EXERCISE 11.7

1 Outline the actions taken when a Muslim funeral is conducted.
2 Explain the significance of the particular actions that are evident in the rituals associated with death and funerals in Islam.
3 Explain the reasons for simple funeral services and graves. How is a Muslim acknowledged and respected?

EXTENSION ACTIVITY 11.7

1 Examine the burial practices of Islam and consider Australian laws and customs. What areas of potential difficulty are apparent? How do Muslims overcome these difficulties?
2 Research a Muslim funeral service. Write out the main elements of the service and note the beliefs that relate to the various aspects of the service.
3 Write a paragraph on the following: 'Muslim funerals remind the community of their own coming judgement.'

Significance for the individual
For the individual, death is the time to meet Allah and face judgement. The actions and directions at death and the funeral prepare the deceased for that judgement. For the family, death is a time to trust in Allah and to draw strength from Allah. It is a time to recognise everyone’s mortality and the importance of submitting to the will of Allah.

Significance for the community
For the community, a funeral is also a time to recognise the mortality of each person and the importance of caring for the bereaved.

Hajj (pilgrimage)

Describe the practice
The fifth pillar of Islam commands all Muslims, where possible, to make a pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in their lifetimes; this is called the Hajj. The Qur’an has specific instructions for the Hajj, and a particular ritualised plan of pilgrimage is enacted. The Hajj is a chance to have sins forgiven and presents new opportunities for Muslims. The Hajj re-enacts significant events and beliefs in Islam. The Hajj is a time for simplicity, self-renewal, re-dedication and generosity.

Muslims have several sacred places that mostly relate to the life of Muhammad, the lives of the prophets and the significant leaders of Islam. The most sacred sites are the cities of Mecca and Medina in modern Saudi Arabia. Muslims are required, if they are able, to participate in a Hajj, a pilgrimage to Mecca and a circumambulation of the Ka’ba. This is commanded in the Qur’an.

Source 11.21 shows the Ka’ba and the city of Mecca at the time of the Hajj, with millions of pilgrims in the city. Mecca is the city of Muhammad’s birth and much of his life. Medina is the city that first accepted Islam as its faith. Both of these cities are now ‘closed cities’ – only Muslims are allowed to enter them. Mecca has as its central ‘shrine’ the Ka’ba, the black covered cube that is traced back to the time of Islam’s earliest beginnings. The Ka’ba is believed to have been built by Abraham and his son Ishmael, and some trace its origins to Adam, the first man. The Ka’ba is the focus of Muslim prayer; it is the shrine that Muslims face as they pray each day that represents the presence of Allah.

The Hajj has an established ritual that should be followed. The Qur’an states Muslims should ‘perform the visit and pilgrimage to Mecca for Allah’ (Qur’an 2:196). Qur’an 2:196–203 and Qur’an 22:26–33 have extensive instructions for the Hajj. Muslims believe the Hajj was designed and commanded to be observed by Allah. Thus every Muslim, male and female, will attempt to make the pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in their lives. The Hajj applies to both Sunni and Shi’a Muslims. It is evident that the concept of the Hajj existed in pre-Islamic Arabia, but now has its current meaning and intention for all Muslims.

The Hajj should be performed at the beginning of the month Dhul Hijjah. Before a pilgrim sets out on the Hajj they should:
• redress all wrongs
• pay all debts
• plan enough money for their journey
• leave enough money for their family
• prepare to behave well while on the Hajj.

The Hajj presents opportunities for Muslims to:
• develop a concept of rebirth
• develop God consciousness
Source 11.21 The city of Mecca with the Ka'ba is the holiest place in Islam; the focus of the Hajj. The Ka'ba is surrounded by Muslims at prayer.

Source 11.22 The front of the Ka'ba

- seek forgiveness for sins committed throughout life
- meet with other Muslims from around the world and together worship Allah
- fulfil one of the important obligations of Islam.

There are a number of steps, physical and spiritual, that should be taken on the Hajj. On arrival at Mecca the pilgrim joins in the great pilgrimage of Abraham, following in his footsteps. Pilgrims re-enact much of the story of Abraham bringing Hagar and their son Ishmael to Arabia. Muslims believe that Hagar is Abraham's legitimate wife and Ishmael his legitimate heir. The centre of Mecca, and the pilgrimage, is the Ka'ba. The Ka'ba features strongly in the story of Muhammad and is said to contain a sacred rock, thought to have fallen from heaven, in one corner. Circling the Ka'ba is the highlight of the Hajj. As the pilgrims approach Mecca they bathe and cut their hair and put on a white robe, called an ihram, that consists of two cloths without stitching. In this way all male pilgrims are dressed identically and are equal. While on the Hajj, pilgrims should not:
- shave or cut their nails, until after the sacrifice on the third day
- use perfume
- fight, argue or bother anyone

Source 11.23 The route of the Hajj with significant sites indicated:

1. Start of the main pilgrimage at the Grand Mosque in Mecca
2. Pray at Mina and sleep
3. Spend the day in prayer at Mount Mercy
4. Proceed to Muzdalifah, sleep and collect pebbles
5. Stone the pillars at Mina
6. Return to Mecca

Pilgrim may return to Mina to stone pillars again

1 2 3 4 5 6

SAUDI ARABIA
• kill any living thing
• carry a weapon
• have sexual relations.

The rituals performed during the Hajj re-enact incidents from the life of Abraham and Hagar, express central beliefs of Islam, and affirm the significance of the Muslim community.

After dressing in their white robes (this applies to men; women may wear other appropriate clothes) the pilgrims are taken to Mecca by bus. They chant a special passage, pledging service to Allah, and then walk seven times around the Ka’ba in a counter-clockwise direction. This is known as a tawaf. If possible, the pilgrims kiss the black stone in the corner of the Ka’ba. If not, it is sufficient to point at the stone.

Pilgrims then re-enact Hagar’s search for water by running between two hills, Safa and Marwah. Today, for safety reasons, the pilgrims usually walk. Ishmael, Hagar’s son, kicked the ground during the search and water sprang from the Well of Zamzam. The Well of Zamzam still exists in Mecca, and pilgrims drink from its water. Time is spent in prayer, study and reflection. Pilgrims then travel to the valley of Mina, before another day’s journey leads to Mount Arafat. Pilgrims pray on the plain, just below the Mount of Mercy, from midday to sunset. The Mount of Mercy is where Muhammad delivered his last sermon, and many pilgrims use the time for prayer and reflection. As part of the Hajj, pilgrims are required to spend the whole afternoon at Arafat. It is believed that past sins are forgiven as a result of this day of prayer.

The pilgrims return to Mina, after staying at Muzdalifah, where they collect stones. At Mina the stones are thrown at three pillars that represent Satan (the devil). This is to represent Abraham’s resistance of the temptation not to sacrifice Ishmael to God (in the Jewish and Christian traditions Abraham was asked to sacrifice Isaac).

Outside Mecca, animals are sacrificed to show how Allah provided an animal so Abraham did not have to sacrifice Ishmael. Some pilgrims are not personally involved in the sacrifice of the animals but buy a sacrifice voucher for the ritual to be performed on their behalf. The meat is used to feed the pilgrims or is sent to the poor.

The pilgrims may circle the Ka’ba another seven times. They then go back to Mina and ‘stone the devil’ over several days before returning to Mecca for a final tawaf. The Hajj is now complete, although many pilgrims also visit the Mosque of the Prophet in Medina, where Muhammad is buried.

Beliefs
The Hajj can last up to fourteen days but can be completed in five days. It is believed that on completion of the Hajj a pilgrim’s past sins have been forgiven. Those who have completed the Hajj at some stage in their lives have the title Hajji for men and Hajja for women attached to their names.

Significance for the individual
The rite of the Hajj is obviously a significant personal experience for Muslims, who use it to reaffirm their devotion to Allah and their own personal commitment to Islam. It is believed that those who complete the Hajj can experience true purity.

Significance for the community
The Hajj also has the communal aspect of reaffirming the importance of the umma, the Muslim community. The power of the shared experience, as well as the mending of relationships done before the Hajj, achieves this.

There are several other places that are considered sacred sites and are often visited at the time of the Hajj. Medina is the city to which Muhammad fled when expelled from Mecca. Medina has a special place in the heart of Muslims because it was the first city to accept Muhammad and his new religious ideas. The Mosque of the Prophet, in Medina, contains Muhammad’s grave and the graves of the first two caliphs. Consequently, Medina

Source 11.24 Muslim pilgrims at Arafat. Muhammad said ‘Hajj is Arafat’.
is a significant sacred city to Muslims. Other sacred sites include Jerusalem in modern

Israel, where it is believed Muhammad ascended into heaven on his 'night journey'. The Al-Aqsa Mosque was built in Jerusalem to commemorate this event, and the Dome of the Rock (built in 691 CE, the earliest Muslim monument) covers the rock from which Muhammad ascended. Jerusalem is also a sacred city to Judaism and Christianity, and thus is a source for potential conflict.

In modern Iraq the city of Karbala is also a sacred site, particularly to Shi’a Muslims. It is the burial place of Muhammad’s grandson Hussein, the third Shi’a Imam.

**EXERCISE 11.8**

1. Outline the teachings of the Qur’an in relation to the *Hajj* (pilgrimage).
2. Describe the main features of the pilgrimage and what they represent for Muslims.
3. Explain, using examples, why the *Hajj* is both a significant act for the individual and the community.

**EXTENSION ACTIVITY 11.8**

1. Draw an annotated map of the *Hajj*, noting significant places and actions.
2. Write a diary of the *Hajj*, reflecting on the significance and meaning of the pilgrimage. Draw out the significance for an individual Muslim on the pilgrimage and reflect on the significance for the community.
3. Talk to a Muslim who has been on the *Hajj*. Note down the significance of the pilgrimage for the person. Include questions such as: What did he/she find most helpful or enjoyable? Why did they go? What may have disappointed him/her? Would they recommend it to other people? What lasting effect did it have on them?
CHAPTER SUMMARY

- A’isha was Muhammad’s favourite wife.
- A’isha influenced the development of Islam.
- Some of the Qur’an reveals this influence and A’isha narrated many hadith.
- A’isha is not well thought of by Shi’a Muslims.
- Sufism is an important Muslim school of thought.
- Sufis emphasise a mystical form of Islam.
- There are many significant Sufi individuals who have influenced Islam, such as Rabi’a and Al-Ghazali.
- Ethics are concerned with the fulfilment of the will of Allah.
- Bioethics are to be practised in accordance with that will, being careful not to usurp the will of Allah.
- Environmental ethics should demonstrate unity, trusteeship and accountability.
- Muslim environmental ethics is concerned about the wise use of the world and care for it.
- Sexual ethics include issues such as premarital sex, homosexuality and gender roles.

- Islam generally holds a view that is typified by loving relationships with limitations.
- Islam differs greatly in its views on the acceptability of certain relationships.
- Islam often views marriage as a contractual arrangement.
- Friday prayers are an obligation for Muslim men, commanded by the Qur’an.
- Friday prayers include readings from the Qur’an as well as sermons.
- There are significant rituals associated with Friday prayers.
- Friday prayers are both an institutional and an individual action.
- At the time of death, Muslims look forward to meeting Allah.
- Muslims should seek to leave behind charity, knowledge and children.
- The Hajj is a physical and spiritual journey to Mecca expected of all Muslims.
- The actions performed on the Hajj have great significance.