

4| Fasting (*Sawm*)

“O Believers! Fasting is prescribed for you as it was prescribed to those before you so that you may (learn) *Taqwa*.” [2:183]

Throughout history, fasting has been Allah’s Way of teaching us **“*Taqwa*”**, which means righteousness, piety, self-restraint and God-consciousness.

Fasting as a pillar of Islam involves abstaining from eating, drinking and marital intimacy, from dawn till sunset, everyday in Ramadan, the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar.

It is obligatory on Muslims from the age of puberty. Those exempted include the sick, menstruating women and travellers; they fast the missed days later.

Fasting in Ramadan is a yearly intensive month-long spiritual and physical training programme designed by Allah that helps develop our **will-power** to readily submit to His Guidance in The Qur’an.

Ramadan is a joyful month - full of Allah’s Blessings, Mercy and Forgiveness. Allah multiplies His reward for every good deed that is done in Ramadan. Thus, Muslims increase their good deeds, such as, extra voluntary prayers (especially in the night), charity, and giving food and clothing to the needy.

Just like prayer, fasting is a **holistic** exercise. Every part of the body practices self-restraint, avoiding non-beneficial activities and wrong actions. **“Whoever did not give up lying and practising falsehood, Allah is in no need of his giving up food and drink (that is, his fasting).” [Bukhari]**

Ramadan: Month of The Qur’an

Muslims strengthen their faith by renewing their bond with Allah’s Book. Many complete reciting the entire Qur’an at least once in Ramadan.

Reading Qur’an on the bus to work in Ramadan.

Ramadan is the **blessed** month in which the **first verses** of The Qur’an were revealed to Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) in 610 CE.

Around the world, the immense spirituality of fasting in Ramadan generates abundant charity of all kind, fosters **compassion** and **unity**, and spreads **peace**.

The end of Ramadan is celebrated on **Eidul-Fitr**: a day of glorifying Allah, prayer, forgiveness, family gatherings and sharing of Allah’s Bounty.

5| Pilgrimage (*Hajj*)

“And Pilgrimage to the Ka’bah is a duty men owe to Allah ...” [3:97]

Pilgrimage to Mecca (*Makkah*) is obligatory at least **once** in a lifetime on Muslims who have the physical and financial capability to perform it.

Hajj is held annually from 8th to 13th of *Dzulhijjah*, the twelfth month of the Islamic lunar calendar. In recent years, about 3 million Muslims performed *Hajj*. The *Hajj* is the **Annual General Assembly** of Islam, with the venue, date and programme fixed by Allah!

Hajj rites commemorate Prophet Abraham’s deep love for Allah, and his unquestioning submission to Him.



The Main Rites of Hajj

- **Circling the Ka’bah 7 times**
- **Walking 7 times between 2 hills**
- **Sacrificing an animal on Eidul-Adha**
- **Supplicating to Allah**

The **climax** of *Hajj* is “standing” at Arafah where pilgrims fervently beseech Allah for forgiveness. This is a **reminder** of the inevitable gathering of all humanity before Allah on the **Day of Judgment**.

Male pilgrims put on two white sheets, which erase distinctions based on race, nationality and wealth. All unite as **equal** members of the human family, worshipping their Creator, Allah - the One True God.

Hajj demonstrates Islam’s universal call:

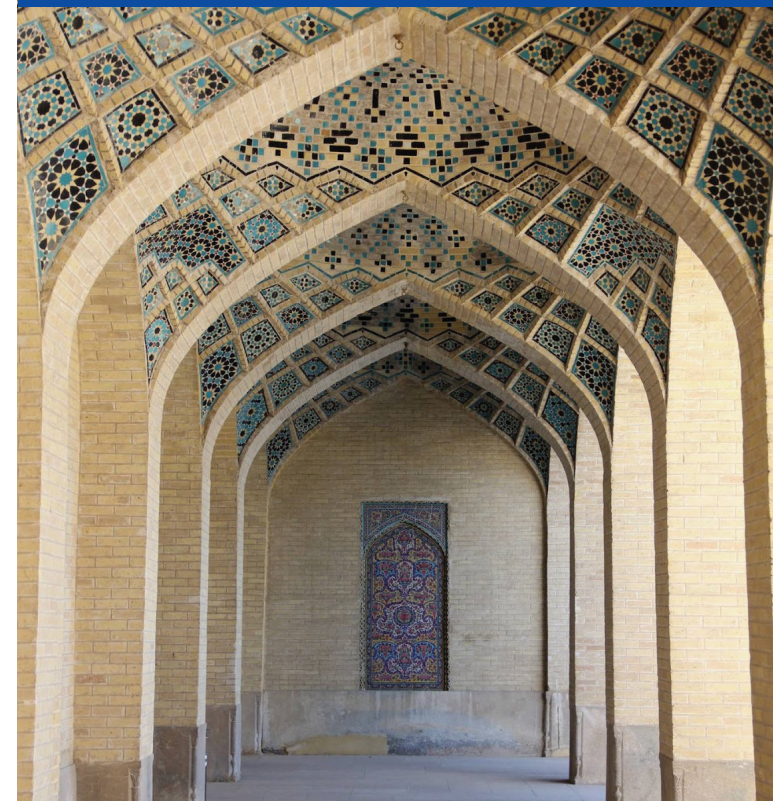


Allah does not need our worship as He is free of need. These **noble acts of worship** are truly a **blessing** from Allah for our **own** benefit. Be a **better** person. **Embrace Islam**. Live a life of **Truth, Good Deeds and Peace**.

Allah knows best.
by:
Fatima Ebrahim Munshi

5 Pillars of Islam

“a divine package of noble acts that supports a life of Truth, Good Deeds and Peace”



Worship in Islam

Life is beautiful when we fulfil its **true** purpose. God (**Allah**) says: **"I have not created the jinn and mankind except to worship Me."** [51:56]

In Islam, the concept of worship is very broad. Everything we do in life is an act of worship when it is done based on **Allah's Guidance** in **The Qur'an**, and following the **Way of Prophet Muhammad** (pbuh).

In His Perfect Wisdom, Allah has enjoined upon us five **obligatory** acts of worship, which are commonly known as **"the five pillars of Islam."**

Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) said:

Islam is built upon five pillars:

- **The Testimony of Faith (Shahadah)**
- **Establishing regular Prayer (Salah)**
- **Paying obligatory Charity (Zakah)**
- **Fasting in Ramadan (Sawm), and**
- **Performing the Pilgrimage (Hajj).** [Muslim]

Pillars support a building. Likewise, the five pillars support a life of **Truth** and **Good Deeds**. They inculcate in us **noble qualities**: love for Allah, God-awareness, gratitude, patience, discipline, kindness and humility. We thus attain **Peace** within ourselves and with others.

These five practices are Allah's Way of teaching us to focus on our **accountability** before Him on the Day of Judgment in the Hereafter. They help Muslims attain **true success** in this life, and also in the Next - **salvation** from Hellfire, and **happiness** in Paradise.

1| Testimony of Faith (Shahadah)

"I bear witness that there is none worthy of worship except Allah, and I bear witness that Muhammad is the (final) Messenger of Allah."

To be a Muslim, one must profess with conviction this statement, in Arabic, called the **"shahadah"**.

The *shahadah* confirms the **Truth** that God (Allah) exists, and that He is the **Creator** and **Sustainer** of everything, and He **alone** is to be worshipped.

The *shahadah* confirms the Truth that Allah sent Guidance to us through **Prophets and Messengers**, who include Abraham, Moses and Jesus (pbuh).

As the **Final** and **Universal** Prophet, Muhammad (pbuh) delivered, through The Qur'an and his Life-example (*sunnah*), the Religion of Islam in its final, **complete** and **perfected** form till the End of Time.

This Truth elevates our dignity, and liberates us from oppressive false beliefs and practices. Accepting the *shahadah* with **sincerity** entails a **life-long** commitment to submit to the Guidance of Allah and apply it as a complete way of life.

Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) said: **"Whoever affirms the shahadah with sincerity enters Paradise."** [Bukhari]

Sincerity of faith is affirmed with **good deeds**.

2| Prayer (Salah)

"Prayer is obligatory on the Believers at prescribed times." [4:103]

Prayer is the **essence** of worship, and a **practical proof** of one's Islam. Indeed, in every prayer, the *shahadah* is reaffirmed.

The prayer is performed five times daily in the way Allah had revealed to Prophet Muhammad (pbuh).

Prayer times are: dawn (before sunrise), mid-day, late afternoon, just after sunset and nightfall. The spacing of the prayers throughout the day prevents us from straying from the Straight Path.

"Prayer restrains from shameful and unjust deeds." [29:45]

Prayer is performed facing the direction of the **Ka'bah** at Mecca (*Makkah*) in Saudi Arabia. It may be performed individually or in groups at any clean place. It is preferable to pray in congregation at a mosque, as it binds the Muslim community together.

Prayer is a direct personal link with Allah. Five times daily, Muslims unplug from the world and connect with the Creator of all the worlds.



Private Conversation with Allah

The prayer consists of body postures - standing, bowing, prostrating, sitting - done humbly with praise to Allah, supplications and Qur'an recitation.

The prayer is a **holistic** form of worship where the body joins the soul, heart, mind and tongue in the praise and humble submission to Allah.

Prayer subdues the ego, emptying the heart of arrogance and filling it with gratefulness and a greater realization of our dependence on Allah. Every prayer is a **reminder** of our **accountability** before Allah on the **Day of Judgment**.

Prayer is food for our soul. Allah says: **"Establish prayer for My remembrance."** [20:14] **"Truly, in the remembrance of Allah, do hearts find peace."** [13:28]

All over the world, Muslims pray in the **same** format, direction and language (Arabic), signifying **"One Human Family Worshipping One God."** They belong to a **universal brotherhood** which facilitates **global efforts** to make a better world.

3| Obligatory Charity (Zakah)

"Those who establish regular Prayer and give the charity ... they will prosper." [31:4-5]

In Islam, prayer is closely linked to charity. A close relationship with Allah is reflected in one's concern for the welfare of others.

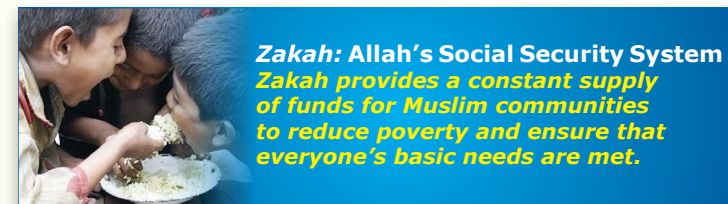
Zakah is the **annual** obligatory charity paid on wealth owned above a minimum amount over a period of one year. "Zakatable" wealth includes cash, business income, gold and silver, agricultural produce, livestock and property. The *Zakah* due on cash is 2.5% per annum.

Zakah is distributed among the poor and needy, those in serious debt, *Zakah* administrators, converts who need help and stranded travellers. *Zakah* is also used to free slaves and to improve the welfare of the community.

Islam teaches that wealth is a **trust** from Allah to be spent in ways that He permits.

The word "*zakah*" means both **"to purify"** and **"to grow"**. *Zakah* purifies the remaining wealth, which gains Allah's manifold blessings. *Zakah* purifies the giver's heart of selfishness.

Islam grants the poor a **right** to a portion of the wealth of the rich, while it places a **responsibility** on the rich to share their wealth with others. This removes animosity toward the rich, and instills **compassion** for the poor, binding the two groups in **goodwill** and **peace**. *Zakah* brings about a better world for all people.



Zakah: Allah's Social Security System
Zakah provides a constant supply of funds for Muslim communities to reduce poverty and ensure that everyone's basic needs are met.