
INTRODUCTION TO

ISLAM



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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION TO ISLAM	04
THE TESTIMONY OF FAITH	08
THE REMAINING 4 PILLARS OF ISLAM	13
THE PILLARS OF FAITH/IMAN	19

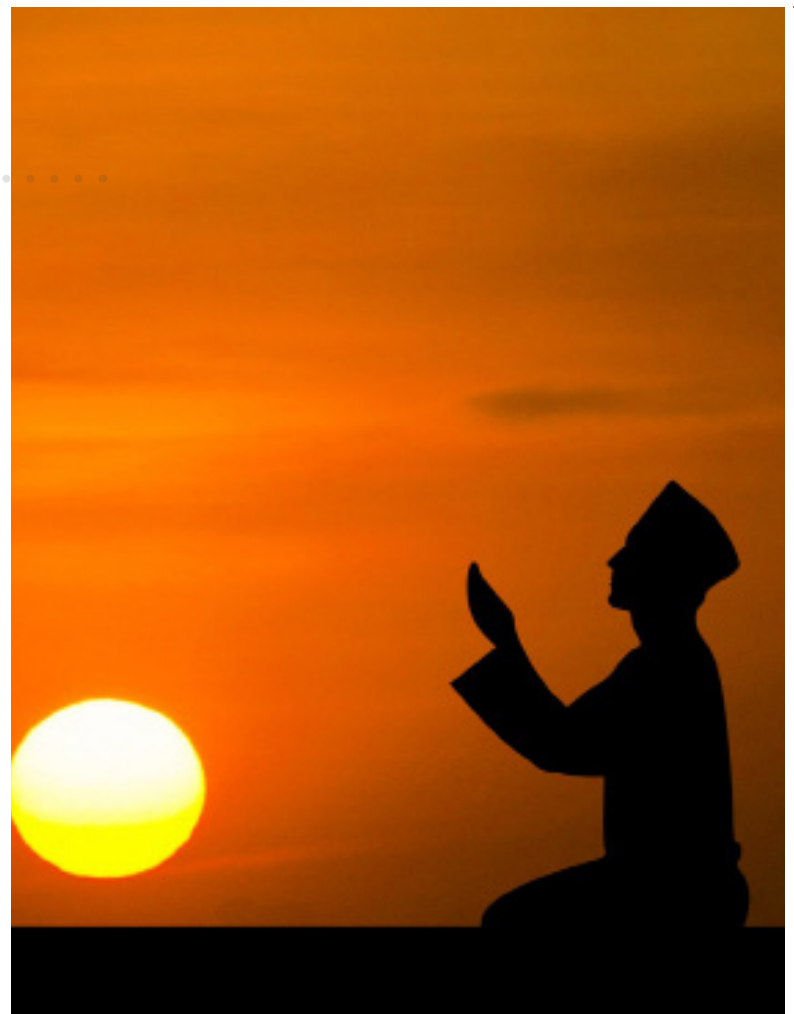


01

**INTRODUCTION
TO ISLAM**

Islam is the religion of Allah that was sent with all of the Prophets, starting with Prophet Adam and which was followed by subsequent Prophets, from Noah to Abraham, Moses to Jesus and all the way to our Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ). This is why we believe in and love all of the Prophets and Messengers. They all came with the same message to worship Allah alone. **They came with Islam.**

Linguistically, the word 'Islam' means to humble and submit. Therefore, as Muslims we completely and willingly submit ourselves to Allah alone. This means we worship Him alone, obey His commands and follow His path, hoping for His reward and fearing His punishment. Islam means to give precedence to Allah's commands and orders over and above our own wants and desires. The word 'salam' or 'peace' comes from the same root word as peace requires humbleness.



- This is why Islam means to wake up and pray Fajr rather than sleep in.
- It means to give obligatory annual charity (zakah) rather save that money and spend it elsewhere.
- It means to fast the long hours of Ramadan instead of eating and drinking.

For the believers, submitting to Allah and showing humility before Him is done out of love for Allah and with reverence for Him.

This was the way of all the Prophets who came from the time of Adam until our Prophet (ﷺ). Allah describes many of the Prophets in the Qur'an as being Muslim or following Islam.

Allah says about Noah,

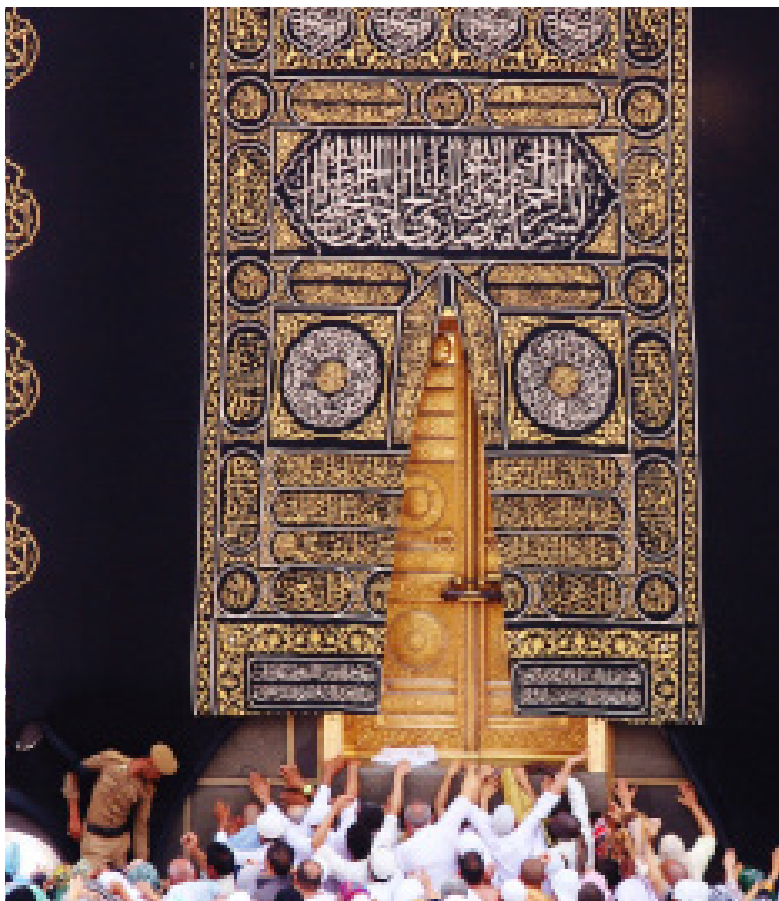
"...and I have been commanded to be of the Muslims." [10:72]



Allah describes Ibrahim,

"Abraham was neither a Jew nor a Christian. He was upright, a Muslim, never an idolater." [3:67]





Therefore, every Prophet came with that same essential message of submitting to God and worshipping Him alone, and every person who followed the pristine teachings of their Prophets were called Muslims.

However, over time those teachings were corrupted and the followers of those Prophets changed their teachings and began to worship others besides Allah. Allah then sent His final Messenger to all of humankind. Our Prophet (ﷺ) came with Allah's final teachings. Thus, he was the final one in a long line of Prophets and Messengers who all came with the same call and message.

The Prophet (ﷺ) said,

“My example and the example of those Prophets who came before me is like the example of a person building a house. He builds it well except for one missing brick in the corner. As people walk around and admire the house they say, ‘If only there wasn’t a missing brick.’ I am that brick and the seal of the Prophets.” [Bukhari & Muslim]

It is therefore important to understand that Islam is not a ‘new’ religion or the last one to come along, but the original religion and the first. This is why we should be proud of the way of life that Allah has chosen for us.

Allah says,

“Today I have perfected your religion for you, completed My blessings upon you, and chose as your religion Islam.” [5:3]

Allah chose Islam for you and there is no greater honour or blessing.

To be Muslim means to know Allah, know who the Prophet (ﷺ) was, know the Qur’an, understand how to worship Allah and live your life in a way pleasing to Allah, and to work for the everlasting life of the Hereafter by preparing for the Day of Judgement and using this life to build for the next. It is the only religion Allah will accept and the only path that will bring salvation in this life and the next.

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The beauty of this religion comes from it being a religion of justice and beauty. It is a religion which focuses on the spiritual as well as physical, it gives every person their due rights and encourages every praiseworthy attribute and characteristic. It tells us to:

- Stay away from evil
- Sin
- Poor Character
- Oppression and harming others.

Its beauty also comes from its ease and how Allah has placed a solution for every difficulty and challenge we may face.

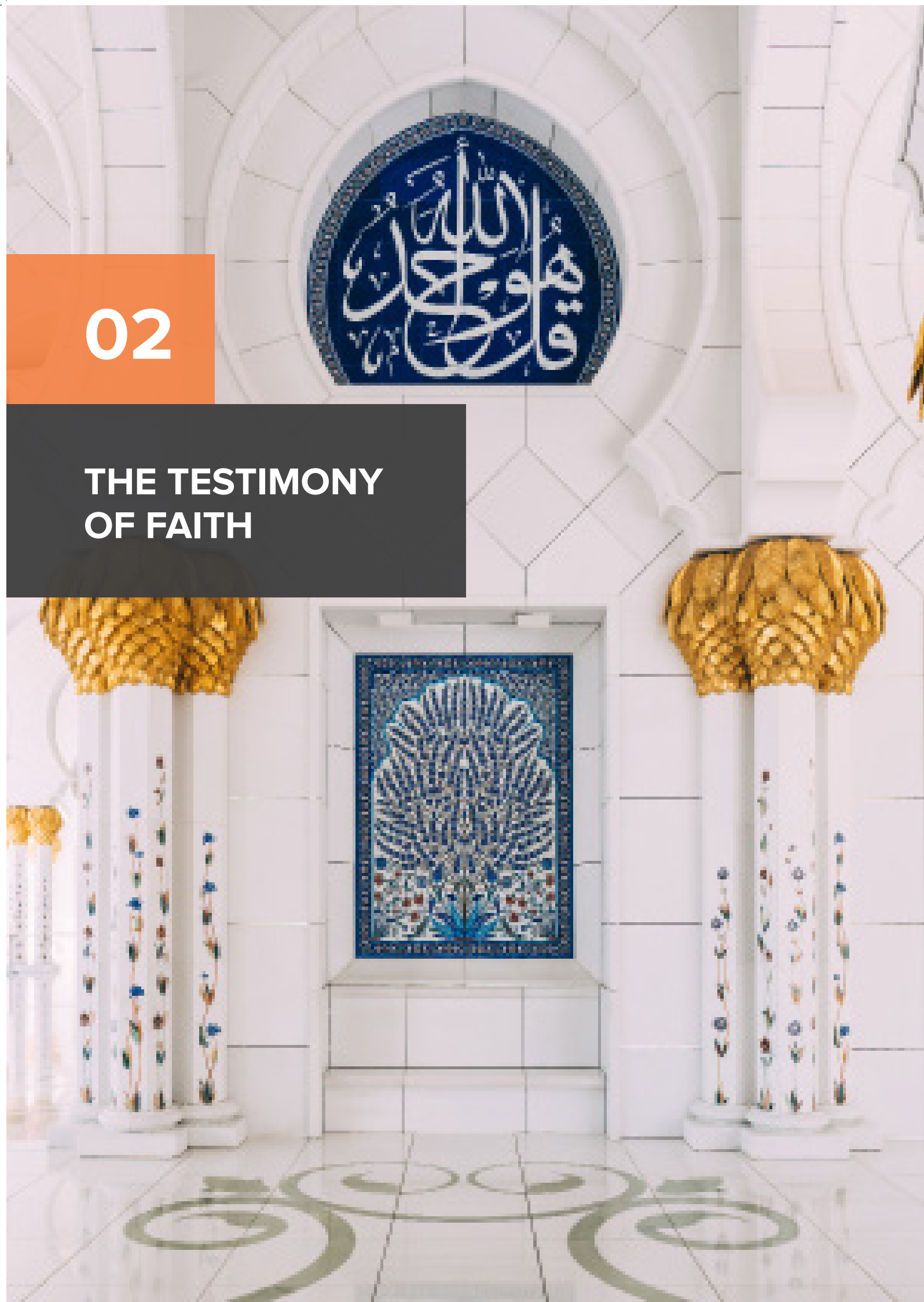
Allah says,

“So [you believers], say, “We believe in God and in what was sent down to us and what was sent down to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes, and what was given to Moses, Jesus, and all the prophets by their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and we devote ourselves to Him.” [2:136]



02

THE TESTIMONY OF FAITH



Islam is based on five pillars.

1. The Shahaadah
2. Salah (prayer)
3. Alms (Zakat)
4. Fasting (Sawm)
5. Hajj (Pilgrimage)

'Pillars' essentially means that they are the fundamental actions that all Muslims must perform. They are obligatory and not optional. It is the bare minimum Muslims must do.

The Prophet (ﷺ) said,

“Islam is built upon five; to testify that Allah alone deserves all worship and that Muhammad is His Messenger, to pray, give zakah, fast Ramadan and perform pilgrimage for those able to do so.” [Bukhari & Muslim]

We can therefore imagine Islam to be like a building. Any building requires a strong foundation and pillars so that the building will stand for decades. Islam is our house that gives us shelter and protection from Satan and his armies, it provides warmth and comfort for us because in it we follow Allah's religion. However, if a single pillar is missing, the house becomes weak and unstable. It is no longer a solid structure.





The Shahadah

The main foundation of Islam is the testimony of faith. This is what is uttered by people who convert to Islam. It is the declaration that summarises and encapsulates Islam. That is to declare that only Allah alone is worthy of all worship and that Muhammad is His servant and final Messenger.

Let us first look more closely at the first half of this testimony of faith:

In Arabic, it is to say ‘**La ilaha illa Allah**’ = لا إله إلا الله

It consists of two parts;

- Negation
- Affirmation.

We deny something and affirm something else. We negate anyone or anything from being God, no matter who or what, how great or big, how pious or righteous. This includes angels, humans, inanimate objects and celestial bodies. Having negated this, we affirm Allah alone as the One who deserves all worship.

This is why the first part of the testimony is often translated as ‘There is no god but Allah’, but what is actually meant is, ‘None has the right to be worshipped except Allah.’ That’s because people have claimed many things as their gods.

The Quraysh at the time of the Prophet (ﷺ) used to have 360 idols in and around the Ka’bah. Yet, all of these other deities are false gods.

In order for us to really understand and internalise the meaning of the first part of the testimony of faith, it needs to be based on **seven conditions**:

1) Knowledge – we have to know what this testimony means and entails, so we live according to it. If we say the testimony of faith but still perform acts of worship towards others, such as believing they can answer our supplications, we have not really based our testimony on knowledge. The Prophet (ﷺ) said, Certainty

The Prophet (ﷺ) said,
“Whoever dies knowing that none has the right to be worshipped except Allah, will have Paradise” [Muslim]



2) Certainty – we have to be certain in what we’re saying and have no doubt. The Prophet (ﷺ) said to his Companion, Abu Hurayrah,

The Prophet (ﷺ) said,
“Whoever you meet testifying to worshipping Allah alone with certainty, then give them glad tidings of Paradise. [Muslim]



3) **Submission** – this means we accept Allah’s right to be worshipped alone in our hearts, and we say it upon our tongues. We accept therefore everything which Allah has told us.

4) **Acceptance** – we must submit ourselves to Allah, giving preference to Him and His commands over and above our desires and wants.

5) **Truthfulness** – we have to be truthful and honest in our acceptance of Allah’s right to be worshipped alone. This honesty is found in the heart before it is found elsewhere.

6) **Sincerity** – we purify our hearts and actions from any form of associating partners with Allah. We believe Allah alone is the Creator, Provider and the One who grants life and death. We therefore pray to Him, supplicate to Him, take oaths by His name and worship Him alone.

7) **Love** – we love this testimony of faith and everything it represents more than anything else.

The second part of the testimony of faith - محمد رسول الله - is to believe that Muhammad is the final Messenger. This means that we believe in the Prophet (ﷺ) as a Messenger that Allah sent as a guide for us. We accept his teachings and commandments, following what he told us to do and staying away from what he forbade. We follow his path and example, learning about his life and teachings as this is a sign of our belief in him and love for him.



We love him more than we love our family and our wealth, and even more than we love ourselves. We believe in his truthfulness, in all of the information he gave to us, whether from the stories of the past or the prophecies of the future. We therefore sacrifice our own wants and desires for what the Prophet (ﷺ) said and commanded.

All of the above is what it means to say the testimony of faith.



03

THE REMAINING 4 PILLARS OF ISLAM

The second pillar of Islam is the prayer.

It is the most important action in Islam after the testimony of faith. It was the first of the remaining four pillars of Islam to be obligated and the only one to have become an obligation before the Prophet (ﷺ) migrated to Madinah.

The prayer is the connection we have to Allah at least five times a day where we stop whatever we may be doing and turn to our Lord and Creator, humbling ourselves before Him.

The prayer was obligated during the Night Journey wherein miraculously the Prophet (ﷺ) went from Makkah to Jerusalem to the heavens and back. This journey came at a time when the Prophet (ﷺ) had lost his wife Khadijah, and his uncle Abu Talib. Allah gave the Prophet (ﷺ) a way in which he could directly connect to Allah through the prayer.



That's why the Prophet (ﷺ) told us,

“The closest a person is to their Lord is during prostration.” [Muslim]



The Prophet (ﷺ) would spend much of his day and night in prayer. He wouldn't only offer the obligatory prayers, but would offer the voluntary prayers too such as the night prayer. When we pray, we turn to Allah and He turns to us. When we recite the opening chapter of the Qur'an in prayer, Allah responds to us. When we humble ourselves before Allah by bowing and prostrating, He raises us in reward and honour. When we offer the prayer, Allah rewards us and forgives our sins.

The prayer has many virtues and rewards. It safeguards us from sin, washes away our sins, gives us a light from Allah that guides us, it raises our ranks and makes heavy our good deeds. In fact, the prayer is so virtuous and rewarding that actions which come before the prayer such as ritual ablution (wudu) and waiting for the prayer in the mosque are also rewarding.

That's why the Prophet (ﷺ) told us,

“The example of the five prayers is like the example of a river running outside your house that you bathe in five times a day.” [Muslim]





Due to its importance it is one of the first things that Allah will question us about on the Day of Judgement. There are five obligatory daily prayers;

- One at dawn (Fajr)
- One just after midday (Dohr)
- One in the afternoon (Asr)
- One at sunset (Maghrib)
- One at night (Isha)

The prayer consists of a set number of rituals performed in order, from standing, to bowing, prostrating and sitting. Within each position there are set verses recited or supplications and remembrances which we say.

If we understand from the above that the prayer is extremely important, the opposite is also true, i.e. that abandoning the prayer is an extremely grave issue. It is from the most major of sins. The Prophet (ﷺ) told us that the prayer is the difference between a Muslim and a disbeliever. [Muslim]

Allah says in the Qur'an,

“But there came after them generations who neglected prayer and were driven by their own desires. These will come face to face with their evil.” [19:59]

The third pillar of Islam is paying zakah or the obligatory charity. From the beauty of Islam is that we do not look to benefitting ourselves individually or our families alone, we also care deeply about others in our communities. Those who are less fortunate than we are or who have specific financial burdens, have rights upon us. We fulfil this right by paying zakah if it is eligible upon us.

Allah often mentions prayer and zakah together in the Qur'an to show its importance. It is a means by which we purify ourselves and our wealth. Zakah literally means purification.



Allah says,

“[O Muhammad], in order to cleanse and purify them, accept from their wealth a charity and pray for them.” [9:103]



Giving charity in this way allows us to empathise with our less fortunate brothers and sisters, and makes us more appreciative and grateful of Allah's blessings upon us.

Zakah is only due if a person has reached a minimum amount of wealth and a lunar year has since passed. Also, zakah is not due on all wealth but on money, gold and silver, certain livestock and agricultural produce and on business profits. It is given to certain eligible groups; **the poor and needy, administrators who work to collect and distribute zakah, new Muslims, slaves wishing to buy their freedom, people in debt, to spread the religion and destitute travellers.**

Not paying zakah is from the major sins.

Allah speaks of its punishment in the Qur'an,

“...tell those who hoard gold and silver instead of giving in God's cause that they will have a grievous punishment: on the Day it is heated up in Hell's Fire and used to brand their foreheads, sides, and backs, they will be told, 'This is what you hoarded up for yourselves! Now feel the pain of what you hoarded!'” [9:34-35]





The fourth pillar of Islam is fasting the month of Ramadan.

Allah says,

“O you who believe, fasting has been prescribed for you as it was for those who came before you that you may attain piety.” [2:183]

اللَّهُ

Fasting this month is extremely virtuous and has great rewards.

The Prophet (ﷺ) told us that:

“Whoever fasts this month with sincere faith and hoping for reward will have all of their sins forgiven” [Bukhari & Muslim]

مُحَمَّدٌ

The month of Ramadan begins with the sighting of the moon. We then fast each day of this month from dawn until sunset. During that time, it is forbidden to consume anything orally, whether, eating, drinking or smoking. It is also forbidden to engage in sexual intercourse. Menstruation and post-natal bleeding also break the fast for women.

Every healthy Muslim over the age of puberty must fast. However, there are concessions available for certain groups who can break their fast. These people are;

- The sick for the duration of their illness
- Travellers
- The old and infirm
- Pregnant and breastfeeding women.

Women who are on their menses or post-natal bleeding must also break their fast. These groups of people make up their fasts at a later date once their concessions finish. For those who cannot physically fast at any time such as the elderly, they feed one poor person for each day of fasting missed.

The fifth pillar of Islam is Pilgrimage. There are two types of pilgrimage, the smaller form which is known as 'umrah and the greater form which is known as hajj. Pilgrimage is a journey which is made to Makkah, the holiest city in Islam, to visit the first house of worship built; the Ka'bah. Pilgrimage is only an obligation once in a lifetime, and then only if someone has the physical and financial ability to do so.

Makkah is a special place, one which many Prophets came to, including Adam, Ibrahim, his son Isma'il and our Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ).

During pilgrimage we visit Makkah and some of its surrounding areas, performing a series of rituals which show our submission to Allah. It is a journey of the body and soul to worship Allah, and people in the past would spend years saving up for it, and then travel for weeks and months in order to complete this pilgrimage.





04

PILLARS OF
FAITH / IMAN

As a person is fulfilling the pillars of Islam, they can then start to work on the pillars of Iman or faith. Where the pillars of Islam deal primarily with outward actions and duties, the pillars of faith pertain to the inner actions of the heart and particularly, matters of belief. The pillars of faith are therefore complimentary to the pillars of Islam but also of a higher level.

There are six pillars of faith as the Prophet (ﷺ) mentioned. They are belief in;

1. Allah
2. His angels
3. His divinely revealed books
4. His prophets
5. the Day of Judgement
6. belief in divine decree.
- 7.

- Let us look at the first of these six pillars: Belief in Allah means to believe in Allah's existence. Allah tells us that we know of His existence when we look at the creation of the heavens and earth and all within it, and when we look at ourselves and the many abilities Allah has placed within us.

Allah says,

“Have they not contemplated the realm of the heavens and earth and all that God created...” [7:185]



How can all this come except from a Creator? That Creator must then be perfect in every sense. He must be the One who controls everything. Therefore, He is the ultimate provider and sustainer. He is the One who controls everything in the heavens and earth and nothing happens except by His permission. He also gives life and death to all creatures. Allah tells us that we all know deep down that we call for divine help at times of most need.

Allah says,

“When trouble befalls man he cries out to Us, whether lying on his side, sitting or standing, but as soon as We relieve him of his trouble he goes on his way as if he had never cried out to Us to remove his trouble.” 10:12]



Allah therefore has the most perfect names and attributes. He is perfect in every way. He can see all, hear all and He knows all. None of his attributes have any weakness or deficiency. He is Most Merciful, Most Kind and Most Generous yet also severe in His punishment. Allah mentions in the Qur'an a number of His names and attributes so that we can learn about Him, increase in love for Him and worship Him better.

If Allah is therefore the Creator of us, He alone is worthy of all worship. It makes sense that we should then obey Him and listen to Him, especially when He has told us that life on this earth is a test and that we were not created for no reason.

Allah says,

“I created jinn and mankind only to worship Me.” [51:56]



It is therefore wrong to pray to other than Allah, supplicate to other than Him, sacrifice for other than Him, or divert any act of worship to anything else for whatever reason.

The disbelief of the Quraysh during the time of the Prophet (ﷺ) was not that they refused to believe in Allah's existence. In fact, they accepted Allah as the Creator and Lord, but they believed that there were other lesser gods that could be worshipped which would then act as intermediaries.

Allah needs no partner. He does not need a spouse or son. He does not need helpers or assistants. He is All-Powerful and the Almighty. Allah tells us in the Qur'an that if He wants something to happen, He commands it to 'be' and it is. The whole message of Islam, the reason for the coming of all the prophets and the revelation of all the scriptures was to explain to us this one fundamental issue.

Therefore, believing in Allah and worshipping Him alone is the essence of what makes someone a Muslim, and worshipping other than Allah takes a person outside of the fold of Islam.

- The second pillar of faith is to believe in the angels. This is a creation that Allah created from light. They have no free will but do as Allah commands. They exist only to worship and obey Allah. This is why when Allah commanded that they prostrate to Adam they did so except for Satan who was not from them.

There are some angels that have specific roles, like the archangel Jibril who brings revelation to the Prophets. There are angels who are entrusted with the rain, the mountains, blow life into babies in the womb, record our actions all the way to the gatekeepers of Paradise and Hellfire. It is from the pillars of faith to believe in all of the angels and what we have been told about them.

- The third pillar of faith is to believe in the divinely revealed scriptures. We believe that Allah revealed books to some of His prophets. These books contained guidance for those nations and were Allah's commands for those people so that they would know how to worship Him, what to do and what to avoid.

For example, Musa had the Torah, Isa the Injeel and our Prophet (ﷺ) the Qur'an. We accept and believe in all of these books and others which we do not know the names of. Many of the scriptures however, were lost or changed over time.

We also believe that the Qur'an is the last of these books revealed to the Prophet (ﷺ). As such, it is Allah's final revelation and abrogates everything which came before it.

The Qur'an is unique in that it is perfectly preserved, having been memorised by millions of Muslims throughout history, which is why there is only one version of the Qur'an. As such, part of belief in this pillar is to accept the Qur'an, believe in it, love and honour it, follow its teachings and not go against it.

- The fourth pillar of faith is belief in the **Prophets of Allah**. Allah sent many Prophets throughout the ages, beginning with the Prophet Adam and ending with our Prophet Mohammad (ﷺ). The Prophets were guides and examples for their nations, clarifying the path which leads to Allah, and explaining what Allah has allowed and what He has forbidden. They came warning of Allah's punishment for those who disbelieve and giving the glad tidings of His reward for those who believe.

Allah chose these individuals and gave them divine revelation which we call prophethood.

Allah says,

"The Messenger believes in what has been sent down to him from his Lord, as do the faithful. They all believe in God, His angels, His scriptures, and His messengers. 'We make no distinction between any of His messengers,' they say, 'We hear and obey. Grant us Your forgiveness, our Lord. To You we all return!'" [2:285]



As Muslims, we believe in all of the Prophets of Allah, those who we know of by name such as Ibrahim, Musa, Isa and the many others mentioned in the Qur'an, as well as the many others whom we do not know about in detail.

Allah says,

"We have sent other messengers before you – some We have mentioned to you and some We have not." [40:78]



Thus, we believe that they were all sent by Allah to their nations calling them to worship Allah alone. We love and honour all of them. We believe that they were humans and we believe that Allah favoured them and gave them a higher status than others. We believe that some prophets had a higher status than others such as the Prophets of the highest determination;

- Nuh/Ibrahim
- Musa
- Isa and
- Prophet Mohammad (ﷺ)

We believe that our Prophet (ﷺ) is the best amongst them. As such, we understand that the Prophet (ﷺ) came with the Qur'an and explained it through his life and teachings. One cannot be understood without the other. Therefore, there is a crucial relationship between the two in correctly understanding our religion.

- The fifth pillar of faith is belief in the **Day of Judgement**.

Allah says,

“Goodness does not consist in turning your face towards East or West. The truly good are those who believe in God and the Last Day, in the angels, the Scripture, and the prophets...”

[2:177]



We believe that Allah will resurrect everyone who has ever lived and hold them to account for their deeds on the Day of Judgement.

Allah is All-Just, and from His justice is that people who have done wrong and evil in this life should be held to account for this, especially if they had no accounting in this world.

Allah says,

“We will set up scales of justice for the Day of Resurrection so that no one can be wronged in the least, and if there should be even the weight of a mustard seed, We shall bring it out- We take excellent account.” [21:47]



We believe therefore that we shall all die one day, after which our ability to do more good generally ceases. The timing of the Day of Judgement is known only to Allah, but there are signs which are mentioned in the Qur'an and by the Prophet (ﷺ) that show the closeness of that Day.

When the Day of Judgement does come, we will all stand before Allah and await our accounting. Allah will judge on that Day with complete justice, even the smallest of good or bad deeds will be weighed. Unlike this life, the next life will be eternal and there will be no death. For the good doers, they will have the reward of Paradise with all of its pleasures and honours. In it, they will not experience sadness, pain or illness but will have all that they desire and more. For the evil doers, they have the punishment of Hellfire with all of its torments and horrors. In it, they will have no happiness or joy, but only pain, being endlessly burned and scorched in the Fire.

- The sixth and final pillar of faith is belief in divine decree. This is to believe that Allah as the All-Perfect Creator has knowledge of everything which takes place in the universe and only that which He allows can take place. Allah has wisdom in His decree. As the Creator, Allah has knowledge of everything.

Allah has allowed people free will and so they have the choice to do good or evil. Ultimately, Allah knows what they will do and allows them the ability to do it so that they can exercise their free will. His knowledge is complete. Allah then wrote everything down in the Preserved Tablet.

Allah says,

“Are you [Prophet] not aware that Allah knows all that is in the heavens and earth? All this is written in a Record” [22:70]



It is important to remember when discussing Allah’s decree, that firstly, Allah is just and does not oppress anyone. They are our deeds and choices, Allah records them and he will give us the consequences of them. Secondly, the decree of Allah can have ease or it can have hardship. However, for the believer even the hardship, which may be in the form of difficulties and trials, are good as they bring that person closer to Allah through patience and worship.

We ask Allah to guide us to **the straight path, ameen.**

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