**The Five Pillars of Islam**

1. **Shahadah**
2. **Salah**
3. **Zkat**
4. **Sawm**
5. **hajj**

**1-What Is Shahada(Witness(?**

The word shahada actually means to testify or to bear witness. There are actually two parts to the shahada which when taken together are often called the Shahadatayn, meaning “two testimonies.” The full shahadatayn requires a statement testifying to Allah’s monotheistic qualities and another statement testifying that Prophet Mohammad is the messenger of Allah.

Declaring the shahada, or testimony, is all one needs to enter Islam. It is the most important of all the five pillars of Islam. This little phrase is what separates Muslims from everyone else. Because those who state this phrase have declared their acknowledgment of Allah’s monotheism and Prophet Muhammad’s status.

shahada-in-Arabic:

A person can convert to Islam by stating the Shahada with conviction.

Here are both parts of the shahada in English and Arabic.

Ash-hadu an laa ilaaha illallah

 “I bear witness that there is no God except Allah”

Wa ash-hadu anna Muhammadan rasulullah

 “And I bear witness that Muhammad is the messenger of Allah.”

The first part of the shahada deals with our relationship with Allah, may He be Glorified and Praised. Even though the literal translation of “laa ilaaha illallah” means “no God but Allah,” the actual meaning is much deeper than that.

**2-What is Salah(Prayer)?**

Salah in Islam is a special prayer which is informed to the Prophet Mohammad (S.A.W.) through revelation and its boundaries and form are determined. Any change in its form nullifies it. Salah is a discipline which is set as a binding duty for all Muslims as it is formal. Islam targeted to discipline its members and saved the endless conscious of the existence of Allah by setting it as a binding duty for Muslims. Salah train a Muslim for a healthy and well-organized life by dividing the day into intervals. It is accepted as refreshing and cleaning practice with a (ritual ablution) performed by clean water.

The five-times-a-day Salaah is perhaps the fulcrum around which all else rotates in ritualistic Islam. The times are

1. ***Fajr*,** the morning prayer just before dawn
2. ***Zuhr,*** the prayer just after midday
3. ***Asr,*** the afternoon prayer
4. ***Maghrib,*** the prayer just after sunset
5. ***Isha,*** the evening prayer.

 All Muslim jurists hold that the observance of these prayers is *fardh*, that is, compulsory. Nevertheless, while the forms of ablution are defined in the Qur'an, neither the five times of prayer nor the procedure of each rak'ah is prescribed in the book. The Qur'an does mention both the *salaatal-fajr* and *salaatal-ishaa* in Surah 24.58 by name but in this case it is improbable that these were actual titles of prescribed prayer - times. It is far more likely that the expressions simply mean the "morning prayer" and the "evening prayer" respectively. This interpretation is supported by the form of the only other prayer mentioned as such in the Qur'an, namely *salaatal-wusta* in Surah 2.238, which means simply the "middle prayer". Even though the Qur'an only mentions three times of prayer, Muslim writers endeavour to make the Qur'an prescribe the five fixed periods of prayer and resort to ingenious and none-too-successful methods to achieve their objective. The Qur'an does indeed urge believers to set up regular prayers at stated times (Surah 4.103), but it is quite loose in its treatment of the daily prayers. Apart from the three times it actually specifies it has a variety of exhortations regarding prayers, for example:

Celebrate (constantly) the praises of thy Lord, before the rising of the sun, and before its setting; Yea, celebrate them for part of the hours of the night, and at the sides of the day: that thou mayest have (spiritual) joy. *Surah 20.130*

And establish regular prayer at the two ends of the day and at the approaches of the night. *Surah 11.114*

It is indeed only in the Hadith that we find the five times specifically fixed.

**3-What Is Zakat(Almsgiving(?**

Zakat (“that which purifies”) is one of the Five Pillars of Islam. It refers to alms-giving, which is obligatory for all Muslims who meet a minimum wealth requirement (called the nisab). Zakat is distinguished from sadaqat (voluntary contributions made by Muslims) and from jizyah (tribute money paid by subjugated non-Muslims).

Muslims are required to give 2.5% of the monetary wealth (exceeding the nisab) they have held for an entire year. They are also required to give various percentages of agricultural products, livestock, and other goods.

Alms are to be distributed to specific groups according to the Qur’an.

There are two important words in Arabic that have to do with almsgiving. The more common of these is *zakat*, from a root that means "to grow" or "to be pure"; it seems to imply that the giving of alms is a means of purifying one's soul - perhaps from the guilt that inevitably accompanies the accumulation of property. the other term is *sadaqat*, from a root that means "true" or "sincere"; the reference is to whatever is sanctified to God's service.

Apart from the regular prescribed alms, there is also a special charity known as *zakatal-fitr*, being a donation made at the end of the fast month of Ramadan on the occasion of the festival *Eid-ul-Fitr*. This tithe is also known as *sadaqatal-fitr* as it is not necessarily an obligatory charity.

Zakaah can be used for distribution to the poor, assistance towards those who have recently embraced Islam, the freeing of slaves, and *fii sabiiIillaah* - "in the Way of A1lah" (a common Qur'anic phrase).

1. **What Is Sawm (FASTING(?**

Sawm is the act of fasting in Islam, and usually refers to the fasting done during the month of Ramadhan (9th month in the Islamic lunar calendar). A more accurate description would be abstention, because when a person fasts, he abstains from eating and drinking, having sex, and other activities which are deemed unIslamic. By the latter, I'm referring to the fact that during sawm, a person is made more conscious of his activities, and hopefully, this 4 weeks of abstention would be habit-forming and the new and better habits would persist.

As an example, if a person likes to gossip, during sawm, he is made more conscious of his submission to Allah during this time and thus distance himself from such activities. Hopefully, this will not just be during the time of fasting but be a new habit.

Sawm, thus is an effort to increase one's piety consciously. Thus, there are some activities that are otherwise legal (eating, drinking and sex with your wife/husband) that is restricted temporarily during this month. During this month, Muslims are encouraged to increase activities that bring them closer to Allah - supernumerary prayers, zikir, community work, etc.

**5-What Is Hajj(Pilgrimage(?**

The fifth pillar of Islam is to make a pilgrimage (Hajj) to Mecca, in Saudi Arabia, at least once in one's lifetime. This pillar is obligatory for every Muslim, male or female, provided that he/she is physically and financially able to do so.

Prerequisites for performing the Hajj are to be a Muslim, to be free, to be an adult or mature enough, to be of sound mind, and to have the ability to afford the journey and maintain one's dependents back home for the duration. The reward for the Hajj is nothing less than Paradise.

The Hajj is the ultimate form of worship, as it involves the spirit of all the other rituals and demands of the believer great sacrifice. On this unique occasion, nearly two million Muslims from all over the globe meet one another in a given year. Regardless of the season, pilgrims wear special clothes (Ihram) - two, very simple, unsown white garments - which strips away all distinctions of wealth, status, class and culture; all stand together and equal before Allah.

The rites of Hajj, which go back to the time of Prophet Abraham who built the Ka'bah, are observed over five or six days, beginning on the eighth day of the last month of the year, named Dhul-Hijjah (pilgrimage). These rites include circumambulating the Ka'bah (Tawaf), and going between the mountains of Safa and Marwah, as Hajar (Abraham's wife) did during her search for water for her son Isma'il. Then the pilgrims stand together on the wide plain of Arafah and join in prayers for Allah's forgiveness, in what is often thought of as a preview of the Last Judgment. The pilgrims also cast stones at a stone pillar which represents Satan. The pilgrimage ends with a festival, called Eid Al-Adha, which is celebrated with prayers, the sacrifice of an animal, and the exchange of greetings and gifts in Muslim communities everywhere.

**Homework:**

Q1:what are the five pillars of Islam?

Q2: What is the most important pillar of Islam? And why?