

Islam

Islam is an Arabic word which means **obedience, submission** and **peace**. To be a Muslim is to commit one's self totally to Allah (God), making one's own will totally subservient to, and in complete harmony with, the will of Allah. Submission should not be seen as a passive concept, but a positive act of committing oneself to live in harmony with the will of Allah. The relationship between man and Allah is that of Master and servant, Creator and created, Ruler and ruled. For Muslims Allah is the one source of knowledge and guidance (communicated through the prophets and messengers of Allah), following Him brings a life of peace and happiness.



Mankind's purpose in life is to seek knowledge of Allah, and thereby to worship and obey Him with true understanding. To worship Allah also means to know Him, love Him and obey His commandments, this includes, by extension, being just to ourselves and to our fellow human beings. Humankind exists in dependence on Allah, we are sustained by His power.



Allah has created man with unique qualities and great abilities – he has intelligence and the power of choice. Allah intends that mankind should learn to live a good life according to Divine guidance, so it is the duty of man to exert himself as fully as possible to this end. If he fails, or misuses his life or neglects his duties he is responsible to Allah Himself for his misdeeds. Life is a trust given to mankind by Allah, and should be handled with honesty and skill, and a constant consciousness of duty to Him.

To a Muslim all aspects of life have a spiritual dimension, and Allah is deeply involved in every action and thought of their life. Belief in Allah makes a person aim high, putting the principles of their faith into practice – this constant personal effort is known as the **Greater Jihad**. It is an aspect of the heart, not simply a following of external religious rules and regulations. Islam is more than prayers, fasting or feasts – **it is the conscious bring of every detail of the day into line with the will of Allah**. The Qur'an the Shari'ah and the Hadith (see below) together give directions on judging all kinds of behaviour, conduct and relationships and promote the most desirable qualities such as kindness, modesty, gentleness, courage, steadfastness, and consideration for others and society in general.

To become a Muslim one simply says (and means) the declaration of faith: 'there is no god apart from God, and Muhammad is the Messenger of God.'

Origins

Islam has its origins in Arabia in the sixth and seventh centuries CE when the teachings of the **Qur'an** were revealed to the **Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)**

There are Muslims in most countries of the world and Islam is the majority faith in more than fifty countries (North Africa, the Middle East, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Indonesia). The Muslim population of Britain draws originally from more than fifty different countries. Muslims are united by their belief in Allah, the Qur'an, and their acceptance of Muhammad (pbuh) as the final prophet of Allah, but they may follow different customs and lifestyles in everyday life. The term for the worldwide Muslim community is the **Ummah**.

Muhammad (pbuh) lived from 570-632 CE in Arabia. Born in Makkah in Saudi Arabia, he made his living as a merchant trader and was widely respected as an honest and reliable person. At this time the building in Makkah known as the Ka'aba was already in existence, but the faith of the area was based on the worship of many different local idols. Muhammad (pbuh) over many years spent time in prayer and meditation upon Mount Hira. In 610 CE he received the first of many visions of the angel Jibrail (Gabriel) in which he received the first of the messages from Allah, which became the Qur'an, as well as his own call to become the prophet of Allah. For the rest of his life he preached Allah's words, gradually accumulating followers. Persecution in Makkah became so severe that the Muslims moved their centre 300 miles to Yathrib (renamed Madinah) in 622 CE. This migration is known as the **Hijrah** and is the date from which the Muslim calendar is calculated (A.D. 622 or 622 CE = 1 AH –Anno Hegirah). Madinah was reorganised as a Muslim city and it was here the first mosque was built. A period of conflict between the Muslims and Makkah followed until Muhammad (pbuh) and his followers re-entered the city of Makkah in 630. It was a bloodless conquest. The Ka'aba was cleansed of its 360 idols and became the centre of the Muslim faith. Muhammad (pbuh) died in 632 CE.

Muhammad (pbuh) received the revelation of Allah over 23 years. He learnt the revelations and recited them to others. They were collected together in written form as the **Qur'an** shortly after his death. The sayings of Muhammad (pbuh) are gathered in different collections known as the **Hadith**, whilst records of his religious practices and stories about him are called **Sunnah**. The Hadith and Sunnah are also regarded as sources of guidance by Muslims, but are second to the Qur'an.

Muhammad (pbuh) is the final prophet of Allah. Allah sent prophets and messengers to every nation upon earth, but some are specifically mentioned in the Qur'an and can be identified with figures also found in the Bible, eg. Adam, Nuh (Noah), Ibrahim (Abraham), Musa (Moses), Yahya (John), Isa (Jesus) (pbut). Each prophet is sent to a new generation to remind them of the forgotten words of Allah. The message of Allah is completed by the revelations given to Muhammad (pbuh). Islam is thus the complete guidance of Allah for mankind until the end of the world.

Within a century of the Prophet's death Islam had spread to Spain in the West and as far East as China. Very early in this period great Muslim civilizations and universities were flourishing, following Muhammad (pbuh)'s statement that 'seeking knowledge is an obligation for every Muslim man and woman'. The synthesis of Eastern and Western ideas and of new thought with old, brought about great advances in medicine, mathematics, physics, astronomy, geography, architecture, art, literature, and history. Many crucial systems such as algebra, the Arabic numerals, and also the concept of the zero (vital to the advancement of mathematics), were transmitted to medieval Europe from Islam. Sophisticated instruments which were to make possible the European voyages of discovery were developed, including the astrolabe, the quadrant and good navigational

maps. One only has to look at some of the Arabic words which are now part of English, in order to see the effect Muslims have had upon the culture of the world:

admiral adobe aladdin albatross alchemy alcove alfalfa algebra algorithm alhambra alibaba almanac amalgam amber apricot arsenal artichoke azure bard bedouin betelgeuse blighty borax buckram calibre camel camphor candy carafe carat caraway cipher coffee cotton crimson elixir fakir falafel gazelle gerbil ghouel gibraltar giraffe guitar halvah harem hazard henna jar jasmine kebab lemon lilac lime loofah lute macramé magazine marzipan mattress mohair monsoon mosque mummy muslin nadir orange ream rook safari saffron sahara sash satin scarlet senna sequin sesame sheikh sherbet soda sofa spinach sugar summit swahili syrup tabby talc talisman tambourine tare tariff tarragon trafalgar zenith zero!

Islam is the second largest faith in the world and the religion of approximately one fifth of the world's population. About 18% live in the Arab world; the world's largest Muslim community is in Indonesia; substantial parts of Asia and most of Africa are Muslim, while significant minorities are to be found in the Soviet Union, China, North and South America, and Europe. There are approximately 2,000,000 Muslims in Britain alone, who between them take their ethnic origins from about 56 countries and speak more than one hundred different languages.

Islam World & Makkah



The Major Groupings in Islam

According to the Traditions, Muhammad (pbuh) predicted that his followers would become divided into seventy-three sects, every one of whom would go to hell, except one sect, the religion professed by himself and his companions. However the number of Islamic sects, now over 150, has far exceeded Muhammad's (pbuh) prediction.

Sunni Muslims are followers of the Hanafi, Shafi, Hanbali and Maliki Schools. They constitute a 90% majority of the believers in Islam, and are considered to be mainstream traditionalists. Because they are comfortable pursuing their faith within secular societies, they have been able to adapt to a variety of national cultures, while following their three sources of law: the Qur'an, Hadith and consensus of Muslims. They take the title of Najiyah, meaning those who are being saved. They acknowledge the first four Khalifs as the rightful successors of Muhammad. They received the "six correct books" and belong to one of the schools of jurisprudence founded by the four Imams. The Sunni emphasize the power and sovereignty of Allah and his right to do whatever he wants with his creation, as strict predeterminism is taught. It is ruled through the Caliphate, the office of Muslim ruler who is considered the successor to Muhammad (pbuh). This successor is not through hereditary lineage. The Sunni believe, based on specific provisions of the Qur'an and the Sunna, that the Muslim people are to be governed by consensus (ijma') through an elected head of state, the khalifa, according to democratic principles.

The Shi'ites (also known as the Ja'firi school) split with the Sunni over the issue of the successor to Muhammad (pbuh). This split occurred after the assassination of the fourth caliph in 661. Shi'ites believe that the successor to Muhammad (pbuh) should have been Ali, his son-in-law, and that subsequent successors should have been through his lineage through his wife Fatima. The Shi'ites strenuously maintain that they alone are right in their understanding of Islam, and like the Sunnis, they call themselves "al-Muminun", or the "true believers". They believe in the divine right of the successors of Ali. His rightful successor is now concealed, they say, but will appear at the end of the world as the "Mahdi", the one rightly guided by Allah, thus able to guide others. They reject the "six correct books" of the Sunnis, and have five collections of their own. Shi'ism is broken into three main sects: The Twelve-Imam (Persia, Iraq, Afghanistan, Lebanon, Pakistan, and Syria); the Zaydis (Yemen); and the Ismailis (India, Iran, Syria, and East Africa). Each group has differences of doctrine. Shi'ite theology includes a doctrine known as the five supports. These are Divine Unity (tawhid), prophecy (nubuwwah), resurrection of the soul and body at the judgment (ma'ad), the Imamate (imamah), and justice ('adl). The first three are found in Sunni Islam, albeit with some differences of emphasis. The Imamate, however, is the essence of Shi'ism, and the last, justice, is an inheritance from the Mu'tazilites, or rationalists, whose system is in many ways perpetuated in shi'ite theology.

Suffis The meaning of the name Suffi is disputed. Suffis are Muslims that have set aside the literal meaning of the words of Muhammad (pbuh) for their spiritual interpretation. Their system is a Muslim adaptation of Indian philosophy. They believe that only Allah exists and there is no real difference between good and evil. The principal occupation of the Suffi is meditation on the unity of God and the remembrance of God's name so as to obtain absolution. Suffis are most numerous in Iran, once called Persia. The three chief Persian poets, Jami, Sa'di, and Hafiz were Suffis who dwelt on love to God. Many of the writings of the Persian Suffis contain indecent passages. The Suffis are divided into innumerable sects which find expression in the numerous order of Faqirs, or Darweshes. Faqirs are

divided into two great classes, those who govern their conduct according to the principles of Islam and those who do not, although they all call themselves Muslims.

Main Beliefs of Islam

There are three fundamental beliefs that form the basis of Islam:

- **The Oneness of God.- Allah is the One and Unique God. He has no family. He is All-Powerful and Master of all.** Allah (“God” in Arabic) is One (no partner or children). He is the omnipresent and almighty creator. Allah created mankind to obey and worship Him. **Islam** means to obey Allah and follow his commands. Allah is known by **99 Beautiful Names** (taken from the Qur’an) which tell us something of His nature and attributes, eg. the Merciful, All-knowing, Law-giver, Sustainer and Nourisher of the world. Belief in Allah permeates the whole of a Muslim’s life; it affects social practices, human inter-relationships and the organisation of one’s life. Before any act (eg. driving a car) Muslims will say **Bismillah** (in the name of God) and when making arrangements for the future they will say **Insha Allah** (God willing). These simple phrases clearly demonstrate the belief that Allah is present in all that one does.

“He is Allah, than whom there is no other God, the Sovereign Lord, the Holy One, the Keeper of the Faith, the Guardian, the Majestic, the Superb.” Sura 59:32 of the Qur’an

- **Prophethood.** Allah has provided mankind with the guidance it needs through His Prophets. Adam was the first prophet and others include Abraham, Moses (Musa), David and Jesus (pbuh). The last and final prophet was Muhammad (pbuh) and through him the religion of Islam was completed. The **Qur’an** is a record of the words of Allah conveyed through the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). Muslims believe that Allah sent prophets to every nation on earth, each with the same message to believe in the one God. When the people forgot the message of Allah, another prophet had to be sent until the complete guidance for the whole world was delivered through Muhammad (pbuh). When speaking the name of any of the Prophets it is customary to invoke the blessing “peace be upon him” as a sign of respect; this is abbreviated to pbuh when written in English. (Note: some prophets of Allah are also called “messengers” – the messengers are the prophets who received books from Allah e.g. Moses (pbuh).)

There were at least 24,000 prophets. The prophets are Allah’s chosen people and their missions were directed towards declaring to mankind the exclusive sovereignty of Allah and to demand total obedience to him. All of human morality and social behaviour is built on the Law of God. Muslims believe that because of the prophets’ perfect submission to Allah, their message is pure and uncorrupted by any personal teachings or inventions.

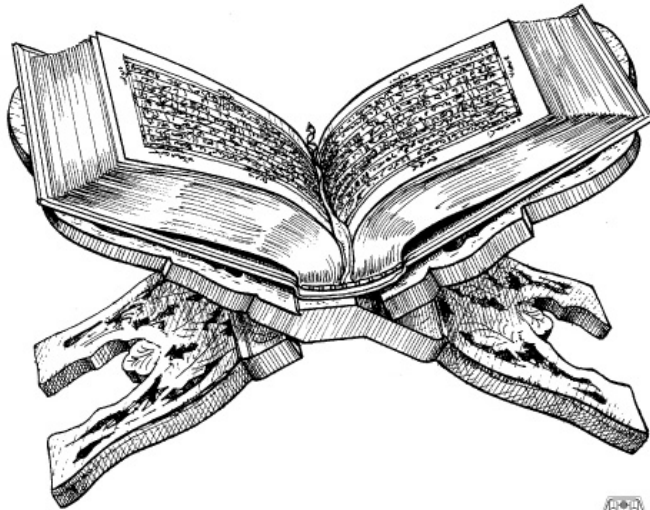
- Belief in **life after death** and the **Day of Judgement** is an important feature of Muslim life. After death individuals receive their reward in Paradise or punishment in Hell according to their conduct in their earthly life. Allah knows all you have ever done and thought, and all the motives for your actions, and judges everyone accordingly. This belief has a profound effect upon a Muslim’s way of life; life in fact becomes a constant battle with evil, or a test, a school of faith, which prepares you for the real life which is to come after death. Heaven is described in graphic terms as a “garden of delights”, and Hell as “boiling water and hell-fire”. When a Muslim dies, he or she is washed, usually by a family member, wrapped in a clean white cloth, and buried with a simple prayer preferably the same day. Muslims

consider this one of the final services they can do for their relatives, and an opportunity to remember their own brief existence here on earth. The Prophet taught that three things can continue to help a person even after death; charity which he had given, knowledge which he had taught and prayers on their behalf by a righteous child.

A summary of Muslim belief: **“I believe in Allah, in His angels, in His books, I His messengers, in the last day, in the fact that everything good or bad, is from Allah, the Almighty, and in the life after death.”**

The Qur’an

Qur’an



© Religious Education
UNIVERSITY OF STRATHCLYDE
GLASGOW

The **Qur’an** is the sacred book of the Muslims and takes its name from the Arabic “to recite”. Muslims believe that it is the unaltered word of Allah revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) by the Angel Jibrail over 23 years – nothing in the Qur’an is a thought or teaching of Muhammad himself (pbuh). It was memorized by Muhammad and then dictated to his Companions, and written down by scribes, who cross-checked it during his lifetime. Not one word has been changed over the centuries. It is therefore asserted that the Qur’an is the only revelation that has been preserved in its original form, with early revelations such as the Tawrut of Musa (pbuh) (Torah of Moses) or Injil of Isa

(pbuh) (Gospel of Jesus) being changed by their followers. It is thus the final and complete revelation of Islam.

The Qur’an deals with all the subjects which concern human beings: wisdom, doctrine, worship, and law, but its basic theme is the relationship between God and His creatures. At the same time it provides guidelines for a just society, proper human conduct and an equitable economic system.

There are 114 chapters in the Qur’an (called **surahs**) and 6,239 verses. Every surah except surah 9 begins “Bismillah ir-Rahman ir-Raheem” (“In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate”). The surahs are organised mainly in order of length, the earliest surah is in fact surah 96.

The Qur’an is always read and recited in Arabic, the language of its revelation; translations of the Qur’an are never regarded as true Qur’an. There are Muslim stories that the Qur’an has been written from eternity in its present form on tablets of gold and is placed beside the throne of Allah. Obviously as the Qur’an itself cannot be updated or rewritten scholars have to reapply its message to a changing secular society.

The Qur'an is used in prayer and worship and all rites of passage. It is a source of guidance on all aspects of human behaviour. Children begin to read the Qur'an at an early age and are encouraged to learn passages by heart. Muslims who learn the whole Qur'an by heart are given the title of **hafiz**.

Because it is a holy book every copy of the Qur'an is treated with great respect. It is often kept wrapped in a piece of material to keep it clean. It will be placed on a high shelf above all other books. Before starting to read the Qur'an Muslims will undertake **wudu** so as to be in a state of ritual cleanliness. Usually the reader will sit cross-legged on the floor with the Qur'an on a wooden stand (**kursi**) so that their position is respectful.

The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) is regarded as a "living Qur'an"; this means that his deeds and sayings demonstrate the Qur'an in action. The record of Muhammad's (pbuh) deeds and sayings are found in collections of **Hadith**; the examples of the right way of life are known as **Sunnah**. The Sunnah are not considered equal to the Qur'an, but they supplement it and Muslims will read the Hadith to find how the Prophet himself behaved in particular situations. Belief in the Sunnah is part of the Islamic faith.

The giving of the Qur'an is particularly celebrated on the "Night of Power" (Laylit ul Qadr) which falls during Ramadan. The Qur'an is read continuously in mosques throughout Ramadan.

Examples of some of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)'s sayings from the Hadith:

'Allah has no mercy on one who has no mercy for others.'

'None of you truly believes until he wishes for his brother what he wishes for himself.'

'He who eats his fill while his neighbour goes without food is not a believer.'

'Powerful is not he who knocks the other down, indeed powerful is he who controls himself in a fit of anger.'

'Allah does not judge according to your bodies and appearances but He scans your hearts and looks into your deeds.'

'A man walking along a path felt very thirsty. Reaching a well he descended into it, drank his fill and came up. Then he saw a dog with its tongue hanging out, trying to lick up mud to quench its thirst. The man saw that the dog was feeling the same thirst as he had felt so he went down into the well again and filled his shoe with water and gave the dog a drink. God forgave his sins for this action.' The Prophet was asked: 'Messenger of God, are we rewarded for kindness towards animals?' He said, 'There is a reward for kindness to every living thing.'

Islamic **calligraphy** is widely used as an art form, particularly using the text of the Qur'an. It may be found on buildings, as book illustrations and on pottery. Many homes will have beautiful wall-hangings consisting entirely of calligraphy. Arabic is written from right to left and its flowing style allows it to be formed into many different creative shapes without destroying its meaning. There are several different styles of script but the main two that you will find are **Naskhi** (Qur'ans are normally in this script) and **Kufic** which is a very angular script ideal for use in architectural designs. Arabic is very important for all Muslims because it is the language in which the Qur'an was revealed. A combination of calligraphy with geometric patterns or background foliage is frequently known as **arabesque**.

The Five Pillars of Islam

All Muslims over the age of ten accept five important duties, which are known as the **five pillars of Islam** because they are as essential to Islam as pillars are to the building they hold up: **Shahadah** Belief in One God and His Messenger, Muhammad (pbuh).

1. **Salah** Prayer five times a day.
2. **Sawm** Fasting from dawn until sunset during the month of **Ramadan**.
3. **Zakat** The giving of charity. (2½% of savings).
4. **Hajj** Pilgrimage to the holy city of Makkah. (if able)

These are acts of worship which involve the whole person, body and soul and are the framework for a Muslim's life.

Shahadah is the declaration of faith: "I declare that there is no God but Allah. He is One and has no partner. And I also declare that Muhammad, blessings of Allah and peace be upon him, is His Servant and His Messenger." (In a shortened form: "There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is His Messenger.") In Arabic, the first part is *la ilaha illa Llah* - 'there is no god except God'; *ilaha* (god) can refer to anything which we may be tempted to put in place of God - wealth, power, and the like. Then comes *illa Llah*: 'except God', the source of all Creation. The second part of the Shahada is *Muhammadun rasulu'Llah*: 'Muhammad is the messenger of God.' A message of guidance has come through a man like ourselves. To say and mean these words makes one a true Muslim. Muslims recite them daily and before they die. This is the first of the five pillars – the other four show how this central belief is worked out in practice.

Salah is obligatory prayer five times a day, individually or in congregation. Before prayer there is a ritual act of washing known as **Wudu**. Wudu is not simply a means of cleansing the body and clothes, but a way of focussing the heart on Allah.

The prayer consists of a prescribed number of prayer cycles (**rakah**) which include reciting the Qur'an, standing, bowing and prostrating. Prayers should be performed within specified periods at dawn (**Fajr**), midday (**Zuhr**), late afternoon ('**Asr**), after sunset (**Maghrib**) and late evening ('**Isha**). The exact times of the five daily prayers vary around the world and according to the season of the year; prayer timetables are normally available from local mosques.

Children are encouraged to join

the adults in prayer as soon as they can. Muslims are required to pray in congregation if they can, but may pray anywhere that is clean and quiet (they will often use a prayer mat as a portable clean place). Salah punctuates a Muslim's day and is a practical outworking of a Muslim's faith in Allah and Islam, as one's mind is constantly directed towards worship.

A translation of the Call to Prayer:

God is most great. God is most great.

God is most great. God is most great.

I testify that there is no god except God.

I testify that there is no god except God.

I testify that Muhammad is the messenger of God.

I testify that Muhammad is the messenger of God.

Come to prayer! Come to prayer!

Come to success (in this life and the Hereafter)!

Come to success!

God is most great. God is most great.

There is no god except God.

Salah consists of the recitation of specific sections of the Qur'an and verses to the glory of Allah, accompanied by specified bodily postures that are intended to express submission, humility and adoration of Allah. It is worship of Allah with the whole body. Within the ritual there is time for **du'a** or personal prayers, when a worshipper offers his own prayers of thanksgiving and supplication. When praying or meditating in this way some Muslims like to use prayer beads (**subhah**) which are often used to recite the ninety-nine names of Allah.

Salah is always performed facing the direction of Makkah which will be marked in the mosque by the **qiblah** wall. The unity of all Muslims in the faith is shown by the fact that they all worship facing exactly the same direction (travellers will carry an Islamic compass to be certain that they are facing Makkah as they pray.) Believers are called to prayer by the **muezzin** who recites the **Adhan** (call to prayer) from the **minaret**. The Muezzin recites the Adhan a second time inside the mosque before worship begins. Salah can take place anywhere but most Muslim men will try to get to the mosque for the Friday **Jum'ah** prayers at noon. This is the main congregational prayer of the week and the service normally includes a talk or sermon. The Friday prayers gives the Muslims of an area an opportunity to meet and discuss community problems, it develops unity, co-operation and cohesiveness. In an Islamic state the head of state or his representative will lead the Jumah prayers in the central mosque of the capital.

Muslims offer Salah as a way of remembering Allah throughout the day, of being close to Him and gaining His favour. It is a command of Allah in the Qur'an that mankind should pray to Him, and a positive force for good ("Surely Salah keeps you away from the indecent and the forbidden.")

Wuzu



1 Hands washed to the wrists x3



2 Mouth & nose washed x3



3. Face washed three times.



4. Arms washed to the elbows three times.

Arms washed to the elbows
x3



Head, ears and back of neck washed



Feet washed up to the ankles

Salah / Salat

Prayer - 1



© Religion Education

Prayer - 2



© Religion Education

Prayer - 3



© Religion Education

Prayer - 4



Prayer - 5



Prayer - 6



You can find these illustrations of Wudu and Salah A4 size at <http://www.strath.ac.uk/Departments/SocialStudies/RE/Database/Graphics/Images/Islam/Islam.html> the site includes full description of the action and the words to be spoken in both Arabic and English translation.

The five daily prayers mean that Muslims:

- Begin and end the day with Allah
- Come before Allah throughout the day and so keep the will of Allah at the forefront of their dealings with each other and with their work
- Draw strength from Allah as the routines of the day make their demands upon them
- Remember that every day and every part of a day belong to Allah
- Pray in the morning cleansing the mind and preparing for the activities of the day and again at midday to find renewed energy for the afternoon
- Pray at night to reflect on the day past and ask forgiveness for any failures

Zakat One of the most important principles of Islam is that all things belong to God, and that wealth is therefore held by human beings in trust. The word zakat means both 'purification' and 'growth'. Possessions are purified by setting aside a proportion for those in need, and, like the pruning of plants, this cutting back balances and encourages new growth ; such charity is to be given without expectation of any earthly reward.

Muslims give 2½% of the value of their total wealth each year to the needy and for community projects. (It is not paid on property which is in personal use, but on what may be described as profit.) It is seen as a sign that they do not own their possessions but hold them in trust from Allah. Each Muslim calculates his or her own zakat individually. In Muslim countries zakat may be collected as a tax by the state. Muslims are encouraged to give voluntary charity in addition to the obligatory zakat. Underlying the duty to give zakat and personal charity is the belief that Muslims are all of one family (ummah), and should

support each other in personal distress, whether financially or with acts of charity. Charity is described as the one thing which lives on after a person dies.

The Prophet said: 'Charity is a necessity for every Muslim.' He was asked: 'What if a person has nothing?' The Prophet replied: 'He should work with his own hands for his benefit and then give something out of such earnings in charity.' The Companions asked: 'What if he is not able to work?' The Prophet said: 'He should help poor and needy persons.' The Companions further asked 'What if he cannot do even that?' The Prophet said 'He should urge others to do good.' The Companions said 'What if he lacks that also?' The Prophet said 'He should check himself from doing evil. That is also charity.'

A pious person may also give as much as he or she pleases as sadaqa, and does so preferably in secret. Although this word can be translated as 'voluntary charity' it has a wider meaning. The Prophet said 'even meeting your brother with a cheerful face is charity.'

Sawm Muslims are required to fast for the month of Ramadan – the ninth month of the Muslim lunar calendar. Fasting means abstaining from eating, drinking, smoking and sexual intercourse from dawn to sunset (the prohibition is so strict that you cannot swim in case you inadvertently swallow water, or use toothpaste in case you eat it.) . It is a form of worship and a test of character and self-discipline, performed to please Allah and to empathise with those who suffer hunger daily. There are increased devotional

activities during Ramadan – e.g. an additional daily time of prayer each night, and the recitation or reading of the whole of the Qur'an. Ramadan is seen as a month of great blessings and mercy from Allah, and as the month of forgiveness. During Ramadan the intention of the heart is actually more important than the discipline of abstinence: "the one who goes without food or drink in the wrong attitude of mind gains nothing but hunger and thirst". The month ends with the festival of Eid-ul-Fitr. Zakat is normally paid during Ramadan. Those who are sick, elderly, or on a journey, and women who are pregnant or nursing are permitted to break the fast and make up an equal number of days later in the year. If they are physically unable to do this, they must feed a needy person for every day missed. Children begin to fast (and to observe the prayer) from puberty, although many start earlier.

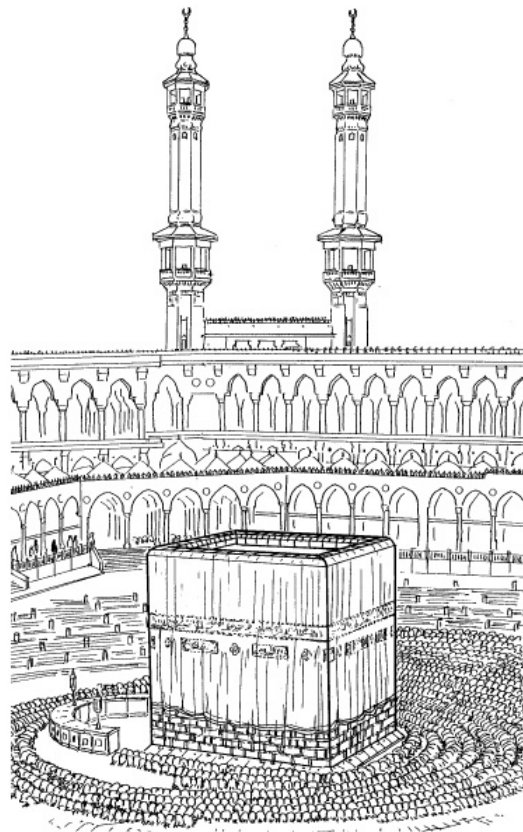
Although the fast is seen as beneficial to the health, it is regarded principally as a method of self purification. By cutting oneself off from worldly comforts, even for a short time, a fasting person gains true sympathy with those who go hungry as well as growth in one's spiritual life.

Hajj The Hajj is the pilgrimage to Makkah, which takes place annually, but will be a once in a lifetime event for most Muslims. It will normally be performed in the month of Dhu'l Hijja. Pilgrims also visit Mina, Arafat, Muzdalafa and possibly Medina. The holy sites are connected with not only the prophet Muhammad, but also the prophets, Abraham and Ishmael (pbut). Over two million make the pilgrimage to Makkah annually (about 20,000 from Britain) and this great gathering is seen as a demonstration of Islamic unity, solidarity, brotherhood and equality. All participants wear a simple robe of unsewn white cloth (**ihram**) and perform the same rites together. This is demonstrating their belief in the equality of everyone before Allah. The pilgrims are thereafter known by the honorific title hajji, and will use their ihram as their shroud when they die.

The significant sites visited on the Hajj are:

- Leaving the tent cities around Mina, the pilgrims stand together on the wide **plain of Arafat** and join in prayers for God's forgiveness, in what is often thought of as a preview of the Last Judgment. This is known as “the standing” and Arafat is the “Mount of Mercy” where Muhammad (pbuh) delivered his final sermon and prayed to Allah for the forgiveness of the sins of those who stood at Arafat. Pilgrims should therefore leave the plain feeling spiritually cleansed and ready to turn over a new leaf. Before they leave the plain they collect forty nine stones for:
- stoning the devil at **Mina**. The three pillars at Mina symbolize the devil who tried to persuade Abraham not to sacrifice his son Ishmael (pbuh) when Allah instructed him to do so.
- Most pilgrims then sacrifice a goat – the meat is shared with the poor. This is the festival of Eid-ul-Adha which is also celebrated by other Muslims throughout the world at the same time – even although they are not on the Hajj.

The Great Mosque



© Religious Education



- **The pilgrims then return to Makkah to circumambulate the Ka'aba (Taw'af).** This is the ancient cube shaped building which Muslims believe God commanded Abraham and Ishmael to build over four thousand years ago on the original site of a sanctuary established by Adam (pbuh). God commanded Abraham (pbuh) to summon all mankind to visit this place, and when pilgrims go there today they say 'At Thy service, O Lord', in response to this summons. The Ka'aba is the physical central focus for Islam (it is the point towards which Muslims turn as they pray) and now stands in the centre of the great mosque of Makkah. Built into the wall of the Ka'aba is a

black meteorite which is seen as especially holy and pilgrims will endeavour to kiss it if they can get close enough. Pilgrims circle the Ka'aba seven times before:

- drinking the waters of the **sacred well Zamzam** which is now in an enclosed chamber in the great mosque. The pilgrims also;
- run seven times between the **mountains of Safa and Marwa** as did Hagar during her search for water. (This is now a covered walkway). Hagar was searching for water for her son Ishmael – Zamzam is the well that the child uncovered by kicking his feet in the sand.

- After these rites are completed the pilgrims consider themselves deconsecrated and turn towards home. Although some may go on to extend their pilgrimage by visiting the Prophet's tomb at Medina.

In previous centuries the Hajj was an arduous undertaking. Today, however, Saudi Arabia provides millions of people with water, modern transport, and Up-to-date health facilities.

Muslim Family

Islam does not divide life into sacred and secular; it provides a comprehensive and universally applicable code of conduct of human life from the cradle to the grave. Islam unites all men without discrimination on the basis of race or colour making them a single community – the **Ummah**. The unity of believers takes precedence over all other relationships, including that of family.

The Qur'an states that all Muslims should **marry** and that sex outside marriage is a sin. Parents help their children in the selection of their marriage partner, as there is normally little free contact between unmarried young men and women and a strong emphasis on chastity and modesty in their lifestyles. Marriage is a partnership; neither partner is inferior to the other, although their roles are different. Marriage is the foundation of the family; and the family is the foundation of society. To prevent the breakdown of family life there are strict Islamic regulations regarding dress, the intermingling of the sexes, co-education, dating, etc. Children are a blessing from Allah.

Bringing up children is an essential job within the family and is primarily the role of the mother, who is also responsible for teaching them about Islam. The Muslim family is a larger unit than the nuclear family, and will cover several generations. The father is ruler of the household and responsible for its smooth running and financial stability, but the key person in running the household, and setting the tone in the home, is always the mother. To be a good mother is the best role a woman can perform – she is to be treated with great respect by husband and children. Muhammad (pbuh) himself warned Muslim men against selfishly serving their own souls by spending all their time at the mosque, and neglecting their wives and children.

Islam assigns the leadership of the family to men, because of their greater physical and emotional strength, they are thus responsible for supporting women, not only their immediate family, but also any female relatives who need it. The wife is her husband's companion and helpmate, responsible for the running of the household. She should obey her husband in all things, unless he tells her to disobey Allah. The woman is a person in her own right, with rights to ownership of property etc. She has the same religious duties as a man (with concessions made for her reproductive cycle and household duties) and a right to be treated with respect and honour. Husband and wife are essentially equal partners. Circumstances may warrant the taking of another wife but the right is granted, according to the Qur'an, only on condition that the husband is scrupulously fair.

A child is a gift from Allah. As soon as **a child is born** the **Adhan** (call to prayer) is whispered into his ear and honey put on his tongue; the call to prayer is therefore associated with sweetness. About seven days after birth the baby is named and his head shaved. The most common name of Muslim boys is Muhammad, or they may be named after famous early Muslim leaders. Muslim girls are frequently named after prophets' wives or particular qualities. Boys will be circumcised; this may be shortly after birth or several years later. No child should be favoured over its siblings, and favouritism should not be shown to sons above daughters. Children should be given the best possible education so that they will later earn their living and be financially independent. Their parents should, in as far as is possible, also help them to make happy marriages.

Children learn that it is an important duty to show respect for their parents and that they have a responsibility to look after them when they are old and weak. A Muslim family should take the best possible care of its elderly members whether they be grandparents or aunts and uncles – they take priority over the children, and should be treated with great respect. They will not be placed in care homes, unless there is really no alternative. There are a great number of verses in the Qur'an emphasising the respect and gratitude due to aged parents. The family is thus the foundation of Islamic society. Allah asks that we not only pray for our parents, but act with limitless compassion, remembering that when we were helpless children they preferred us to themselves. Mothers are particularly honored: the Prophet taught that 'Paradise lies at the feet of mothers'. When they reach old age, Muslim parents are treated mercifully, with the same kindness and selflessness. In Islam, serving one's parents is a duty second only to prayer, and it is their right to expect it. It is considered despicable to express any irritation when, through no fault of their own, the old become difficult.

The peace and security offered by a stable family unit is greatly valued, and seen as essential for the spiritual growth of its members. A harmonious social order is created by the existence of extended families; children are treasured, and rarely leave home until the time they marry. Muslims will often live as extended family groups with mutual respect across the generations. In most countries it is rare to find Muslims living alone, or refusing to honour their responsibilities to other members of their extended family.

The welfare and stability of Muslim society rests on the cornerstone of family. The institution of the family is ordained by Allah, and relatives should be considered as if they were gifts to us from Allah. The institution of the family has several key roles: protecting morals; providing emotional and psychological support; providing a secure place to raise children; providing social and economical security.

Food. The Prophet taught that 'your body has rights over you', and the consumption of wholesome food and the leading of a healthy lifestyle are seen as religious obligations. All wholesome, good things are used for food and food may be assumed lawful unless it has been declared unlawful (haram). All fish and vegetables are lawful, pig and carnivorous animals are not; all other animals must have been slaughtered according to Islamic law (their throats cut while the name of Allah is being invoked). This is known as **halal**. Halal butchers may be found in many cities in Britain. Islam prohibits all alcohol, even in cooking.

Dress The Qur'an requires that people dress properly and decently. As a minimum a man should be covered from navel to knees and a woman from head to foot excepting her face and hands. The styles of different garments associated with Muslims are dictated by local custom.

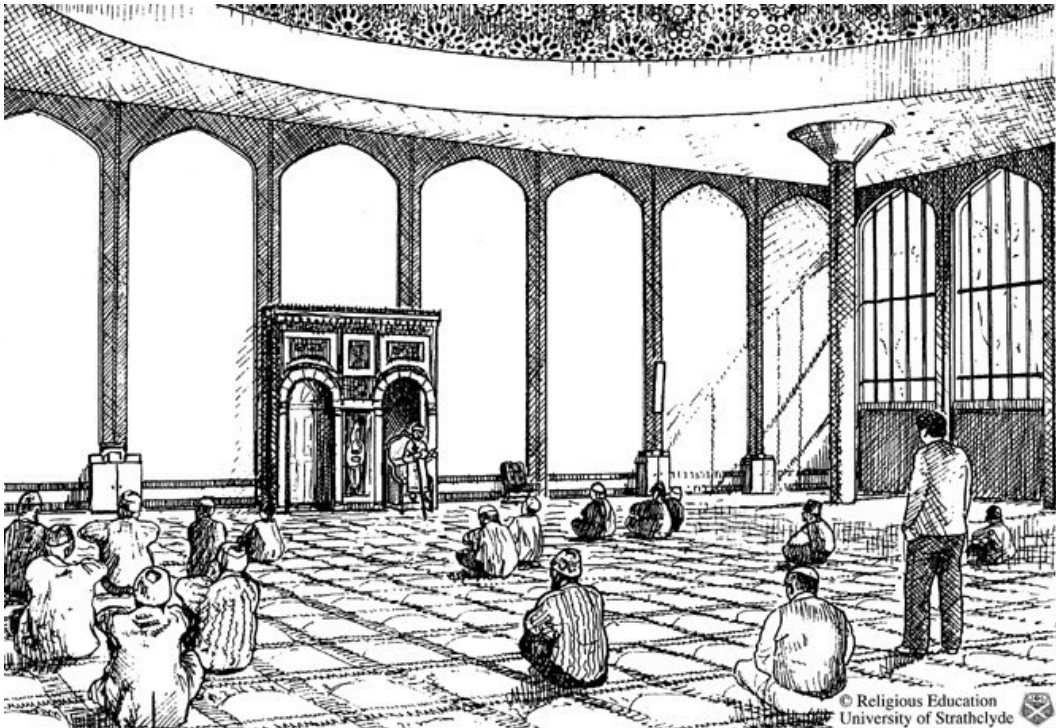
Equality All human beings belong to the family of Allah and all are equal, whatever sex, colour or nationality they happen to be born in. This is demonstrated in the Muslim creation story where Allah takes seven different colours of earth to make mankind – all seven colours of men are equal. Hospitality is also an important value of any Muslim family, and is closely linked

O mankind! We created you from a single soul, male and female, and made you into nations and tribes, so that you may come to know one another. Truly, the most honored of you in God's sight is the greatest of you in piety. God is All-Knowing, All-Aware.

(Qur'an, 49:13)

to the concept of honour and brotherhood.

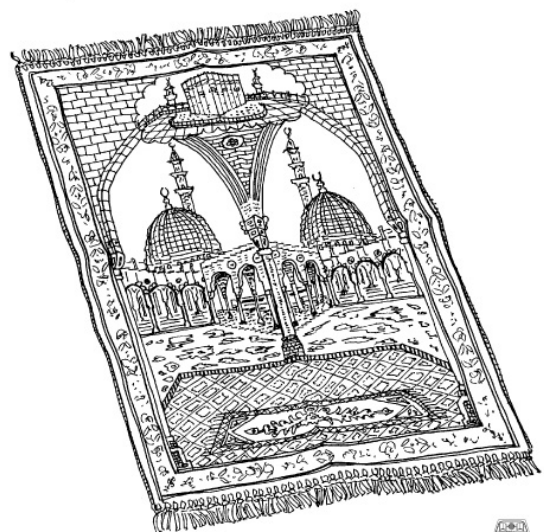
Mosques



The **Mosque** (masjid – “the place of prostration”) is not only a place of prayer but also an educational and community centre for the local Muslim community. Mosques may be built in many different styles but will all have the following characteristic features:

- a prayer hall,
- in the prayer hall is a qiblah wall with a mihrab (an alcove or structure containing an arch which shows the direction of Makkah), The prayer hall will be carpeted, often with a distinctive carpet resembling rows of prayer mats (shoes are left outside). Women have a separate area for prayer where they can see the main prayer hall but not been seen e.g. an enclosed balcony.
- a ritual ablution area (wudu),
- a dome (representing the heavens),
- a minbar (platform for sermon)
- and a minaret (tower from which the **muezzin** calls the people to prayer).
- Purpose-built mosques may also include a Qur’an school, a community hall and a mortuary.

Prayer mat



(In this country many mosques are converted halls or churches – such buildings do not have a dome and minaret.)

Large mosques have an official **Imam** who acts as prayer leader and gives the sermon in worship (although any adult male Muslim can lead prayers if necessary). The Imam may also run a Qur'an school for children at the mosque.

Islamic Art and Calligraphy are expressions of Islamic spirituality. Geometric patterns are the most common form of art and reflect the natural order, pattern and rhythms of the universe. True Islamic repetitive patterns will be made using only a ruler and compass and will fill the entire space that frames them. They will be found especially covering both the exterior and interior of buildings. Pictures of humans and animals are avoided as they may distract from worship, but stylised floral motifs are widely used and reflect the pattern of the gardens of Paradise. Certain colours are particularly symbolic: white = purity, black = the Ka'aba, green = paradise, blue = infinity (sky) and revelation, yellow = sun, glory and plenty. *There are a lot of wonderful examples of Arabic art and calligraphy on-line – just use Google Images!*

Festivals

The word **Eid** (also spelt Id) means 'Festival'. The two main Muslim festivals are **Eid-ul-Fitr**, which ends Ramadan, and **Eid-ul-Adha**, which falls during the Hajj. The latter is when pilgrims to Makkah will sacrifice a sheep to commemorate Abraham's sacrifice of a sheep in the place of Ishmael. Sacrifices will also take place in Muslims communities elsewhere in the world where Abraham is being remembered. The key ideas at these festivals are worship (time for special prayers) and purity (baths, new clothes). It is a time when the whole family of Islam is brought together to share the goodness and to remember the less fortunate (zakat and hospitality for strangers).

The birth of Muhammad (pbuh) is celebrated as **Eid-Milad-un-Nabi**; it is not a universally accepted festival. People celebrate particularly by telling stories of Muhammad (pbuh) and sharing a meal.

Creation and Responsibility

A paraphrase of the Muslim Story of Creation:

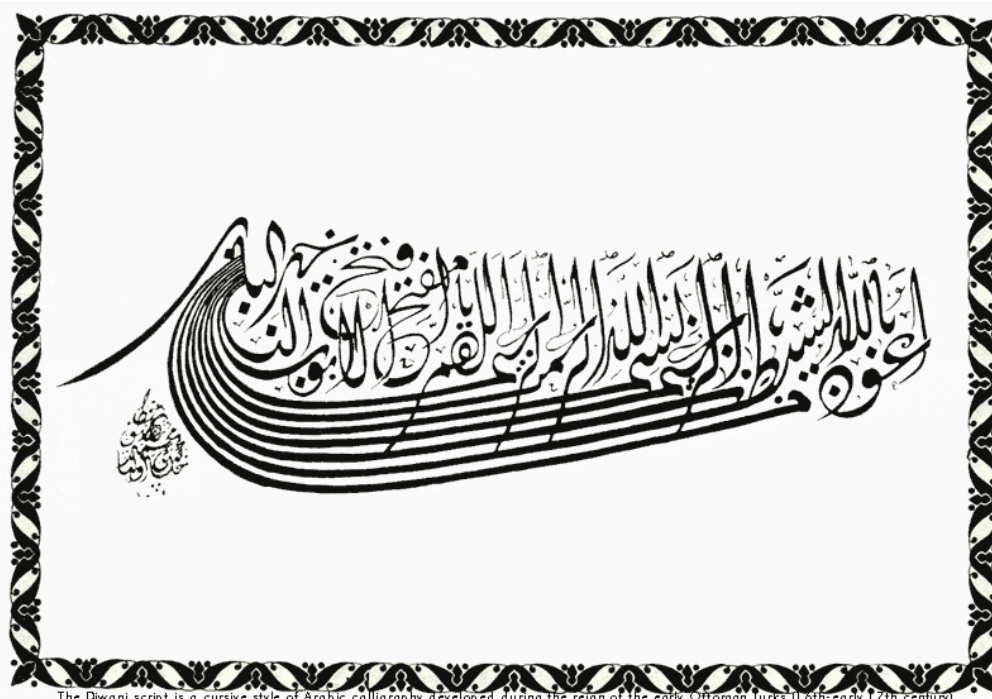
Before even time existed there was Allah. And Allah said "Be", and as he spoke the earth and the heavens came into being, he made all the creatures of the earth – the creatures which walk, the creatures which fly and the creatures which swim. He made the angels, and the sun, moon and stars, he made the whole universe. And Allah sent the rain that poured down upon the earth, and out of the soil came grapes and corn, olives and palm trees, fruits and grass.

Then Allah sent the angels down to the earth and they brought back seven handfuls of soil. Each handful of soil was a different colour. Allah took the seven handfuls of soil and made a model of a man. He breathed life and power into the man and he sprang into life. This was the first man, and Allah called him Adam.

Allah took Adam to live in Paradise and out of his side he created Eve. Allah taught Adam the names of all the creatures, and commanded the angels to bow down before Adam – but one of the angels, Iblis, refused to do this, because man was made of earth but Iblis and the other angels were made of fire. Adam and Eve lived in a beautiful garden in Paradise. Allah had taught them they could eat whatever they wanted in the garden, except the fruit of one tree, which was forbidden to them. But Iblis, the Evil One, tempted them to disobey Allah and eat the fruit., they forgot that Allah had warned them not to touch this tree and they ate. Allah threw them out of Paradise for their disobedience. Allah also threw Iblis out of His presence for the evil he had brought about – and in revenge Iblis vowed that he would forever tempt Adam and his descendants to do wrong.

Yet despite all this Allah is a God of mercy. The earth was created to give food, warmth, drink, beauty and shelter to humans, and it still does. It is a good world and has been created to serve people. Those believers who submit to the will of Allah (Muslims) and do his will, will be taken to live for ever in Paradise.

The story of Creation is found in the Qur'an, and is explained by Muhammad in the Hadith. It demonstrates how all things were made from the will of Allah. As man is made from seven colours of earth, this demonstrates that Allah is the Lord of all people, of whatever race and colour. Mankind contains Allah's spirit, which has been breathed into him – no other living creature has this – he is Allah's most important creation, because even the angels are supposed to bow down before him. Mankind was created to live in Paradise, but lives upon earth because of Adam and Eve's disobedience. However, the earth is still good, it is here to be enjoyed, but also to be taken care of as part of Allah's creation. The world is ours in trust, and we must take care of it for Allah who is its rightful owner. Thus it is the duty of people to take no more from the earth than is needed – Allah does not approve of those who waste the bounty of the earth – even if you are sitting by a river of water you should not take more water than you need. It follows that animals should only be hunted for food, never for pleasure, nor should they be made to behave unnaturally or their communities destroyed to please man (circuses, kept in cages). As Allah's representatives we have no right to misuse or abuse the world. The title used to describe man as Allah's Trustee or Deputy is Khalefah.



The Diwani script is a cursive style of Arabic calligraphy developed during the reign of the early Ottoman Turks (15th-early 17th century).