

Key concepts

- Muslim beliefs about those sent by God with the purposes of being nabi (prophets), rasul (messengers) and nadir (warners) to people to accept and follow Islamic beliefs.
- The Islamic belief in risalah (the message) as one of the core beliefs in Islam, with a line of prophets and messengers from Adam to Muhammad, the final 'seal of the prophets.'
- There are various terms used for messengers and prophets, often interchangeably. This is perhaps because there are 124 000 considered prophets over history, each sent to guide a different community with the same message, and God draws no distinction between any of them.
- However, only some messengers brought a holy book from God, and these are said to be rasuls. These include Ibrahim (Abraham) who brought the Sahifa (scrolls), Musa (Moses) who brought the Torah, Dawud (David) who brought the Zabur (psalms) and Isa (Jesus) who brought the Injil (gospels) as well as the final prophet, Muhammad.
- All were nabis, prophets and all warned people not to worship idols but only the one, unseen God, Allah. They told people to turn away from immorality and to follow the way of righteousness.

- Muhammad was said to have his heart washed by angels and to have been blessed with a sinless life, not even to have a shadow from the sun.
- Muhammad was also a caring person, who led by example. He was abused, sworn at and had rubbish thrown at his door every day by an old woman. When one day she didn't come, he went to ask if she was all right.
- Muhammad was modest, cared for his wives and helped around the house, including mending his own clothes.
- All of Muhammad's actions form an authoritative body of examples for Muslims to follow, called the Sunna. Anything Muhammad did is an ideal example to copy, because he was the perfect person.
- Nevertheless, many of his actions were situation specific so require interpretation to be applied.
- Some Muslims celebrate the birthday of Muhammad as Id-Milaud-an-nabi whilst others reject this and even condemn it as shirk.

Key quotes

- 'Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but (he is) the Messenger of Allah, and the Seal of the Prophets: and Allah has full knowledge of all things.' (The Qur'an Sura 33:40, Yusuf Ali)
- 'I am no bringer of new-fangled doctrine among the apostles, nor do I know what will be done with me or with you. I follow but that which is revealed to me by inspiration; I am but a Warner open and clear.' (The Qur'an Sura 46:9, Yusuf Ali)
- 'The popular portrait of Muhammad constructs him as an extremely important element in the salvation of his community, someone far more significant than simply the recipient of the revelation of the Qur'an.' (Rippin)
- 'When he experienced the 'state of revelation', those around him were able to observe his visible, audible, and sensory reactions. His face would become flushed and he would fall silent and appear as if his thoughts were far away, his body would become limp as if he were asleep, a humming sound would be heard about him, and sweat would appear on his face, even on winter days.' (Haleem)

Key words

Jahilyya	Anbiya	Nabi	Nadir	Rasul
Risalah	Warner	Rusul	Ibrahim	Dawud
Isa	Musa	Hadith	Portent	Sunna
Trustworthy	Sahifa/ scrolls	Injil/ gospels	Zabur/ psalms	Torah

Issues for analysis and evaluation

Key questions, arguments, and debates

1. The extent to which Muhammad was the ideal prophet and messenger. Muhammad had no divine status, he was fully human, and had worries, doubts and faced times when things went wrong. So, does this mean he fell short of 'ideal'? Many Muslims regard him as a 'perfect person' and his experiences in coping with difficulty inspire Muslims even today.
2. Whether the concept of 'messenger' has been a success for Islam. The line of prophets suggests that people continuously forget their message, or corrupted it and needed reminding, suggesting failure. However, it could be argued essential to communicate this to humanity in an understandable way.