

The Nature of God

Islam teaches that God has 99 names, based on His different attributes. Muslims believe in the omnipotence of God, which means that He is all-knowing and all-powerful. They believe in His beneficence and mercy, which means He is all-loving, and His omnipresence, which means He is all-present. God is also believed to be fair and just: in the Qur'an, it is stated that

“Whoso bringeth a good deed will receive tenfold the like thereof, while whoso bringeth an evil deed will be awarded the like thereof; and they shall not be wronged.” (Al-Qur'an 6:160).

Shi'a belief especially highlights the idea that God does not inflict injustice or cruelty on His subjects; they believe that everything that God does is for the improvement of humanity. Shi'a Muslims believe that because God is perfect, He must therefore be just, as injustice would be imperfect. God is believed to be transcendent, which means He is separate from His creation, beyond and independent from the universe. However, because He is believed to be all-knowing, some Muslims would also argue that He is also immanent, which means existing within His creation, within people's hearts and minds.

Angels

Muslims believe that angels are heavenly creatures who can take human form. Their purpose is to serve God and carry out different tasks for Him, including communicating His messages.



Jibril is the most important angel in the Islamic faith, as he is the angel who revealed the Qur'an to Muhammad. Mika'il is another key angel in the Islamic faith; he is known as the angel of mercy. He is also credited with bringing rain and thunder to Earth, and has responsibility for rewards given out for good deeds. Mika'il and Jibril were believed to be the first two angels to obey God's command to worship Adam.

PRAYER – Muslims can pray anywhere, but it is considered especially good practice to pray in the mosque, as part of a congregation with other Muslims. Before they pray, Muslims must wash themselves, in a ritual called wudhu. This involves starting in the name of God, then washing the right hand three times, then washing the left hand three times. The mouth, nose and face are then washed three times. The right and left arms are washed three times. Water is then wiped through the hair once. The back and inside of the ears are wiped using damp hands. Finally, the right and left feet are washed three times.

There are movements (rak'ahs) and recitations which are part of the prayer process. A Muslim will begin by raising the hands to the ears or shoulder and reciting "allāhu 'akbar", meaning "God is the greatest". They then place their right hand over their left hand on their chest and say a short supplication praising God. Then they recite the first chapter of the Qur'an, and some other verses. After this comes ruku, which means bowing. As they are bowing, they say 'glory to God, the greatest' three times. The person praying will then return to standing position, saying 'to God belongs all praise'. Next comes sujud, or prostration (putting oneself on the ground).

Whilst kneeling with their head touching the floor, the person praying will say "Glory be to God, the most high". Only palms, knees, forehead, nose and toes are allowed to touch the ground at this point. The person praying will then recite "God is great" whilst returning to the sitting position. They will pause for a short time, before saying "God is great" and returning to the sujud position. They will say "Glory to God, the most high", and this completes one unit. Different prayers have different lengths; the shortest, Salat al-fajr, has two units.

After saying "God is great", the person praying returns to the sitting position, recites some short prayers glorifying God, raises their forefinger of their right hand and recites the declaration of faith. They ask for peace to be bestowed on the prophets Abraham and Muhammad, and then for forgiveness for themselves and their children until Judgment Day. Finally, to close the prayer, the person praying will look to their right and say, "Peace be upon you, and the mercy and blessings of Allah." They will turn to their left and say the same thing. This is said to the angels, who Muslims believe are watching people and recording their actions.

On Fridays, Muslims hold a prayer called Jummah, instead of the Salat al-zuhr or noon prayer. Sura 62 of the Qur'an states: "O ye who believe! When the call is proclaimed to prayer on Friday (the Day of Assembly, yawm al-jumu'ah), hasten earnestly to the Remembrance of Allah, and leave off business (and traffic): That is best for you if ye but knew!"

The Jummah prayer is more commonly practised in Sunni tradition than in Shi'a tradition, although it is found in both. There are several differences between Sunni and Shi'a prayer practices. Shi'a Muslims pray three times a day, joining two prayers together. Shi'a Muslims also use a plank of wood to rest their heads on when they are in the sujud position, whereas Sunni Muslims touch the floor. Unlike Sunni Muslims, Shi'a Muslims don't say 'Amen' as it is a Hebrew word and therefore not considered to be necessary. Prayer is considered of extreme importance in Islam. It is the second pillar, meaning it is a necessary element of the Muslim faith. It is an offering of submission to God, and the Qur'an instructs Muslims to pray in order to gain God's help: ""O you who have believed, seek help through patience and prayer. Indeed, Allah is with the patient" (2:153). It is also an important way of praising God and staying connected to God, whilst also helping the person to stay away from evil. The prophet Muhammad is recorded in several hadith collections as saying, "the worst type of thief is the one who steals from prayer," meaning that it is extremely bad to stop your prayer without finishing it.

Predestination

Unlike angels, humans are believed to have a degree of free will. This means that they have some degree of control over their actions and can make their own choices. However, because God is all-knowing, He already knows what will happen, and has written down in a preserved tablet everything that has happened and everything that will happen.

Shi'a views on predestination are slightly different. They believe that God has not set a fixed path for human history, and that He may change the course of humanity as He sees fit.

Muslims believe that everyone will be judged for their deeds on Judgement Day. In the Qur'an it is stated:

“On that Day, people will come forward in separate groups to be shown their deeds: whoever has done an atom's weight of good will see it, but whoever has done an atom's weight of evil will see that” (al-Qur'an 99:6-8).



Life After Death

Muslims believe in Akhirah (life after death). In Islamic belief, a person will be judged by God, who will declare their Akhirah to be in Heaven or Hell, depending on whether they have done more good or bad deeds.

Upon their death, a person's soul resides in Barzakh, which is somewhere between Heaven and Hell. The soul will experience its own Heaven or Hell until the Day of Judgement, when all of the dead will be resurrected and all of the righteous are sent to Jannah (Paradise) and all of the wicked are sent to Jahannam (Hell).

ISLAM AQA GCSE SPEC A

KEY BELIEFS, PRACTICES + AUTHORITY

AUTHORITY Prophets

Prophets are very important in Islam. A prophet is someone whom God has been chosen to pass on teachings to humankind; in Islam, all prophets preach the same message of the oneness of God, and the importance of submission to God. **Risalah** is the term used to refer to the scriptures revealed to humankind through the Prophets. Muslims believe that the first prophet was Adam, who is believed to be the first human being ever created, and who would therefore be the ancestor of every human being who has ever lived. Adam is considered to be the first Muslim in Islam. Ibrahim is another key prophet in Islam. He was made a leader by God in recognition of his unbreakable faith in God. Ibrahim and his son are also credited with building the first worship house of worship, which is visited by Muslims as part of their pilgrimage to Mecca. The most important prophet in Islam is the Prophet **Muhammad**, who is seen as the final prophet by both Sunni and Shi'a Muslims. It was Muhammad who received the revelation of the Qur'an from the angel Jibril over the course of 23 years. Muhammad's teachings and practices are also found in the Hadith. In Shi'a doctrine, Muhammad appointed twelve successors, called the imamate. These successors, called Imams or leaders, were infallible human beings who were free from sin, and who had a close relationship with God. These Imams were not given any divine revelations, but were guided by God and were therefore able to guide humankind. The twelfth and final imam, Muhammad al-Mahdi, is believed by some Shi'a Muslims to be alive and hiding until the end of the world, when he will return with Isa (Jesus) in order to bring justice and peace on Earth.

The Qur'an

The Qur'an is the main holy text of the Islamic faith, and is seen as the highest authority for Muslims as it is a revelation of God's word and His final revelation to humanity. Muslims believe that God has guaranteed that the Qur'an is a perfect record of His word, as the Qur'an states that "Indeed, it is We who sent down the Quran and indeed, We will be its guardian." (Qur'an 15:9). The Qur'an is made up of 114 chapters or suras. Each sura contains several verses or ayat. The content of the Qur'an covers basic Islamic beliefs, including the oneness of God and the resurrection of the dead on Judgement Day. The Qur'an also includes records of the lives of prophets and historical events. Guidance on how to live, ethical and legal subjects, charity and prayer are also topics that are addressed in the Quran.

Other important religious texts in Islam are the Torah, the Psalms, the Gospel, the Scrolls of Abraham. These texts came before the Qur'an and are respected as revelations of God's guidance for His people. However, Muslims believe that it is only the Qur'an which is guaranteed to be unaltered. They also believe that the Qur'an is the final and therefore most important word of God.

The six articles of faith in Sunni Islam are:

- 1) The oneness of God. This means the acceptance that God is the only God, that He has no equal, no mother, no father, son or daughter, and that He is the creator of the universe and God of everybody in the world (not just a particular group of people), that He is eternal.
- 2) The angels of God. This means the belief in angels as spiritual beings who serve the purpose of God, and who deliver His messages, carry out His commands, and worship Him perfectly.
- 3) The books of God. This means accepting the Qur'an and other books as sources of religious authority. The Qur'an is believed to be a perfect record of divine revelations from the Angel Gabriel to Muhammad. While the Qur'an is the most important book in Islam, other important sources include the Torah, the Gospel, the Scrolls of Abraham and the Psalms of David.
- 4) The prophets of God. This means the belief in the human messengers of God, who were shown divine revelations and tasked with teaching humankind about God and how to worship Him. Prophets recognised in Islam include Noah, Moses, Solomon and Jesus, but the most important prophet in Islam is Muhammad.
- 5) the afterlife and Day of Judgement. This is the idea that the soul continues after the body's death, and that God has appointed a day when all humanity will be judged and people will either be sent to Heaven or Hell.
- 6) Preordination. This is the belief that God not only knows everything that will happen in eternity, but also that He preordains it.

In Shi'a Islam, the five principles of religion (Usul ad-Din) are:

- 1) belief in the oneness of God;
- 2) belief in the Prophets;
- 3) belief in the justice of God;
- 4) belief in the Day of Judgement;
- 5) belief that Muhammad appointed 12 successors, called Imams, to lead the people and continue the religion. You can see that both Sunni and Shi'a beliefs have in common the oneness of God, belief in His prophets, the Day of Judgement.

Tawhid, or the oneness of God, is the central belief about Allah in Islam. Surah 112 of the Qur'an says: "Say, He is God, the One. God, the Absolute. None was born of Him, nor was he born. And there is nothing comparable to Him."

PRACTICES

Worship

There are five Pillars of Sunni Islam. These are as follows:

- 1) Shahadah (faith). This is the declaration of faith in Islam. This declaration states that there is no God but Allah, and that Muhammad is His prophet.
- 2) Salat (prayer). This involves praying five times a day according to the appropriate ritual.
- 3) Zakat (charity). This involves giving a proportion of one's income to benefit the poor.
- 4) Sawm (fasting). This involves not eating or drinking during daylight hours in the month of Ramadan.
- 5) Hajj (pilgrimage). This involves travelling to Mecca as an expression of devotion to God.

There are ten obligatory acts in Shi'a Islam. Four of these are the same as noted above (Salat, Zakat, Sawm and Hajj). The other six are:

- 1) Khums - a tax of 20% of income to be given to causes decided by Shi'a leaders.
- 2) Amrbil ma'roof - the encouragement of good actions and being a positive role model.
- 3) Nahi anil munkar - discouraging bad or evil actions.
- 4) Tawalla - associating with good people, especially those who follow the ahl al-bayt (Muhammad's family).
- 5) Tabarra - avoiding evil people or people who oppose God.
- 6) Jihad - struggling or striving for a better and more Godly life or world.

While many people associate the term jihad with war, it has several interpretations. It can mean a struggle within oneself (fighting against impulses to commit sin). It can also mean debating with or persuading people about topics to do with Islam. In Shi'a doctrine, full-scale jihad (defending Islam through use of armed struggle) can only be carried out by instruction from the Imam. Salat, the second pillar of Islam, is prayer. God commanded Muslims to pray at five fixed times of day:

Salat al-fajr: dawn, before the sun rises

Salat al-zuhr: noon, after the sun passes its highest

Salat al-'asr: late afternoon

Salat al-maghrib: just after sunset

Salat al-'isha: between sunset and midnight

Muslims are encouraged to follow Salat from the age of seven onwards. It is common to hear the call to prayer at these times of day in areas with a high Muslim population. Carrying out the 1400-year-old ritual of salat is important to Muslims because it connects them not only to each other, but to their ancestors who also took part in this spiritual practice.



AREA	RAG	Retest 1	Retest 2	Retest 3
PRACTICES				
Worship				
Prayer				
KEY BELIEFS				
AUTHORITY				