

Islam Question & Answer

General Supervisor:
Shaykh Muhammad Saalih al-Munajjid

13569 - The Pillars of Islam

the question

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

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allaah.

Islam is based on five pillars which the Messenger (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) has explained for us, when he said: "Islam is built upon five [pillars]: the testimony that there is no god but Allaah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allaah; establishing regular prayer (salaah); paying the zakaah; Hajj (pilgrimage) and fasting Ramadaan." (Agreed upon; narrated by al-Bukhaari, no. 8)

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

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

[al-Maa'idah 5:3 - interpretation of the meaning]

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

The first pillar: al-Shahaadatayn (the twin testimony of faith)

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

“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 Allaah, your Lord! Laa ilaaha 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’aam 6:101-102]

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

“Say (O Muhammad to mankind): ‘If you (really) love Allaah, then follow me (i.e. accept Islamic Monotheism, follow the Qur’aan and the Sunnah), Allaah will love you and forgive you your sins. And Allaah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful”

[Aal ‘Imraan 3:31 - interpretation of the meaning]

The second pillar: salaah (prayer)

The Muslim believes that Allaah has enjoined upon every sane adult Muslim five 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

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forgiveness for his sins, asking Him for Paradise and seeking refuge in Him from Hell.

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 'Ishaa' (at night, after dark has fallen). There are also Sunnah prayers such as Qiyaam al-Layl (prayer at night), Taraweeh prayers, two rak'ahs of Duha prayer, etc.

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

“Guard strictly (five obligatory) As-Salawaat (the prayers) especially the middle Salaah (i.e. the best prayer - 'Asr). And stand before Allaah with obedience [and do not speak to others during the Salaah (prayers)]”[al-Baqarah 2:238]

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

“Verily, As-Salaah (the prayer) is enjoined on the believers at fixed hours”[al-Nisaa' 4:103 - interpretation of the meaning]

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

“(And remain always) turning in repentance to Him (only), and be afraid and dutiful to Him; and perform As-Salaah (Iqaamat-as-Salaah) and be not of Al-Mushrikoon (the polytheists, idolaters, disbelievers in the Oneness of Allaah)[al-Room 30:31]

Islam is based on co-operation, brotherhood and love, and Allaah has prescribed coming together for these prayers and others, in order to attain these virtues. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “Prayer in congregation is twenty-seven times better than prayer offered

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alone.” (Narrated by Muslim, no. 650)

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

“And seek help in patience and As-Salaah (the prayer) and truly, it is extremely heavy and hard except for Al-Khaashi’oon [i.e. the true believers in Allaah — those who obey Allaah 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 Allaah be upon him) said: “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 be 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 Allaah erases sin.”

Prayer in the mosque is a means of entering Paradise. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “Whoever comes and goes to the mosque, Allaah 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 Allaah brings the Muslim closer to his Lord, and keeps him from doing evil, as Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Recite (O Muhammad) what has been revealed to you of the Book (the Qur’aan), and perform As-Salaah (Iqaamat-as-Salaah). Verily, As-Salaah (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

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kind of evil wicked deed)"[al-'Ankaboot 29:45]

The third pillar: zakaah (poor due, charity tax)

Just as Allaah 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, Allaah has enjoined upon the Muslims zakaah which is taken from the rich and given to the poor. Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

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

Zakaah 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.

Allaah has made the payment of zakaah obligatory upon everyone who owns the nisaab (minimum amount) for one year. The rate of zakaah on gold, silver, other metals and trade goods is one quarter of ten percent. On agricultural produce and fruits the amount is one-tenth if it is irrigated (by artificial means), and one-half of one-tenth if it is not irrigated (by artificial means, i.e., it is watered by rainfall or other natural means). Concerning an'aam animals (i.e., sheep, goats, cattle and camels) the details are explained in the books of fiqh... Whoever pays zakaah, Allaah expiates his sins thereby, and blesses his wealth, and stores up for him a great reward. Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

"And perform As-Salaah (Iqaamat-as-Salaah), and give Zakaah, and whatever of good (deeds that

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Allaah loves) you send forth for yourselves before you, you shall find it with Allaah. Certainly, Allaah is All-Seer of what you do”[al-Baqarah 2:110]

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

“O you who believe! Verily, there are many of the (Jewish) rabbis and the (Christian) monks who devour the wealth of mankind in falsehood, and hinder (them) from the way of Allaah (i.e. Allaah’s religion of Islamic Monotheism). And those who hoard up gold and silver (Al-Kanz: the money, the Zakaah of which has not been paid) and spend them not in the way of Allaah, announce unto them a painful torment.

On the Day when that (Al-Kanz: money, gold and silver, the Zakaah 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-Tawbah 9:34-35]

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

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

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

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“As-Sadaqaat (here it means Zakaah) are only for the Fuqaraa’ (poor), and Al-Masaakeen (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 Allaah’s Cause (i.e. for Mujahidoon — those fighting in a holy battle), and for the wayfarer (a traveller who is cut off from everything); a duty imposed by Allaah. And Allaah is All-Knower, All-Wise”[al-Tawbah 9:60]

The fourth pillar: 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. Allaah has enjoined upon this ummah fasting for one month of the year, in order to draw closer to Allaah, to avoid that which Allaah has forbidden, to get used to being patient, to bring the nafs (self) under control, to compete in generosity and to demonstrate co-operation and mutual compassion. Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“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-Muttaqoon (the pious)”[al-Baqarah 2:183]

The month of Ramadaan is a great month, in which Allaah revealed the Qur’aan. 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 shayaateen (devils) are tied up.

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

“The month of Ramadaan in which was revealed the Qur’aan, a guidance for mankind and clear

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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 Ramadaan 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. Allaah 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 Allaah [i.e. to say Takbeer (Allaahu Akbar: Allaah 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 Allaah be upon him) said: “Every action of the son of Adam is multiplied, each good deed receiving a tenfold to seven hundredfold reward. Allaah 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-Siyaam)

The fifth pillar: Hajj (pilgrimage)

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

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

Because the Muslims 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 Allaah and to venerate the rituals of Allaah - hence Allaah 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 Allaah and His

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Messenger. Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And Hajj (pilgrimage to Makkah) to the House (Ka’bah) is a duty that mankind owes to Allaah, 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 Allaah], then Allaah stands not in need of any of the ‘Aalameen (mankind, jinn and all that exists)” [Aal Imraan 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.

Hajj has its own etiquette and conditions which the Muslims must observe, such as restraining their tongues, hearing and sight from all that Allaah 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 Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“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 Ihraam), 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) Allaah 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 Allaah, it will be an expiation for his sins. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “Whoever does Hajj for the sake of Allaah, and does not have sexual relations or commit sins, will come back like the day his mother bore him.” (Narrated by al-Bukhaari, no. 15210)