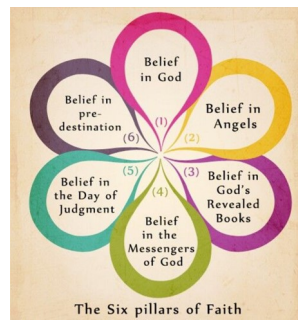
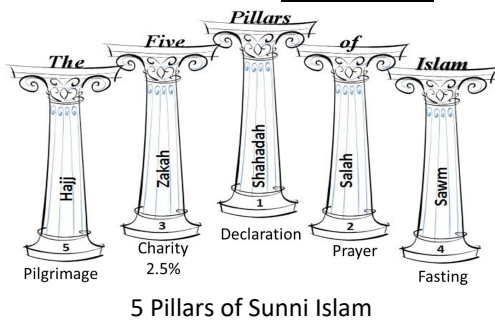


Sunni Islam



Shahadah - This is the Muslim declaration of faith. All Muslims say it very often to confirm their faith as a Muslim. This Pillar is believing and saying the words “**There is no god except Allah, Muhammad is the messenger of Allah**” (Sunni Islam). Shahadah is very brief but is very important to the Muslim way of life. Shahadah is included in the Muslim call to prayer (adhan) and repeated during all prayers. Faithful Muslims will repeat Shahadah thousands of times during their lives. It is repeated several times a day and is the first thing to be whispered into a baby’s ear when s/he is born. It is taught to children as a matter of high importance and Muslims hope and pray it will be the last words they speak before they die. If they are unable to say it themselves then they are hopeful to be surrounded by a Muslim who can speak it to them.

The Shahadah in Shi’a Islam

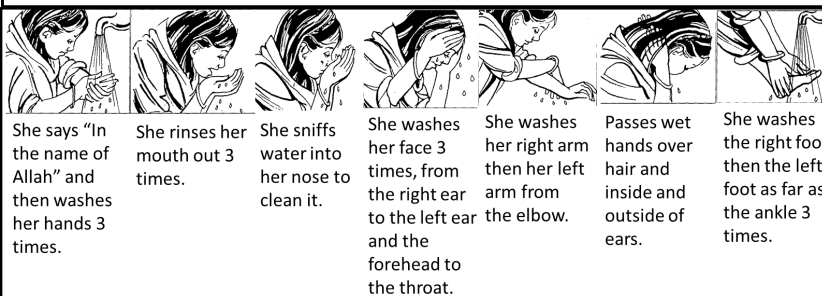
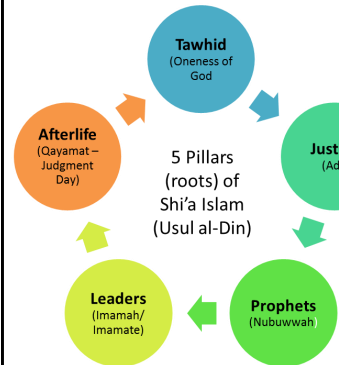
Many Shi’a Muslims add an extra phrase to the Shahadah: ‘and Ali is the friend of God’. This demonstrates their belief that Ali, Muhammad’s cousin and son-in-law, was the true successor of Muhammad, and that only he and his descendants know the true meaning of the revelation given to Muhammad.

Shia Islam

The Ten Obligatory Acts in Shi’a Islam

For Muslims who follow Twelver Shi’a Islam, there are ten duties called the **Ten Obligatory Acts** (also known as the Ancillaries of the Faith). These include all the Five Pillars except Shahadah (which is covered by some of the additional acts). They are:

1. Salah – prayer.
2. Sawm – fasting.
3. Zakah – charitable giving.
4. Khums – a 20 per cent tax on income once all expenses are deducted. Half goes to charity and half goes to Shi’a religious leaders.
5. Hajj – pilgrimage.
6. Jihad – the struggle to maintain the faith and defend Islam. For many Muslims this means the struggle to live by their faith as well as possible, for example by obeying the Five Pillars, contributing to the community or doing voluntary work.
7. Amr-bil-Maruf – encouraging people to do what is good.
8. Nahi Anil Munkar – discouraging people from doing what is wrong.
9. Tawallah – to be loving towards the friends of God, including Muhammad and the Imams.
10. Tabarra – disassociating from the enemies of God.



Salah begins with ritual washing called **Wudu**. It is a ritual wash because it is carried out in the same way by every Muslim, and has been done like this since Prophet Muhammed taught it. The ritualistic washing helps a Muslim get into the right frame of mind for prayer. This ritual washing is also called ablution; **ablution** means making pure. The Wudu therefore purifies the soul, cleaning away sin before worship.

Salah - This is prayer. All Muslims who are old enough aim to pray 5 prayers a day. Sunni Muslims pray five times a day, whilst Shia Muslims complete their five prayers, three times a day. Taking time to pray offers a wonderful opportunity for a Muslim to improve his/her life. It is a system of spiritual, moral and physical training. It shows obedience to his/or her creator. When done with the right intention it gives Muslims a chance to refocus at different times throughout the day. Objects are often used to help with Salah. The objects are prayer rugs (used for cleanliness) and tasbeeh – (prayer beads used to help praise Allah. There are 99 beads). Muslim men will also cover their heads with a Topi and women a headscarf called Hijab, as a sign of respect and an awareness that Allah is always above them.

Zakat - This is the compulsory giving of a percentage of a Muslim's wealth to charity. It is regarded as a type of worship and of self-purification. Zakat does not refer to charitable gifts given out of kindness or generosity (this is known as **Sadaqah**), but to the systematic giving of 2.5% of one's wealth each year to benefit the poor. For a **Sunni Muslim** this percentage is 2.5% of all surplus money (after necessary expenditure e.g. food, bills, clothes etc.). For **Shia Muslims** it is different. Shia Muslims will only pay Zakat (2.5%) on goods specifically mentioned in the Qur’an e.g. gold, silver, cattle, livestock etc. With Zakat here is a cut off point so the poor, who need every single thing they have in order to raise their families, pay nothing at all. There are a number of ways in which Zakat might be distributed such as to people who are poor, the prisoners of war or their families or to hospitals, schools and Mosques. In Muslim countries like Saudi Arabia, Zakat is collected and shared out by the government. In Britain, Muslim organisations and Mosques might collect money from Muslims donating Zakat. They will then decide who should receive the money.

Khums— Within **Shia Islam**, Muslims are expected to pay Khums. Khums is the compulsory giving of 20% of their wealth to God. It is the 4th obligation in Shia Islam. Sunni Muslim do not pay Khums as they believe that this only applies to property/ assets/ money/ land etc. gained through war (as mention in the Qur’an as ‘War booty’; **Sunni Muslims** do not believe this applies to modern Muslims. However **Shia Muslims** argue that the real meaning/ translation means ‘everything you acquire’ (i.e. all your savings). This is why a modern Shia Muslim will give 20% of their savings to charity.

■ The significance of Zakah

- In giving Zakah, Muslims are fulfilling a duty imposed by God. The Qur'an makes it clear that giving Zakah is a sign of a true Muslim.
- Paying Zakah gives Muslims a good attitude towards money. They learn to share it and not be greedy with it.
- Zakah strengthens communities by making the rich support the poor.
- Zakah links well with salah (prayer). Prayers should make Muslims feel concern for others, and Zakah puts this concern into action.

Helping the poor
Obeying God

Helping a person acknowledge that everything comes from God on loan and that we do not really own anything ourselves
– And since we cannot take anything with us when we die we need not cling to it
Acknowledging that whether we are rich or poor is God's choice
– So we should help those he has chosen to make poor
Learning self-discipline

Benefits of Zakat

Freeing oneself from the love of possessions and greed
Freeing oneself from the love of money
Freeing oneself from love of oneself
Behaving honestly
The 2.5% rate only applies to cash, gold and silver, and commercial items. There are other rates for farm and mining produce, and for animals

2

Sawm -This is fasting. All Muslims who are physically able must fast for a month during Ramadan. They cannot eat or drink in daylight hours. Muslims break the fast every evening after sunset; this meal is called the Iftar. It is a chance for families to come together and share a very special meal. Muslims who are pregnant, breastfeeding, travelling, elderly, young or are suffering from an illness must not fast. Muslims can make up fasts later in the year if they are able to. Fasting when you are not well enough and making yourself ill is actually a sin. Some Muslim children like to join in the fast and so they may start fasting by just missing one meal in the day (however this is up to each family to decide).

Benefits of Sawm and Ramadan -There are many reasons why Muslims fast. When a Muslim fasts they follow the practice of Muhammad (pbuh). Fasting enriches the soul, it helps those who fast to take time out of their lives and focus on God. Muslims focus on God and what God wants of them, and a Muslim has time to reflect on their own character. Fasting leads to spiritual growth which will eventually lead to paradise (Heaven). Muslims develop empathy for the poor and work hard to promote equality, fairness and justice. It is a time when Muslims are thankful for what they have and give generously to charity to tackle poverty e.g. give Sadaqah (voluntary money to charity). Fasting also teaches great self-discipline which they can then use in all aspects of their life; leading a religious life can be difficult and so self-discipline keeps a Muslims on the right (God's) path.

The Nature of God

Qur'an Surah 112: Say, "He is Allah, [who is] One, Allah, the Eternal Refuge. He neither begets nor is born, nor is there to Him any equivalent."

Tawhid is a belief that Allah is One i.e. that there is only one God and that God is beyond every comparison, every creation (including the universe (or universes)). It is also the belief that We can never fully understand God because He is so different from us. God is not a person; He has always existed and so is eternal (no beginning or end); He is beyond time and space and is therefore not limited or changed by it, this makes Him transcendent (outside space and time); Allah **does not** have many aspects (like in Christianity and the trinity), He is One He is whole/ complete.

Impact of Tawhid on Muslim life and beliefs

- **immanent:** the idea that God is present in and involved with life on earth and in the universe; a quality of God
- **transcendent:** the idea that God is beyond and outside life on earth and the universe; a quality of God
- **omnipotent:** almighty, having unlimited power; a quality of God
- **beneficent:** benevolent, all-loving, all-good; a quality of God
- **merciful:** the quality of God that shows compassion or forgiveness to humans, even though he has the power to punish them
- **fairness:** the idea that God treats people fairly and impartially without favour or discrimination
- **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

The **SHAHADAH** is a statement that reminds Muslims of Tawhid-**"There is only one God Allah, and Mohammed is His Prophet"**. This means that it is said several times a day and is the first thing a Muslim baby hears when they are born and the last thing a Muslim will repeat at the point of death.

Allah created all things and we can explore his creation through understanding the universe. This means that in Islam science and religion are compatible and the study of science is encouraged as it helps us to understand God's nature.

God created all things for a purpose. He has a plan for us. This means that Muslims believe in predestination. This gives Muslims comfort because they believe anything that happens good or bad is down to God who they can trust.

Tawhid means that God comes first and is more important than anything else. This means that putting anything before God (worshipping a person or money etc.) is the biggest sin and is called SHIRK. Muslims avoid falling into the trap of putting other things before God by praying 5 times a day. This gives them several opportunities a day to reflect on what is really important.

Tawhid means that only God must be worshipped and one must focus their prayers entirely on God. This means that there are no pictures of God or any of the prophets. There are no pictures in the mosque as they would divert the attention away from God during worship. This is often why men pray in front of women so they are not distracted in prayer.

Tawhid explains that Allah is the origin of all life and that all things belong to Him. **"It is He who created for you all things that are on earth; His design comprehended Heaven."** This means that the Earth is not ours to do what ever we want with it. Muslims should therefore try to look after it and take great care of the environment.

Can we know God?



■ 'God is the greatest'

Every day Muslims hear and say the words 'Allahu Akbar', meaning 'God is the greatest'. Muslims believe that God is so great he is beyond human understanding, and greater than anything humans can imagine. Yet Muslims have firm beliefs about what God is like. Where do these ideas come from?

Imagine an ant with a broken leg setting out to walk the 200 miles across the desert.

A Muslim leader describes the process of trying to understand Allah as being like this. The ant will not succeed but it still tries. Nor will any human mind ever succeed in understanding Allah, but still Muslims try.

■ The names of God

Muslims believe God has revealed himself to people through Muhammad and the holy books. There are 99 names of God in the Qur'an and Hadith (Muhammad's sayings), which can help Muslims to understand something of God's nature. Each name describes a quality that God has revealed about himself.

Many Muslims memorise the names of God and recite them when they are praying privately. Each name helps them to feel God's presence. Some names show God's power, might and authority; others show God's love and care for human beings.

“The Most Excellent Names belong to God: use them to call on Him.”

3

The Greatest Name	The Victorious	Qur'an 7:180
The All-Compassionate	The Greatest	
The All-Merciful	The Creator	
The Absolute Ruler	The Maker of Order	
The Pure One	The Forgiving	
The Source of Peace	The Giver of All	
The Inspirer of Faith	The Sustainer	
The Guardian	The Knower of All	

Sunni and Shia Muslims—Authority and the Qur'an

Sunni Islam

When Muhammad died, the majority of Muslims thought that only the **Qur'an** (the Muslim holy book) and the **Sunnah** (Muhammad's teaching and actions) had the authority to guide the beliefs and behaviour of Muslims. They elected Abu Bakr to be their leader (Caliph), to act on behalf of God and Muhammad to make sure people followed God's laws.

The Caliphs did not make the laws; they enforced them once the community had considered the views of scholars who studied the Qur'an and the Sunnah. This group of Muslims came to be called '**Sunni**', meaning followers of the Sunnah.

Shi'a Islam

Another group of Muslims believed that Muhammad had named his cousin Ali as his successor. Ali was one of the earliest converts to Islam and was married to Muhammad's daughter, Fatima. Ali and his supporters thought that the true leader (called the Imam) had to be a descendent of Muhammad and chosen by God. Each Imam would identify the next one before he died.

Ali's claims to be leader were ignored by many Muslims. Over time a split developed between the followers of Ali's party, known as the **Shi'a**, and the Sunni Muslims. Today, the Shi'a have their own interpretation of Islamic laws and only accept sayings of Muhammad that have been passed down through Ali or his followers.

Shi'a and Sunni Islam hold many elements in common such as belief in God, the prophethood of Muhammad, the guidance of the Qur'an, and following the Sunnah. They only differ in interpretations of certain aspects of belief and law, and in the emphasis they put on expressing key beliefs, as you will see below.

The Qur'an and the Nature of God

How do we know about God?

Throughout human history God has revealed Himself to His people through His prophets. He not only reveals guidance for us to live by but also reveals His nature (what he is like).

We call this REVELATION. The word comes from the word "revealed", and means that Allah has revealed his words to a man in order that they can be shared by all humanity. Muslims believe that God has spoken to all of humanity, and his words – dictated *exactly* as God wants them to be read – are in the Qur'an. This means that we can look to the Qur'an for answers about God. It is important therefore that the Qur'an remains unchanged.

What does the Qur'an contain?

It influences a person throughout their life; birth, marriage, death, daily prayers etc. It contains basic worship that Muhammad developed and legal and social systems (Shari'ah Law). It explains ultimate questions about why we are here and what happens when we die. Some Muslims argue that it contains scientific explanations that have only recently been verified by science e.g. the big bang. It provides personal and spiritual guidance for all life's situations and challenges.

For Muslims, the Qur'an is the most important object that they possess. The Qur'an is never left on the floor and a stand is used to read it to remind Muslims that it is like no other book. Some Muslims keep their Qur'an in a cover to stop it from becoming polluted. The Qur'an is always kept on a shelf higher than all other books to show its importance. Casual conversation while reading the Qur'an is forbidden, it is a reminder that whilst the Qur'an is present you are close to God. Muslims do not eat or drink while reading the Qur'an and Muslims always wash their hands before reading it.



■ Other holy books

Muslims believe there are other holy books that have been revealed by God. These include the Torah (revealed to Moses), the Psalms (revealed to David), and the Gospel (revealed to Jesus). Some Muslims think that these books have been lost, while others believe they can be found in the Christian Bible (although the original text has been corrupted or distorted, so does not have the same authority as the Qur'an).

Scrolls of Ibrahim

Very little is actually known about these scrolls (often called 'Suhuf').



These were individual revelations to Ibrahim 'the upright one' who was always faithful to Allah. The revelations were believed to contain parable like stories about worship, reflection and building a livelihood. The scrolls of Ibrahim were written on parchment but perished over time.

Tawrat/ Torah

Tawrat is Arabic for Torah which are revelations given to Musa (moses) by Allah on Mount Sanai. The Tawrat is mentioned 18 times in the Qur'an. Some Muslims equate this to the first 5 books in the Bible (the Pentateuch), others equate the Tawrat to the whole of the Old Testament. The Tawrat does not exist in its original language as it was written down by the followers of Musa a long time after his death. Those that put Musa's words together changes the text, some of it is the word of God and other parts are human addition. The Qur'an refers to the Tawrat as 'guidance and light', revealed by Allah is clearly very important and Muhammad was told to search out meaning and understanding from previously received scripture suggesting that these were in fact reliable.

Muhammad's nightly prayers reinforce the importance of the early scripture: In the prayer he puts his life in Allah's hands (the creator and lord of everything, the source of the Tawrat, the Gospels and the Qur'an) and asked for protection from Shaytan.



The psalms of Dawud (Zabur) are

a collection of prayers to Allah (often referred to as poems).

Dawud was a great King, whose people were God-fearing and righteous. In surah 4:163 of the Qur'an it says 'we gave Dawud the Zabur'. They contain lessons of guidance for the people and he recited them in song version. One important message in the Zabur is the idea of Masih (Messiah). The Masih was to be a symbol of hope for the future in a world where many had failed to obey Allah's command. For Muslims Jesus is the Messiah and will return at judgement.

Injil—This is the good news about ISA (Jesus) written by his disciples. Muslims highly respect Isa because there are revelations in the Qur'an about him.



Muslims believe: he was born of a virgin mother, he was the Masih (messiah), he was not the son of Allah, he followed Allah, he did not die to save sins, one man cannot take the sins of others and Allah is compassionate and He will forgive sins. Muslims believe the Gospels that are found in the Bible contain mistakes because they were written a long time after Isa's death.



Hajj - intro

Hajj is the fifth pillar of the Five Pillars of Sunni Islam: pilgrimage to Makkah and the 5th obligatory act in Shia Islam.

Muslims follow the pilgrimage that Prophet Muhammed carried out in the name of Allah.

The hajj takes place in the twelfth month of the Muslim calendar. Hajj is expected to fall between Sunday 19th August and Friday 24th August 2018

In order to attend Hajj, Muslims must apply for a Hajj visa before they can go. If the person has a non-Muslim name (e.g. a convert) then they must also provide an Islamic certificate to prove that they are a Muslim.

•Hajj means 'to undertake a journey with a definite purpose'

•Hajj is the pilgrimage to Makkah (Mecca)

•Men who complete it are known as 'hajji'

•Women who complete it are called 'hajjah'

•Every Muslim who is healthy and can afford it tries to go on Hajj once in their lifetime.

•If you are too old, sick, disabled or are poor you are excused from the Hajj.

The hajj is a deeply spiritual experience.

Muslims come from all over the world to perform Hajj.



Hajj - Ihram

Before entering Makkah, pilgrims enter a holy state. This is called Ihram.

During the state of Ihram Muslims must not use perfume or soap as this may distract worshippers from their prayers.

Muslims must not wear any jewellery, although women can wear their wedding ring. This is so that Muslims cannot show off their wealth.

Before they enter Makkah pilgrims pray to God, stating their intention to perform the Hajj.

- Muslims wear special clothing.
- Men and boys wear two white cotton sheets. One is tied around the waist and the other draped over the shoulder.
- Women and girls wear a long dress and a head-covering. Veils are forbidden.
- Everyone wears the same to show that everyone is equal in the eyes of Allah no matter what race or how much money someone has.

During Ihram Muslims must not cut their hair or nails, have sexual relations or kill any living thing.



Ka'bah

As soon as Muslims enter Makkah he or she heads towards the Ka'bah. This is the most sacred shrine in Islam. When Muslims pray they face the Ka'bah in Makkah.

Muslims walk around the Ka'bah seven times in an anti-clockwise direction. They say a prayer every time they circle it.

Running around the Ka'bah is called the *tawaf*. Running around the Ka'bah symbolises the unity of Allah (like a circle He is infinite).

• The Qur'an says that the Ka'bah was first built by Ibrahim (Abraham) and his son Ishma'il.

• Later it was used by idol worshippers until Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) got rid of them so that it could be returned for the worship of Allah.

• Muslims believe that it lies directly under the throne of Allah in heaven.

During Hajj, the Ka'bah is covered by a large, black cloth. At the end of each Hajj, the cloth is cut up into pieces and sold to pilgrims as a memento of their pilgrimage.

After the whole of Hajj has been performed, Muslims return to Makkah to walk for a last time around the Ka'bah.



Sa'y

Sa'y is the movement between two hills of Marwa and Safa. Muslims run between these two hills (if they are able, if not they just walk).

The distance between the two hills are now covered to protect Muslims from the hot desert sun.

When Hagar returned to her son she found that a spring had arisen where the crying baby kicked the sand with his feet. This spring is now known as the [Zamzam Well](#), and was revealed as a reward for Hagar's patience and trust in Allah.

Muslims drink water from the Zamzam well.

- Ibrahim was ordered by God to leave his wife Hagar and their baby son alone in the desert between Al-Safa and Al-Marwa to test their faith.
- When they had run out of food and water Hagar went in search of help or water. To make her search easier and faster, she went alone, leaving the infant Ishma'il on the ground.
- She ran between two hills, Al-Safa and Al-Marwa, to look around. While Hagar was on either hillside, she was able to see Ismael and know he was safe. However, when she was in the valley between the hills she was unable to see her son, and would thus run whilst in the valley and walk at a normal pace when on the hillsides.
- Hagar travelled back and forth between the hills seven times in the scorching heat before returning to her son.



Arafat

Muslims leave Makkah and camp over night at Mina. A huge city of tents is created especially for Hajj. Muslims from all over the world come together at Mina and share in the experience of Hajj.

Whilst at Mina men and women sleep in separate tents so they do not distract each other from prayer and worship.

When Muslims leave Arafat they spend the night at Muzdalifah, collecting stones needed for the next part of Hajj.



• The prayers at Arafat are the most important part of Hajj.

• This is where Muslims reconnect with Allah and ask for forgiveness of their sins.

• This is the place where God forgave the first man, Adam, for his sins.

If you could ask for forgiveness what would you ask for? Write the answers in your book.

At sunrise Muslims make their way to Mount Arafat where Muhammad (pbuh) gave his last sermon. Pilgrims stand here to pray from noon until sunset (in the hot desert sun).



Pillars at Mina

Muslims make their way to Mina where they spend three days.

On each day they throw seven stones at each of the three pillars. The throwing of these stones represent Muslims rejecting the devil. The stones represent the temptations that Muslims face in their everyday lives.

What temptations do you face?

- Ibrahim was ordered by God to sacrifice (kill) his son Ishma'il to show how devoted he was to Allah.
- Ibrahim, Ishma'il and Hagar set off to Mina – the place where the sacrifice was to take place.
- On the way a stranger approached them and asked them why they were going ahead with the sacrifice.
- The stranger was the devil in disguise and tried to convince Ibrahim, Ishma'il and Hagar to go against God and not to perform the sacrifice.
- They did not give into the devil and followed the path that God had sent them on.
- They threw rocks at the devil.

At the end of Hajj Muslims shave their hair (or cut their hair if they are a woman). This is to show that they have gotten rid of all their sin (through prayer) and have started a new life – one of devotion to Allah.



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What is prophethood?

Muslims believe that God has chosen many prophets to bring the message of Islam to people. This belief in the **prophets** and their importance is known as **Risalah**. **Prophethood** – when someone is made a prophet – is a gift given by God to help humankind understand his message.

The prophets are important for Muslims because they provided a method of communication between God and human beings. In order for Muslims to know how to live in the way God desires, it was necessary for instructions to be conveyed to people through the prophets. When humans forgot, misunderstood or changed God's message, he sent prophets to call people back to the right path.

Many Muslims believe there have been around 124,000 prophets, of which 25 are named in the Qur'an. The most important prophets are called messengers or apostles. These have been sent by God to every nation on earth.

Muslims believe that the prophets and messengers are important role models to follow, as they were good people who lived according to God's will. Some of the most important prophets in Islam include Adam, Ibrahim (Abraham), Musa (Moses), Isa (Jesus) and Muhammad.

Adam

Muslims believe that Adam was the first man on Earth and the first prophet of Islam. Created by God from the dust of the ground, he is regarded as the father of the human race and so is treated with reverence and great respect.

God gave Adam understanding and the names of all things:

Why was Adam important? What can we learn from him?

1. He is father of all mankind. 2. He was a prophet until death. 3. He taught the revelations to his sons. 4. He taught about the work of Iblis and how to protect themselves against Jinn. 5. He taught that life on earth was temporary, eternal life could be had in the next life. 6. He built the Ka'aba as the first place of worship. 7. Adam disobeyed Allah but immediately repented and always regretted his sin. He found salvation through God's forgiveness. (Iblis never showed repentance and so lost hope and is forever tormented).

Key terms

- **prophet**: a person who proclaims the message of God
- **Risalah**: the belief that prophets are an important channel of communication between God and humans

- **prophethood**: when God makes someone a prophet to communicate his message to people
- **Iblis (Satan)**: a spiritual being, created from fire, who was thrown out of paradise for refusing to bow to Adam

■ Why is Ibrahim important?

Ibrahim is the Arabic name of the prophet Abraham. Muslims believe that he fulfilled all the tests and commands given to him by God, and so was promised to be the father of all nations. They believe that the prophet Muhammad was descended from Ibrahim through his first son, Ishmael.

The Qur'an presents Ibrahim as a role model because of his obedience to God, his kindness and compassion, and his refusal to worship idols. (His close relative Aazar was a sculptor who carved statues and idols, which at the time were worshipped widely by the people of Arabia.)

■ Muhammad

Muslims believe that Muhammad received the final revelation of Islam from God. He is known as the last and greatest of the prophets.

“ Muhammad is not the father of any one of you men; **he is God's Messenger and the seal of the prophets:** God knows everything. ”

Qur'an 33:40

The Hijrah - Muhammad's popularity was seen as threatening by the people in power in Mecca. Muhammad's followers were tortured and treated badly and so Muhammad took his followers on a journey from Mecca to Medina in 622.

This journey is called the Hijrah (migration) and the event was seen as so important for Islam that 622 is the year in which the Islamic calendar begins.

The return to Mecca—Within ten years Muhammad had gained so many followers that he was able to return and conquer Mecca. From this time on he was generally accepted by the faithful as the true final Prophet of God. Muhammad continued to lead his community both spiritually and in earthly matters until his death in 632.

Ibrahim (or Abraham) is an important religious figure in Islam, Christianity and Judaism; for this reason these three faiths are called 'Abrahamic religions'. 6

“ Who could be better in religion than those who direct themselves wholly to God, do good, and follow the religion of Abraham, who was true in faith? God took Abraham as a friend. ”

Qur'an 4:125

Muslims do not allow any pictures of the prophets because it encourages idol worshipping. This means that people will focus on the images of the prophet and worship them rather than God and to put anything before God is a sin (shirk).

“ Every community is sent a messenger, and when their messenger comes, they will be judged justly; they will not be wronged. ”

Qur'an 10:47

Loosing his mother at a young age and being put to work early in his childhood made him strong, determined, patient and responsible. He was courageous, honest and trustworthy and was extremely self-disciplined. These are characteristics needed for a prophet; especially one that would have the responsibility of delivering the final word of Allah, word that would not be corrupted. His message was that there was NO God but Allah.

Why was it important for Muhammad's prophethood to happen when it did?

People were becoming more distant from the ways of Allah, earlier revelations had been lost, corrupted or ignored and Mekkah had become a centre for idol worshipping as the city grew in trade.

Muslims believe that Muhammad was given Allah's revelation and that it has not been changed and corrupted.

Why is prophet Muhammad so important?

Allah chose him above all others to reveal the Qur'an.

He was an honest and righteous man who people could trust in and follow.

He was compassionate and merciful and put Allah's words into action; he was just, loyal and was concerned about the welfare of others including animals.

There are no more prophets, so anyone claiming to have heard independently from Allah is not a Muslim – this can be difficult for Shi'a Muslims who believe that Allah still speaks to and through Imams who can even add to the Qur'an.

As there are no more prophets, Muhammad must be the final example for Muslims. Muslims are encouraged to follow his example and find out all they can about how he lived. For example, Muhammad did not shave his beard off, so Muslim men are encouraged to grow a beard.

The Qur'an contains all the beliefs a Muslim needs. This can be difficult in the modern era – for example, reinterpreting how women should be treated 1500 years after the Qur'an was written.

If Muhammad is the perfect example, Muslims may fall into the dangerous trap of following Muhammad rather than following the Qur'an. The danger of **shirk** is difficult to avoid, but the Qur'an says that all prophets should be treated with equal respect.

Impact of the final prophet:

Muhammad the individual:

Perfect example to others. He was an ordinary man and therefore his example is attainable; we can all be like Muhammad. Being a prophet is not easy, it comes with hardships (i.e. persecution, doubt and ridicule) but Muhammad through, patience, conviction and true belief in God and submission to God's will, Muhammad overcame these hardships and we can do the same in our lives. Muhammad strove to make his community a better place and it reflects the families within in. If parents take care of their children and bring them up to be fair, compassionate and hardworking, society will reflect this.

Muhammad the family man:

Muhammad was the ultimate family man. There is a theme in the Qur'an about good fathers e.g. Adam, Noah, Lut, Jacob, Ibrahim and then Muhammad. Islam sees the family as the basis for a successful society. If a family works well they contribute to society; society is a family and it reflects the families within in. If parents take care of their children and bring them up to be fair, compassionate and hardworking, society will reflect this. He had four daughters who he educated (not the custom of the time) and made sure they were well taken care of. He lost his sons and suffered through this, but belief in Allah gave him strength.

Muhammad the leader:

Muslims claim that Prophet Muhammad was the greatest political and religious leader of all time managing to combined both roles perfectly. He allowed religious freedom, gave women rights and cared for the sick and elderly. He inspired the spread of Islam and there are now 1.3 billion Muslims in the world.

Muhammad the teacher:

He not only taught how a Muslim should live their life, but led by example. He spoke with authority but made it easy for others to learn. He spent 13 years in Mekkah teaching people the word of Allah. He taught Muslims how to pray and this can be seen in Mosques everyday.