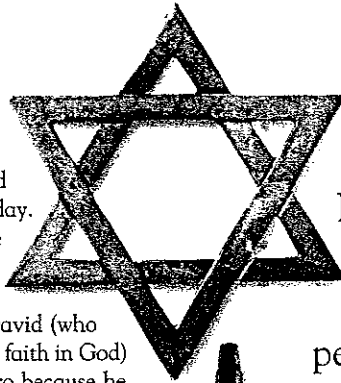


Symbol

The Star of David is most commonly linked with Judaism today. It is in the shape of King David's shield. In the Hebrew Bible, David (who



had great faith in God) was a hero because he killed the giant Goliath.

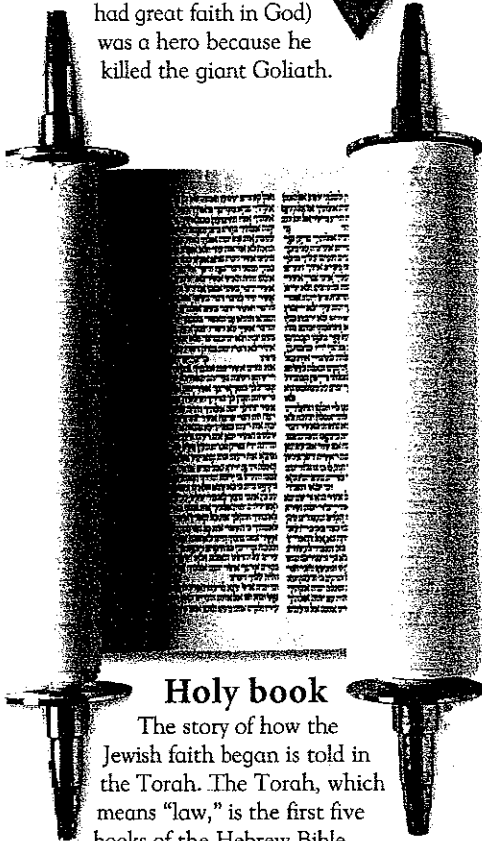
Judaism

FOLLOWERS OF JUDAISM worship one God, and they are all the children of Abraham, the man who brought God's message to the people. The holy book of Judaism, the Torah, tells the story of how God promised to protect Abraham's people if they vowed to love and obey God, and to follow God's laws.

The most important laws are the Ten Commandments, handed down from God to a leader named Moses.

Mezuzah

Many Jews affix a small box, called a mezuzah, to the front doors of their homes. Inside is a tiny scroll with a special prayer, called the Shema, honoring God.



Holy book

The story of how the Jewish faith began is told in the Torah. The Torah, which means "law," is the first five books of the Hebrew Bible.

It contains rules for daily life and for worship and is printed on a long scroll.



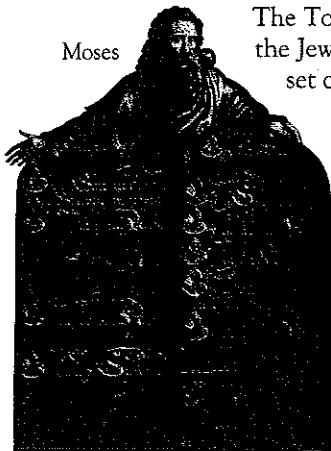
Father of the faith

Abraham lived in what is now Iraq more than 4,000 years ago. In his day, people worshipped different gods. But Abraham believed there was only one God, who would look after people forever if they obeyed God's laws. This is why Jews became known as God's chosen people.

Moses and the Ten Commandments

The Torah tells the story of Moses, who was a leader of the Jews. God gave Moses the Ten Commandments (a set of rules for people to follow) on two stone tablets.

Moses



- 1 I am the only God. Worship no god but me.
- 2 Do not make idols of images of God to worship.
- 3 Respect God's name.
- 4 Keep the Sabbath (day of rest) holy.
- 5 Respect your father and mother.
- 6 Do not kill.
- 7 Do not be unfaithful to your husband or wife.
- 8 Do not steal.
- 9 Do not tell lies about other people.
- 10 Do not envy the things that other people have.

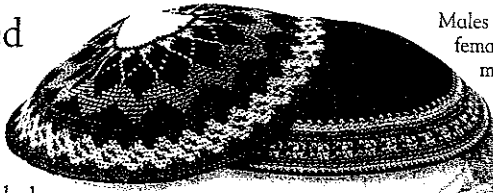


Praying to God

Prayer is central to Judaism. Many Jews pray three times a day, as well as in the morning and at night. Some Jews wear a tallit, or prayer shawl (above), over their heads when they pray, or at ceremonies.

A scattered nation

Although the Jewish faith was founded in the Middle East, Jews were driven out of their homelands and spread out in groups across the world. There are differences in the ways these groups now worship and what they wear. Orthodox Jews, who follow traditional Jewish laws closely, may wear a head covering every day. Reform Jews might cover their heads only during services with one of these kippahs.



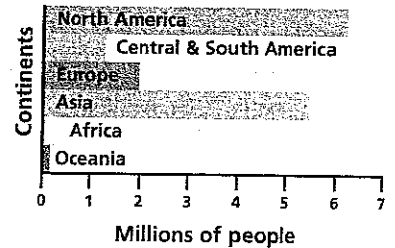
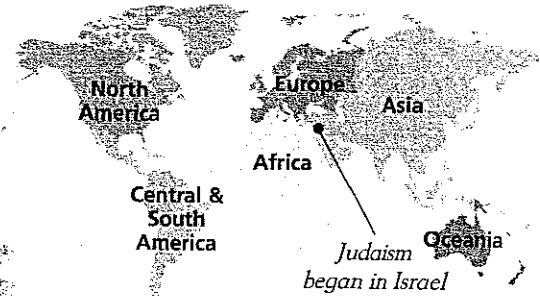
Males and females may wear kippahs.

Rites of passage

Jewish children are born into their faith. Jewish boys are circumcized eight days after birth (below) and given a Jewish name. Girls are also named and blessed. Children officially join the synagogue at a bar mitzvah (boys) or bat mitzvah (girls) ceremony.



Where Jews live



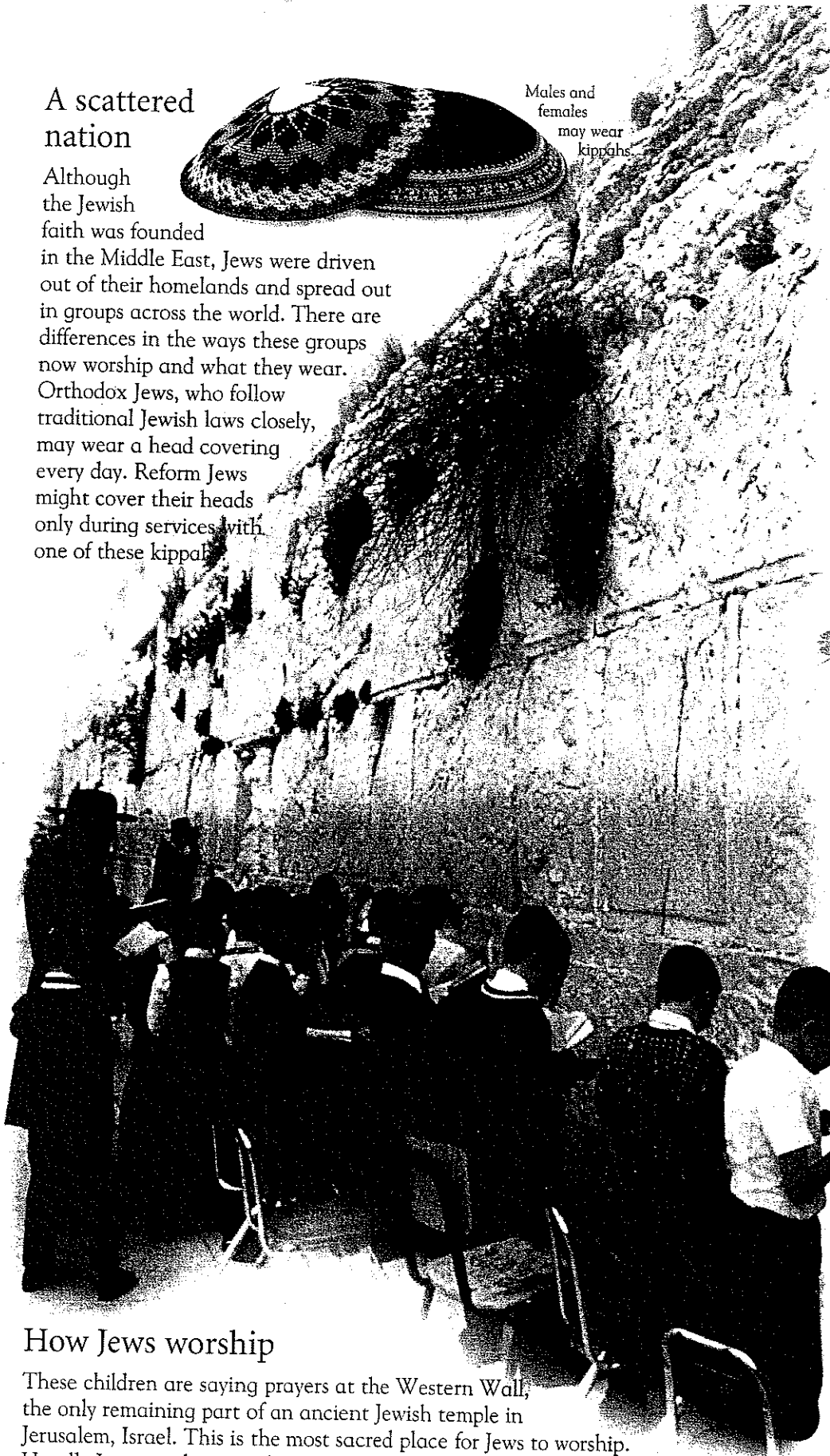
The largest populations of Jews in the world are in North America (where more than six million Jews live) and in Asia, home to more than five million Jews (mainly in Israel).

Main festivals

- Shabbat Day of rest and worship from Friday night to Saturday night *weekly*
- Purim Celebrates the bravery of Queen Esther *February/March*
- Passover Remembers the deliverance from slavery in Egypt *March/April*
- Rosh Hashanah New Year's Day *October*
- Yom Kippur Day of repentance *October*
- Hanukkah Festival of lights *December*

How Jews worship

These children are saying prayers at the Western Wall, the only remaining part of an ancient Jewish temple in Jerusalem, Israel. This is the most sacred place for Jews to worship. Usually Jews worship together in a building called a synagogue. Every synagogue has a copy of the Torah, which is read out over the course of a year.



Passover

AN EIGHT-DAY FESTIVAL

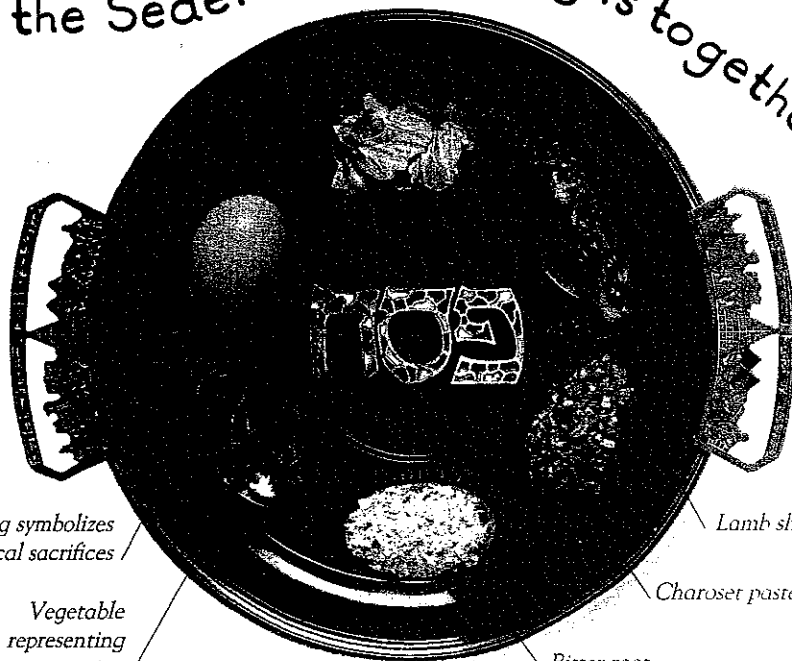
MY NAME IS YAEL, and I am almost 11 years old. I have two brothers and a sister. When I grow up I want to be an actress.



Yael from Israel

We walk to the Orthodox synagogue every Saturday. I enjoy saying the Shema because I know it so well. Passover is a festival that reminds us of the story of the Jewish people who were taken out of Egypt from slavery to freedom.

At the Seder all the family is together



The Seder is the most important meal.

We eat special foods that symbolize Passover. Bitter root reminds us of the bitter lives of the slaves. We dip potato in salty water to remember the tears they shed. We mix dates, apples, and nuts to make charoset, like the cement the slaves made to build the pharaoh's cities. We eat lamb to remember God's plague passing over the homes marked with lambs' blood.



We get rid of all the chametz in the house.

During Passover, we don't eat chametz (bread and foods made with yeast). The evening before Seder, my father lights a candle to look for any crumbs, and we follow. He asks us if we are sure we have removed all the chametz.



The house is cleaned top to bottom.

Getting rid of every trace of chametz is a lot of work. I cleaned my room, vacuumed the rug, and dusted my toys, books, and clothes so well that there were no crumbs in them. Then I helped get out our special Passover dishes.

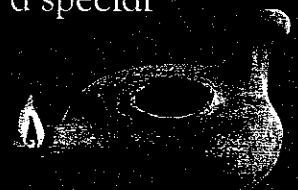
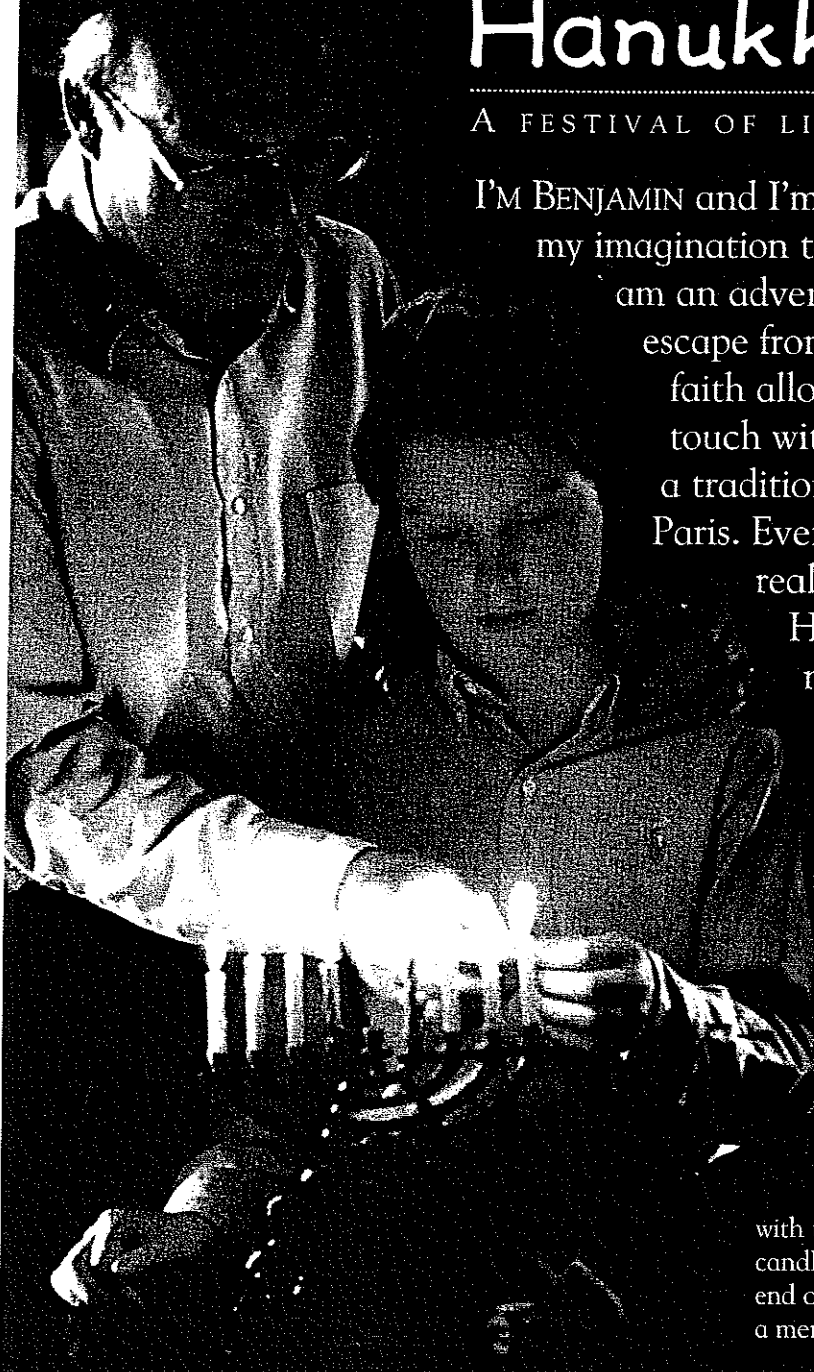
Hanukkah

A FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS

I'M BENJAMIN and I'm nine. I like using my imagination to pretend that I am an adventurer who has to escape from an enemy. My faith allows me to get in touch with my soul. I go to a traditional synagogue in a beautiful square in Paris. Every Sunday I study the Torah there. It's really interesting. During the festival of Hanukkah, we remember a special miracle that happened a long time ago.



Benjamin from France



Roman oil lamp

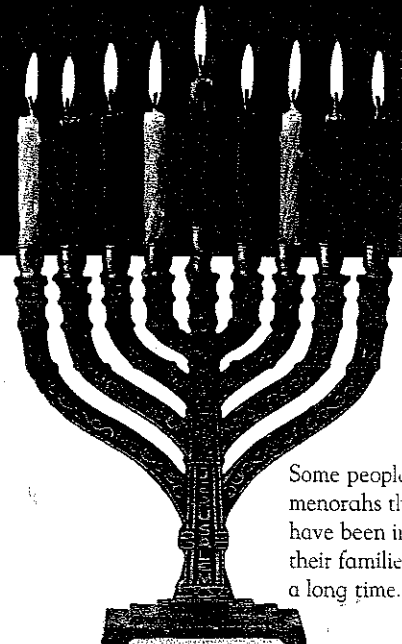
A menorah is a special candlestick.

It holds eight candles for every day of the miracle, plus a chamach (candle). This last candle is used to light the others. My mom lights the chamach, then my brother and

I light the other candles with the chamach, one more candle every day until the end of Hanukkah. We use a menorah from Israel.

We celebrate the miracle of the oil.

After the Jews defeated a cruel king about 2,000 years ago, the oil in their temple lamp burned for eight days instead of one.



Some people use menorahs that have been in their families a long time.



Romi

Australia

In Australia Hanukkah time is hot and sunny. The days are long so we wait until 9 p.m. to light the big Hanukkiah in the park. This year my dad did the blessings, then we sang and danced and ate yummy foods.



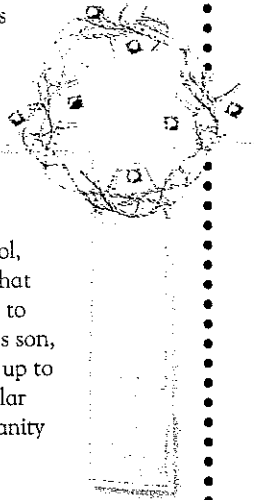
Rachel

South Africa

We all light a menorah in our family. My sister and I light the menorahs that we made in school. I like playing games with the dreidl. I love to eat doughnuts and also potato latkes.

Symbol

The symbol of the cross helps Christians to remember Christ's sacrifice by dying on a cross. But the image of an empty cross is perhaps an even stronger symbol, reminding Christians that Jesus came alive again to show that he was God's son, before ascending back up to heaven. Another popular symbol of early Christianity was a fish (below).



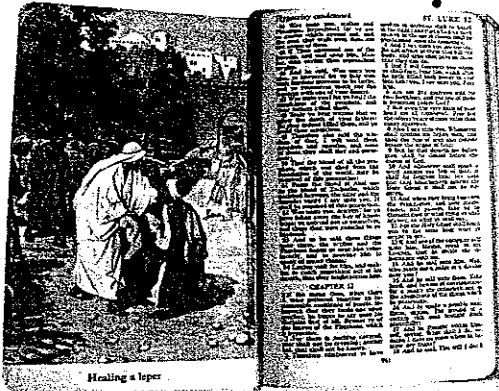
Christianity

TWO THOUSAND YEARS AGO in Israel, a great teacher spread a simple message: people must live God's word every day through acts of kindness and love. This man was Jesus Christ, whom Christians believe is God's son. Although Jesus inspired many people, he was put to death by the Romans, who ruled the area. Yet three days later Jesus rose from the dead. His life and teachings are celebrated in Christianity.



God's son

Christians believe that God sent Jesus to live on earth to tell people about God's love for them. They also believe that God allowed Jesus to die as a sacrifice to forgive the wrong things people do, and give people "new life", or a fresh start.



Holy book

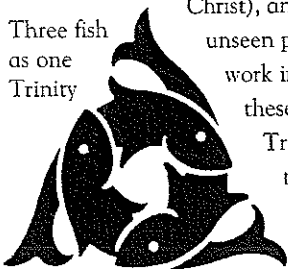
The Bible contains the Old and New Testaments. (Testament means "promise".) What Christians call the Old Testament is also sacred to Jews and Muslims. The New Testament tells the story of Christ's life and teachings, his death and return to heaven, and the growth of early Christianity.



The Trinity

Christians believe in one God, but they also believe that God can be seen in three special, equally important ways. There is God the Father (the creator of all life), God the Son (who came to earth as Jesus Christ), and God the Holy Spirit (the

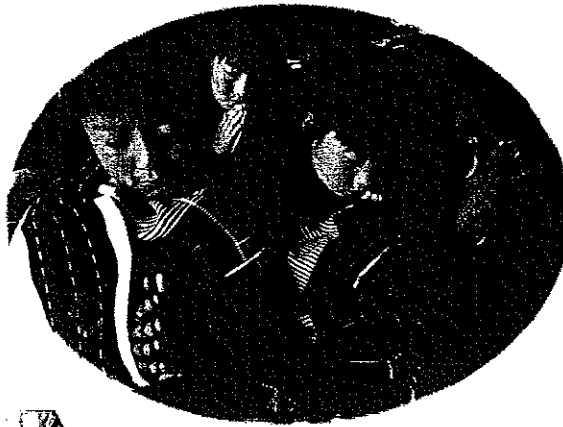
Three fish as one Trinity



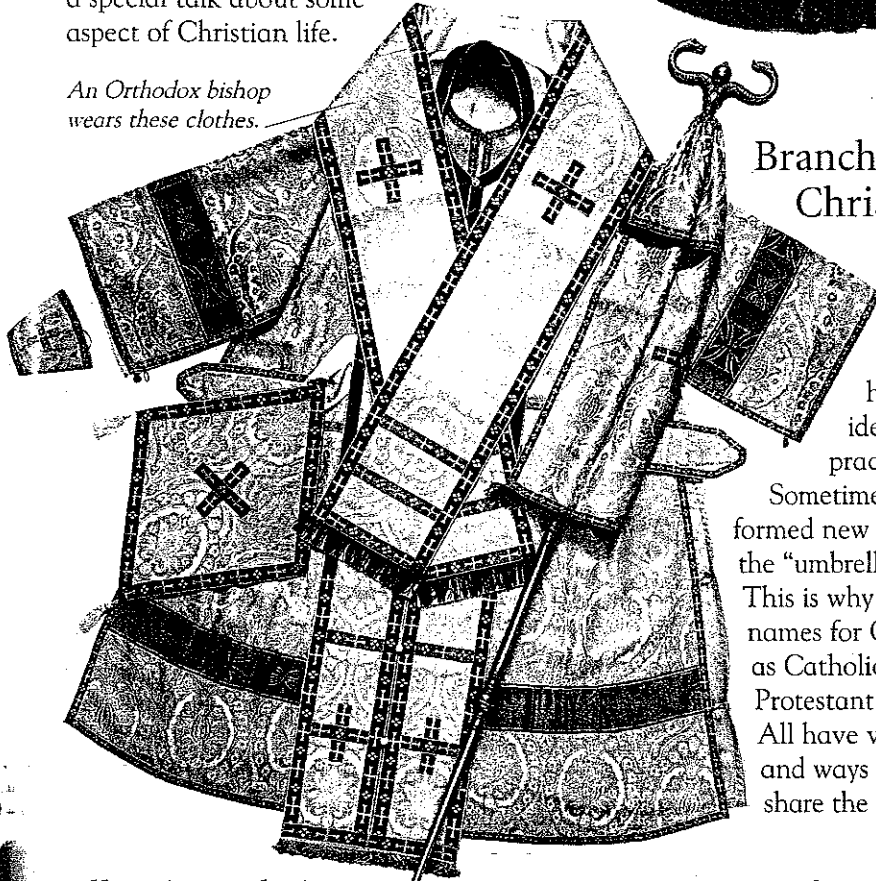
unseen power of God, which is at work in the world). Together, these three are known as the Trinity. The Bible clearly tells of three "faces" of God, while stating that there is only one God.

How Christians worship

Christians read the Bible and pray at home. Prayers are especially common before meals or at bedtime. Sunday (the day Jesus that rose from the dead) is the day that most Christians gather together in church buildings to worship. Church services include Bible readings, singing, and prayers. The church leader may give a sermon, a special talk about some aspect of Christian life.



An Orthodox bishop wears these clothes.



Branches of Christianity

As Christianity has grown, some groups of Christians have had different ideas about church practices and rules.

Sometimes these groups formed new churches under the "umbrella" of Christianity. This is why we have many names for Christians, such as Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, and Pentecostal. All have various customs and ways of worship, but share the same basic beliefs.

Rites of passage

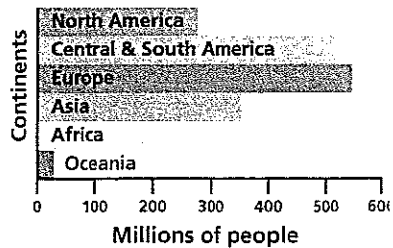
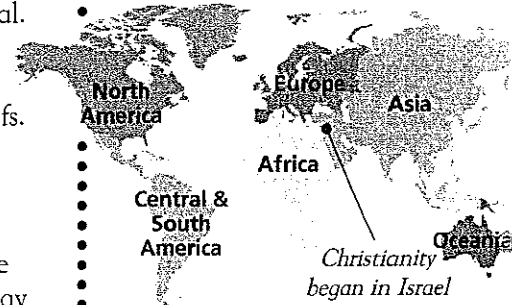
In most Christian churches, babies are welcomed into the church family at a baptism ceremony, when the baby is dipped in, or sprinkled with, water that has been blessed. Young Christians may also celebrate First Communion. This ceremony remembers a special meal that Jesus shared with his disciples the night before his crucifixion.



Main festivals

- Epiphany The visit of The Three Wise Men to baby Jesus *January*
- Ash Wednesday The beginning of Lent *February/March*
- Holy Week: Palm Sunday, Good Friday, Easter Day Remembers Christ's life, death, and resurrection *March/April*
- Pentecost Celebrates the coming of the Holy Spirit *June*
- Advent Period leading up to Christmas *November/December*
- Christmas Birth of Jesus *December*

Where Christians live



Christians live throughout the world. Just under two billion people belong to one of the several dozen major branches of the Christian faith. The largest group is the Catholic church, which has about a billion members.

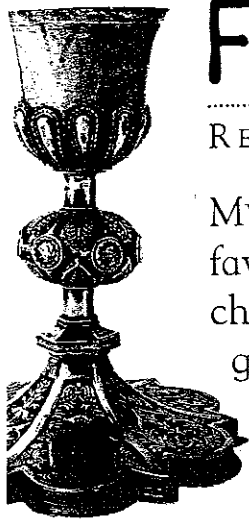
Following Christ

These Christians in Central America wave palm branches and follow a statue of Christ to celebrate Palm Sunday. In the short time that Jesus was teaching (about three years), he was followed by similar crowds, who heard his parables (stories with a message) and saw his miracles—amazing events that cannot be explained.



Caring for others

Jesus told people to love and care for each other. Christians may follow his teachings by performing acts of kindness, or by supporting or working for agencies that help people in need. This nun, who has chosen to devote her life to serving God, has opened an orphanage and hospital in Brazil to care for many homeless children.



Wine chalice

First Communion

REMEMBERING JESUS' LAST SUPPER

MY NAME IS ANTONINO and I am 10. Soccer is my favorite sport because it's a team game and many children can play together. The church I go to is a Catholic church in the square in our village. The thing that interests me about my faith is Jesus' commandment that we love and forgive each other. This year, I received the sacrament of First Communion.



Antonino from Italy

The Last Supper

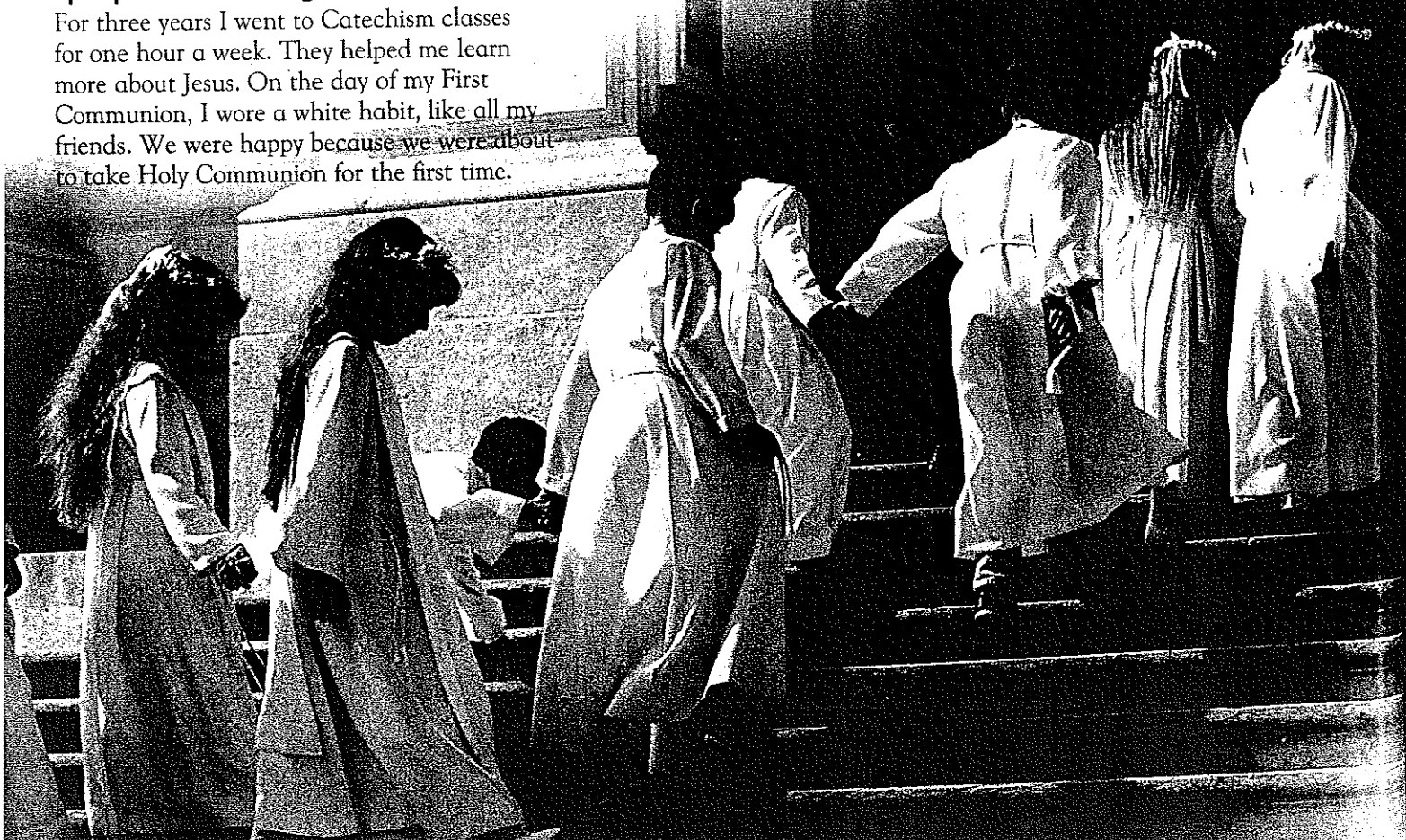
Jesus ate with his Apostles the night before he died. He gave them some bread and wine said that they were his body and his blood. I think it's important to take Communion because it is a way to meet Jesus.



My first confession was a month before First Communion. Everyone in my Catechism class went to church together. I sat opposite the priest and confessed my little sins to him. I was excited because it felt like I was face to face with Jesus.

I prepared for Holy Communion.

For three years I went to Catechism classes for one hour a week. They helped me learn more about Jesus. On the day of my First Communion, I wore a white habit, like all my friends. We were happy because we were about to take Holy Communion for the first time.

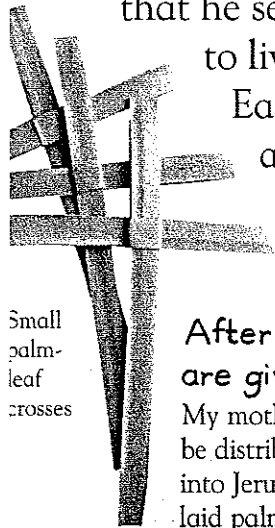


Easter

HOLY WEEK

I AM EVA AND I'm 13 years old. I go to a Greek Orthodox church. I enjoy the moment when the old ladies gather round the priest at communion. My faith teaches me that there is one God, who cares about me. God cared so much that he sent his son Jesus to live on earth. At

Easter, we remember how Jesus died, and after three days lived again.



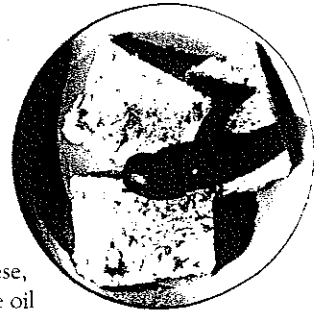
Small palm-leaf crosses

After Mass on Palm Sunday we are given small branches of laurel. My mother tells me that palm crosses used to be distributed instead. This is because Jesus rode into Jerusalem on the Sunday before Easter. People laid palm branches on the ground to honor him.

At midnight the priest announces the resurrection of Christ



Eva from Greece



Olives, feta cheese, and olive oil

The 40 days of Lent begin on Pure Monday.

This is when we remember the time Jesus spent alone and hungry in the desert, preparing to spread God's message. We have to make a sacrifice like Jesus did. My family and I do not eat dairy products or meat until Easter Sunday.



The Friday before Easter is Big Friday.

This is the day Jesus was crucified. During Mass, the priest takes the statue of Jesus' body from the cross. He puts it in a wooden box, which symbolizes the tomb. Women and children decorate the tomb with flowers. Later, the priests parade around the church with the tomb. We follow, holding candles and singing sad hymns.

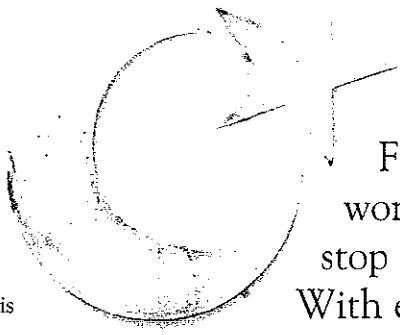


On Saturday we gather for Midnight Mass.

We hold white candles, which are not lit. At twelve o'clock the priest announces the resurrection of Christ, and at that moment we light our candles. The children throw a lot of fireworks. Then we go home with our candles still lit.

Symbol

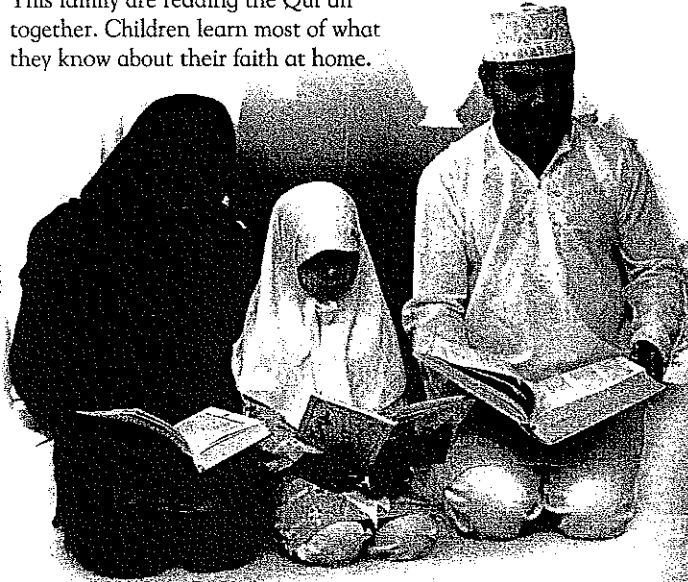
The crescent moon and star symbol has come to represent the Islamic faith. Some mosques, and many flags of mainly Islamic nations, feature this symbol. It has no religious meaning, but it may have been chosen because the Islamic calendar is based on the phases of the moon. In the Islamic calendar, each year has 12 months of 29 or 30 days for a total of 354 days. A new moon marks the start of each month.



Islam

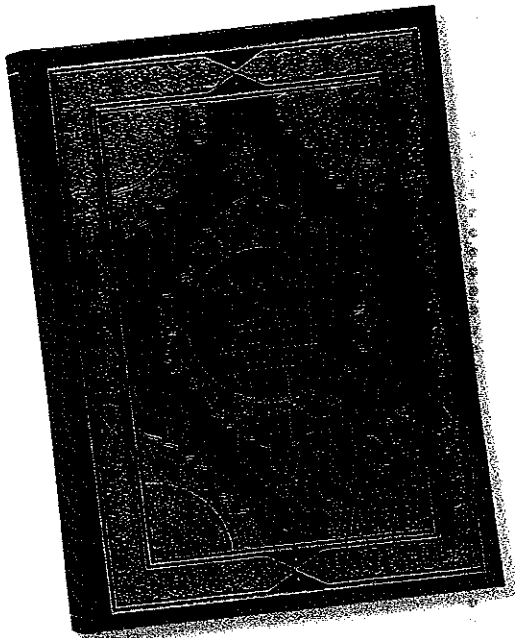
FIVE TIMES A DAY, all over the world, followers of the Islamic faith stop what they are doing and pray. With each prayer, they show their devotion to God, most often called by his Arabic name, Allah. Today, there are more than a billion followers of Islam across the world. The word Islam means "surrender to God", and followers of this faith (known as Muslims) must obey God's will. The religion's holy book, the Qur'an, contains the word of Allah, as told by an angel to Islam's founder, the prophet Muhammad.

This family are reading the Qur'an together. Children learn most of what they know about their faith at home.



Islam's founder

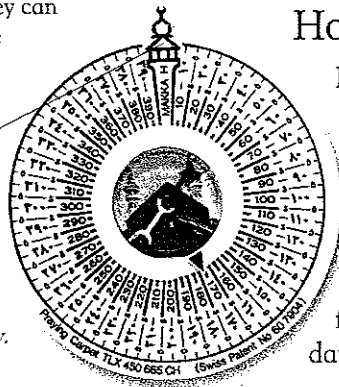
Muslims believe that Muhammad was chosen to hear God's words and teach them to others. Born in Mecca (in present-day Saudi Arabia) in 570 CE, Muhammad taught that there is only one God, who created and controls everything in the world.



Holy book

Muhammad memorized God's words and taught them to his companions, who wrote them down in a book called the Qur'an. This book contains descriptions of God and his powers, as well as rules about how Muslims should live. Many Muslims try to learn Arabic so they can read and recite the Qur'an in its original language.

The arrow on this special compass (called a qibla) points towards Mecca. Muslims must face Mecca to pray.



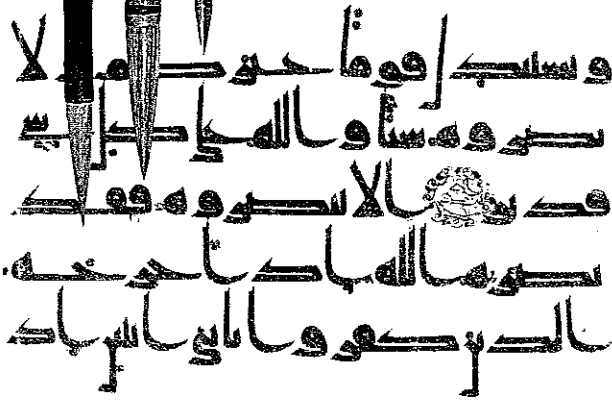
How Muslims worship

Muslims worship God by reciting the Qur'an and praying five times a day at certain hours. They recite prayers in Arabic, although they can also speak to God in their own languages. People worship at home, or pray with other Muslims in a mosque. Before they enter the mosque, all Muslims must remove their shoes and wash their faces, arms, and feet. On Friday, the Islamic holy day, everyone gathers in the mosque to pray.



The written word

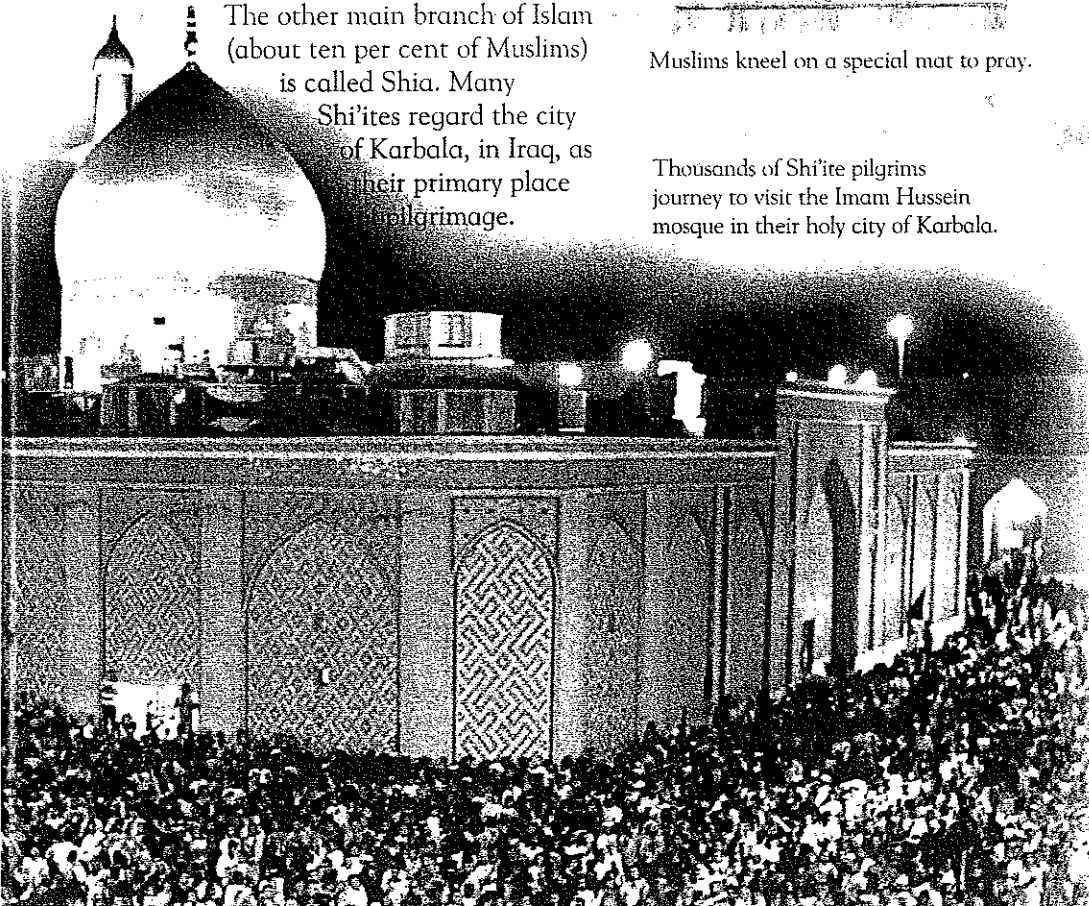
The Qur'an is the word of God, so it must be written with great care. Many Muslims practise a beautiful style of handwriting, called calligraphy, so that their writing can be as special as the words themselves. Calligraphers use brushes and coloured inks to create this decorative writing.



Places of pilgrimage

Mecca, Muhammad's birthplace, is the holiest place on earth for the majority of Muslims, called Sunnis. They travel to Mecca on Hajj (a pilgrimage) at least once in their lifetime.

The other main branch of Islam is called Shia. Many Shi'ites regard the city of Karbala, in Iraq, as their primary place of pilgrimage.



The Five Pillars of Islam

Muslims have five sacred duties to perform as part of their faith. They must recite words of faith, pray five times a day, give help to the poor, fast during the month of Ramadan, and travel to Mecca at least once in their lifetime. These duties are called the Five Pillars of Islam.



Muslims kneel on a special mat to pray.

Thousands of Shi'ite pilgrims journey to visit the Imam Hussein mosque in their holy city of Karbala.

Rites of passage

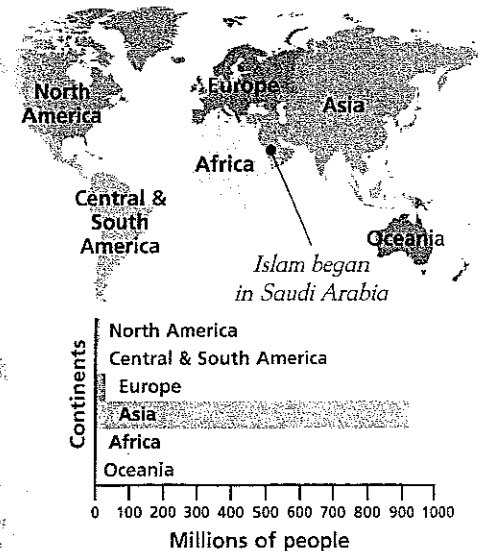
The first sound newborn Muslim babies hear is their father whispering the call to prayer (called the *adhan*) in their right ear. When the baby is seven days old, parents have a naming ceremony, the *aqiqah*. They may shave the baby's hair, and make a special offering to the needy. As they grow older, children are taught about Islam at home and at the mosque.



Main festivals

- Day of Hijra New Year (1st month of the Islamic calendar)
- Mawlid al-Nabi Muhammad's birthday (3rd month)
- Laylat al-Qadr Night of Power (9th month, towards the end of Ramadan)
- Eid al-Fitr Celebrates the end of Ramadan (10th month)
- Dhu al-Hijja Hajj (12th month)
- Eid al-Adha Festival of Sacrifice (12th month)

Where Muslims live



Nearly a third of all Muslims live in North Africa and the Middle East, but the majority of Muslims live in central and southern Asia. Smaller populations live in the West.



The Five Pillars of Islam

THE FIVE DUTIES OF A MUSLIM

I AM RACHID, and I am nine years old. I like playing soccer and listening to music, and some day I want to visit the city of Marrakech. Islam is the religion I know about. It teaches me how to be good with people and behave in a nice way. It only takes me five minutes to walk to the mosque nearby. I often go there during the week and always go on Friday because it is a holy day. The Five Pillars are important because they are the things all Muslims must do to show faith and respect to Allah.



Rachid from Morocco

I affirm my faith daily. Every time I hear the call to prayer from the muezzin, I say the words, "There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is his messenger." This first pillar shows my faith in Allah.



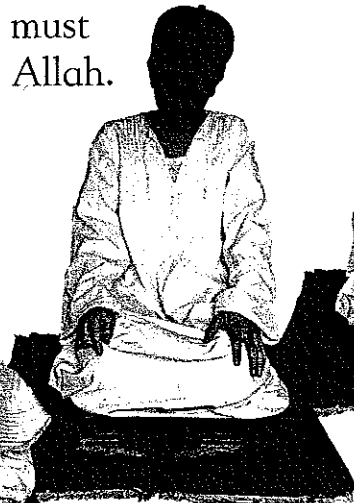
1. For me, facing Mecca is where the sun rises. We begin with the words, "Allah Akbar" (Allah is greater than all else).



2. We bow our heads to show respect for Allah. Another verse is spoken from the Qur'an. In the mosque, the imam says the words. If I'm praying at home, I say them.



3. Next, we place our foreheads on the prayer mat in a very deep bow, called prostration. This shows that Muslims are humble in Allah's presence.



4. Then we kneel on our prayer mats to pray silently to Allah. This finishes with a prayer for the community.



5. Finally, we turn our heads left and then right, wishing the peace of Allah to all people.

I concentrate more when I pray at the mosque.

The second pillar says you must pray five times a day. The call to prayer always comes from the mosque. There are big speakers on top of the minaret so that everyone can hear the muezzin's call. Before we pray at home or in the mosque, we perform wudu. This means we must wash our faces, arms, and feet. Then we face Mecca to pray. I have my own sheepskin prayer mat at home.

Ramadan and Eid al-Fitr

A MONTH OF FASTING FOLLOWED BY A FEAST

MY NAME IS LEENA and I am nine years old. I have two sisters who are older than me. I like drawing and playing basketball, and I want

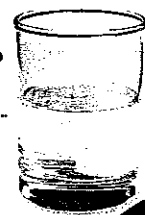


Leena from Jordan

to be a vet when I grow up because I like animals. This year, Ramadan was very special for me. For the first time, I fasted for the whole month with my family. Then Eid al-Fitr arrived and we all celebrated. It is one of the most special days of the year.

During Ramadan we still go to school.

Muslims must not eat or drink from dawn to dusk. This is called fasting, and it is one of the greatest acts of worship to Allah. It was a bit difficult to study at school for exams during fast days, but the teachers were understanding and didn't give us extra homework. The main thing we did at school was collect money to buy clothes or food for poor families.



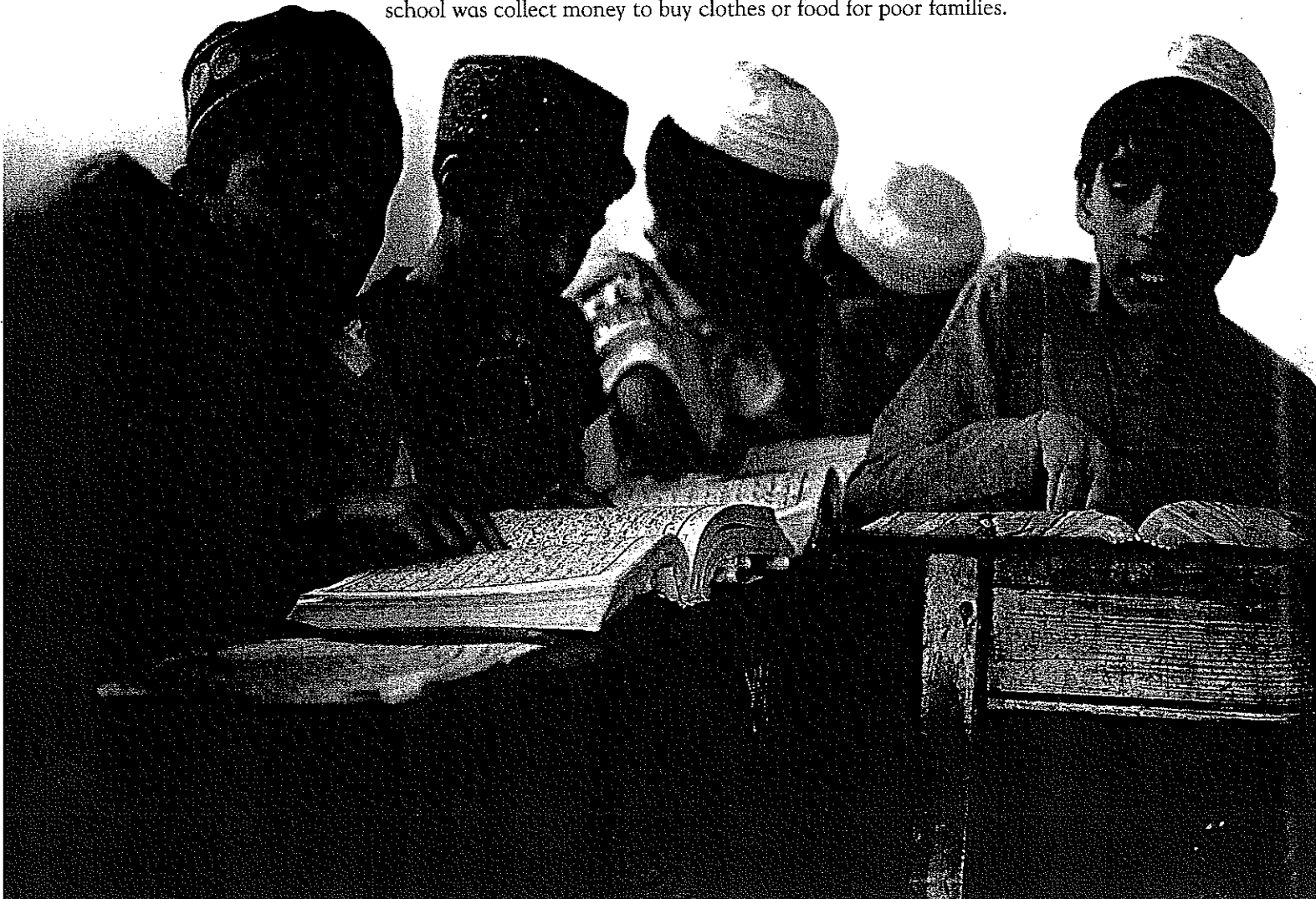
Water

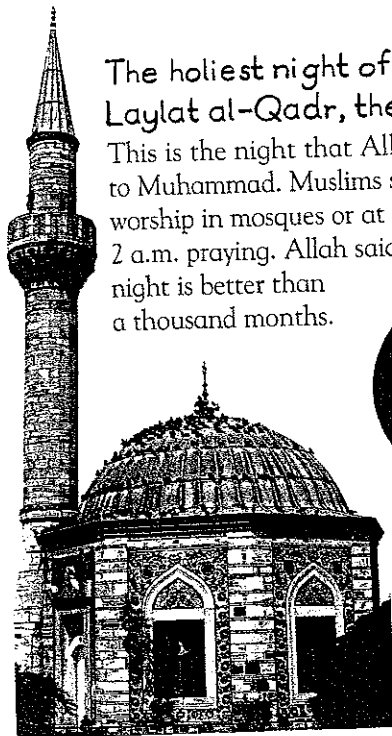


Fresh dates

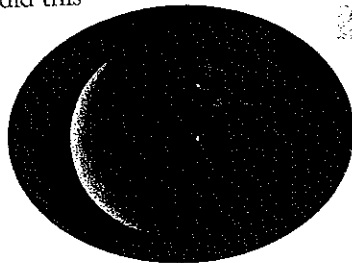
We eat before dawn.

The day's fast begins once we hear the call to dawn prayer. Apart from the last couple of days, I didn't feel tired or hungry. We break the fast at sunset by eating dates and drinking water.

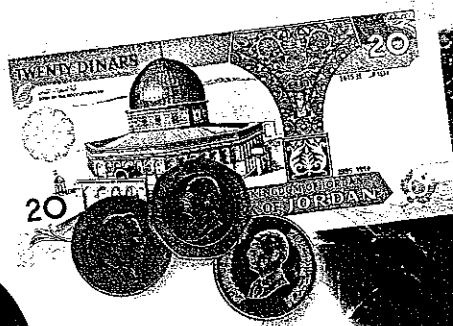




The holiest night of Ramadan is Laylat al-Qadr, the Night of Power. This is the night that Allah sent the Qur'an to Muhammad. Muslims stay up all night to worship in mosques or at home. I stayed up until 2 a.m. praying. Allah said this night is better than a thousand months.



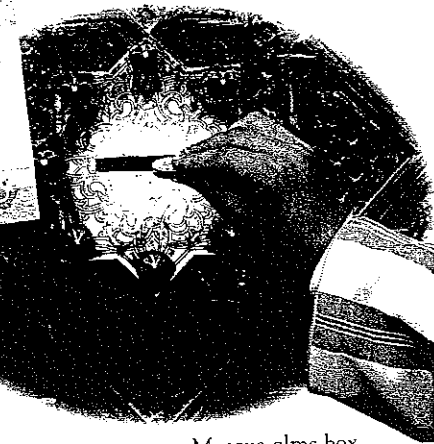
A new moon is the start of a new month. We wait for a new moon to show us that Ramadan has ended and the Festival of Eid can begin.



Giving money to the poor is important.

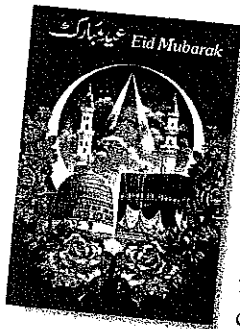
During Ramadan and Eid, we try to help a little more.

Our mothers cook food and we help to share it with children in the orphanage. We also collect and distribute blankets, heaters, and clothes, and donate money at the mosque.



Mosque alms box

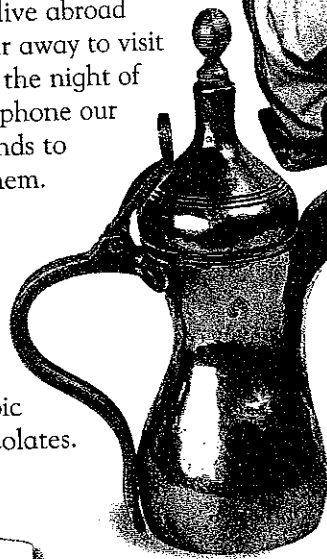
We remember Allah and feel his nearness more than any other time



We send Eid cards to family and friends. We send them cards because they live abroad and are too far away to visit us for Eid. On the night of Eid we always phone our family and friends to congratulate them.

We welcome people to our home during Eid.

My sisters and I wear new clothes to welcome our visitors. We offer them Arabic coffee, sweets, and chocolates.



We have an Eid lunch with our closest family.

For lunch, my mother makes stuffed chicken, and Arabic rice mixed with minced meat, carrots and peas. It has fried almonds, raisins, and pine nuts on top. During the meal I get scared a few times, thinking that I should be fasting. Then I remember that now I can eat during the day again.



Omar

Afghanistan

Ramadan is a special time for Muslims. Muslims fast for one month to remember that everyone is equal. Poor people don't have food, so everyone fasts to know how it feels if you don't have food.



Yasmin

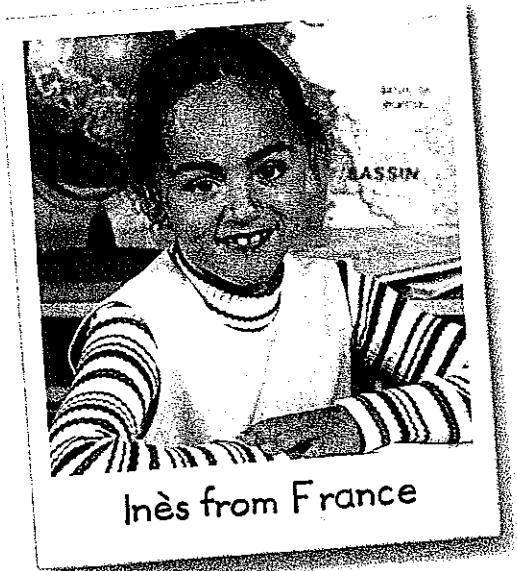
UK

Eid is a celebration of the end of Ramadan. To celebrate, we visit our families and we go to fun fairs. I also like visiting aquariums.

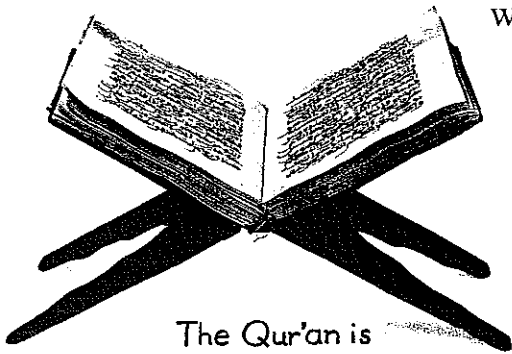
Living by the Qur'an

ALLAH'S RULES FOR EVERYDAY LIFE

I AM INÈS. I don't have any brothers or sisters, but I have a best friend and about 30 cousins. I love going on holiday with my family. Sometimes we visit relatives in Algeria and Morocco, but I've also been to Kenya, Mexico, and New York. There is a mosque near where I live. Inside there is lots of beautiful Arabic writing from the Qur'an on the walls. We have several Qur'ans at home. The holy book contains Allah's wishes for how we live our lives. All Muslims should live by these rules.



Inès from France



The Qur'an is Allah's word.

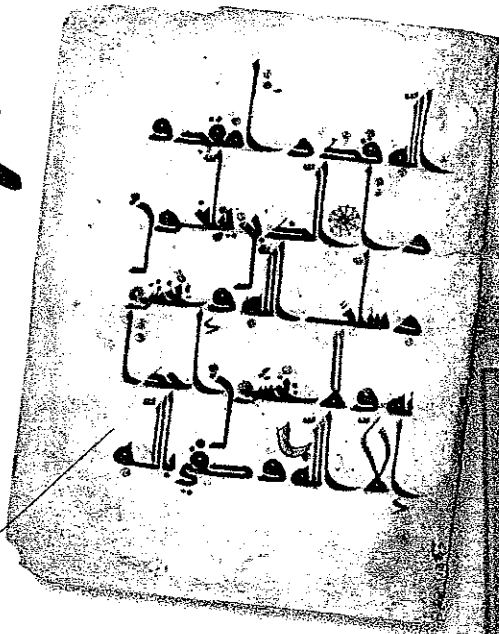
We treat the Qur'an with respect. The copy at my mosque is kept on a stand. We read the words on the page from right to left. Allah's words are special, no matter how they are written.



Soshi

Bangladesh

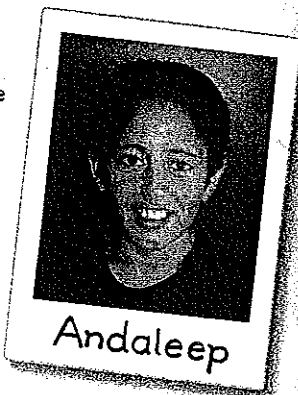
At Eid al-Fitr we have to wake up early and pray. The food is great (curry and chicken tikka). I like this Muslim festival because it is a joyful time.



Writing a copy of the Qur'an is an act of devotion.

Afghanistan

The Qur'an tells all the rules on how to live, like don't have a boyfriend or a girlfriend, and do what your mum and dad tell you. It's important to eat halal food. Maybe I'll learn to speak and write Arabic when I'm older.



Andaleep

Sometimes words in the Qur'an are written in a beautiful way.

I see this special kind of Arabic writing on prayer mats, on buildings, and in some copies of the Qur'an. It's called calligraphy. No matter where Muslims live in the world, they read the Qur'an in Arabic.

