

## Islam - Beliefs and Teachings - Authority

Prophethood (**Risalah**) is very important in Islam. **Risalah** means 'message' – the prophethood is how Allah has communicated with humanity. Muslims believe that the prophets (**nubuwwah**) began with the first man, Adam, and ended with Muhammad. They believe that Muhammad did not begin Islam, but he communicated Allah's final revelation – the Qur'an.

**Adam**  
**Role**  
 → To be the **caliph** for Allah – to rule and look after the Earth for him.  
 → To teach other humans to care for the Earth as Allah had taught him  
 → To teach humans how to live, e.g. what to eat and how to pray.  
**Importance**  
 → The first human, Muslim and prophet.  
 → Believed to have built the first **Ka'aba** in Makkah (rebuilt by Ibrahim).



The **imamate** in Shi'a Islam refers to the collection of **imams**, or leaders, who came after Muhammad. These led Shi'a Islam one after another, and were blood relatives of Muhammad – in **Sunni** Islam an 'imam' is a leader of a mosque, but not of the whole Sunni community.

**Muhammad**  
**Role**  
 → Final prophet in Islam, who revealed the Qur'an from Allah.  
 → Formed the Muslim community – the **ummah**.  
 → A role model for Muslims.  
**Importance**  
 → Muslims must believe that Muhammad is the prophet of Allah. He is the final prophet, the Seal of the Prophets.  
 → Even if Muhammad is not believed to be the first Muslim, without him there would not be Islam as it is today.

**Note:** Muslims usually add 'peace be upon him' or '**pbuh**' after the name of the Prophet Muhammad in speech and writing to show respect.

### Prophethood (Risalah)

'We said: "O Adam! Dwell thou and thy wife in the Garden; and eat of the bountiful things therein..."'  
 (Qur'an surah 2:35)

**Ibrahim (Abraham)**  
**Role**  
 → Father of Arabs through Ismail (Ishmael).  
 → Rebuilt the **Ka'aba** (a house for Allah) in Makkah – this is the holiest place in Islam, one important focus for Muslims on the **Hajj** pilgrimage, and the direction in which Muslims face for prayer.  
**Importance**  
 → Was a monotheist when many others were polytheists.  
 → Was prepared to sacrifice his son Ismail to show his faith in Allah, but Allah stopped him. This is celebrated at **Id-ul-Adha**, the holiest Muslim festival – Ibrahim's faith is a significant example.

**History of the Imamate**  
 → **Sunni** and **Shi'a** Muslims disagreed about who should succeed Muhammad:  
 ↳ **Sunni** Muslims believe the **Four Rightly Guided Caliphs** succeeded Muhammad. Sunnis have then followed additional leaders, though there has not constantly been a **Sunni Caliphate** (leadership of all Sunnis).  
 ↳ **Shi'a** Muslims believe that **Ali** (the Fourth Rightly Guided Caliph) should have been the first successor of Muhammad. They believe that the leadership of Islam should be passed down Muhammad's bloodline.  
 → The largest branch of Shi'a Islam is the **Twelvers**. They believe that there were 12 imams who followed Muhammad and led Islam (beginning with Ali).  
 → Twelvers believe that the final, twelfth, imam, known as the **Madhi**, did not die, but was hidden (which is known as the **occultation**). They believe that the **Madhi** is still alive, and will return at the end of time.  
 ↳ Not all Shi'as share all beliefs with the Twelvers. Some believe in the same 12 imams, but not in the occultation. Some believe in a different succession of imams forming the **imamate**.

'Muhammad is... the Messenger of Allah, and the Seal of the Prophets...'  
 (Qur'an Surah 33:40)

There are many other prophets recognised in Islam; many the same as those in the Jewish and Christian faiths – these include **Musa** (Moses) and **Isa** (Jesus).

### The Imamate

**Role of the Imamate**  
 → To guide Muslims (**Shi'as**) after Muhammad  
 → To be both religious and political leaders.  
 → **Twelvers** at least believe that the **imams** were infallible – they could not be wrong, and knew Allah's will. This gave them divine authority to teach and interpret the Qur'an.

**Qur'an**  
 → The Qur'an is believed to be the direct **revelation** of Allah. Qur'an means 'recitation' – Muhammad recited it.  
 → Muhammad received this revelation from the angel **Jibril** (Gabriel).  
 ↳ Some Muslims believe that he received the whole of the Qur'an in one go, while others believe that it was revealed over a number of years.  
 → Allah is the ultimate **authority** for Muslims, and so the Qur'an is an incredibly important source of authority, because it is the word of Allah. Many Muslims try to follow the Qur'an fully, seeing it as Allah's will for all time.  
 ↳ While no Muslims deny the authority of the Qur'an, some do apply modern interpretation to it, and argue that some parts of the revelation were more applicable to the time in which it was revealed.  
 → The Qur'an teaches Muslims how to live – what is right, and how they should act.  
 → Muslims believe that the Qur'an completes and corrects earlier holy books.  
 → **Shariah** law is Islamic law, and is largely based on the Qur'an.



The Qur'an is the most important holy book in Islam, but it is not the only holy book – some other books from the Jewish and Christian faiths also hold importance. They are believed to be earlier **revelations** from Allah, and the Qur'an makes references to them – though they may contain mistakes from human copying and translating.

### 8 Holy Books

**Torah (Tawrat)** – the first five books of the Jewish **Tenakh** and Christian Bible, Muslims believe it was revealed to the **prophet** **Musa** (Moses), though the Torah is no longer needed for Muslims, now they have the Qur'an.

**Psalms (Zabur)** – also in the **Tenakh** and the Bible, the Psalms are songs of praise to Allah, believed to be written by the **prophet** **Dawood** (King David).

- The Qur'an is in Arabic, and it is important to Muslims for them to read the original in Arabic, even though there are translations.
- There are 114 **surat** (chapters) in the Qur'an.
- The Qur'an is treated with extreme respect; kept clean, and stored higher than other books to show its importance.

**Gospel (Injil)** – The Gospel of Jesus, does not refer to the first four books of the Christian New Testament but to a revelation made to the **prophet** **Isa** (Jesus), which is believed lost. Muslims do not believe that Jesus was God, but that he was an important prophet. Muslims believe that Jesus ascended to heaven, but that he was never crucified/killed.

**Scrolls of Abraham** – these are believed to have been a revelation to Ibrahim (Abraham) – though they have been lost. They are referred to in the Qur'an, but Muslims do not know what they contained. It is unclear if they refer to a document which Jews/Christians use/used.

**Significance of the Imamate**  
 → Helped shape the early **Shi'a** community.  
 → Part of the division between **Sunnis** and **Shi'as**, which sometimes causes tension in the Muslim community.  
 → Ali's younger son **Husayn**, the third **imam**, was martyred at the Battle of Karbala when challenging the Sunni leadership. This is remembered at the festival of **Ashura**.  
 → **Twelvers** believe that the **Madhi** will return at the end of time, bringing peace.