

In the name of God,
the Compassionate, the Merciful

BELIEFS (ARTICLES OF FAITH)

ISLAM

Beliefs and Practices

The articles of Islamic faith define the place of a human being in this world and the next. There are six articles of faith. The following verse of the Qur'an mentions the first five, "*O you who believe! Believe in Allah (God) and His Messenger (Muhammad), and the Scripture that He has sent to His Messenger and the Scriptures that He sent to those before (Muhammad). Anyone who denies Allah, His angels, His Books, His Messenger, and the Day of Judgment has gone far astray.*" [Qur'an, 4:136] The sixth article of faith is to believe in the Divine Decree.

A man came to Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and asked him about faith. He inquired, "Tell me about faith (*Iman*)."
The Prophet Muhammad informed him, "Faith is to believe in God, His Angels, His Books, His Prophets, the Last Day, and in the Divine Decree (*Qadar*), both in its good and in its evil aspects."

1. FAITH IN GOD'S UNITY

The most important article of faith is the belief in the oneness of God. The Arabic word for God is Allah. This is emphasized in the Qur'an in many places, for example: "*There is no god but He (Allah), the Living, the Self-subsisting, Eternal*" [Qur'an, 3:2], "*Know, therefore, that there is no god but Allah*" [Qur'an, 47:19], and "*Say: 'He is Allah (God), the One and Only. Allah, the Eternal, Absolute. He begets not, nor is He begotten. And none is like Him.'*" [Qur'an, 112:1-4]



Real and absolute success in this life and the hereafter lies in willful and conscious acceptance of this canon. Oneness of God was the cornerstone of teachings of all of God's prophets and messengers. A Muslim must not, in any shape or form, ascribe partners to God in His essence, attributes, authority, or rights.

2. FAITH IN GOD'S ANGELS

Belief in the existence of God's angels is the second article of faith. God states in the Qur'an, "*Praise be to God, who created (out of nothing) the heavens and the earth, who made the angels, messengers with wings, two, three, or four (pairs).*" [Qur'an, 35:1] God also says, "*And the angels celebrate the praises of their Lord and pray for forgiveness for (all) beings on earth.*" [Qur'an, 42:5]



Angels do not deviate from the commands of God. They are in no way related to God and have no share in His divinity. Muslims are forbidden from worshipping angels or seeking any help or any intercession from them. One of God's well-known angels is Gabriel, who was responsible for bringing God's messages and revelations to His prophets and messengers.

3. FAITH IN GOD'S BOOKS (SCRIPTURES)

The third article of faith is to believe in all scriptures that were revealed by God. Muslims, therefore, believe in the scriptures, such as the Scrolls of Abraham, the Psalms of David, the Torah of Moses, and the Gospel of Jesus, but only in their original forms. The Qur'an affirms, "He has sent down the Book to you with truth, confirming what was there before it. And He sent down the Torah and the Gospel." [Qur'an, 3:3] However, full contents of these and other scriptures (which are not mentioned by name in the Qur'an)

did not remain intact. Consequently, translations of only parts of some of those earlier scriptures are available today. Additionally, languages of the older scriptures are extinct and are, therefore, not easily and generally accessible or comprehensible to people today. The Qur'an is the last and final scripture that was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad. Its language (Arabic), however, is fully preserved and alive to this day, and so is the original text of the Qur'an in its entirety.

4. FAITH IN GOD'S PROPHETS

The fourth article of faith is to believe that God chose some human beings as His prophets and messengers for the guidance of all nations and peoples. Some of the well-known prophets and messengers are mentioned in the following verses of the Qur'an, "And this was Our argument which we gave to Abraham against his people. We raise in rank whoever We will, your Lord is All-Knowing, All-Wise. We gave him Isaac and Jacob, each of whom We guided, as We had guided Noah before, and among his descendants were David, Solomon, Job, Joseph, Moses, and Aaron; in this way, We reward those who do good; and Zachariah and John and Jesus and Elias. All of them were among the righteous. And Ishmael and Elisha and Jonah and Lot; and to all We gave favor above the nations. We guided many among their fathers and their children and their brothers, and we chose them and led them on to the straight path." [Qur'an, 6:83-87]

Teachings imparted by all prophets and messengers were applicable to the people they were sent to. Muhammad was the last and final messenger of God and his teachings confirmed the teachings of all previous prophets and hence applied to all people

of his time and are applicable to all human beings who will follow him until the end of this world. About the Prophet Muhammad, the Qur'an says, "We have not sent you but as a universal (messenger) to mankind, giving them glad tidings and warning them (against sin)." [Qur'an, 34:28]

5. FAITH IN LIFE AFTER DEATH

Islam's fifth article of faith is the belief in life after death or the hereafter, when all human beings will be brought back to life. God says in the Qur'an, "On that day, We shall leave them to surge like waves on one another; the trumpet will be blown, and We shall collect them all together" [Qur'an, 18:99], and "Verily the hour is coming – My design is to keep it hidden – for every soul to receive its reward by the measure of its endeavor." [Qur'an, 20:15]



Belief in the hereafter has the most profound effect on a Muslim's actions in this life, because he believes that one is accountable for all one's actions, small or large, covert or overt. On Judgment Day, complete records of every person's actions will be presented to God. Based on these actions, God will justly decide every human being's destination in Paradise or Hell.

6. DIVINE DECREE (QADAR)

The sixth article of faith is to believe in Divine Decree or destiny. When God created each thing, He determined when it would come into existence and when it would cease to exist. He also determined its qualities and nature. And everything in the universe, the seen and the unseen, is completely subject to the overriding power of God. Nothing can happen outside His Will.

PRACTICES (PILLARS OF ISLAM)

The pillars of Islam are the five duties incumbent upon every Muslim. They are the profession of faith (*shahadah*), daily ritual prayers (*salah*), the annual obligatory charity (*zakah*), fasting during the month of Ramadan (*sawm*), and pilgrimage to Mecca (*hajj*). The Qur'an presents the practice of Islam as a framework for worship and a sign of commitment to the faith. Muslims worship God directly without the intercession of priests, clergy, or saints.

A man heard the Messenger of God, Muhammad, say, "Islam is built upon five (pillars): testifying that there is none worthy of worship except God and that Muhammad is the Messenger of God, establishing the prayers, giving alms, making pilgrimage to the House, and fasting the month of Ramadan." The structure of Islam stands on its five pillars. Establishing these pillars is essential for a Muslim who wants to fulfill the duty of submission to God.

1. TESTIMONY OF FAITH (SHAHADAH)

The declaration (*shahadah*) that “There is no deity but God (Allah) and Muhammad is His Messenger” is the first pillar of Islam. The first part of the *shahadah* creates a direct link between a person and God. It frees man from superstitions and any false gods and from the tyranny and oppression of other men, as there is no obedience to any other creature that violates obedience to God.



The second part of the *shahadah* covers the finality of prophethood of Muhammad. He was the last in the chain of prophets and messengers sent by God to guide humanity. The Qur’an says, “*He (Muhammad) is the messenger of Allah and the seal of the prophets.*” [Qur’an, 33:40] A Muslim must have knowledge and full conviction in the attributes of God. For example, He is one and only one and has no partners or associates; He is the Creator, the Ruler, and the Sustainer of the whole universe; He hears, sees, and knows all whether it is open or hidden; He is the most Merciful and the Just. He is Omnipotent, Omniscient and Omnipresent.

2. PRAYERS (SALAH)

The five daily prayers constitute an important pillar of Islam. The Qur’an mentions this in many places, for example, “*And be steadfast in prayer and regular in charity.*” [Qur’an, 2:43]

The *salah* is an expression of gratefulness to God and is a method of purifying the heart and the soul while safeguarding a person from indecency and evil. The obligatory *salah* is offered during five windows of time throughout the day. The daily prayers include recitation of parts of the Qur’an and among others, the physical postures of bowing and prostration. The prayers can be offered almost anywhere: home, workplace, school, etc.

Salah in congregation, especially in a mosque, is highly recommended, as it is an expression of collective piety and solidarity of Muslims. During congregational prayers, all worshippers stand shoulder to shoulder, regardless of their color, race, or social status. Since there is no hierarchy in Islam, any male Muslim can be a prayer leader (*imam*). However, the *imam* is usually the one who is more knowledgeable in Islamic matters. A Muslim female may lead female-only prayers.



3. OBLIGATORY CHARITY (ZAKAH)

Obligatory charity, as a pillar of Islam, is an act of charity for the social and economic benefit of a society and a way of achieving God-consciousness and spiritual elevation. *Zakah* is a means of minimizing the affliction of the poor and the deserving sections of a society. Paying of *zakah* (and other voluntary charity) cleanses a person’s heart of greed, hatred, and jealousy, and replaces them with generosity, compassion, and goodwill.

Every Muslim, male or female, who for a whole one year, has owned cash, silver, gold, or other forms of liquid assets above a certain limit (of the value of three ounces of gold approximately), is obligated to give away 2.5% of one’s savings as *zakah*. Beneficiaries of *zakah* are specified in the Qur’an, “*Zakah is for: the poor, the destitute, those who collect it, reconciling people’s hearts, freeing captives, those in debt, spending in the cause of God, and for the wayfarer. It is a legal obligation from God. God is All-Knowing, All-Wise.*” [Qur’an, 9:60]

4. FASTING (SAWJ)

Fasting, another pillar of Islam, builds a spirit of patience and self-discipline in a Muslim. The Qur’an mentions fasting in several places, such as, “*O you who believe! Fasting is prescribed to you as it was prescribed to those before you, that you may (learn) self-restraint*” [Qur’an, 2:183]; and “*So let those of you who witness it (the month of Ramadan) fast in it.*” [Qur’an, 2:185] By denying oneself food, drink, and intimate spousal relations, the fasting person, in compliance with divine commands, suppresses one’s basic needs and desires, thus reinforcing one’s faith in God. Through fasting, a Muslim develops compassion for the needy and the hungry.

Every day of Ramadan (the 9th month in the Islamic lunar calendar), the fast lasts from dawn to sunset. Muslims strengthen bonds within their families and with other Muslims by sharing meals at the end of the fasting day. In addition to the daily obligatory prayers, Muslims also offer special nightly congregational prayers (*tarawih*) in mosques. During Ramadan, Muslims are expected to continue their usual daytime activities of earning a livelihood, going to school, etc. They are exhorted to abstain from vain chat and gossip and to be more generous during this month. Outside of Ramadan, a Muslim may fast voluntarily any day of the year except on the days of Eid celebration.

5. PILGRIMAGE (HAJJ)

Pilgrimage is the fifth pillar of Islam. The Qur’an states, “*In it (the Sacred House) are clear signs, the station of Abraham, and whoever enters it shall be secure, and pilgrimage to the House is incumbent upon men for the sake of God, (upon) everyone who is able to undertake the journey to it.*” [Qur’an, 3:97] Muslims from all over

the world travel to Mecca (in Saudi Arabia) to perform pilgrimage (*Hajj*) with hearts filled with an intense sense of devotion. These pilgrims embark on this journey with a common objective of acquiring the pleasure of God.

The largest assembly of millions of Muslims of all races and colors during *hajj* develops a universal brotherhood. *Hajj* is highlighted by a complete atmosphere of peace, the peace within pilgrims' souls and the peace with all creatures of God. All Muslim men and women are required to perform *hajj* once in their lifetime provided they are physically, mentally, and financially capable. Many rituals of *hajj* date back to the time of Prophets Abraham and Ishmael (peace be upon them) who were the first pilgrims to the holy place of the *Ka'bah* (sanctuary) in Mecca. *Hajj* culminates by the gathering of all pilgrims in the plain of Arafat that reminds them of the assembly of all human beings on Judgment Day.



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reviving the Qur'an into the hearts of Muslims,
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