

The Koran and the Hadith

“He has revealed to you the Book with the truth, confirming the scriptures which preceded it; for He has already revealed the Torah and the Gospel for the guidance of men, and the distinction between right and wrong.” (*Koran*: 3.1-4)

The *Koran* is the Islamic holy scripture. Muslims believe it is literally the Word of God as received by Muhammad. They look to the *Koran* for guidance and spiritual sustenance, keeping it close to their hearts throughout life. As children, Muslims begin memorizing verses of the *Koran*, reciting them during prayer. Some people go on to memorize the entire *Koran*, which consists of 114 chapters or *surahs*. Within each *surah* are verses, each varying in number. The writing is half poetry and half prose. The *Koran* is written in Arabic, the language in which Muhammad is believed to have received the revelations from God.

Muslims believe the *Koran* follows the Torah and the Gospels of the New Testament in a series of holy books. This is why Muslims have reverence for the prophets who preceded Muhammad. However, they believe that the earlier scriptures have been corrupted by false interpreters. Hence, Muslims take the *Koran* to be the most accurate scripture.

Like the Bible, the *Koran* speaks of a compassionate, loving God, but also warns of a Day of Judgment. Thus, the scripture begins,

“Praise be to God, Lord of the Universe,
The Compassionate, the Merciful,
Sovereign of the Day of Judgement!
You alone we worship, and to You alone we turn for help.
Guide us to the straight path,
The path of those whom You have favored,
Not of those who have incurred your wrath,
Nor those who have gone astray.”

(*Koran*: 1.1-7)

According to the *Koran*, either heaven or hell awaits after death. Both places are described in detail. Therefore, the sincere Muslim tries to follow the rituals of Islam and lead a pure religious life.

But the *Koran*, like the Torah, also has instructions for domestic life. Besides daily religious activities, it attends to issues such as marriage and inheritance.

In addition to the *Koran*, Muslims turn to the *Hadith* for wisdom and support. The *Hadith* consists of the life and teachings of Muhammad. Because Muhammad is regarded so highly, his life and words are models by which the Muslims can live. Originally, the accounts were circulated by word of mouth until there were thousands of versions in existence. Eventually, they were trimmed to six volumes, joining the *Koran* as an Islamic holy book.