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Other beliefs covered include:-

**Bahá'í, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Jainism, Judaism, Sikhism**

*Please contact the Centre to receive copies of other faith editions.*

# ISLAM

St Philip's Centre is a charity set up in 2006 with the support of the Diocese of Leicester and is rooted in the multi-faith environment of Leicester, the UK's most plural city.

We have a strong track record of promoting positive community relations through our religion and belief training, community events, charitable activities, dialogue and community engagement.

St Philip's Centre works closely with local and national public sector organisations including central and local government, Police, armed forces, schools, colleges and universities. We welcome international visitors and groups.



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Front cover images: *Main image - Al Harim Ka'aba, Mecca*

*From top down: 1. Al Masjid Al Nabawi, Medina 2. Masjid Al Aqsa, Jerusalem 3. The Great Mosque of Djenné, Mali 4. Qibla direction compass 5. Christian and Muslim women in dialogue*



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## ★ What is Islam?

Muslims believe that the most complete way of life is found in the religion of Islam. Islam means, submission to the will of God (*Allah* in Arabic). Muslims believe there is only one creator God.

God in his mercy had sent messengers to convey his message, to different peoples, in different times. Each prophet came with guidance and miracles that were relevant for his time and for his people. The message was the same: That there is only one God and worship is for Him alone. This Islam was the religion brought by all the prophets of God. Islam was the religion of **Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus** and the last prophet **Muhammad** (peace be upon them all). God has in His Grace, addressed this issue to humanity in his final revelation, the Holy **Qur'an**.

Islam is the second largest religion in the world with over 1 billion followers from all races, nationalities and cultures. From the rice farms of Indonesia to the deserts of Africa and from the skyscrapers of New York to Bedouin tents in Arabia. There are several different groups of Muslims but all of them, in every country and community, regard their faith as a bond between them and a major part of their identity.

### The Five Pillars of Islam

The Five Pillars of Islam are the five obligations that every Muslim must satisfy in order to live a good and responsible life according to Islam.

Shahadah	Salah	Zakah	Sawm	Hajj
Testimony that there is only one God and Muhammad (pbuh) is his messenger	Performing five daily ritual prayers with their set rites	Giving 2½% annually of one's wealth to benefit the poor and the needy	Fasting during the month of Ramadan	At least once in a lifetime pilgrimage to Mecca, a city in Saudi Arabia

#### Why are they important?

Carrying out these obligations provides the framework of a Muslim's life and weaves their everyday activities and their beliefs into a single cloth of religious devotion.

No matter how sincerely a person may believe, Islam regards it as pointless to live life without putting that faith into action and practice.

## Islamic traditions

The general consensus is that there are three main Islamic traditions - **Sunni, Shia and Ibadi** plus many more sub-traditions or schools of thought. The differences stem from the political legacy of the Prophet Muhammad. When the Prophet died in the early 7th Century he left an Islamic nation in the Arabian Peninsula. It was the question of who should lead this community which eventually created the divide. All agree that the Prophet Muhammad was the final prophet and messenger of Allah but that leadership was still required.

The debate about who should become *caliph* (leader) of the Muslims involved four close companions of Prophet Muhammad - Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman and Ali who each became caliphs in turn. However, legitimacy to their position was questioned by their opponents and this schism led to the formation of the different Islamic traditions.

In 2004, the 'Amman Message' declared the existence of eight legal schools of shari'a with most resident under the Sunni umbrella. Leadership and authority varies within each tradition and indeed sub-tradition. Some follow local or national opinion whereas others connect to an international figurehead.

The Ahmadiyya community is a movement which the Muslim world does not regard as being under the Islamic umbrella owing to several key differences. The Ahmadiyya community however, would think differently. This is akin to other religions which also have similar groups.



**Main:** Dome of the Rock, Jerusalem **Top right:** Shrine of Imam Ali, Najaf, Iraq **Bottom right:** Shrine of Imam

## The Qu'ran

The **Qur'an** is the holy book for Muslims, revealed in stages to the Prophet Muhammad over 23 years. Qur'anic revelations are regarded by Muslims as the sacred words of God, intended to update the teachings of previous holy books.

The Qur'an was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad by God in Arabic. Some Qur'anic fragments have been dated as far back as the eighth, and possibly even the seventh century. The oldest existing copy of the full text is from the ninth century.

The Qur'an is treated with immense respect by Muslims because it is the sacred word of God. When the Qur'an is recited aloud, Muslims should behave with reverence and refrain from speaking, eating or drinking, or making distracting noise.

### Sunnah and Hadith

In addition to the Qur'an, the other sacred sources are the Sunnah, the practise and examples of Prophet Muhammad's life and the Hadith - reports of what the prophet Muhammad said or approved of. Both the Hadith and Sunnah must adhere to a strict chain of narration that ensures its authenticity, taking into account factors such as the character of people in the chain and continuity in narration. Reports that fail to meet such criteria are disregarded.



*Above: Holy Qu'ran on reyal*

### Jihad

In Arabic, **Jihad** means 'strive' or 'struggle'. A person engaged in jihad is called a **mujahid**, the plural is **mujahidun**. Jihad requires Muslims to 'struggle in the way of God' or 'to struggle to improve one's self and/or society'. The term "Jihad" used without any qualifiers is generally understood by many to be referring to holy war.

In broader usage and interpretation, the term has accrued both violent and non-violent meanings. It can simply mean striving to live a moral and virtuous life, spreading and defending Islam as well as fighting injustice and oppression, among other things. The relative importance of these two forms of jihad is a matter of controversy.

## Beliefs

The main beliefs/ articles of faith for a Muslim are:-

- a) There is only one God/ Allah
- b) His revealed holy books
- c) His angels
- d) His messengers or prophets,
- e) Day of Resurrection or Judgement; and
- f) The graceful acceptance of pre-destination from God.

1. Allah is the name for God. Christians and Muslims who speak Arabic may refer to God as Allah.

2. Islam regards the original **Torah** of Moses, the **Psalms** of David and the teachings of Jesus, as being revealed. The Qur'an is believed to be God's final, complete, unadulterated and authoritative revelation.

3. Islam reveres the prophets found in the Old and New Testament like Adam, Abraham, Moses, David, Jesus etc as true messengers of God. Jesus is considered as a prophet of special pre-eminence and also agree to his many miracles performed through the agency of God. Muhammad is regarded by Muslims as the last of God's messengers. The virgin Mary, mother of Jesus, is the only woman mentioned by name in the Qur'an.

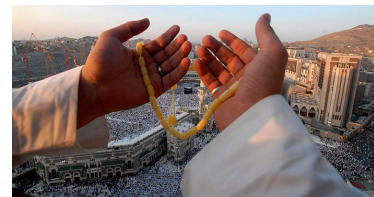
### Law of Islam

**Shari'a** is a familiar term to many of us. It can often be heard in news stories about politics, crime, feminism, terrorism and civilisation. Muslim's are obliged to govern their lives by Shari'a. Shari'a law comes from a combination of sources including the Qur'an (the Muslim holy book), the Hadith (sayings and conduct of the Prophet Muhammad and other rulings of Islamic scholars).

Many people, including some Muslims, misunderstand or are ignorant of Shari'a. It is often only associated with the amputation of limbs, death by stoning, lashes and other punishments. Because of this, it is sometimes thought of as draconian and archaic.

However, in the Islamic tradition, Shari'a is seen as something that nurtures humanity and justice particularly in relation to personal, civil and criminal law.

Most Sunni Muslims follow **Hanafi**, **Shafii**, **Maliki** and **Hanbali** while most Shia Muslims follow the **Jafari** school of thought.



*Overlooking Ka'aba, Mecca, Saudi Arabia*



*Cave of the Patriarchs or the Cave of Machpelah, Hebron—Israel*



## The Holy Days

There are two Muslim festivals set down in Islamic law celebrated by all: **Eid ul-Fitr** and **Eid ul-Adha**. There are however, several other special days which Muslims celebrate.

### Eid ul-Adha

This celebration marks the end of the Hajj pilgrimage and is the festival that remembers Prophet Ibrahim's (Abraham's) willingness to sacrifice his son when God ordered him to.

#### Celebrations

Ibrahim's complete obedience to the will of God is celebrated by Muslims each year. Each Muslim, as they celebrate, reminds themselves of their own submission to God and their own willingness to sacrifice to God's wishes.

During the festival Muslims who can afford to, usually sacrifice a sheep. This is a symbol of Ibrahim's sacrifice. Meat is distributed among family, friends and the poor, who each get a share. As with Eid ul-Fitr, the day begins with prayers followed by visits to the cemetery, family meals and festivities.

### Eid ul-Fitr

This festival marks the end of Ramadan, the Islamic holy month of fasting. Muslims give money to the poor, wear their best clothes, visit family and friends.

On the day of the celebration, a typical Muslim family awakes early, does the first daily prayer and is required to eat a little, symbolising the end of Ramadan. They then attend special congregational prayers usually at mosques or large open areas. The prayer is followed by a sermon.

Worshippers greet and embrace each other in a spirit of peace and love. After prayers, visits are usually made to the cemetery to pray for deceased members of one's family. After this a family/ communal meal takes place and visits to the homes of relatives and friends to celebrate and thank Allah for all blessings.

Eid ul-Fitr is a joyous occasion of important religious significance.



Typical foods shared by a family at Eid ul-Ad and Eid ul-Fitr

## The Holy Prophet (peace be upon him/pbuh)

Muslims believe that Islam is a faith that has always existed and that it was gradually revealed to humanity by a number of prophets. The final and complete revelation of the faith was made through the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) in the 7th century CE.

Muhammad was born in Mecca in Saudi Arabia in 570. He was a deeply spiritual man and often spent time in meditation on Mount Hira. The traditional story of the Qur'an tells how one night in 610 he was meditating in a cave on the mountain when he was visited by the Angel Jibril (Gabriel) who ordered him to recite.

### The Qur'an

During the rest of his life Muhammad continued to receive these revelations. The words were remembered, recorded and formed the text of the Holy Qur'an, the Muslim scripture.

### Preaching

Believing that God had chosen him as his messenger, Muhammad began to preach what God had revealed to him. The simple and clear-cut message of Islam is that there is no God but Allah and that life should be lived in complete submission to the will of Allah. This was attractive to many people and they flocked to hear it.

### The Hijrah

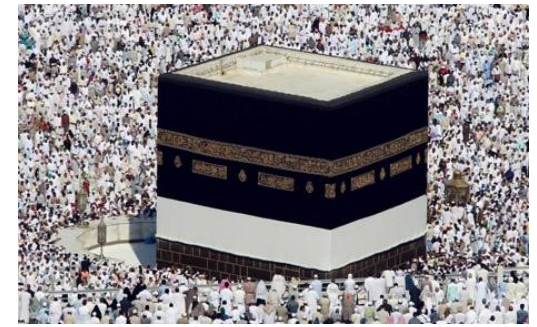
Muhammad's popularity was seen as a threat by the people in power in Makkah and Muhammad was forced to flee with his followers from Mecca to Medina in 622. This journey is called the **Hijrah** (migration) and the event was seen as so important for Islam that 622 is the year in which the Islamic calendar begins.

### The Return to Mecca

Within ten years Muhammad had gained so many followers that he was able to return and liberate Mecca. Muhammad continued to lead his community both spiritually and in earthly matters until his death in 632.



The Prophet's Mosque, Medina - Saudi Arabia



Ka'aba at the centre of the Al Haram, Mecca -Saudi Arabia