

What Muslims Believe

Muslims believe that Allah is unique, all-powerful, gracious, and merciful to all Muslims. The Islamic faith is lived out according to five “pillars” that must be adhered to if one is to hope for salvation.

The Five Pillars are:

1. Reciting the Creed (*shahada*)—“There is no god but Allah and Mohammed is his prophet.”
2. Prayer (*salat*)—At five set times per day.
3. Almsgiving (*zakat*)—Both obligatory and voluntary giving to certain groups.
4. Fasting (*siyam*)—Especially during the “holy” month of Ramadan.
5. Pilgrimage (*hajj*)—At least once in a lifetime to Mecca.

While a Muslim may observe each of these pillars, there is still no guarantee of salvation. Islam is a religion based on works. Most Muslims believe that each person’s deeds are recorded in a book. On the fearful Day of Judgment, Allah will open the book and will weigh each person’s deeds on a balance to determine eternity in heaven or hell. Muslims hope that their good deeds will eventually outweigh their bad ones. However, since Allah is seen beyond any constraint, and as absolutely sovereign, he still reserves the right to send individuals to whichever destination he pleases. Some Muslims teach that the only sure way to paradise is to die as a martyr in *Jihad* (a “striving in God’s cause,” sometimes incorrectly referred to as only “Holy War”).

Mohammed is Islam’s highest prophet. However, the Qur’an also speaks of *Isa Almasih*, Jesus the Messiah, referring to him also as *Kalimat Allah*, the Word of God. Although Muslims recognize many prophets, 25 of which are mentioned in the Qur’an, Jesus (Isa) is regarded by many as the second highest prophet in Islam. However, Muslims do not believe in Jesus’ death on the cross, His resurrection, or His deity.

The belief in angels and evil spirits (*jinn*) plays a prominent part in the lives of most Muslims. Although the Qur’an states that “good and evil comes from Allah,” the frequent reliance on magic practices, spells, and charms is not founded in orthodox Islam but is a result of syncretism at work—animistic practices incorporated into Islam. Islam is a way of life—a complete system that governs all aspects of Muslim life, individually and as a society. Within the Qur’an and the Hadith there is instruction for nearly every detail of a Muslim’s daily life.

This symbol is widely used in both the Jewish and Islamic worlds as jewelry, in charms on door entrances and in other ways to protect against the evil eye, and is often referred to as the *Hand of Miriam* or *Hand of Fatima*. (Christians often see it as an occult symbol, because it is believed to possess the power to protect.) The more common name for it among Muslims is *Khamsa*, from the Arabic word for “five.” It is not a design that is promoted by Islam, but rather a cultural icon that probably predates Islam. In Jewish culture it is also known as *hamsa*, without bearing any connotation to Islam. Some see a reference in the five fingers to the five books of the *Torah* (the five books of Moses), others to the five pillars of Islam. Such references have motivated some Middle East peace activists to wear the *khamsa* as a symbol of the similar origins between Islam and the Jewish faith.

