



Revision Summaries for GCSE AQA Religious Studies (Short Course)

Component 1: Islam

Update v1.1, October 2025

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Teacher's Introduction

The revision summaries in this series are designed to support your students as they study GCSE AQA Short Course Section A: Islam, and have been designed to cover the major themes and concepts of each topic point accordingly.

All students, whether they are academically strong, average or weak, can benefit from a concise and clearly explained set of notes to revise from, both as they work through the AQA course but also when preparing for their end of course exams. It is recommended, therefore, that students be given each relevant summary after learning a topic so that they can clearly understand the summaries and refer back to them when needed. The summaries can also function well, however, as a pack given to students in the run-up to their exams.

Remember!

Always check the exam board website for new information, including changes to the specification and sample assessment material.

Each topic follows a set structure detailed below:

- ✓ **Keywords:** A clear list of important terminology students need to know when studying the topic.
- ✓ **Overview:** A look at the major themes of the topic, with a brief introduction to the major points of discussion and disagreement.
- ✓ **Key Points:** The main body of the summaries for each topic, they are a clear and concise set of notes that help students support their own knowledge and understanding of the topic.
- ✓ **Student Checklist:** A helpful guide to what students need to know by the end of the revision summary and a way to check their understanding and progress through a particular topic.
- ✓ **Practice Questions:** A full set of practice questions (with extra multiple-choice questions), complete with mark schemes. These are useful for students wishing to improve their knowledge on a particular topic and to practice skills as they approach their end-of-year exams.

This clearly ensures students have not only a grasp of the key themes of each topic, but a way to understand their place within the specification as a whole. Students who may have missed lessons or not made detailed notes may benefit greatly from these revision summaries in helping their recollection of key topics closer to their end-of-course exams, especially when looking over topics covered earlier in their studies.

September 2018

Update v1.1, October 2025

As per the exam board assessment updates, changes have been made to the practice questions:

- “contrasting” replaced with “different” in the 4 mark question
- 5-mark question replaced with a 6-mark question
- 2-mark question reduced to a 1-mark question

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Introduction to Islam



Overview

Islam is the second largest faith group in the world today, with 1.8 billion people who follow this monotheistic faith, which means that Muslims believe in one God, who is commonly referred to as 'Allah'.

Islam began in the sixth century with the preaching of a holy man named **Muhammad**, the most important **Prophet** and final Prophet of Islam. He is considered to be the Father of the faith. Muslims believe he was given the final revelation from God, which was subsequently written down. This revelation forms the **Qur'an**, which is the holy text of Islam. The Qur'an is, for the most part, the only source of authority. Other sources of authority include the **Sunnah** (the actions of the Prophet) and the sayings of the Prophet.

The word Islam means 'submission' and large parts of the faith are about following the teachings of the ways of the Prophet. A Muslim will demonstrate their submission to God in their daily prayers, including daily prayer. Some Muslims pray five times a day, while others pray three times. In all prayers, Muslims will prostrate themselves to demonstrate their submission to God.

There are different branches of Islam. The two dominant factions are the **Sunni** and the **Shi'a**, the only groups of Muslims. Furthermore, within these groups, Muslims might hold to be part of a particular branch based on whether or not they believe in certain teachings derived from jurisprudence, or the interpretation of the law.

Islam is a religion that began as a small religious movement in what is now known as Arabia, and through military conquest to become an empire, and is now an established world religion. Countries of many nations such as Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Iran.



Key Points

Muhammad

The Prophet Muhammad is the founder of Islam. In the beginning of the sixth century, the Angel Jibril visited the Holy Man in a cave on Mount Hira to begin the process of delivering the Holy book, the Qur'an. After his name, you might commonly see the phrase 'peace be upon him' as a common practice as a mark of respect for the important Prophet. His life is considered a model that many will strive to follow his life actions.

The Qur'an

The Qur'an is the holy text within Islam. It is understood by Muslims to be the literal word of God, revealed to the Prophet Muhammad. It is considered perfect and without flaw in its content. It is kept above all other books within a Muslim home as a mark of respect. It is the source of law and can derive moral teachings.

Sunnis and Shi'as

There are two major branches of the Islamic faith. These are known as the Shi'a and the Sunni. Muslims in the world identify as Sunni. This divide is rooted in the issue of succession after the Prophet Muhammad in 632 CE. The Sunni Muslims thought that the succession should go to the first companion of the Prophet, while the Shi'a Muslims thought that the succession should go to the Prophet who was married to Muhammad's daughter, Fatimah. This resulted in a branch that exists to this day.

The Five Pillars

Within Islam, there is an analogy which describes the way in which the practices of Islam are built. These are the Shahadah (the declaration of faith), Salah (daily prayer), Sawm (fasting), Zakat (charitable giving) and the undertaking of the Hajj (the pilgrimage to Makkah).

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Key Beliefs

The Six Articles of Sunni Islam Five Roots of Shi'a Islam



Keywords

- **Sunni** – One of the main branches of Islamic faith that they follow the Six Articles of Faith.
- **Shi'a** – One of the main branches of Islamic faith that they follow the Five Roots of Faith.
- **Allah** – This is the Arabic word for God.
- **Islam** – This is the faith which Muslims follow; the word 'Islam' means 'submission'.
- **Usul ad-Din** – The five principles of Shi'a Islam.
- **Articles of Faith** – The term for the central facets of Sunni belief.
- **Adalah** – The Shi'a term for the Justice of God.
- **Tawhid** – Belief in the Oneness of God.
- **Angels** – Unseen, holy entities who bring God's revelation to humans.
- **Risalah** – This is the article of faith which refers to belief in Prophets.
- **Day of Judgement** – The day the world will end and Muslims believe all humans will be judged for their actions.
- **Justice** – The concept that God will treat humans with fairness and without bias.
- **Resurrection** – The concept of God raising humans from the dead on the Day of Judgement.
- **Imamate** – This is the Shi'a belief in the leadership of the Imams.
- **Twelvers** – The section of Shi'a Islam that specifically believes in Twelve Imams.
- **Supremacy** – The idea that God is all-powerful over all of creation.



Overview

The Sunni and Shi'a branches are the two main factions within Islam. These were created after the death of the Prophet when the Sunnis believed that the father-in-law of the Prophet, Abu Bakr, was the most suitable successor to Muhammad and elected him one of their Four Rightly Guided Caliphs. Conversely, the Shi'a believed that the son-in-law of the Prophet, should have succeeded him. They called him their Imam, and this led to the split of the two groups in terms of leadership which resultantly created divisions in beliefs. Some beliefs, including belief in the Oneness of God and in the Prophets, but there are differences in others. The core facets of each respective branch of Islam are represented in two groupings: The Six Articles of Faith (Sunni Islam) and the Five Roots of Usul ad-Din (Shi'a Islam).



Key Points

The Six Articles of Faith in Sunni Islam

Within Sunni Islam, there are six articles of faith which are central to Sunni beliefs not only regarding God, but also regarding the world around them, the acceptance of God's past interactions with humans and expectations regarding the end of the world.

These Articles are as follows:

- **The Supremacy of God's Will:**
 - This is the belief that God is all-powerful, and therefore everything in existence has been done so because God wished it to be. They believe that nothing has or can ever happen without God allowing it to.

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- **Belief in Angels**
 - This is the belief in the existence of supernatural beings who are above human belief. They believe that they bring communications from God (revelations) to human beings. They carry out duties they carry out to serve God. There are many angels within Islam, but the most famous is Jibril.
- **Belief in the Authority of the Holy Books**
 - This is the reverence and respect afforded to the Muslim Holy Texts. The Muslims believe that the Qur'an is God's final revelation to mankind. They also believe the Qur'an is the word of God and is immutable. There are other books which are considered holy, but these were either changed or confused.
- **Tawhid**
 - This means the belief in the Oneness of God. Islam is a monotheistic faith. Muslims believe Allah is one, and there is nothing like him, so any concept of comparison with him would contradict this belief is considered to be a great sin within Islam.
- **Belief in the Prophets**
 - This is the belief that God has sent a series of prophets with revelations over the centuries, revealing his will to the world. This culminates in Islamic thought with the Prophet Muhammad, who is considered to be the final Prophet.
- **Belief in the Day of Judgement**
 - This is the belief that there will be a day announced by the blowing of a trumpet. Only God knows the timing of this day. At this point, all of humanity, living or dead, will be held to account for their actions during life and be judged according to them. This is a major factor as to whether or not they are destined for heaven or for hell.

The Five Roots of Usul ad-Din

Usul ad-Din means the Principles of Religion; the phrasing of these facets of belief as roots demonstrates how these are incredibly important to Shi'a Islam as they directly impact the principles of the faith. The five roots of Shi'a Islam are as follows:




- **Belief in the Oneness of God**
 - Like Sunni Muslims, Shi'a Muslims also lay a great deal of importance on the Oneness of God. As Islam is a monotheistic religion, this is a central, important belief held by Muslims. Any form of polytheism is considered a very grave sin within Islamic thought.
- **Belief in The Justice of God:**
 - This is the root of Shi'a Islam that refers to the nature of God as being just and fair to all people with a fair and impartial view. This is also known as Adalat. They believe that God will therefore act justly as he has superior knowledge and is infallible.
- **Belief in the Prophets**
 - Like Sunni Muslims, Shi'a Muslims believe that God has, throughout history, revealed his will to various people he has deemed worthy. These revelations were given to prophets, culminating in the Prophet Muhammad who is considered to be the final Prophet. The revelation of the Qur'an.
- **Belief in the Day of Resurrection**
 - This refers to the belief in the resurrection on the Day of Judgement. Shi'a Muslims believe that when a person dies, their body stays in the grave in the state of Barzakh. At the point of the resurrection, the dead will experience the Day of Resurrection – at which point all the living will be held to account for their actions during the course of their lives.
- **Belief in the Imams**
 - This is the belief in the Shi'a system of leadership following the death of the Prophet Muhammad. The twelve Imams following Muhammad's death in 632 CE in order to guide the community. These were descended from Muhammad through his daughter (Fatima), who was the first Imam. These imams are believed to be infallible.

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Student Checklist

What do I know?	No Idea 	Nearly 	Sure 
I can list all six articles of faith in Sunni Islam.			
I can list all five roots of Usul ad-Din in Shi'a Islam.			
I can describe why these are important to Muslims.			
I can identify and describe the key differences between the six articles and five roots.			
I can identify and describe the key similarities between the six articles and five roots.			

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Tawhid



Key Terms

- **Tawhid** – the concept of the Oneness of God.
- **One** – the singular nature of God.
- **Monotheism** – belief in one god, rather than multiple gods.
- **Shirk** – the Islamic sin of suggesting God is not one.
- **Lesser** – the form of shirk when a person professes that God is one but does not believe inwardly that he is One.
- **Greater** – the form of shirk when a person openly states that God is not one.
- **Idolatry** – the practice of worshipping something other than the one God with no form.
- **Calligraphy** – A beautiful form of writing, commonly used to decorate mosques.
- **Shahadah** – the Islamic declaration of faith which declares God to be one.



Overview

This is the Islamic concept of the oneness of God; that he is completely and utterly one. All his attributes and deeds can only be attributed to One God. This idea permeates various aspects of religion, including the Islamic declaration of faith, the Shahadah, which is said at the point of birth and death, and the practice Salah (daily prayer). This short declaration specifically addresses the concept of God being One.



Key Points

Tawhid

Islam is a monotheistic faith; this means that there is only one God within Islam. This concept of God is known as Tawhid, which means to worship God correctly, as all worship should be directed solely to him. This term is a theme within the religious theory and practice of Islam. It is a central tenet of Islamic belief, repeatedly mentioned in the Quran and described in Surah 112. This is expressed directly in one of the most important prayers which Muslims express, 'There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is His Messenger'.

Shirk

The sin of shirk is a particularly serious one within Islam, and is considered to be unforgivable. Shirk is to contradict Tawhid and suggest or declare that God is not one. There are two types of shirk, lesser and greater, both considered to be unforgivable. They are divided into the categories of lesser and greater shirk.

- **Lesser shirk** is to profess verbally that God is one, but to believe inwardly that there are others who share his power or to believe it.
- **Greater shirk** is to state openly that God is not one, or to state belief that there are others who share his power, or to state belief that there is more than one God, such as a Hindu would believe.

Idolatry

Idolatry is a sin within Islam that refers to the potential worship of images or physical objects. The concept of the oneness of God means that only God can be worshipped and, therefore, anything other than God is considered to be a sin, and a particularly grave sin. As a result of this view, there are no images or statues made. This rule also applies to any potential images of the Prophet Muhammad. This is to ensure that the focus of worship is on God themselves is avoided, allowing the focus of worship to remain on God. This is the reason why there are no images or statues within mosques. Instead, they are commonly decorated with beautiful calligraphy.

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Allah

The Arabic name for God, 'Allah', has no plural forms. This shows how the concept of that Muslims use to refer to God.

Surah 112:

*'He is Allah, the One. Allah, the Absolute. He begets not, nor is He begotten.
And there is nothing comparable to Him'*



Student Checklist

What I know?	No Idea 	Nearly 	Sure
I understand the concept of Tawhid.			
I understand what greater shirk is.			
I understand what lesser shirk is.			
I understand why idolatry is important to avoid in Islam.			
I understand how calligraphy helps Muslims avoid committing idolatry.			

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The Nature of God



Keywords

- **99 Beautiful Names** – this is the number of beautiful names for God that Muslims use as terms for God. These are found in the Qur'an and the Hadiths (sayings of Muhammad).
- **Merciful** – the nature of God which depicts his mercy towards human beings.
- **Just** – belief that God will be fair in his judgement, giving punishment and reward.
- **Omnipotent** – the all-knowing, all-powerful nature of God.
- **'Adalat'** – this is the Arabic term for 'God's Justice'.
- **Al-Qadeer** – the Arabic term for the power of God.
- **Transcendent** – the nature of God as being beyond the realm of human physical existence.
- **Immanent** – the nature of God as being constantly close to humanity at all times.
- **Beneficent** – the belief that Allah is completely good.
- **Fair** – belief in the impartiality of God's judgement and treatment of humans.



Overview

Muslims believe that there are many facets of God's nature that collectively present the full picture of God. They believe that God has 99 beautiful names, which are remembered through special string of prayer beads with 99 beads – one for each name of God. There are seven main beliefs about the nature of God that are emphasised in Islam. The key beliefs about the nature of God are that he is:

omnipotent, immanent, transcendent, merciful, fair

It is worth noting that the qualities of immanence and transcendence juxtapose with each other. To imagine a God who can be both completely close to humans at all times, and also completely far from humans at all times. This is solved within Islamic thought as they believe that while this would not be a contradiction for a human, God is so powerful and not limited by the boundaries of the physical realm in the same way humans are. God is able to be both at the same time.



Key Points

Merciful

Muslims believe that God shows mercy to those who truly repent and forgives them. This is seen as being merciful to the whole of mankind as well as individuals. The giving of the Qur'an is also seen as a great display of God's mercy towards all of mankind, and his previous revelations as evidence of his mercy throughout history.

Just

'Adalat' is the Arabic term for 'God's Justice'. It expresses the Muslim belief that Allah will judge according to a person's actions throughout their lifetime, good or bad. Muslims believe that Allah will therefore make a judgement of a person's action with full knowledge. They believe that Allah is just in a just manner today, and this will continue to apply on the Day of Judgement.

Omnipotent

This is the facet of God that refers to his all-powerful nature. Muslims believe that God is all-powerful, able to make all things and control all things. This is also referred to within Islam as Qadir, which refers to the power of God.

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Immanent

This is the facet of God's nature that refers to his constant closeness to mankind. The to man as his jugular vein – which, if cut, will end a person's life. This puts forward that it means to be a living human, and that he cannot be removed from what it means to

Transcendent

The term 'transcendence' in an Islamic context is the fact that God is beyond everything. He is understood to be removed from and greater than mankind.

Fair

This is the belief that God is completely fair; he will treat human beings and judge them as they have acted. Those who have done evil will be treated accordingly, but those who

Beneficent

This is the key belief within Islam that God is inherently and completely good. The goodness of his just, fair and merciful nature, as well as the many blessings he bestows upon people, is referred to 57 times throughout the Qur'an.



Student Checklist

What do I know?	No Idea ☹️	Nearly 😊	Sure 😄
I understand the concept of the Justice of Allah.			
I understand the concept of Allah's mercy.			
I understand the concept of Allah's fairness.			
I understand how Muslims believe Allah shows his goodness.			
I understand how Allah can be both immanent and transcendent.			

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Angels



Keywords

- **Angels** – supernatural beings which act as mediators between humans and God.
- **Immortality** – the ability to live forever.
- **Sinless** – the absence of the issue of sin.
- **Jibril** – the most important Angel within Islam.
- **Mika'il** – A prominent angel within Islamic thought.
- **Holy** – meaning 'removed' this refers to a state of being sacred.
- **Revelation** – this refers to communications between God and human beings.
- **Book of Decrees** – this is the book in which angels record the acts and thoughts of humans.
- **Light** – the substance from which angels are made.
- **Free Will** – the ability to make moral choices.
- **Isra'il** – the angel who will blow the trumpet on the Day of Judgement.
- **Izra'il** – the angel who will blow the trumpet on the Day of Judgement.



Overview

Nature

Muslims believe that angels are real beings; indeed, belief in angels is one of the Six Articles of Faith in Sunni Islam. They believe that they are God's first creation, and that he created them from light. They believe that angels are God's messengers and perform various duties as intermediaries between humans and God. They believe that angels are part of the unseen world. Angels are also considered to be able to dazzle, as they are made of light, whereas humans do not have this ability. Unlike humans, they have no gender – although, for the ease of discussion, it is common to refer to an angel as 'he'. Angels are immortal, so will not suffer death as humans will. They are described in the Qur'an as never ceasing the praising of God. Unlike humans, they have no need of the sustenance gained through food and drink.

Role

Angels within Islam have many duties; one of their main functions, however, is to relay messages from God to humanity. This is because angels are holier than humans, and therefore able to be in the presence of God. Humans are not holy enough to do this. This is because angels are without sin; they do not know what Allah allows them to. As a result of having no free will, they are without sin and can communicate with God.

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Key Points

The key points about angels are regarding their various roles throughout history and function today. Some more important angels have specific central roles within Islam, Mika'il, Israfil and Izra'l.

Jibril

This is the chief angel; he has historically been very important within Islam. He is also known as Gabriel. He has been instrumental throughout Islamic history in giving the most important revelations to the prophets. This was the angel who gave the revelation to the Virgin Mary that she would give birth to Jesus, who is considered to be a very important prophet. Most importantly, Jibril was the angel who revealed the Qur'an to the Prophet Muhammad, commanding him to recite it. He is also known as the Angel of the Holy Spirit.

Mika'il

This is another important angel with a specific role. He helped the Prophet Muhammad throughout his life. Muslims believe that this angel helps believers today with their own spiritual needs. He is responsible for controlling rain, thunder and lightning. He will assist Jibril on the Day of Judgement. It is thought that he never smiles as he has seen the realities of the world and the people can experience here.

Israfil

This is the angel who has a very specific job which has not yet occurred; he is responsible for blowing the trumpet at the end of time at the instruction of God, who is the only One who knows when this will happen. He will indicate the destruction of the world and with it the commencement of the Day of Judgement. He is also called to account for their actions during life. Within Judaism, he may be referred to as the Angel of the Trumpet.

Izra'l

Also known as the angel of death, this is the angel who takes the final breath away from a person. Only God knows and can decide the point at which a person will die; it is Izra'l (or one of the angels who controls), however, who is the one to take the final breath from a soul.

Other duties of angels include:

- Putting the souls into fetuses at either 40 or 120 days gestation (depending on the religion)
- Being guardian angels
- Watching over believers in battle
- Taking souls to either heaven or hell
- Asking souls questions on their actions during Barzakh
- Recording actions in the Book of Deeds



Student Checklist

What do I know?	No Idea ☹️	Nearly 😐	Sure 😊
I understand the nature of angels in Islam.			
I understand who Jibril is.			
I understand who Mika'il is.			
I understand the responsibilities of angels in Islam.			

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Predestination and Free Will



Key Terms

- **Free Will** – the concept of being able to make moral choices using your own volition.
- **Predestination** – the concept that our choices have been predetermined by a higher power.
- **Al-Qadr** – the Islamic concept of the Power of God.
- **Responsibility** – the idea that with free will comes the burden of responsibility.
- **Day of Judgement** – the idea in which, within Islamic thinking, humans will be judged on their choices and use of free will.
- **Book of Decrees** – where the angels keep a record of the actions undertaken by humans on the Day of Judgement to determine the predestination of each human.



Overview

The concept of predestination refers to the idea that events that happen in our lives on a daily basis are not actually ones we have made of our own volition, but have been predestined. This means that we have not thought about taking those actions. The idea of Free Will refers to the concept that humans have the freedom and volition to make moral choices that are completely their own.

The concept of predestination within Islam is a slightly complicated one. Opinion can vary between different groups – the Sunni concept and the Shi'a concept. While they agree on some key points, there are marked differences between the two methods of thinking about this.



Key Concepts

Sunni Concept of Predestination

- The Sunni concept of predestination stems from their belief in the Supreme Will of God, one of the Five Articles of Faith of Sunni Islam. The Supreme Will of God, known as Al-Qadr, means that God has the supreme power over creation and everything in it. It logically follows that God has the power to determine what happens within that creation, which includes human beings. Some Sunni Muslims believe that God determines the actions that a person will take before they make those choices themselves.
- This places greater weight on the concept of God's will rather than the free will of humans. However, Sunnis still believe that humans have the responsibility to make moral choices and that they are responsible for the choices they made in their lifetime.

Shi'a Concept of Predestination

- The Shi'a concept of predestination places less emphasis on the all-powerful nature of God and more on the freedom of humans to make their own moral choices. The key difference is that while Sunnis believe that God has the knowledge of what a person will choose, but does not necessarily determine it, Shi'as believe that God has the knowledge of what a person will choose, but does not necessarily determine it.
- An example of this can be if a wife wishes to buy her husband an anniversary present. She can choose to buy him a limited edition copy of his favourite movie, or she can choose to buy him a well-endowed watch. She will be able to say beforehand which he will choose (most likely, the watch), but he will still have the free will to make his own choice. The key factor here to bring a choice to light is beforehand, but her husband still made his own choice.

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Human Responsibility

- Both Shi'a and Sunni Islam believe in the responsibility of humans to make more of our freedom to make choices comes the responsibility to make the right moral choices not only of ourselves (as our choices have a direct impact on where we will be called to account) but also for the benefit of others. The choices we make will impact the wider Ummah. The choices that we make are written to the Book of Decrees and will be used on the Day of Judgement whether or not we go to heaven (Jannah) or hell (Jahannam).

The Day of Judgement

- Regardless of their differing ideas on free will, both groups believe that on the Day of Judgement, which is known only by God, all human beings (dead and alive) are called to account. The Book of Life will be presented to each individual by an angel. If the Book is handed to the person then they have done well in the sight of God and will be going to Jannah (heaven). If the Book is handed to the person then the person has done bad deeds within their lifetime and is destined for Jahannam (hell).
- Both Sunni and Shi'a Muslims believe that humans still have free will, despite differing views on predestination. The human responsibility to make their own choices directly affects humans' experience of the Day of Judgement.



Student Checklist

What do I know?	No Idea 	Nearly 	Sure
I understand what free will and predestination are.			
I understand the Sunni view on predestination.			
I understand the Shi'a view on predestination.			
I understand the concept of human responsibility.			
I understand how beliefs about free will impact beliefs about the Day of Judgement.			

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Life after Death



Keywords

- **Death** – the end of life.
- **Akhirah** – this is the Islamic concept of the afterlife.
- **Barzakh** – this is the state in which humans reside between the point of death and the Day of Judgement.
- **Sirat Bridge** – this is the bridge that spans the fires of hell and over which souls pass on the Day of Judgement.
- **Day of Judgement** – the end of the world, on which day the entirety of human actions in life.
- **Jannah** – the Islamic concept of heaven.
- **Janaham** – the Islamic concept of hell.
- **Book of Deeds** – this is the document in which the thoughts and actions of humans during their lifetime will be recorded.
- **Angels** – unseen beings who have multiple roles in Akhirah.
- **Resurrection** – this is the returning to life of the deceased on the Day of Judgement.



Overview

The reality of life after death is a very important part of Islamic belief. It is represented in Sunni Islam and in the Five Roots of Shi'a Islam. Life after death, referred to as Akhirah, is a certainty within Islam.



Key Points

Barzakh

- Barzakh is the concept within Islam of a state following death.
- This state spans the time in between the point of death and the time God decides on the Day of Judgement. People do not go straight to heaven or hell upon their death, but remain in the state of Barzakh until God decides that the Day of Judgement should take place.
- Some Muslims believe Barzakh is a state of sleep, while others believe you experience a version of where you are destined to be (heaven or hell).
- Some Muslims believe that during the state of Barzakh, you will be visited by two angels who will ask you a series of questions regarding your belief in Allah and your actions while alive.

Akhirah

- Akhirah is the concept within Islam of the afterlife, which is believed to be a certainty. It refers to the entirety of the afterlife – that being, the state of Barzakh, the Day of Judgement, and either Jannah or Janaham.
- It is important to remember that while this is referred to as life after death, this is a concept of a new kind or stage of life in the afterlife.

Day of Judgement

- This is the final day, the timing of which is known only by God. This will commence with the blowing of the trumpet by the angel Israfil. It will involve a **resurrection** of all the dead, who will be brought back to life for their actions during life.
- The Prophet Isa (Jesus) will return, and with the help of Jibril and Mika'il will judge the people.
- On this day, humans will be judged for their actions in their lifetime for which they were judged. The result of the judgment is down to the choices they made – this is the result of the belief that all humans have to make good choices.
- Muslims believe that on the Day of Judgement every human being will be handed a book of their actions. If the book is handed into the right hand then this person will go to heaven. If the book is handed to the left hand then the person will go to hell. This is based on the choices that they have made in life.

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Jannah

- Jannah is the Islamic term for the concept of heaven, which is considered to be a physical place. It is described throughout the Qur'an as a beautiful garden full of joy and pleasure for the inhabitants.
- Those destined to be in Jannah are given plentiful, delicious foods and drinks, spending their time praising God and enjoying the comfort and beauty of heaven.
- While alcohol is considered haram (forbidden) on earth because it intoxicates, there is mention in the Qur'an of sweet heavenly wine which does not intoxicate and is, therefore, able to be enjoyed by the inhabitants.
- The inhabitants of Jannah are also described as being eternally youthful.

Janaham

- This is the Islamic name for hell. Within Islam, it is thought to be a physical place throughout the Qur'an as a place of great and constant suffering.
- Full of fire, Janaham is a place of torment and suffering for those who are there. Those involved in this torment are described in the Qur'an in detail.
- Those who are in Janaham will be punished for their sins in a variety of ways described in the Qur'an, including boiling water poured on them, and being burned with fire. Once their skin becomes so burned that the pain is no longer keenly felt, they will be given a new skin so that the pain is fresh. They will also be forced to drink boiling water.
- The Qur'an states that in hell there is no respite from the suffering in the flames, but it should be noted that while hell will always exist, those who are sent there on the Day of Judgement are not confined there for the entirety of time. There is some respite for those who truly repent – you can still get to Jannah should you truly repent of your sins and submit to Allah. Some sins, however, are unforgivable, such as Shirk (denying the Oneness of God).



Student Checklist

What do I know?	No Idea ☹️	Nearly 😐	Sure 😊
I understand what Akhirah is.			
I understand what Barzakh is.			
I understand what will happen on the Day of Judgement in Muslim theology.			
I understand the difference between Jannah and Janaham.			

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Practice Questions – Key Beliefs

Multiple-choice Questions (Note: in the exam papers there will only be one correct answer)

1. 'Risalah' is the term for which belief?
 - A In the Oneness of God
 - B In the Justice of God
 - C In the Imamate
 - D In the Prophets
2. 'Tawhid' is the Islamic concept which professes what about God?
 - A Power
 - B Oneness
 - C Immanence
 - D Transcendence
3. Which of the following is the Islamic term for heaven?
 - A Akhirah
 - B Janaham
 - C Jannah
 - D Barzakh
4. What concept gives Muslims responsibility over their choices?
 - A Predestination
 - B Free Will
 - C Judgement
 - D Al-Qadr

5. Give **one** example of the responsibilities of angels.
6. Explain **two** understandings of the concept of predestination and free will in Islam.
7. Explain **two** beliefs about life after death in Islam. Refer to at least one piece of evidence in your answer.
8. 'Tawhid is the most important part of the nature of God'
Evaluate this statement, and in your answer:
 - give reference to relevant Islamic doctrine
 - develop well-supported arguments for and against this view
 - give a reasonable and justified conclusion

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Authority

Prophethood



Keywords

- **Risalah** – the concept of belief in Prophets.
- **Prophet** – a person selected by God to receive revelations.
- **Muhammad** – the final Prophet.
- **Adam** – the first man and Prophet.
- **Musa** – Moses; the Prophet who received the Torah.
- **Dawud** – David; the Prophet who received the Psalms.
- **Isa** – Jesus; the Prophet who received the Gospels.
- **Ibrahim** – Abraham; the Prophet who received the Scrolls of Abraham.
- **Ishmael** – the son of Abraham.
- **Revelation** – the messages that God sends through his Prophets.
- **Angels** – unseen beings who bring God's revelation to humans.
- **Seal of the Prophets** – term for Muhammad that establishes his role as the final Prophet.
- **Rasul** – a Prophet who has a revelation for all humankind.
- **Nabi** – a Prophet who has a revelation specifically for themselves.



Overview

The belief in Prophethood within Islam is a key aspect in both Sunni and Shi'a Islam. The term 'Risalah' refers to the belief in the sending of multiple revelations from God to mankind through the medium of prophets. Muslims believe there have been about 124,000 prophets in history, with about 25 of them included or referenced in the Qur'an.

Muslims believe that God sent prophets in his mercy to provide revelation to guide mankind as he is too holy to communicate directly with humans. The giving of revelation, especially the Qur'an, is a clear example of God's merciful nature.

They believe that the line of prophets sent by God ended with the Prophet Muhammad, who was given the final revelation which has not been adulterated as other revelations previously had. They believe that throughout history, God has sent other texts (such as the Torah and the Gospels) to other prophets, but that these texts became misunderstood. He sent his final revelation in the form of the Qur'an which can never be changed, so cannot become corrupted. This underlines the importance of Muhammad as the final Prophet.

Prophets are chosen by God for a specific reason; for example, the Prophet Muhammad is believed to have been chosen because he was upstanding. His role as the final Prophet as receiver of the Qur'an has made him a central, honoured figure within Islam.

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Key Points

Adam

Role:

- o Iblis tested Adam and Hawwa (Eve), and they fell to temptation in the Garden of Bliss.
- o When they were expelled from the Garden of Bliss, Adam and Hawwa were punished and became the first Prophet.
- o The Devil (Iblis) refused to bow down to Adam, disobeying an order to do so from heaven.
- o He built the first form of the Ka'aba.

Importance:

- o Adam was the first man, made from clay.
- o He is considered the father of all mankind.

Ibrahim

Role:

- o This is the Arabic term for Abraham.
- o This is the prophet who is believed to have received The Scrolls of Ibrahim, which are believed to have been completely lost.

Importance:

- o He is remembered specifically on Id-ul-Adha for his willingness to sacrifice his son.
- o He is also believed to be an ancestor of Muhammad, who is believed to be descended from Ishmael.

Muhammad

Role:

- o He was the final of the 124,000 prophets. As a result, he is referred to as the Seal of the Prophets, meaning after him there will be no more prophets sent by God.
- o He lived from 570 to 632 ce
- o He received the Qur'an.

Importance:

- o Muhammad is the most important prophet in Islam.
- o His actions are emulated by Muslims today who attempt to follow the Sunna.
- o Usually, the term 'PBUH' (Peace be upon him) is written or said after the name to show respect.

Other Prophets of interest...

Isa

- o This is the Arabic term for Jesus.
- o Muslims believe that Jesus was not the Son of God as he is understood to be revered as an important prophet.
- o They believe he received the Injil (Gospels), but his message was misunderstood by his followers.
- o Importantly, they do not believe that Jesus was crucified and rose again as Christians believe that he was taken up to heaven by God, and did not die.
- o They also refuse to believe that he died for the sake of forgiveness of sins; they believe that to believe that Jesus is capable of doing so is a sin.
- o They do not believe that he was born of the Virgin Mary.
- o He will return on the Day of Judgement to help judge humankind.

Musa

- o This is the Arabic term for Moses.
- o Musa is the prophet who received the Tawrat, which is the Arabic word for the Torah.

Dawud

- o This is the Arabic term for David.
- o This is the prophet who received the Zabur, which is the Arabic term for the Psalms.




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Student Checklist

What do I know?	No Idea 	Nearly 	Sure 
I understand the importance of prophets in Islam.			
I understand the role of the Prophet Muhammad.			
I understand the role of Isa, Musa, Dawud, Ibrahim and Adam.			
I understand the role of the prophets in terms of revelation.			

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The Holy Books



Key Words

- **Revelation** – the giving of a message from God to humans.
- **Authority** – the power held by an entity to give instruction or guidance
- **Qur'an** – the final revelation and holiest text in Islam.
- **Injil** – the revelations of Gospels.
- **Tawrat** – the revelation of the Torah.
- **Zabur** – the revelation of the Psalms.
- **Scrolls of Ibrahim** – a revelation which is believed to have been lost.
- **Shari'ah** – the law of God.



Overview

Within Islam, there is a variety of books which are considered to be holy, without necessarily having authority. The most important text within Islam is indisputably the Qur'an, which is the final revelation as given to the Prophet Muhammad. It is considered to be the literal word of God.

Other books considered to be holy in Islam are the Tawrat (Torah), Zabur (Psalms), Scrolls of Ibrahim (Abraham) and the Injil (Gospels). These books are remembered as important revelations, but because their messages have been changed, in Islamic thought, they have no authority in Islam.

The Islamic beliefs regarding Holy Books, specifically the Gospels and the Torah, differ from those of Christians and Jews in Islam. They are viewed as 'People of the Book' who worshipped God but in a misguided way.



Key Points

Qur'an

The Qur'an is the holiest book in Islam. It is considered to be the literal word of God. The revelation of the Qur'an to Muhammad began in 610 CE, at Mount Hira in Makkah by the angel Jibril.

Jibril is believed to have ordered him to 'recite' the Qur'an – which, for an illiterate man such as Muhammad, is considered to be a miracle. He instructed a scribe to write down the revelations in Arabic. To this day, the Qur'an must be written down exactly in Arabic with absolutely no changes, to ensure that the Word of God is preserved. The revelation is remembered each year on the Night of Power during Ramadan.

The Qur'an is written in Arabic, which is the holy language of God. It is considered to be so important that it can cause a person to convert to Islam. It contains 114 Surahs (chapters). The word 'Qur'an' refers to the story of the giving of the revelation to the Prophet by the angel Jibril. It contains accounts, life guidance and instructions on how to follow the will/path of God.

Due to the reverence to the Qur'an as the Word of God, it is respected and viewed as having absolute authority in Islam. It is considered wholly perfect and immutable.

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Injil

This is the Arabic term for the Gospels. These are not the Gospels as we have come to know them in Christian culture; these are past revelation that God gave to Isa during his lifetime. Much of this revelation was confused and adulterated.

The Gospels are referenced 12 times throughout the Qur'an.

Zabur

This is the revelation that was given to the Prophet Dawud, more commonly known as the Psalms.

Scrolls of Ibrahim

This is a revelation that is believed to have been given to the Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham). The scrolls are believed to have been completely lost.

Tawrat

This is the Arabic term for the Torah: much like the Gospels, however, this is not the Torah as we understand within Judaism. Again, Muslims believe that this was revelation that was given to the Prophet Musa but has been changed, parts lost or adulterated over time. These changes made these revelations have resulted in misunderstanding of the message that God was attempting to give people, thus necessitating the need for the Qur'an.



Student Checklist

What do I know?	No Idea ☹️	Nearly 😊	Sure 😄
I understand what a revelation is.			
I understand what the Qur'an is, and how it is viewed.			
I understand what the Injil, Zabur, Tawrat and Scrolls of Ibrahim are.			
I understand what the authority of these texts is.			

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Imamate



Keywords

- **Imamate** – the Shi'a belief in divinely ordained and guided leadership for the
- **Imam** – one of the 12 leaders of Shi'a Islam.
- **imam** – the leader of a mosque.
- **Caliph** – the Sunni term for a leader of the faith.
- **Shi'a** – the branch of Islam that believes in the concept of the Imamate.
- **Muhammad** – the final Prophet, whose leadership succession is believed by Shi'a
- **Leadership** – the function of the Imamate.
- **Mahdi** – the final Imam, believed to be hidden until the Day of Judgement.
- **Divine** – the source from which Imams receive their ordination and guidance.
- **Ahl-al-Bayt** – the term which is used to refer to the family of Muhammad.



Overview

The Imamate is the term used to refer to the Shi'a Islamic concept of leadership. This was formed in the issue of the succession from Muhammad. The Prophet died in 632 CE, and the community debated regarding who should succeed him to lead the Muslim community.

This is where the diverging ideas of the Sunni and Shi'a communities began. Shi'a Muslims believed that the Prophet's in-law, Ali, was the rightful leader. They also believed in the system of future appointment – that is to say, each Imam had the just knowledge and holy guidance to lead the community. They also believe that this leadership should be passed down through the family. Within Shi'a Islam, Imams were elected.

Thus, the idea of Imamate came to be. This was a system of 12 leaders (seven in some branches) chosen from the Shi'a community from the death of the Prophet in 632 CE to 9th century.



Key Points

Imams

- The role of the Imam within Shi'a Islam is to function as a divinely appointed leader of the faith in succession of the Prophet Muhammad. They were intended to guide Shi'a Islam, and were viewed as having divine authority to interpret Scripture.
- The Imams are believed to be just and fair leaders. They are also given the position of authority via their perceived ability to understand and teach the Qur'an and to interpret Shari'ah Law perfectly.
- Shi'as believe that every generation has an Imam within it, as continuous guidance for people is needed. They are all believed to be descended from the Prophet and, therefore, part of the family of the Prophet, known as Ahl al-Bayt.
- Each Imam has the divine authority and wisdom to appoint their successor.
- The very small grammatical change of a capital 'I' is extremely significant – an imam with a lowercase 'i' refers to the leader of a mosque. An Imam with a capital letter refers specifically to the

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Twelvers

- Twelvers are the largest section of Shi'a Muslims who believe there was a successor to the final Imam. They believe that the previous 11 Imams all suffered death, but the twelfth Imam was rather hidden by God somewhere in the world. He is known as the Mahdi.
- There is a smaller part of Shi'a Islam, known as Seveners, who believe there were seven Imams.

Mahdi

- The Mahdi is the term for the final Imam; Shi'as believe that the twelfth and final Imam was hidden by God. They believe that he did not die, but was rather hidden by God. He will be revealed at the end of time and will join the Prophet Isa (Jesus) in just judgement.



Student Checklist

What I know?	No Idea ☹	Nearly 😊	Sure ☺
I understand the concept of the Imamate.			
I understand the difference between an Imam and an imam.			
I understand who the Mahdi is.			
I understand the differing Sunni and Shi'a ideas about leadership.			

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Practice Questions – Authority

Multiple-choice Questions (Note: in the exam papers there will only be one correct answer)

1. 'Isa' is the Arabic name for which prophet?
 - A Moses
 - B Abraham
 - C David
 - D Jesus
2. Which of the following is considered to be wholly perfect?
 - A The Injil
 - B The Scrolls of Abraham
 - C The Qur'an
 - D The Zabur
3. What is the term for belief in the system of leadership in Shi'a Islam?
 - A Imamat
 - B Twelvers
 - C Seveners
 - D Risalah
4. Which prophet received the Tawrat?
 - A Ibrahim
 - B Dawud
 - C Musa
 - D Isa

5. Give **one** example of an important prophet within Islam, other than Muhammad.
6. Give **two** examples of holy books within Islam, explaining the authority that each has.
7. Explain **two** examples of the role of the Prophet Ibrahim. Refer to sacred writings.
8. 'The Imamate are the highest authority in Shi'a Islam.'
Evaluate this statement, and in your answer:
 - Give reference to relevant Islamic doctrine.
 - Develop well-supported arguments for and against this view.
 - Give a reasonable and justified conclusion.

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Mark Schemes – Key Beliefs

Multiple-choice: Correct answers in order: (d), (b), (c), (b) (1 mark each for a total of 4 marks)

5. 1 mark for any correct point. Possibilities include:

- Mika'il helping Muhammad and believers in their faith
- Mika'il sending rain/thunder/lightning
- Isra'il as the angel of death
- Jibril bringing revelation
- Guardian angels
- Ensoulment of foetuses
- Recording actions in the Book of Deeds
- Escorting souls to heaven or hell
- Israfil blowing the trumpet to signal the end of days

6. 2 marks per point for a total of 4 marks:

Simple explanation = 1 mark

Detailed explanation = 2 marks

Students may include the following:

- **The Sunni view:** That God is all-powerful, and the supreme will of God means decision you are going to make (1). However, they still believe that humans have choices. (1)
- **The Shi'a View:** That God knows what you are going to do before you do it, but humans have complete free will and therefore, they are responsible for their actions. (1) Humans have complete free will and therefore, they are responsible for their actions. (1)

7. Marked as the four-mark question, plus 1 mark for naming a relevant reference to scripture, for a further mark for applying this to the question, for an overall total of **6 marks**:

Students might include the points below, but any relevant points can be included:

- **Akhirah** – This is the Islamic term for the Afterlife. It is a certain belief within Islam.
- **Barzakh** – This is the state after death, but before the Day of Judgement, where Muslims believe that this is a state of sleep, whereas others believe that those asked questions by angels.
- **Jannah** – This is the Islamic idea of heaven; it is described as a heavenly garden where righteous people who inhabit it. It is believed to be a real place.
- **Janaham** – This is the Islamic concept of hell; it is described as being a fire-filled place where unrighteous people who inhabit it. It is believed to be a real place.
- **Day of Judgement** – This is the final day that only God knows the timings of, when the trumpet will be blown and all of humankind (living and dead) will be called to account for their actions.
- **Verses of Scripture** could include: Surah 56:42–44, Surah 13:23

8. Criteria:

One argument with justification
Different arguments for and against, with justification OR Several linked, justified arguments for one position
This is the highest level which can be reached if only one point of view is considered
Good, well-justified arguments for and against, linked together
Defining relevant to religion
Very well justified. Well-justified arguments for and against, linked together and leading to a reasonable conclusion.
Appropriate reference to religion used to answer question

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Preview of Answers Ends Here

This is a limited inspection copy. Sample of answers ends here to stop students looking up answers to their assessments. See contents page for details of the rest of the resource.