

Religions of the Ancient Middle East—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam

Section 4



MAIN IDEAS

1. The Qur'an guides Muslims' lives.
2. The Sunnah tells Muslims of important duties expected of them.
3. Islamic law is based on the Qur'an and the Sunnah.

Key Terms and Places

jihad literally means “to make an effort” or “to struggle”

Sunnah a collection of actions or sayings by Muhammad

Five Pillars of Islam the five acts of worship required of all Muslims

Section Summary

THE QUR'AN

After Muhammad died, his followers wrote down all of the messages he received from Allah. This collection of teachings became known as the Qur'an. Muslims believe that the Qur'an is the exact word of God as it was told to Muhammad. Like the Jewish and Christian bibles, the Qur'an says there is one God (Allah). Islam teaches that there is a definite beginning and end to the world. On that final day, Muslims believe, God will judge all people. Those who have obeyed God's orders will be granted life in paradise. Those who have not obeyed God will be punished.

Muslims believe that God wishes them to follow many rules in order to be judged a good person. These rules affect the everyday life of Muslims. In the early days of Islam, these rules led to great changes in Arabian society. For example, owning slaves was forbidden.

Jihad (ji-HAHD) is an important Islamic concept. Literally, jihad means “to make an effort” or “to struggle.” It refers to the internal struggle of a Muslim trying to follow Islamic beliefs. It can also mean the struggle to defend the Muslim community

Circle the name of Islam's most important holy book.

How do you think “jihad” came to mean “holy war?”

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or convert people to Islam. The word has also been translated as “holy war.”

THE SUNNAH

Another important holy book in Islam is the **Sunnah** (sooH-nuh), a collection of Muhammad’s words and actions. The Sunnah spells out the main duties for Muslims. These are known as the **Five Pillars of Islam**. The first pillar is a statement of faith. The second pillar says a Muslim must pray five times daily. The third pillar is a yearly donation to charity. The fourth pillar is fasting during the holy month of Ramadan (RAH-muh-dahn). The fifth pillar is the hajj (HAJ), a pilgrimage to Mecca. The hajj must be made at least once in a lifetime.

The Sunnah also preaches moral duties that must be met in daily life, in business, and in government. For example, it is considered immoral to owe someone money or to disobey a leader.

Do Muslims believe that the Sunnah is the direct word of God?

What is the third pillar of Islam?

ISLAMIC LAW

The Qur’an and the Sunnah form the basis of Islamic law, or Shariah (shuh-REE-uh). Shariah lists rewards or punishments for obeying or disobeying laws. Shariah punishments can be severe. Shariah makes no distinction between religious and secular life. Most Islamic countries today blend Islamic law with a legal system much like that in the United States.

Is Shariah the only law used in Islamic countries?

CHALLENGE ACTIVITY

Critical Thinking: Drawing Inferences Write a brief essay evaluating the differences and similarities between the two earlier religions of Judaism and Christianity with Islam. Focus not only on beliefs but also on practices and what social conditions might have influenced these practices in all the religions.