The **Five Pillars of Islam** (ارکان الإسلام; also **Arkān ad-dīn** "pillars of the religion") are five basic acts in Islam, considered obligatory by Sunni Muslims. These are summarized in the famous Hadith of Gabriel.\[^1\] [^2] [^3] [^4]

The Qur'an presents them as a framework for worship and a sign of commitment to the faith. They are (1) the **shahada** (creed), (2) daily prayers (salat), (3) fasting during Ramadan (sawm), (4) almsgiving (zakāt), and (5) the pilgrimage to Mecca (hajj) at least once in a lifetime.\[^5\] [^6]

The minority Shi'i and majority Sunni both agree on the essential details for the performance of these acts,\[^7\] [^8] but the Shi'a do not refer to them by the same name (see Theology of Twelvers and Aspects of the Religion for Twelvers and Seven pillars of Ismailism).

### The Five Pillars

#### Shahada

**Shahadah** is a saying professing monotheism and accepting Muhammad as God's messenger.\[^9\] The **shahadah** is a set statement normally recited in Arabic: *(ašhadu an) lā ilāha illā l-Lāhi (wa ashhadu 'anna) Muḥammadan rasīlu l-Lāhi* "(I profess that) there is no god except God and (I profess that) Muhammad is the Messenger of God." Also, it is said that when dying one should recite this declaration of faith. In Azaan (call to prayer) it is recited. When a person wishes to convert religions they should recite this affirmation and believe in it.\[^10\]

#### Salat

**Salat** is the Islamic prayer. **Salat** consists of five daily prayers: **Fajr**, **Dhuhr**, **Asr**, **Maghrib**, and **Isha'a**. **Fajr** is performed at dawn, **Dhuhr** is a noon prayer, **Asr** is performed in the afternoon, **Maghrib** is the sunset prayer, and **Isha'a** is the evening prayer. Each prayer consists of a certain amount of **raka’āt**. A prayer either consists of two, three, or four raka’āt. All of these prayers are recited while facing the Ka'bah in Mecca. Muslims must wash themselves before prayer, this washing is called **Wudu**. The prayer is accompanied by a series of set positions including: bowing with hands on knees, standing, prostrating and sitting in a special position (not on the heels, nor on the buttocks, with the toes pointing away from Mecca), usually with one foot tucked under the body.

View of the prayer hall of the Mosque of Uqba also called the Great Mosque of Kairouan (in Tunisia); performing the prayer or **Salat** is one of the five pillars of Islam.\[^11\]
**Sawm**

Three types of fasting (Sawm) are recognized by the Qur’an: Ritual fasting, fasting as compensation for repentance (both from sura Al-Baqara), and ascetic fasting (from Al-Ahzab).

Ritual fasting is an obligatory act during the month of Ramadan. Muslims must abstain from food, drink, and sexual intercourse from dawn to dusk during this month, and are to be especially mindful of other sins. Fasting is necessary for every Muslim that has reached puberty.

The fast is meant to allow Muslims to seek nearness to God, to express their gratitude to and dependence on him, atone for their past sins, and to remind them of the needy. During Ramadan, Muslims are also expected to put more effort into following the teachings of Islam by refraining from violence, anger, envy, greed, lust, profane language, gossip and to try to get along with fellow Muslims better. In addition, all obscene and irreligious sights and sounds are to be avoided.

Fasting during Ramadan is obligatory, but is forbidden for several groups for whom it would be very dangerous and excessively problematic. These include pre-pubescent children, those with a medical condition such as diabetes, elderly people, and pregnant or breastfeeding women. Observing fasts is not permitted for menstruating women. Other individuals for whom it is considered acceptable not to fast are those who are ill or traveling. Missing fasts usually must be made up for soon afterward, although the exact requirements vary according to circumstance.

**Zakāt**

Zakāt or alms-giving is the practice of charitable giving by Muslims based on accumulated wealth, and is obligatory for all who are able to do so. It is considered to be a personal responsibility for Muslims to ease economic hardship for others and eliminate inequality. Zakat consists of spending 2.5% of one's wealth for the benefit of the poor or needy, including slaves, debtors and travelers. A Muslim may also donate more as an act of voluntary charity (sadaqah), rather than to achieve additional divine reward. There are two main types of Zakat. First, there is the kaff, which is a fixed amount based on the cost of food that is paid during the month of Ramadan by the head of a family for himself and his dependents. Second, there is the Zakat on wealth, which covers money made in business, savings, income, and so on. In current usage Zakat is treated as a 2.5% collection on most valuables and savings held for a full lunar year, as long as the total value is more than a basic minimum known as nisab (3 ounces (85.05 g)). As of 2 July 2010, nisab is approximately $3,275 or an equivalent amount in any other currency. Many Shi'ites are expected to pay an additional amount in the form of a khums tax, which they consider to be a separate ritual practice.

There are four principles that should be followed when giving the Zakat:

1. The giver must declare to God his intention to give the Zakat.
2. The Zakat must be paid on the day that it is due.
3. Payment must be in kind. This means if one is wealthy then he or she needs to pay 2.5% of their income. If a person does not have much money, then they should compensate for it in different ways, such as good deeds and good behavior toward others.
4. The Zakat must be distributed in the community from which it was taken.
Hajj

The Hajj is a pilgrimage that occurs during the Islamic month of Dhu al-Hijjah to the holy city of Mecca, and derives from an ancient Arab practice. Every able-bodied Muslim is obliged to make the pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in their lifetime if he or she can afford it. When the pilgrim is around 10 km (6.2 mi) from Mecca, he/she must dress in Ihram clothing, which consists of two white sheets. Both men and women are required to make the pilgrimage to Mecca. After a Muslim makes the trip to Mecca, he/she is known as a hajj/hajja (one who made the pilgrimage to Mecca). The main rituals of the Hajj include traveling seven times between Mount Safa and Mount Marwah, and walking seven times around the Kaaba, touching the Black Stone, and symbolically stoning the Devil in Mina.

The pilgrim, or the haji, is honoured in their community. Islamic teachers say that the Hajj should be an expression of devotion to God, not a means to gain social standing. The believer should be self-aware and examine their intentions in performing the pilgrimage. This should lead to constant striving for self-improvement. A pilgrimage made at any time other than the Hajj season is called an Umrah, and while not mandatory is strongly recommended. Also, they make a pilgrimage to the holy city of Jerusalem in their alms giving feast.

Notes

[9] From the article on the Pillars of Islam in Oxford Islamic Studies Online (http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.co.uk/article/opr/t125/e1859?_hi=32&_pos=3)
[14] Qur'an 33:35
[17] talhaanjum_9
Five Pillars of Islam


[21] Qur’an 2:184
[25] Zakat, Encyclopedia of Islam Online
[29] Zakat Alms-giving (http://public.wsu.edu/~dee/GLOSSARY/ZAKAT.HTM)

References

Books and journals


**Encyclopedias**


**External links**

- Pillars of Islam in Oxford Islamic Studies Online (http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t125/e1859?_hi=17&_pos=3)
- Living as a Muslim (http://www.muslimliving.org)