

Introduction to Pillars of Islaam and Articles of Faith (part 1 of 2)

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allaah, the Most Merciful, the Bestower of Mercy

The essential teachings of Islaam are based on five principles, referred to as the ‘Five Pillars of Islaam’, and six fundamental beliefs, known as the ‘Six Articles of Faith.’¹ This division is based on the following well known hadeeth of Prophet Muhammad (*May the peace and blessings of Allaah the Most High be upon him*). Umar, one of the closest of companions to the Prophet (*May the peace and blessings of Allaah the Most High be upon him*), related the following occurrence:

“Once, while we were sitting with the Prophet, a man appeared before us whose clothes were exceedingly white and hair exceedingly black. No signs of travelling were seen on him and no one among us knew him. He sat towards the Prophet, resting his knees against his knees and placing the palms of his hands on his thighs. He then said: ‘O Muhammad, tell me about Islaam.’

The Messenger (*May the peace and blessings of Allaah the Most High be upon him*) replied: ‘Islaam is to testify that none has the right to be worshipped but Allaah alone, without partners and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allaah, to perform the prayers, to pay the compulsory charity (zakaah), to fast in Ramadhaan, and to make the pilgrimage to the House if you are able to do so.’

He said: ‘You have spoken the truth.’

We were amazed at him asking questions and then saying he had spoken the truth!

He then inquired: ‘Tell me about faith (‘Eemaan)?’

The Prophet (*May the peace and blessings of Allaah the Most High be upon him*) replied: ‘It is to believe in Allaah, His angels, His scriptures, His messengers, and the Last Day, and to believe in divine decree, both its sweetness and its bitterness.’

He said: ‘You have spoken the truth.’

Umar then related some more questions he asked and the answers given by the Prophet (*May the peace and blessings of Allaah the Most High be upon him*). Finally, when the man left, the Prophet (*May the peace and blessings of Allaah the Most High be upon him*) asked:

¹ The Arabic word for faith is ‘Eemaan.

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‘O ‘Umar, do you know who was the questioner?’

I said: ‘Allaah and His Messenger know best.’

The Prophet (*May the peace and blessings of Allaah the Most High be upon him*) said: ‘It was Gabriel who came to you to teach you your religion.’”²

The Meaning of ‘Islaam’

The Arabic word ‘Islaam’ means to submit, a total surrender, a total resignation to God. Therefore, a ‘Muslim’ is ‘one who submits to God.’ Islaam means to submit to Allaah alone, to worship and serve Allaah alone, and to believe and follow the prophet sent to them. To many non-Muslims, ‘Islaam’ is a religion that began in the seventh century in the Middle East, but to Muslims, Islaam has always been the only religion of Allaah since the time of Adam, the first man. Thus, Islaam was the religion of all prophets who came after him. In the time of Moses (*Peace be upon him*), Islaam was to worship Allaah alone and believe and follow the teachings Moses (*Peace be upon him*) had brought, and Islaam in the time of Jesus (*Peace be upon him*) was to worship Allaah alone and believe and follow the teachings Jesus (*Peace be upon him*) had brought, as they were both prophets sent by God to teach his religion. After the coming of Prophet Muhammad (*May the peace and blessings of Allaah the Most High be upon him*), Islaam is to worship Allaah alone and believe and follow the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (*May the peace and blessings of Allaah the Most High be upon him*). Although the teachings of all the prophets about God, the Afterlife, and all other realities of belief were the same, there were slight differences in the methods of practice, worship and service, for each prophet was sent to a specific nation and specific period of time. Even though previous religions come under the general heading of Islaam, the religion of Muhammad (*May the peace and blessings of Allaah the Most High be upon him*) has specifically been given the name ‘Islaam’ by God, as it is the final religion prescribed for humanity until the Day of Judgment.

The Five Pillars of Islaam

Allaah has mandated five acts upon which the whole religion of Islaam is built. Due to their importance, the Prophet (*May the peace and blessings of Allaah the Most High be upon him*) stated in another hadeeth:

“Islaam has been built upon five...”

...and then proceeded to mention the same acts of worship described in the hadeeth of Gabriel (*Peace be upon him*) above.

These acts of worship are called the Pillars of Islaam, and they are as follows:

² Hadeeth found in Saheeh Muslim and others. The hadeeth is known as the ‘Hadeeth of Gabriel.’

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1. Testimony of faith (Shahahdah)

One must profess this testimony of faith, summarised in the two testimonies:

(a) None has the right to be worshipped but Allaah alone, without partners.

(b) Muhammad (*May the peace and blessings of Allaah the Most High be upon him*) is His Slave and final Messenger.

Through the belief and attestation of the testimony of faith (Shahahdah) one enters the fold of Islaam. It is the central belief that a believer maintains throughout his life, and is the basis for all his beliefs and worship.

2. Formal Prayers (Salaah)

One must offer the five daily prayers at their specific times. Through the prayer, a Muslim maintains his relationship with Allaah, comes to remember Him often, and avoids falling into sin.

3. Compulsory Charity (Zakaah)

Those who have stored a certain amount of wealth must allot a specific portion of it annually to designated deserving recipients.

4. Fasting (Sawm)

Muslims must fast for a period of one lunar month, which is the month of Ramadhaan, by refraining from food, drink and sexual intercourse from dawn to dusk. The goal of fasting, as mentioned in the Qur'aan, is to increase one's piety and God-consciousness.

5. Pilgrimage (Hajj)

Pilgrimage to the House of God, the Ka'bah, in Makkah is obligatory for every able Muslim once in a lifetime. The Hajj is a physical and visual proof of the brotherhood of humanity, and their equality in servitude in front of Allaah.