

Testimony of Faith

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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

The core of the religion of Islaam is the attestation to two phrases:

- (i) La ilaaha illaallaah (meaning 'There is no god rightfully worshipped except Allaah')
- (ii) Muhammad rasoolu Allaah (meaning 'Muhammad is the Messenger of Allaah')

These two phrases are known as the Shahahdah, or Testimony of Faith. Through the belief and attestation of these two phrases 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, worship and existence in this world.

Every Muslim, including someone new to Islaam, has to understand the meanings of these two phrases, and try to live his life accordingly.

The Importance of the Testimony of Faith

This Testimony is by far the most important aspect of the religion of Islaam, upon which the whole religion is built. Islaam is the only true monotheistic religion, stressing that no worship should be directed to any other except Allaah. It is a way of life in which a person obeys and worships the orders of Allaah and none else.

This Testimony of Faith (Shahahdah) reminds us of our purpose in life, which is the worship of Allaah alone. Allaah says in the Qur'aan:

[And I have not created neither jinn nor humans, except to worship Me Alone.]¹

The message of the Oneness of God (Tawheed) found in the testimony was not particular to the message of Prophet Muhammad (*May the peace and blessings of Allaah the Most High be upon him*). It was the universal message of all Prophets of Allaah. Since the dawn of humanity, Allaah sent Messengers to every people and nation, commanding them to worship Him Alone, and to reject all false deities. Allaah says:

**[And indeed We have raised amongst every nation a Messenger, [commanding them]
'Worship Allaah, and reject all false deities.]²**

¹ Qur'aan [51:56]

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The Meaning of La Ilaaha illaallaah

The meaning of each word in the phrase is:

La: There is no; ilaha: god (deity); illa: except; Allaah: Allaah (God)

And therefore the literal meaning of this phrase is “There is no god (deity) except Allaah”

First Part of this phrase: Rejection

‘There is no god (deity)’... Here, god with a small case ‘g’ is anything which is worshipped. Many people have taken things in creation as their gods and deities, but they are all false and are wrongfully worshipped, meaning that they have no right to that worship, nor do they deserve it. This rejection extends to all superstitions, ideologies, ways of life, or any authority figures who claim divine devotion.

Some people imagine the Divine Kingdom of God to be like earthly kingdoms. Just as a king has many ministers and trusted associates, they imagine ‘saints’ and minor deities to be our intercessors to God. They take them as agents through whom God is approached. In truth, there are no intercessors in Islaam, nor any class of clergy to whom one must ‘confess’ their sins to be forgiven. A Muslim prays directly and exclusively to God. We also reject superstitious practices such as astrology, palm reading, good luck charms, and fortune-telling.

Second Part of this phrase: Affirmation

‘Except Allaah’... After denying the right of any created being to be worshipped, the Testimony affirms divinity for Allaah alone, with ‘...except Allaah.’

Allaah, in the Qur’aan, mentions in many places that all things which people take as objects of worship besides Allaah do not deserve any worship, nor do they have any right over it, as they themselves are creations and have no power to bring any benefit.

[Yet they have taken besides Him other gods that created nothing but are themselves created, and possess neither hurt nor benefit for themselves, and possess no power (of causing) death, nor (of giving) life, nor of raising the dead.]³

Thus, la ilaaha illaallaah means, “There is no true god except Allaah” or “There is no god rightfully worshipped except Allaah.”

The Meaning of Muhammad rasoolu Allaah

The meaning of each word in the phrase is:

Muhammad: Prophet Muhammad; rasoolu: Messenger; Allaah: Allaah (God)

And therefore this phrase means, “Muhammad is the Messenger of Allaah”.

² Qur’aan [16:36]

³ Qur’aan [25:3]

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By testifying to this fact, one affirms that Prophet Muhammad (*May the peace and blessings of Allaah the Most High be upon him*) is in fact a Prophet and Messenger raised by God, amongst mankind to deliver the message of God, as were other Prophets and Messengers. Attesting to this fact implies a multitude of meanings. These include:

1. To believe that he was the last Prophet and Messenger.

[Muhammad is not the father of any man among you but he is the Messenger of Allaah and the last of the Prophets and Allaah is Ever All-Aware of everything]⁴

2. To believe that he delivered the message of Allaah faithfully just as he received it without any deficiency. Allaah says:

[...This day, I have perfected your religion for you, and completed My Favour upon you, and have chosen for you Islaam as your religion...]⁵

3. To believe that he was a Prophet to all mankind. Allaah says:

[Say: O humanity! I am Allaah's Messenger to you all...]⁶

4. To believe that everything he said about the religion was revealed from Allaah. He is to be taken as an example and obeyed without reservation as he speaks in the Name of Allaah and obeying him is obeying Allaah.

[He does not speak from his own desire, it (his speech) is only a revelation inspired [to him].]⁷

[He who obeys the Messenger, obeys Allaah...]⁸

5. We must worship Allaah according to the law brought by him. He abolished all previous laws including the Mosaic Law.

[And whoever desires a religion other than Islaam, it shall not be accepted from him, and in the Hereafter he shall be one of the losers.]⁹

6. Prophet Muhammad is to be loved and honoured. Knowing about his morals, his sacrifices for spreading monotheism, and patience with his opponents all increase one's appreciation of him. The more we learn about his life and characteristics, the more we will increase in our love for him.

In summary, the testimony Muhammad rasoolu Allaah means obeying Prophet Muhammad in what he commands, believing him in what he informs, shunning what he has prohibited, and worshipping Allaah alone the way he instructed us. These matters are not restricted to a certain people or to a specific time.

⁴ Qur'aan [33:40]

⁵ Qur'aan [5:3]

⁶ Qur'aan [7:158]

⁷ Qur'aan [53:3-4]

⁸ Qur'aan [4:80]

⁹ Qur'aan [3:85]