have received his revelations.

are based on it. The message was revealed to Muhammad by the Angel Jibril over a period of 23 years in a cave on Mount Hira. He remembered the message and later recited it to his people. It was compiled in the Qur'an after Muhammad's death, but it has remained unchanged since that time. The Arabic word Qur'an literally means recitation and Muslims believe it is important to keep the Qur'an in its original language of Arabic so as not to lose any of its meaning. This is why Muslims will learn the Qur'an in Arabic. Muslims believe that the first religious leaders were direct descendants of Muhammad.

### Can you remember?

- Can you remember the Six Beliefs of Islam for Sunni Muslims and how Risalah is one of these key beliefs?
- Can you remember why these beliefs are so important to Sunni Muslims?
- Can you remember how Muslims express their beliefs about Risalah in their daily lives?

### Activities

- 1 Make a list of the characteristics a good teacher should have. Why do you think these are needed? Do you think the prophets would have had these characteristics? Why or why not?
- 2 In groups, imagine that you have been asked to host a 'Question Time' interview with a selection of the prophets. Plan the questions you would ask them and say how you think they might respond. Once you have planned it, role-play your interview.
- 3 Write an answer to the question, 'Why does the fact there are so many prophets show that Allah cares for humanity?'

### Summary

- Risalah, or prophethood, is very important to Muslims.
- Prophets are the messengers of Allah and the connection between Allah and humanity.
- Some prophets have simply brought messages, while others have been trusted to bring sources of authority in the form of holy books.
- Muslims recognise many prophets who are also seen in the other Abrahamic religions (Judaism and Christianity).

### Check point

#### Strengthen

- S1** Where do Muslims get their information about the prophets from?  
**S2** Name four prophets who are important to Islam and explain why they are important.  
**S3** Why is Muhammad so important to the religion of Islam?

#### Challenge

- C1** Why do you think revelation is so important to Muslims?  
**C2** What can we learn today from the examples of the prophets?  
**C3** Why do you think some people living in the time of the prophets did not accept the messages they were giving?

### Exam-style questions

Explain two reasons why prophets are important in Islam.  
**(4 marks)**

### Exam tip

This question requires you to give two reasons. Make sure you explain them both fully, using examples if possible to show your understanding of why they are important.

### Sources of authority

*Say (O Muslims): We believe in Allah and that which is revealed unto us and that which was revealed unto Abraham, and Ismael, and Isaac and Jacob, and the tribes and that which Moses and Jesus received and that which the Prophets received from their Lord. (Qur'an 2:136)*

## 1.5 Muslim holy books

### Learning objectives:

- To understand the nature and history of holy books in Islam.
- To explore the significance of holy books in Islam.
- To identify the importance and purpose of Muslim holy books today.

### The Qur'an

The main holy book for Muslims is the Qur'an. Muslims believe that it was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad over 23 years through the Angel Jibril and that the words came directly from Allah. The word 'Qur'an' means 'recitation', and as Muhammad was illiterate and could not read or write, he is believed to have recited accurately the words told to him by the Angel Jibril. Muslims believe that Muhammad shared this with his followers and it was written down on scraps of writing material or committed to memory. They were collected into a book immediately after Muhammad's death, under the direction of Abu Bakr, who succeeded Muhammad. Uthman, Muhammad's third successor, then standardised copies and all copies since then have been identical.

The Qur'an is written in Arabic and Muslims believe it is important to read, understand and learn it in its original language, so that its meaning can be understood fully and does not get changed through translation. The Qur'an is divided into surahs, or chapters, and each of these is made up of **ayats**, or verses. It is organised according to length, with the longest chapter at the start and shortest at the end. Many Muslims learn the Qur'an by heart and as a mark of respect they are then

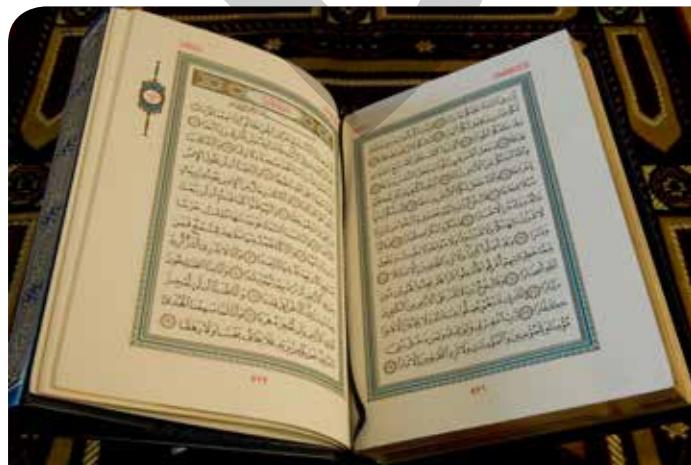


Figure 1.5 The Qu'ran – the holy book of Islam.

called **hafiz** if male and **hafizah** if female. This is done as a reminder that this is the format in which the Qur'an was revealed to Muhammad. It is considered a challenge to be able to recite the Qur'an so great respect is given to those who can achieve this.

### How do Muslims show respect to the Qur'an?

Muslims believe the Qur'an came directly from Allah and that therefore it deserves respect. They show this by:

- not allowing it to touch the ground – it will be placed on a kursi, which is a Qur'an stand usually made out of wood, when it is read
- washing before they read it to ensure they are clean
- not handling the Qur'an unless absolutely necessary
- not speaking, eating or drinking when reading the words of Allah
- covering it to protect it when it is not used
- placing it at the highest point in the room to signify that it is above all other possessions.

### Other holy books

The Qur'an mentions four other holy books: the Tawrah, Zabur, Injil and Sahifah of Ibrahim. Muslims believe these holy books originally contained the same message as the Qur'an. However, they believe their meaning has been gradually changed or corrupted over time, suggesting they became a mixture of Allah's words alongside those added by humans. Muslims therefore only accept the Qur'an as the true word of Allah and the most important of his revelations.

### How do Muslims show respect to the Qur'an?

Muslims believe the Qur'an came directly from Allah and that therefore it deserves respect. They show this by:

- not allowing it to touch the ground – it will be placed on a kursi, which is a Qur'an stand usually made out of wood, when it is read

The Tawrah – the Torah	According to the Qur'an, the Tawrah (the Jewish holy book) was revealed to Moses. They accept this is the longest-used scripture. Whilst Jews still use it today, Muslims believe it has become corrupted over the years and is no longer reliable, but recognition of it teaches Muslims that Allah had previous messengers to Muhammad.
Zabur – Psalms of Dawud (David)	The Qur'an mentions the Zabur as being the scripture revealed to King David. The current Psalms are still recognised by many Muslim scholars but some believe they were not divinely revealed.
Injil – the Gospel of Isa (Jesus)	The Qur'an recognises the Injil as the book revealed to Isa. Muslims believe its meaning has been altered over time and therefore Allah's words have been changed. It teaches Muslims about the revelations that they believed were revealed by Allah to Isa.
Sahifah of Ibrahim – Scrolls of Abraham	Many Muslims believe these were an early scripture revealed to Ibrahim and used by his sons Ishma'il and Isaac. They are considered today by Islam to be lost rather than corrupted. They teach Muslims what Allah revealed to Prophet Ibrahim.

These four books are also considered holy in the other Abrahamic religions, Christianity and Judaism. Although the religions of Islam, Christianity and Judaism all recognise them as being holy books, they don't accept or view them in the same way. Muhammad is believed to be the final prophet in Islam, and although Muslims appreciate the sources of authority in holy books that came before, they believe Muhammad and the Qur'an are the most significant.

### Why are holy books important in Islam today?

- Muslims believe Allah is behind the messages they contain and therefore they are a form of revelation about Allah, showing Muslims what Allah is like.
- Muslims believe that holy books contain truths from Allah and therefore should not be questioned nor altered – Muslims believe they should submit to Allah, and this includes his words in holy books.
- The books, especially the Qur'an, which is considered to be Allah's final revelation, guide Muslims in how Allah wants them to live.
- The books show that Allah wants to interact with his creation, specifically humans.
- Muslims believe they can get closer to Allah and understand him better by reading his words.

### Activities



- 1 What is your favourite book? Share it with a partner, giving a brief synopsis of the story. Explain three reasons why you like this book and why it is important to you.
- 2 Why do you think Muslims believe it is important to show so much respect to the Qur'an? Think of an example of how you show respect to something in your life. Make a list of ways in which you do this.
- 3 Imagine you have been asked to talk to a group of non-Muslims about the Qur'an, explaining what it is and why it is important. Plan what you would say and write a speech.

**Activities**

- 4** In a group, discuss the advantages and disadvantages of using the Qur'an today as a source of authority. Think about reasons why some people may suggest it is too old or out of date, while others may argue that the teachings it contains are timeless and still relevant. Make sure you use examples in your arguments.

**Extend your knowledge**

There are 114 surahs, or chapters, in the Qur'an. Each surah has a name which is taken from the beginning of the chapter or a significant word within the chapter. All surahs except Surah 9 begin with the words 'Bismillah-ir Rahman-ir Rahim', which means 'In the Name of Allah, the Merciful Benefactor, The Merciful Redeemer.'

**Exam-style questions**

Consider why holy books are important in Islam.  
**(9 marks)**

**Exam tip**

This question requires you to present a number of points and develop them fully. This means you need to explain each idea in your answer – give examples where possible and try to show you understand the importance of holy books as sources of authority.

**Sources of authority**

*That this is indeed a qur'an Most honourable, In Book well-guarded, Which none shall touch but those who are clean: A Revelation from the Lord of the Worlds.*  
(Qur'an 56:77–80)

*I leave behind me two things, the Qur'an and my example the Sunnah and if you follow these you will never go astray.*

(Prophet Muhammad's last sermon)

**Summary**

- Holy books are important to Muslims.
- Muslims recognise the Tawrat, Zabur, Injil, Sahifat and the Qur'an as holy books.
- The Qur'an is considered to be the most important as it is the final, complete revelation from Allah.
- Holy books are a way Allah communicates with humanity and they are sources of authority and guidance for Muslims.
- Muslims believe holy books were important when they were first revealed as well as today.

**Check point****Strengthen**

- S1** Can you name the holy books identified and accepted by Muslims?  
**S2** Why is the Qur'an considered to be the most important holy book for Muslims?  
**S3** Why are holy books important for Muslims today?

**Challenge**

- C1** Why do you think Muslims feel it is important to learn the Qur'an by heart?  
**C2** Why do you think Muslims feel it is important to show respect to the Qur'an at all times?  
**C3** When do you think Muslims might use the Qur'an?

## 1.6 Malaikah: angels

### Learning outcomes:

- To understand the nature and importance of angels for Muslims.
- To be able to explain how the Angels Jibril, Izra'il and Mika'il are shown in the Qur'an.
- To explore the significance of angels for Muslims today.

### Islam and angels

Islam believes strongly in the existence of angels; indeed, they are recognised as one of the Six Beliefs for Sunni Muslims. They believe that although Allah is the only spiritual being that should be worshipped, other **supernatural** beings which are beyond the physical world – angels – are the servants of Allah. They believe that angels were created from light and have no physical body of their own, but they can appear in human form. Muslims also accept that angels have no free will, so they can only do what Allah orders them to do.



**Figure 1.6** The Archangel Jibril.

Angels are also seen to have a guardianship role within Islam. They are believed to have accompanied Muhammad up to Jannah where he received commands from Allah. Angels are also seen to be used by Allah in other ways, such as overseeing al-Jannah (Paradise). It is also believed that there are angels who oversee the clouds and give life to unborn children in their mother's womb. The angels perform all of these tasks at Allah's command.

Muslims recognise that there will be a Day of Judgement after death. It is taught in Islam that at this time the end of the world will come and humans will be judged on their actions and deeds on earth. In order that this can be done, Muslims are taught that throughout their life, there are two angels present. One writes down their good deeds whilst the other writes down their bad deeds. This information is then used to make the decision on whether each person deserves to go to Al-Jannah (Paradise) or to be punished in Jahannam (Hell). In this way, angels hold very important roles for Allah.

Muhammad is believed to have told followers that angels surround humans at all times and present a full report on each and every human after death to Allah. Some angels are given special importance by Allah and hold roles of significance in the world. They are mentioned in the Qur'an and therefore given recognition and importance by Muslims today.

## Angels in the Qur'an and their importance

Some angels are given higher ranks than other angels and are known as archangels. Three archangels identified on numerous occasions in the Qur'an and accepted as important to all Muslims are:

- Jibril, or Gabriel as he is recognised in Judaism and Christianity, who is given the role in Islam of revealing messages from Allah to the prophets, most notably revealing the Qur'an to Muhammad
- Izra'il, who is given the important role of blowing the trumpet twice to signal the start of the Day of Judgement – according to the Qur'an, the first blow will bring all humankind to attention and end all life, while the second will return all humans back to life to face Allah and be judged
- Mika'il, recognised in Christianity and Judaism as Michael, and is often shown as the archangel of mercy – he is believed to bring rain and thunder to earth and is seen to be the one who is responsible for giving out rewards to people who are good.

These angels are seen by Muslims to have been given roles of importance by Allah and should therefore be respected and remembered. Muslims believe that Allah chooses to communicate with them and the angels are important because of this.

## What is the significance of angels for Muslims today?

Belief in Malaikah is a compulsory act, a requirement of being a Muslim, as it forms part of the Six Beliefs of Islam for Sunni Muslims. It is important for Muslims today for several reasons.

- This belief helps Muslims to understand Allah better – the angels are the creations of Allah and therefore reveal truths to Muslims, such as Allah wanting to communicate with humanity and using the angels to pass messages to the prophets.
- Muslims feel a sense of **awe** and amazement towards Allah as they believe he is transcendent but has been able to communicate with humanity using the angels.
- Jibril is the angel who was used to reveal the Qur'an to Muhammad. As Muhammad is accepted to have brought the final, perfect message from Allah, he is of particular importance.

- Izra'il and Mika'il are associated with what happens after death for Muslims – something that will also affect how they live. The roles of these angels remind Muslims of the importance of living as Allah wants them to, in order to be rewarded after death.

### Activities

- 1 Imagine you have been given the privilege of meeting any of the three angels mentioned on these pages. Who would you want to meet and what would you want to ask them, and why?
- 2 Discuss with a partner whether angels watching what humans do and reporting on it is a good or bad thing.
- 3 How do you think a belief in angels will affect the life of a Muslim? Write a paragraph explaining your thoughts, making sure you give examples where appropriate.

### Sources of authority

*The Messenger believes in what has been revealed to him from his Lord, and so do the believers. All believe in Allah, His Angels and His Messengers.*  
(Qu'ran 2:285)

*Say: Whoever is an enemy to Gabriel – for he brings down the (revelation) to thy heart by Allah's will, a confirmation of what went before, and guidance and glad tidings for those who believe, –*

*Whoever is an enemy to Allah and His angels and messengers, to Gabriel and Michael, – Lo! Allah is an enemy to those who reject Faith.*

(Quran, 2 (Al-Baqara):97–98)

*...then We sent her our angel, and he appeared before her as a man in all respects.*

(Quran, 19 (Maryam):17)

### Exam-style questions

Consider why angels are important in Islam.  
**(9 marks)**

**Exam tip**

This question is worth nine marks, so you have to make sure you demonstrate your knowledge accurately. Use examples where relevant to illustrate the points you make, and try to explain each idea fully before moving on to the next.

**Can you remember?**

- Can you remember what the Six Beliefs of Islam are?
- Can you remember why the Six Beliefs of Islam are important?
- Can you remember how the Six Beliefs of Islam affect the life of a Muslim today?

**Summary**

- Malaikah is an important belief in Islam – it is one of the Six Beliefs.
- Muslims believe angels were created by Allah and are used as his servants.
- Three angels – Jibril, Izra'il and Mika'il – are given special importance in Islam.
- Muslims believe that angels are important today and will have an impact on how they live.

**Check point****Strengthen**

- S1** What is Malaikah?  
**S2** Who are the three main angels in Islam and what roles are they given?  
**S3** Where do Muslims get their knowledge about angels from and why is this important?

**Challenge**

- C1** Give three examples of how a Muslim's life might be affected by the knowledge of the existence of angels.  
**C2** What do you think we can learn about Allah from each of the archangels – Jibril, Izra'il and Mika'il?  
**C3** Why might some people say there is no evidence to suggest that angels exist?

## 1.7 Al-Qadr: predestination

### Learning objectives:

- To understand the nature and importance of predestination for Muslims.
- To identify how al-Qadr and human freedom relates to the Day of Judgement.
- To consider the implications of belief in al-Qadr for Muslims today.

### What is al-Qadr and why is it important?

Al-Qadr is the Islamic idea of predestination, the idea that Allah has control over everything and knows everything that will come to pass before it happens. This is a belief accepted by Sunni Muslims but not by Shi'a Muslims. Some Muslims believe that Allah has written down everything that has happened and will happen. They do not believe that a person's actions will occur because Allah has decided it, but that he already knows and has recorded what choices they will make with their free will. It is one of the Six Beliefs for Sunni Muslims. They believe that although Allah gave humans free will, he is omnipotent (all-powerful) and **omniscient** (all-knowing), and controls the destiny of every person. Muslims accept that nothing happens unless it is the will of Allah and they often use the words 'Insha allah' ('If Allah is willing') to show that they submit to this.

Belief in predestination is based on four things: Allah's knowledge of everything that has been and will be, the idea that Allah has recorded these, that everything that does happen is willed by Allah and finally that Allah is the creator of everything. Some people may raise questions about the apparent conflict between some of these ideas. Muslims believe that although Allah is aware of what is going to happen, he cannot interfere. This



**Figure 1.7** Muslims believe that they must submit to the will of Allah. During prayer, they prostrate themselves to the floor to show this.

is because Muslims also accept that Allah gave humans free will and to be involved in the world would mean Allah was violating this idea. Although Allah does not want people to make the wrong decisions, he accepts that sometimes this is what needs to happen in order for humans to have free will – without free will they cannot completely and willingly submit to Allah.

## Al-Qadr and human freedom

Muslims accept the teaching of al-Qadr, but it may be more difficult for others to understand why, if Allah is controlling everything that happens and knows what will happen, he doesn't prevent bad things from taking place. Islam holds that Allah gave humans free will when he created them. This means that humans have choices and can decide what to do in any given situation. Therefore humans are responsible for their own sins, as they have decided what action to take.

Muslims believe that Allah knows every human so well that he knows what they will choose before they make the decision for themselves. They accept that every human has a purpose given to them by Allah and they can choose to go along with this divine purpose or reject it and turn away from Allah. Muslims believe that on the Day of Judgement, all mankind will be destroyed and then brought back to life to be judged by Allah. They are accountable for their own actions and Allah judges whether they should be punished or rewarded. Although Allah knows the choices they made, the human beings were still free to choose otherwise. In this way, there is no contradiction between the ideas of al-Qadr and human freedom.

## What are the implications for belief in al-Qadr for Muslims today?

Muslims live in the knowledge of al-Qadr. It helps them make sense of the world around them – if Allah knows everything and has control of all things that happen it must mean that events happen for a reason. Belief in al-Qadr affects their lives because:

- they want to be rewarded rather than punished after death, so they try to live in the way Allah wants
- they try to follow the duties given to them by Allah
- they try to help others as this is what the Qur'an and Muhammad's example teach them to do
- they try to constantly be aware of their thoughts, actions and deeds to ensure they are living by the rules of Allah.

## Sources of authority

*Nor can a soul die except by Allah's leave.  
(Qur'an 3:145)*

*Ali narrated that one day Muhammad was sitting with a wooden stick in his hand with which he was scratching the ground. He raised his head and said, 'There is none of you, but has his place assigned either in the Fire or in Paradise.' They (the Companions) enquired, 'O Allah's Messenger! Why should we carry on doing good deeds, shall we depend (on Qadr) and give up work?' Muhammad said: 'No, carry on doing good deeds, for everyone will find it easy (to do) such deeds that will lead him towards that for which he has been created.' Then he recited the verse: 'As for him who gives (in charity) and keeps his duty to Allah and fears Him, and believes in al-Husna, We will make smooth for him the path of Ease (goodness)'. (Qur'an (Surah al-Lail) 92:5-7)*

## Activities

- 1 Consider the idea of submission. List five ways in which you show this idea towards your friends and family. Share your ideas with a partner. If you were to accept ideas about al Qadr or predestination, would you live your life any differently? Explain reasons for your answer.
- 2 Write a statement to answer the question, 'What evidence is there that humans have free will in their lives?'

## Exam-style questions

'It is not possible to accept the ideas of al-Qadr and human free will.' Evaluate this statement, considering more than one perspective. You must refer to Islam in your answer. **(12 marks)**

## Exam tip

This question asks you to consider a range of viewpoints about the given statement. Before you start writing your answer, think about what different people might say – would they agree or disagree? What reason might they give? Make sure you include a Muslim view in your answer.

## Activities



- 3** ‘We should make the most of life now and not worry about the future.’ Create a table of arguments agreeing and disagreeing with this statement. Discuss them with a partner and debate which side of the argument you think is strongest and why.

## Extend your knowledge

There are differences between Sunni and Shi'a acceptance of the idea of al-Qadr. Sunni Muslims hold it to be true and this can be seen by the fact they show its importance by having it as one of the Six Beliefs in Sunni Islam. In contrast, Shi'a Muslims reject the idea of predestination. This is further reinforced by acceptance of the Shi'a concept of Bada', which states that God has not set a definite course for humans.

## Summary

- Al-Qadr is the Islamic belief in predestination – that Allah controls everything.
- Every aspect of being a Muslim follows the idea of submission to Allah.
- Muslims believe that al-Qadr and human free will do not contradict each other but work together.
- Belief in al-Qadr will affect the daily life of a Muslim in how they act and behave.

## Check point

### Strengthen

**S1** Why do Muslims feel that a belief in al-Qadr is important?

**S2** How do you think the quotes in the Sacred Texts box reflect the idea of al-Qadr?

**S3** Why do Muslims believe that al-Qadr and human freedom can work together?

### Challenge

**C1** In your own words, explain what you think a Muslim can learn from a belief in al-Qadr.

**C2** How might a belief in al-Qadr impact on humans living in the modern world?

**C3** Why might many people not accept the belief of predestination?

## 1.8 Akhirah: life after death

### Learning objectives:

- To explore Muslim teachings about life after death.
- To understand the nature of judgement, paradise and hell, and how they are seen in the Qur'an.
- To consider how Muslim teachings about life after death affect the life of a Muslim.

### Islam and Akhirah

Belief in life after death is fundamental to Islam. It features in both the Sunni Six Beliefs and Shi'a Five Roots of 'Usul ad-Din. Muslims believe life on earth is only part of human existence, as it continues after death. Life on earth is our chance to live good lives as Allah intended or to choose to turn our back on Allah and his laws. Muslims believe that after death, every human will be called to answer for the way they have lived their life, and that this will affect their afterlife, determining whether they will be rewarded or punished. Muslims accept belief in Akhirah because it was promised by Allah, and they believe he never breaks his promises.

Muslims believe that at each person's death, two angels will visit them and record their good and bad deeds, to decide whether they are fit to enter paradise. The angels are believed to ask questions such as, 'Who is your god?', 'What is your religion?' and 'Who is your prophet?' How a person answers these questions will determine their future life in the afterlife alongside how they acted in their life on earth. They believe that there will be a Day of Judgement, when there will be a complete resurrection of the body and all deeds will be judged by Allah. Prior to this day, they believe that the souls of the dead will go to **Barzakh**, which is understood as a barrier between the physical and spiritual worlds, where they will wait until the Day of Judgement.

Muslims believe that those who succeed in the test on the Day of Judgement will be rewarded with paradise – **al-Jannah** – whilst those who fail will suffer in hell – **Jahannam**.

### What does the Qur'an say?

The Qur'an offers vivid images of life after death. It talks of the end of the world being where stars will scatter, mountains tumble, oceans boil over and the dead will be raised from their tombs. Good and bad deeds will be weighed and each person will have to face Allah. Paradise and hell are described in the Qur'an as physical states, although many Muslims believe that this is symbolic, because eternal life is beyond human understanding.

### Al-Jannah

Al-Jannah, or paradise, is described in the Qur'an as a wonderful garden. People are thought to return to their young states and be able to enjoy all the pleasures the garden offers. It talks of flowers, birds and fruit served

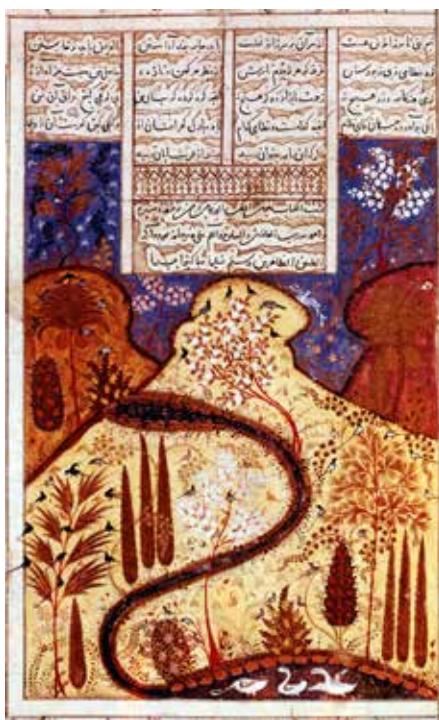
**Life on earth – this is a test.**

**Death**

**Barzakh – a place where souls go after death to wait.**

**Judgement – on the Day of Judgement, all will be judged by Allah according to how they have lived their lives**

**al-Jannah or Jahannam**



**Figure 1.8** Al-Jannah is a beautiful garden that awaits Muslims that pass the test on the Day of Judgement, according to the Qur'an.



**Figure 1.9** Muslims believe that those who don't go to paradise will end up in Jahannam.

by youths and maidens. Reference is made to couches or thrones with soft cushions, and goblets and dishes made from gold. Paradise is seen as a reward and a place of beauty.

### Jahannam

In contrast, Jahannam is a place of hell; of fire, black smoke and boiling water. It is seen as a place of punishment where those who deserve it face endless pain and torture – a fitting punishment for those who chose to turn away from Allah.

### Allah and judgement

Muslims believe that Allah is not evil and that punishment through Jahannam is not because he is a cruel tyrant. They accept that because Allah gave humans free will, some will choose to turn away from him. The fate of these people is inevitable, as they have used their free will incorrectly to turn away from Allah and must face the consequences.

### How will beliefs about Akhirah affect the life of a Muslim?

Akhirah is such an important belief to Muslims that it is bound to affect their lives. They see their life on earth as a test from Allah, and obviously want to be rewarded in the afterlife, so this may make them think about their beliefs, actions and behaviour.

Muslims may:

- be more aware of their lives – their thoughts, actions and deeds are being watched by Allah and recorded by the angels, so it may make them think more carefully about these
- realise the importance of asking for forgiveness when they do something wrong, as they know Allah will also see and hear this
- be more aware that every action they perform is an act of worship to Allah (ibadah)
- try to please Allah by performing sacred duties, reading the Qur'an, following Shari'ah law, caring for those around them, being honest and faithful and working hard.

### Activities



- 1 Write down what you believe about death and why. Share your thoughts with a partner to see whether you agree or disagree. Does it matter if you don't agree?
- 2 Read the descriptions in the Sacred Text boxes of al Jannah and Jahannam. Why do you think Muslims offer such physical descriptions of these places? Do you think it is the right thing to do to offer physical descriptions? Why or why not?
- 3 Imagine you are having an email conversation with a friend who is a Muslim. Write both sides of the conversation to show you understand the Muslim view and an alternative view of what happens after death.

## Sources of authority

*Did you think that We had created you in play and that you would not be brought back to us?*

(Qur'an 23:115)

*Does man think that We cannot assemble his bones? Nay, We are able to put together in perfect order the very tips of his fingers. (Qur'an 75:3–4)*

*Then when the Trumpet is blown, there will be no more relationships between them that Day, nor will one ask after another. (Qur'an 23: 101)*

*Fruits (Delights)... In Gardens of Felicity... Thrones... a clear-flowing fountain, Crystal-white, of a taste delicious to those who drink (thereof).*

(Qur'an 37:42–46)

*Therefore do I warn you of a Fire blazing fiercely; none shall reach it but those most unfortunate ones Who gave the lie to truth and turn their backs. But those most devoted to Allah shall be removed far from it. (Qur'an 92:14–17)*

## Exam-style questions

'Death is just the end and that is that – there is no idea of Paradise and Hell.' Evaluate this statement, considering more than one perspective. You must refer to Islam in your answer.

**(12 marks)**

## Exam tip

Death and the afterlife are complex topics and you need to demonstrate that you understand this in your answer. Make sure you think of a number of arguments agreeing and disagreeing with the statement, explaining each fully. Remember that you must include a Muslim view in your response.

## Can you remember?

- Can you remember the role of Akhirah in the Six Beliefs of Islam and Five Roots of 'Usul ad-Din?
- Can you remember what the characteristics of Allah are and how they are shown in ideas of Akhirah?
- Can you remember the link between Akhirah, al-Qadr and judgement?

## Summary

- Akhirah is the Islamic word for life after death.
- Muslims believe this life is a test for the afterlife.
- The Qur'an is where Muslims get their information about the afterlife.
- If they have lived their life as Allah wants, they will go to al-Jannah (paradise).
- If they have not lived their life as Allah has required, they will go to Jahannam (hell).
- Muslim beliefs about the afterlife will impact on the way a Muslim lives their life.

## Check point

### Strengthen

**S1** What is Akhirah and where do Muslims gain their knowledge about it from?

**S2** Can you explain what Muslims believe about al-Jannah and Jahannam?

**S3** Why is Allah not seen as evil for allowing some people to be punished?

### Challenge

**C1** In your own words, can you explain why Akhirah is important to Muslims?

**C2** Why do you think Muslims are so aware of Akhirah and judgement?

**C3** Can you explain why some people may not accept that there is an afterlife?

# Recap Quiz

## Recap: Muslim beliefs

The activities on the next two pages will help you to remember the things you have learnt before you move on to the next chapter. It is important that you consolidate your knowledge about Muslim teachings and beliefs as this will assist your understanding of the other topics in this book:

Living the Muslim life

Marriage and the family

Matters of life and death

If you learn the information, practise exam-type questions and produce revision materials as you go along, it will also make preparation for your examinations much easier!

### Recap quiz

#### **The Six Beliefs of Islam**

**1** Name each of the Six Beliefs of Islam for Sunni Muslims.

**2** How are the Six Beliefs of Islam for Sunni Muslims put into practice in everyday life?

#### **The Five Roots of 'Usul ad-Din in Shi'a Islam**

**3** Name each of the Five Roots of 'Usul ad-Din for Shi'a Muslims.

**4** How are the Five Roots of 'Usul ad-Din for Shi'a Muslims put into practice in everyday life?

**5** What are the key differences between Sunni and Shi'a Muslims?

#### **The nature of Allah**

**6** State five characteristics of Allah.

**7** Name five of the 99 names of Allah.

**8** How are beliefs about Allah seen to be central to the religion of Islam?

#### **Risalah: prophethood**

**9** What is Risalah?

**10** Name four prophets accepted by Muslims.

**11** Who is Muhammad?

**12** Why is Muhammad so important to Muslims?

**13** What can Muslims today learn from the prophets?

#### **Muslim holy books**

**14** Name the holy books recognised by Muslims.

**15** What is the most important holy book for Muslims called?

**16** Why do Muslims accept a number of holy books?

**17** Why is the Qur'an considered to be so important to Muslims?

#### **Malaikah: angels**

**18** What is Malaikah?

**19** Name three angels recognised by Muslims.

**20** Why would Islam not exist without the angels?

#### **Al-Qadr: predestination**

**21** What is al-Qadr?

**22** Why is a belief in predestination so important to Muslims and how does it relate to ideas of Tawhid?

#### **Akhirah: life after death**

**23** What is Akhirah?

**24** How do beliefs about Akhirah affect the daily life of Muslims?

**25** Give five examples of how a Muslim might live according to all their beliefs.

## Exam-style questions

- Outline three Muslim beliefs about judgement. **(3 marks)**
- Explain two reasons why Risalah is important to Muslims. **(4 marks)**
- Consider why belief in Tawhid is essential for Muslims. **(9 marks)**
- 'The Qur'an is the most important source of authority for Muslims.' Evaluate this statement, considering more than one perspective. You must refer to Islam in your answer. **(12 marks)**

## Activities

- Create a spider diagram showing what beliefs are essential to being a Muslim and following the Islamic faith.
- Create a set of flashcards – one for each of the key terms studied in this chapter. Write the key term on one side and its meaning and examples on the other.
- 'It is easy to live as a Muslim today.' Consider this statement and create a table of arguments for and against. Share your arguments with a partner to develop them. Have a class debate about this statement.
- Imagine you are on the radio and are interviewing a group of Muslims about their faith. Use all the knowledge you have gained in this chapter to write a series of questions that you can give to a partner. Get them to answer your questions. Record your interview to use in your revision.
- In groups, think about what it means to be a Muslim. Consider things in their lives they may find easy and things they may find difficult. Write a speech explaining how you think they might feel about their religion.



## Exam tips

- Each question has a 'command' word which instructs you in what you are required to do. Make sure you look at this carefully to ensure you understand what the question is asking.
- Read each question carefully before starting to answer it. If appropriate, plan your answer carefully to decide what knowledge is important to include.
- Make sure you practise each style of question carefully to familiarise yourself with how you should answer it.



## Summary of learning

In this chapter you found out about how the religion of Islam began and developed, as well as some key Islamic beliefs and teachings. You have learnt about what Islam teaches and what Muslims believe:

- are the key teachings of Islam
- is important to Muslims
- about Allah and why
- about why prophets are so important
- about what messages the prophets brought to humanity
- about which books are important as sources of authority
- about angels and the role they play
- about why Muslims believe in predestination and what this means for Muslims
- about key Islamic beliefs about life after death.

## Extend – Muslim beliefs

### Source

Hello, my name is Rayan. I am a Muslim and this means I follow the religion of Islam. I will tell you a little bit about my faith. I believe in one God and call him Allah. I pray to him five times every day – sometimes with my family and sometimes alone. I also try to attend the Mosque on a Friday.

My family and I belong to the largest branch of Islam – it is known as Sunni Islam. We believe in life after death, and that the prophets are Allah's way of communicating with us, and we believe what the holy books tell us. I read the Islamic holy book, the Qur'an, every day. It makes me feel closer to Allah and understand him better.

I enjoy being a Muslim. I can talk and share my faith with other Muslims. I do find some ideas difficult to accept and have talked to my parents about them. For example, I believe that Allah is powerful and controls everything. This means that he knows us, including me, very well. I do find it difficult, however, to understand therefore how I have free will. If Allah knows what I am going to do and controls this, am I actually free to make my own choices? To help me understand some of the beliefs of Islam better, I have read parts of the Qur'an and looked to the example of Prophet Muhammad. They help me to understand my faith better and realise how important it is for me to lead a good life as Allah intended.

I know that other Muslims may hold different beliefs from me or interpret their faith in a different way. I also know that there are other religions in the world. I have shared a few ideas of mine with you. If you have any questions, ask me in your reply and I will try to explain them to you. It would also be great to know more about you and your religious beliefs.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Rayan



Figure 1.10 The Qur'an.

## Activities



- 1** What key Islamic beliefs does Rayan mention in his email?
- 2** What Islamic key words does he use in his email? Can you explain what each one means?
- 3** What Muslim beliefs does Rayan mention where he has not used the Islamic term? Can you say what term he could have used?
- 4** How important do you think Islam is to Rayan and why do you think this?
- 5** Do you think Rayan finds it easy to be a Muslim? Why or why not?
- 6** Write a reply to Rayan, asking him questions about his faith. Include your own ideas and beliefs about religion to share your thoughts.
- 7** Consider what Rayan has said in his email to help you plan responses to the following statements. Make sure you include arguments that both agree and disagree with the statement.
  - a ‘Tawhid is the most important belief in Islam.’
  - b ‘Islam is a way of life that affects all aspects of a Muslim’s life.’
  - c ‘Religion is more important today than it has ever been before.’
- 8** Once you have planned your arguments, debate them in a group to see who can offer the strongest response.

## Literacy tips

- Make sure that when you offer arguments to support a point of view, you include examples to help you.
- Structure your arguments in a logical and organised way. Make sure you consider what arguments may be given in response so you can prepare an answer.
- Make sure you always use the appropriate key terms in your written and oral responses. This will show you have a good understanding of them and can use them accurately and appropriately.

## Can you remember?

- Why are beliefs so important to Muslims?
- What do Muslims believe about Allah?
- Why are holy books important to Muslims?
- What roles were angels and prophets given by Allah?
- What is the link between the ideas of judgement, al-Qadr and free will?
- What do Muslims believe about life after death?