



Pillars of Islam and Articles of Faith

Five Pillars of Islam

The Five Pillars of Islam are the five basic acts in Islam, considered obligatory by Muslims. These are summarized in the famous Hadith of Gabriel. The Quran presents them as a framework for worship and a sign of commitment to the faith. They are

1. Shahadah (Creed)
2. Daily prayers (Salat)
3. Sawm (Fasting during Ramadan)
4. Zakat (Almsgiving)
5. Pilgrimage to Makka (Hajj) at least once in a lifetime

1. Shahadah

Shahadah is a saying and confessing monotheism and accepting Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) as God's Messenger. The shahadah is a set statement normally recited in Arabic, which is translated as

**I testify and bear witness that there is no god except Allah (SWT), and
Prophet
Mohammad (PBUH) is the last and final messenger of Allah
(SWT).**

Also, it is said that when dying one should recite this declaration of faith. In Azaan (call to prayer) it is recited. When a person wishes to convert his religion, he should recite this affirmation and believe in it.

2. Salat

Salat is the Islamic prayer. As per Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) the difference between a Muslim and a non-believer is Salat. Now, if you say that you are a Muslim, it is obligatory for you to offer prayers.

Salat consists of five daily prayers: Fajr, Dhuhr, Asr, Maghrib, and Isha'a. Fajr is performed at dawn, Dhuhr is a noon prayer, Asr is performed in the afternoon, Maghrib is the sunset prayer, and Isha'a is the evening prayer. Each prayer consists of a certain amount of raka'at. A prayer either consists of two, three, or four raka'at. All of these prayers are recited while facing the Ka'bah in Makkah. Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) told us that the first question on the Day of Judgement will be asked regarding Salat. Salat is the practical proof of our faith in Allah and Islam. Allah says in the Quran, "***Salat at fixed times has been enjoined on the believers (4:103).***"

First try to understand why we need to offer salah. We offer salah to remember Allah our creator and to be close to Him and to gain His favor. To say your salah you must be pure and clean. The Quran says "***Indeed Allah loves those who turn to Him in repentance and loves***

those who purify themselves” (2-222).

3. Sawm

Three types of fasting (Sawm) are recognized by the Quran: ritual fasting, fasting as compensation for repentance (both from Surah Al-Baqarah), and ascetic fasting (from Surah Al-Ahzab).

Ritual fasting is an obligatory act during the month of Ramadan. Muslims must abstain from food, drink, and sexual intercourse from dawn to dusk during this month, and are to be especially mindful of other sins. Fasting is necessary for every Muslim that has reached puberty. The fast is meant to allow Muslims to seek nearness to Allah (SWT), to express their gratitude towards Allah (SWT) and dependence on Him, atone for their past sins, and to remind them of the needy.

During Ramadan, Muslims are also expected to put more effort into following the teachings of Islam by refraining from violence, anger, envy, greed, lust, profane language, gossip and to try to get along with fellow Muslims better. In addition, all obscene and irreligious sights and sounds are to be avoided.

Fasting during Ramadan is obligatory, but it is forbidden for several groups for whom it would be very dangerous and excessively problematic. These include pre-pubescent children, those with a medical condition such as diabetes, elderly people, and pregnant or breastfeeding women. Other individuals for whom it is considered acceptable not to fast are those who are ill or traveling. Missing fasts usually must be made up for soon afterward, although the exact requirements vary according to circumstance.

Fasting other than Ramadan can be called as ‘nafl fasting’ for which one can get extra reward. Sawm helps us to remain truly obedient to the commands of Allah. That is why the Quran says” *O believers! Fasting is prescribed for you—as it was for those before you—so perhaps you will become mindful of Allah` (2:183)*. True obedience and piety known as taqwa in Islam is developed through sawm. Sawm develops self-control and helps us to overcome selfishness, greed, laziness and other faults. Sawm enables us to experience the pangs of hunger and thirst. It teaches us not to think just about comfort.

4. Zakat

The word zakat is originated from “*zaka*” which means “**to purify**”. The purpose of zakat is to purify one’s wealth. Zakat or alms-giving is the practice of charitable giving by Muslims based on accumulated wealth, and is obligatory for all who are able to do so.

It is considered to be a personal responsibility for Muslims to ease economic hardship for others and eliminate inequality.

Zakat consists of spending 2.5% of one's wealth for the benefit of the poor or needy, including slaves, debtors and travelers. A Muslim may also donate more as an act of voluntary charity (sadaqah), to achieve additional divine reward. Zakat on wealth covers money made in business, savings, income, and so on. In current usage Zakat is treated as a 2.5% collection on most valuables and savings held for a full lunar year, as long as the total value is more than a basic minimum known as nisab.

Zakat is an act of ibadah. Ibadah is an Arabic term which means worship and obedience. We pay zakat to gain Allah's favour. It provides us with the opportunity of sharing our excess wealth with those less fortunate than ourselves. In fact, we and our wealth belong to Allah.

He is the real owner and we are mere the trustees of His wealth. Islam has its own economic principles. Zakat is one of the basic principles of Islamic economy based on social welfare and fair distribution of the wealth. In addition to the compulsory payment of zakat, Muslims are encouraged to make voluntary contributions to help the poor and needy and for other social welfare purposes. This voluntary contribution is called charity (sadaqah).

“If one gives in charity what equals (the size of) one date-fruit from the honestly-earned money and Allah accepts only the honestly earned money –Allah takes it in His right (hand) and then enlarges its reward for that person (who has given it), as anyone of you brings up his baby horse, so much so that it becomes as big as a mountain.”

(Sahih Bukhari, Vol 2, Book 24, No. 491)

Zakat is compulsory payment and is neither charity nor tax. The categories of the use of zakat are mentioned in the quran. ***Zakat has to be spent under the fixed headings like helping the poor, the needy, payment of salaries to its collectors to free captives and debtors, for travelers in need to win over hearts of new converts and for the cause of Allah (Surah Tawbah 9:60).***

As a cornerstone of the faith, zakat is highly significant in both the Quran and the Hadith.

Those who believe and lead a righteous life, and observe the Contact Prayers (Salat), and give the obligatory charity (Zakat), they receive their recompense from their Lord; they will have nothing to fear, nor will they grieve (Surah Al Baqarah [2:277]).

You shall observe the Contact Prayers (Salat) and give the obligatory charity (Zakat), and bow down with those who bow down (Surah Al Baqarah [2:43]).

You shall observe the Contact Prayers (Salat) and give the obligatory charity (Zakat). Any good you send forth on behalf of your souls, you will find it at Allah. Allah is seer of everything you do (Surah Al Baqarah [2:110]).

“The wealth of a person does not decrease by paying Zakat” (Sahih Bukhari)

“One who pays Zakat, Allah will make their wealth increase” (Sahih Bukhari)

5. Hajj

Hajj is the fifth pillar of Islam. It is a visit to Al Ka'bah, the house of Allah in Makkah once in a lifetime by those muslims who can afford and physically fit to make the journey.

This act of worship which must be done once in a lifetime if

1. You have wealth to do so
2. You have health to do so

Once the conditions met, then one should not delay this act of worship. *Al Ka'bah is the first house ever built for the sole purpose of worship of Allah. Indeed, the first House [of worship] established for mankind was that at Makkah - blessed and a guidance for the worlds (Surah Al Imran 3:96)*. The Hajj is a pilgrimage that occurs during the Islamic month of Dhu al-Hijjah to the holy city of Makkah, and derives from an ancient Arab practice. Every able-bodied Muslim is obliged to make the pilgrimage to Makkah at least once in their lifetime if he or she can afford it. When the pilgrim is around 10 km (6.2 mi) from Makkah, he must dress in Ihram clothing, which consists of two white sheets. Both men and women are required to make the pilgrimage to Makkah. The main rituals of the Hajj include:

- Putting an Ihram (Surah Al Baqarah 2:200)
- Going around Ka'bah seven times (Surah Al Baqarah 2:200) called Tawaf.
- A fast walk between as safa and al Marwa near al ka'bah (Surah Al Baqarah 2:158)
- Visiting and staying at Mina Arafat and Muzdalifah (Surah Al Baqarah 2:198)
- Throwing pebbles at three fixed places in Mina (Surah Al Baqarah 2:200)
- Shaving or Trimming hairs (Surah Al Baqarah 2:200; Surah Al Fath 48:27)
- Sacrifice of an animal (Surah Al Baqarah 2:196, 200)

The pilgrim, or the haji, is honored in their community. Hajj should be an expression of devotion to God, not a mean to gain social standing. The believer should be self-aware and examine their intentions in performing the pilgrimage. This should lead to constant striving for self-improvement. A pilgrimage made at any time other than the Hajj season is called an Umrah, and while not mandatory is strongly recommended. Hajj has it in all the lessons of Salat zakat and sawm. We offer prayer to remember Allah, pay zakat to please Allah, and fast only for His sake. At the time of salah we face towards al ka'bah, but during Hajj we go there in person. Zakat teaches us to pay part of our savings for welfare and other good causes for Allah's sake but during hajj we sacrifice much more of our money for the pleasure of Allah. Sawm teaches us to control ourselves during the daylight hours from eating drinking smoking and other restrictions. But in the state of Irham there are many more restrictions (eating and drinking are not prohibited in the state of Ihram though).

What we learn from Hajj is that we belong to Allah, we will return to Him and we must do as He command us to be successful in this life and akhirah.

Six Articles of Faith

In Islam, Muslim doctrine is often summarized in "Six Articles of Faith." These are the fundamental beliefs which every Muslim must ascribe to.

1. One God (Allah)

The central belief in Islam, and arguably the most important theme of Islam, is that there is one God. A Muslim can't do shirk, it is considered a great crime (Zulm-e-Azeem). We know from the ayah of the Quran that Allah (SWT) can forgive any sin, but cannot forgive the person who associates partners with Allah (SWT) because of it the direct negation of Kalima.

2. Belief in Angels

Belief in angels is fundamental to the faith of Islam. Angels are a special creation of Allah. By comparison Adam, the first man was created from clay and the jinn from fire. Iblis the devil, is from the Jinn. Some people think Iblis was the leader of angels. The Quran says Iblis was from among the jinn (18:50).

Allah gave angels the qualities and powers necessary to carry out their duties. According to the Quran, angels do not possess free will, and therefore worship and obey God in total obedience. Angels' duties include communicating revelations from God, glorifying God, recording every person's actions, and taking a person's soul at the time of death. They are made of light and they are numerous in number. Angels are the sinless servants of Allah's will. The duty of angels is to glorify and praise Allah. They never get tired. They are always ready to obey Allah. They do not sleep nor do they require the things humans would need. We cannot see angels until they appear in human form. Angel Jibrail one appeared in human form before a gathering of the companions of the Prophet (PBUH). He came to teach them but only Prophet knew that he was an angel. Angel can take any suitable appearance to carry out their duties.

According to the correct opinion, there are 4 angels with every human being all the time. Two angels are at left & right, writing our bad and virtuous deeds and two at the front and back, protecting ourselves. As per Hazrat Ali bin Abi Talib (RA) that when a person has to meet his death, these angels move away.

The following verses are in reference to those angels: *“[Remember] that the two receivers [recording angels] receive [him], one sitting on the right and one on the left. Not a word does he utter, but there is a watcher by him ready [to record it]” (Surah Kah 50:17-18).*

Angels will welcome in Heaven those of us who obey Allah's commands and will throw the wrong doers into Hell (*Surah Az Zumar 39,71-74*).

Several angels are mentioned by name in the Quran, with a description of their responsibilities:

- **Jibril (Gabriel)** - in charge of communicating Allah's words to His prophets
- **Israfeel** - in charge of blowing the trumpet to mark the Day of Judgment
- **Mika'il** - in charge of weather, natural forces and provision for human needs
- **Munkar and Nakir** - after death, these angels will question souls in the grave about their faith and deeds
- **Malak Am-Maut (Angel of Death)** - in charge of taking souls after death
- **Kiraman Katibeen** – They are called the honorable recorders. Not a single word we say goes unrecorded.
- **Malik** - guardian of hell
- **Ridwan** - guardian of heaven

Everything in the heavens and every creature on the earth prostrates to Allah, as do the angels. They are not puffed up with pride. They fear their Lord above them and do everything they are ordered to do. (Quran 16:49-50)

3. Prophets (AS)

Muslims identify the Prophets (AS) of Islam as those humans chosen by Allah (SWT) to be Allah's Messengers.

Allah (SWT) says that we have sent upon every nation, a Rasool, who said Worship one Allah and don't worship false Gods.

It is a belief of all Muslims that prophethood is a divine duty and mission from Allah; He appoints to it those whom He selects from among His good servants, from those who are exalted among mankind. Some are able to perform miracles to prove their claim. Islam teaches that all of Allah's (SWT) Messengers preached the message of Islam; i.e. submission to the will of Allah (SWT). Allah sent them to the humanity to be a guide to what is of benefit to them and is in their interest in this world and the next; to purify them from immorality, evil deeds and harmful customs and also to teach people wisdom and knowledge and the ways of happiness and goodness until they attain to the perfection for which they were created and reach the biggest position in both worlds.

He who obeys the Messenger, obeys Allah (An Nisaa: 80)

The Quran mentions Prophet Adam (AS), Prophet Noah (Nuh) (AS), Prophet Abraham (Ibrahim) (AS), Prophet Moses (Musa) (AS) and Prophet Jesus (Isa) (AS) among others, as being Prophets (AS) of Islam. Muslims believe that God finally sent Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) as the last Prophet (Seal of the Prophets) to convey the final summation of all divine revelations to the whole of humanity. This final revelation is believed to be contained in the Quran as well as being exemplified in the life, words, actions and personal characteristics of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) called the Sunnah ("the trodden path"). The collections of sayings and actions of the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) are known as the Hadith.

4. Revelations

Allah's blessings are countless. He(SWT) provides us all with we need. Allah's greatest favour to mankind is his guidance contained in the revealed book. The pure, perfect and the most useful knowledge comes only from Allah, the Wisest and the Greatest. (***Surah Al Baqarah 2:147***) ***The truth is from your Lord, so never be among the doubters.*** Muslims believe that God dictated His revelations to the various Prophets. A Muslim believe in all the revealed books which are mentioned in Quran.

Islam teaches that parts of the previously revealed scriptures, the Tawrat (Torah of Moses), the Zabur (Psalms of David) and the Injil (Gospel of Jesus), had become distorted, either in interpretation and/or in content. The text available today were written by their followers many years after the death of their Prophets. The writers have changed and distorted Allah's words. They have mixed divine words with that of human beings.

The Quran is viewed by Muslims as the final revelation and literal word of God preserved in its original form. For Muslims, all earlier revelations through Adam (AS), Moses (Musa (AS)), David (Dawud (AS)), Jesus (Isa (AS)) and others are clearly and unambiguously restated in the Quran, being the fulfillment of all Divine revelation.

Muslims believe that the Quran was revealed to Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) by Allah SWT) through the angel Gabriel (Jibril (AS)) on many occasions. Muslims usually regard only the original scripture, revealed in Arabic, as being the true Quran. The holy Quran to mankind's guidance is like the soul in related to the body. The message of Quran is valid for all times and claims. When the Muslim recites Quran he will feel matchless tranquility in his heart.

5. Resurrection and Judgment

Death is an undeniable nature event for all living things. It comes and will come to every one of us. Death brings an end to temporary life on this earth. Islam reminds us to remain conscious of the fact that death can arrive at any time.

Islam holds that the world is a place of trial and that man is being judged there. He will have to present a report on all he accomplished in his lifetime at some point. He will be revived in a new realm after death, where he will receive the rewards or punishment for his good and bad conduct. In the Hereafter, individuals who follow the Lord's instructions in this life will experience eternal happiness, while those who defy Him will have to deal with the painful consequences of their actions. According to the Quran:

And every man's deeds have We fastened around his neck, and on the day of resurrection will We bring forth a book which shall be proffered to him wide open: (It will be said to him) "Read your record: This day there need be none but yourself to make out an account against you." (Surah Al Isra 17: 13-14)

Whoever comes with a good deed, for him there shall be the like of it tenfold, while whoever comes with an ill-deed, he shall be required with only one like it, and they shall not be treated unjustly. (Surah Al Inam 6:160)

Muslims believe in the "Day of Resurrection" and the Quran emphasizes the resurrection of the body, which is a distinct break with the pre-Islamic Arabian understanding of death. Muslims believe that on 'The Day of Resurrection' all humankind will be judged according to their good and bad deeds.

The Quran describes this as,

"Whoever does an atom's weight of good, will see it; and whoever does an atom's weight of evil, will see it" [Surah Al-Zalzalah:7-8]

The Quran mentions certain sins that are punishable by hell, such as disbelief in God and dishonesty. However, the Quran also teaches that God will forgive the sins of those who sincerely repent and that one's good deeds, such as charity, prayer and compassion will be rewarded with entry to heaven. To prepare ourselves for this day we need to follow the guidance given through the prophets. The Qur'an gives many warnings about the Day of Judgement and Muslims are encouraged to question themselves: Am I ready to face death? What have I done to prepare for that day?

6. Qadr (Divine Decree)

Muslims believe that Allah (SWT) has full knowledge and control over all that occurs. Everything in the world that occurs, good or bad, has been pre-ordained and nothing can happen unless permitted by Allah (SWT). According to Muslim theologians, although events are pre-ordained, humans possess free will in that each of us has the faculty to choose between right and wrong, and so each of us is responsible for her/his own actions.

Muslims believe that we can never know the reasons behind the universe, but that it is all part of a larger picture. God is the all-knowing one; his knowledge is complete and perfect. He even knows the secrets of our hearts. *'He knows what is within the heavens and earth and knows what you conceal and what you declare. And God is Knowing of that within the breasts.'* Qur'an 64:4

References

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