# What Are the Pillars of Islam?

## Question:

We hope that you can explain the pillars of Islam for us.

## Answer:

Praise be to Allah.

## Islam is about beliefs and laws

Islam is based on five pillars which the Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) has explained for us.

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

بني الإسلام على خمس شهادة أن لا إله إلا الله , وأن محمداً رسول الله و إقام الصلاة , وإيتاء الزكاة والحج وصوم رمضان

**“Islam is built upon five [pillars]: the testimony that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah; establishing regular prayer (salah); paying the zakah; Hajj (pilgrimage) and fasting Ramadan.”**

[Sahih al-Bukhaari, no. 8]

Islam is both belief and laws, in which Allah and His Messenger have told us what is halal and what is haram, morals and good manners, acts of worship and how to interact with people, rights and duties, and scenes of the resurrection. When Allah completed this religion, He chose it to be the way of life for all of mankind until the Hour begins:

اليوم أكملت لكم دينكم وأتممت عليكم نعمتي ورضيت لكم الإسلام دينا

“This day, I have perfected your religion for you, completed My Favour upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion.”

[al-Maidah 5:3 – interpretation of the meaning]

## What are the 5 pillars of Islam?

These are the pillars of Islam and the principles upon which it is based:

## The first pillar of Islam: al-Shahadatayn (the twin testimony of faith)

This means that a person believes that Allah alone is the Lord, Sovereign and Controller, the Creator and Provider. He affirms all His most beautiful names and the sublime attributes that Allah has affirmed for Himself or that His Prophet affirmed for Him. He believes that Allah alone, and no one else, is the Only One Who is deserving of worship, as Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

بديع السماوات والأرض أنى يكون له ولد ولم تكن له صاحبة وخلق كل شيء وهو بكل شيء عليم ، ذلكم الله ربكم لا إله إلا الله هو خالق كل شيء فاعبدوه وهو على كل شيء وكيل

**“He is the Originator of the heavens and the earth. How can He have children when He has no wife? He created all things and He is the All-Knower of everything.**

**Such is Allah, your Lord! La ilaha illa Huwa (none has the right to be worshipped but He), the Creator of all things. So worship Him (Alone), and He is the Wakeel (Trustee, Disposer of affairs or Guardian) over all things.”** [al-An’am 6:101-102]

And he believes that Allah sent His Messenger Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), and revealed to him the Quran, and commanded him to convey this religion to all of mankind. He believes that loving Allah and His Messenger and obeying them are duties which are obligatory upon all of mankind, and that love of Allah can only be realized by following His Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him):

قل إن كنتم تحبون الله فاتبعوني يحببكم الله ويغفر لكم ذنوبكم والله غفور رحيم

**“Say (O Muhammad to mankind): ‘If you (really) love Allah, then follow me (i.e. accept Islamic Monotheism, follow the Quran and the Sunnah), Allah will love you and forgive you your sins. And Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.”** [Al ‘Imran 3:31 – interpretation of the meaning]

## The second pillar of Islam: salah (prayer)

The Muslim believes that Allah has enjoined upon every sane adult Muslim five (formal) prayers each day and night, which he does in a state of purity, standing before his Lord, every day in a state of purity and humility, thanking his Lord for His blessings, asking Him of His bounty, seeking His forgiveness for his sins, asking Him for Paradise and seeking refuge in Him from Hell.

### What are the five daily prayers in Islam?

The five obligatory prayers which are required day and night are :

Fajr (early morning, before dawn),

Zuhr (mid-day, just after noon),

Asr (mid afternoon),

Maghrib (just after sunset)

and ‘Isha (at night, after dark has fallen).

There are also Sunnah prayers such as Qiyam al-Layl (prayer at night), Tarawih prayers, two rak’ahs of Duha prayer, etc.

### What are the benefits of prayer in Islam?

Prayer, whether it is fard or nafl, represents a sincere turning towards Allah alone in all one’s affairs. Allah has commanded all the believers to guard strictly the observance of the prayers, as He says (interpretation of the meaning):

**حافظوا على الصلوات والصلاة الوسطى وقوموا لله قانتين**

**“Guard strictly (five obligatory) As-Salawat (the prayers) especially the middle Salah (i.e. the best prayer – ‘Asr). And stand before Allah with obedience [and do not speak to others during the Salah (prayers)].”** [al-Baqarah 2:238]

The five daily prayers are obligatory upon every Muslim man and woman, night and day:

**إن الصلاة كانت على المؤمنين كتاباً موقوتاً**

**“Verily, As-Salah (the prayer) is enjoined on the believers at fixed hours.”** [al-Nisa 4:103]

The one who abandons prayer has no share in Islam. Whoever neglects it deliberately is a kafir, as Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

**منيبين إليه واتقوه وأقيموا الصلاة ولا تكونوا من المشركين**

**“(And remain always) turning in repentance to Him (only), and be afraid and dutiful to Him; and perform As-Salah (Iqamat-as-Salat) and be not of Al-Mushrikin (the polytheists, idolaters, disbelievers in the Oneness of Allah).”** [al-Rum 30:31]

Islam is based on co-operation, brotherhood and love, and Allah has prescribed coming together for these prayers and others, in order to attain these virtues. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

**صلاة الجماعة أفضل من صلاة الفذ بسبع وعشرين درجة**

**Prayer in congregation is twenty-seven times better than prayer offered alone.”** [ Sahih Muslim, no. 650]

Prayer helps the believer at times of hardship and calamity. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

**واستعينوا بالصبر والصلاة وإنها لكبيرة إلا على الخاشعين**

“And seek help in patience and As-Salah (the prayer) and truly, it is extremely heavy and hard except for Al-Khashi‘un [i.e. the true believers in Allah — those who obey Allah with full submission, fear much from His punishment, and believe in His Promise (Paradise) and in His Warnings (Hell)].” [al-Baqarah 2:45]

The five daily prayers wipe out sins, as the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

**أرأيتم لو أن نهراً بباب أحدكم يغتسل منه كل يوم خمس مرات هل يبقى من درنه شيء ؟ قالوا لا يبقى من درنه شيء . قال فذلك مثل الصلوات الخمس يمحو الله بهن الخطايا**

“Do you not think that if there was a river at the door of any one of you, and he were to bathe in it five times each day, would there by any dirt left on him?” They said, “No dirt would be left on him at all.” He said, “That is the likeness of the five

daily prayers, by means of which Allah erases sin." [Sahih Muslim, Hadith 677]

Prayer in the mosque is a means of entering Paradise. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said**:**

**من غدا إلى المسجد أو راح أعد الله له في الجنة نزلاً كلما غدا أو راح**

"Whoever comes and goes to the mosque, Allah will prepare for him a house in Paradise for each time he comes and goes." [Narrated by Muslim, no. 669]

Prayer brings the slave and his Creator together. It was the delight of the Messenger (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him). Whenever any matter grieved him, he would turn to prayer and converse with his Lord and call upon Him, seeking His forgiveness and asking Him of His bounty.

Prayer done with proper humility and fear of Allah brings the Muslim closer to his Lord, and keeps him from doing evil, as Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

**اتل ما أوحي إليك من الكتاب وأقم الصلاة إن الصلاة تنهى عن الفحشاء و المنكر**

"Recite (O Muhammad) what has been revealed to you of the Book (the Quran), and perform As-Salah (Iqamat-as-Salah). Verily, As-Salah (the prayer) prevents from Al-Fahsha (i.e. great sins of every kind, unlawful sexual intercourse) and Al-Munkar (i.e. disbelief, polytheism, and every kind of evil wicked deed)." [al-'Ankabut 29:45]

## The third pillar of Islam: zakah (poor due, 'compulsory' charity)

Just as Allah has created people with different colours, attitudes and levels of knowledge, so too their deeds and provision vary. He has made some of them rich and some poor, to test the rich as to whether they show gratitude, and to test the poor as to whether they are patient. Because the believers are a brotherhood, and brotherhood is based on compassion, kindness, love and mercy, Allah has enjoined upon the Muslims zakah which is taken from the rich and given to the poor. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

**خذ من أموالهم صدقة تطهرهم وتزكيهم بها وصلّ عليهم إن صلاتك سكن لهم**

“Take Sadaqah (alms) from their wealth in order to purify them and sanctify them with it, and invoke Allah for them. Verily, your invocations are a source of security for them.” [al-Taubah 9:103]

## What is the wisdom of zakah in Islam?

Zakah purifies and cleanses wealth, and purifies the soul from stinginess and miserliness. It strengthens the love between the rich and poor, takes away hatred, makes security prevail and brings happiness to the ummah.

## What is the rate of zakah?

Allah has made the payment of zakah obligatory upon everyone who owns the nisab (minimum amount) for one year. The rate of zakah on gold, silver, and trade goods is one quarter of ten percent. On agricultural produce and fruits the amount is one-tenth if it is irrigated (without artificial means), and one-half of one-tenth if it is irrigated by artificial means. Concerning an’am animals (i.e., sheep, goats, cattle and camels) the details are explained in the books of fiqh… Whoever pays zakat, Allah expiates his sins thereby, and blesses his wealth, and stores up for him a great reward. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

**وأقيموا الصلاة وأتوا الزكاة وما تقدموا لأنفسكم من خير تجدوه إن الله بما تعملون بصير**

“And perform As-Salah (Iqamat-as-Salah), and give Zakah, and whatever of good (deeds that Allah loves) you send forth for yourselves before you, you shall find it with Allah. Certainly, Allah is All-Seer of what you do.” [al-Baqarah 2:110]

Withholding zakah brings disasters and evils upon the ummah. Allah has threatened those who withhold it with a painful torment on the Day of Resurrection. He says (interpretation of the meaning):

**والذين يكنزون الذهب والفضة ولا ينفقونها في سبيل الله فبشرهم بعذاب أليم – يوم يحمى عليها في نار جهنم فتكوى بها جباههم وجنوبهم وظهورهم هذا ما كنزتم لأنفسكم فذوقوا ما كنتم تكنزون**

And those who hoard up gold and silver (Al-Kanz: the money, the Zakah of which has not been paid) and spend them not in the way of Allah, announce unto them a painful torment.

On the Day when that (Al-Kanz: money, gold and silver, the Zakah of which has not been paid) will be heated in the fire of Hell and with it will be branded their foreheads, their flanks, and their backs, (and it will be said unto them:) ‘This is

the treasure which you hoarded for yourselves. Now taste of what you used to hoard’” [al-Taubah 9:34-35]

Concealing one’s zakah is better than paying it openly in front of people, as Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

**إن تبدوا الصدقات فنعمّا هي وإن تخفوها وتؤتوها الفقراء فهو خير لكم ويكفر عنكم من سيئاتكم والله بما تعملون خبير**

“If you disclose your Sadaqat (almsgiving), it is good; but if you conceal them and give them to the poor, that is better for you. (Allah) will expiate you some of your sins. And Allah is Well-Acquainted with what you do.” [al-Baqarah 2:271]

### Who is eligible to receive zakah in Islam?

When a Muslim pays his zakah, it is not permissible for him to give it to anyone except those whom Allah mentions in the ayah (interpretation of the meaning):

إنما الصدقات للفقراء والمساكين والعاملين عليها والمؤلفة قلوبهم وفي الرقاب والغارمين و في سبيل الله وابن السبيل فريضة من الله والله عليم حكيم

“As-Sadaqat (here it means Zakah) are only for the Fuqara (poor), and Al-Masakin (the poor) and those employed to collect (the funds); and to attract the hearts of those who have been inclined (towards Islam); and to free the captives; and for those in debt; and for Allah’s Cause (i.e. for Mujahidun — those fighting in Allah’s cause), and for the wayfarer (a traveller who is cut off from everything); a duty imposed by Allah. And Allah is All-Knower, All-Wise.” [al-Taubah 9:60]

## The fourth pillar of Islam: sawm (fasting) in Ramadaan

Fasting means abstaining from things which break the fast, such as food, drink and intercourse, from the break of true dawn until sunset, with the intention of fasting.

The relationship of patience to faith is like that of the head to the body. Allah has enjoined upon this ummah fasting for one month of the year, in order to draw closer to Allah, to avoid that which Allah has forbidden, to get used to being patient, to bring the nafs (self) under control, to compete in generosity and to demonstrate cooperation and mutual compassion. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

**يا أيها الذين آمنوا كتب عليكم الصيام كما كتب على الذين من قبلكم لعلكم تتقون**

“O you who believe! Observing As-Sawm (the fasting) is prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you, that you may become Al-Muttaqun (the pious).” [al-Baqarah 2:183]

## What are the virtues of Ramadan?

The month of Ramadan is a great month, in which Allaah revealed the Quran. The reward for good deeds, acts of charity and acts of worship are multiplied in this month. In it is Laylat al-Qadr, which is better than a thousand months. The gates of Heaven are opened and the gates of Hell are shut, and the shayateen (devils) are tied up.

### Who must fast in Ramadan?

Allah has made fasting the month of Ramadan obligatory upon every sane, adult Muslim, male and female alike, as He says (interpretation of the meaning):

**شهر رمضان الذي أنزل فيه القرآن هدى للناس وبينات من الهدى والفرقان فمن شهد منكم الشهر فليصمه , ومن كان مريضاً أو على سفر فعدة من أيام آخر يريد الله بكم اليسر ولا يريد بكم العسر ولتكملوا العدة ولتكبروا الله على ما هداكم ولعلكم تشكرون**

“The month of Ramadan in which was revealed the Quran, a guidance for mankind and clear proofs for the guidance and the criterion (between right and wrong). So whoever of you sights (the crescent on the first night of) the month (of Ramadan i.e. is present at his home), he must observe Sawm (fasts) that month, and whoever is ill or on a journey, the same number [of days which one did not observe Sawm (fasts) must be made up] from other days. Allah intends for you ease, and He does not want to make things difficult for you. (He wants that you) must complete the same number (of days), and that you must magnify Allah [i.e. to say Takbeer (Allahu Akbar: Allah is the Most Great)] for having guided you so that you may be grateful to Him.” [al-Baqarah 2:185]

There is a great reward with Allaah for fasting. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

**كل عمل ابن آدم يضاعف , الحسنة بعشر أمثالها , إلى سبعمائة ضعف قال الله عز وجل إلا الصوم فإنه لي وأنا أجزي به , يدع شهوته , وطعامه من أجلي**

“Every action of the son of Adam is multiplied, each good deed receiving a tenfold to seven hundredfold reward. Allah said, ‘Except for fasting, for it is done for Me and I will give a reward for it, for he gives up his desire and food for My sake.’” [Narrated by Muslim, al-Siyam]

## The fifth pillar of Islam: Hajj (pilgrimage)

Allah has given the Muslims a Qiblah (direction of prayer) which they face when they pray (salah) and offer supplications (du’a), wherever they may be. This qiblah is the Ancient House (the Ka’bah) in Makkah al-Mukarramah:

**فول وجهك شطر المسجد الحرام وحيث ما كنتم فولوا وجوهكم شطره**

“So turn your face in the direction of Al-Masjid Al-Haram (at Makkah). And wherever you people are, turn your faces (in prayer) in that direction.” [al-Baqarah 2:144 – interpretation of the meaning]

### Why do Muslims go for Hajj?

Because the Muslims are scattered all over the world, and Islam calls people to be united and get to know one another, just as it calls them to co-operate in righteousness and piety, to recommend one another to the truth, to call people to Allah and to venerate the rites of Allah – hence Allah has made it obligatory for every sane, adult Muslim who has the means, to visit His Ancient House, to circumambulate it and to perform all the rituals of Hajj as explained by Allah and His Messenger. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

**ولله على الناس حج البيت من استطاع إليه سبيلا ومن كفر فإن الله غني عن العالمين**

“And Hajj (pilgrimage to Makkah) to the House (Ka‘bah) is a duty that mankind owes to Allah, those who can afford the expenses (for one’s conveyance, provision and residence); and whoever disbelieves [i.e. denies Hajj (pilgrimage to Makkah), then he is a disbeliever of Allah], then Allah stands not in need of any of the ‘Alamin (mankind, jinn and all that exists).” [al ‘Imran 3:97]

Hajj is an occasion on which the unity of the Muslims, their strength and pride, are made manifest. For the Lord is One, the Book is one, the Messenger is one, the ummah is one, their worship is one and their clothing is one.

## What are the conditions of Hajj?

Hajj has its own etiquette and conditions which the Muslims must observe, such as restraining their tongues, hearing and sight from all that Allah has forbidden, being sincere in their intentions, using money from good sources (for Hajj), fostering the best attitude, and avoiding everything that could invalidate the Hajj, such as sexual relations, sin or arguing unjustly, as Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

**الحج أشهر معلومات فمن فرض فيهن الحج فلا رفث ولا فسوق ولا جدال في الحج وما تفعلوا من خير يعلمه الله وتزودوا فإن خير الزاد التقوى واتقون يا أولي الألباب**

“The Hajj (pilgrimage) is (in) the well-known (lunar year) months (i.e. the 10th month, the 11th month and the first ten days of the 12th month of the Islamic calendar, i.e. two months and ten days). So whosoever intends to perform Hajj therein (by assuming Ihram), then he should not have sexual relations (with his wife), nor commit sin, nor dispute unjustly during the Hajj. And whatever good you do, (be sure) Allah knows it. And take a provision (with you) for the journey, but the best provision is At-Taqwa (piety, righteousness). So fear Me, O men of understanding!.” [al-Baqarah 3:197]

If the Muslim does Hajj correctly, in the manner prescribed and sincerely for the sake of Allah, it will be an expiation for his sins. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

**من حج لله فلم يرفث ولم يفسق رجع كيوم ولدته أمه**

**“Whoever does Hajj for the sake of Allah, and does not have sexual relations or commit sins, will come back like the day his mother bore him.”** [Narrated by al-Bukhari, no. 15210]

End quote from *Usool ad-Deen al-Islami* by at-Tuwaijri

**And Allah knows best**