

# The five pillars of Islam

There are five fundamental requirements of Islam, called the five pillars of Islam.

## First pillar: Shahada

The Muslim profession of faith is called the **SHAHADA**, which means 'bearing witness'. This is said out loud before and during each of the five daily prayers. It is whispered into a baby's ear at birth, and at the time of death. In Arabic, it is:

*La ilaha illal lah Mohammed ar rasul lallah* (There is no God but Allah, and Mohammed is the prophet of Allah).

## Second pillar: Daily prayer

Prayer is the heart of the Muslim faith. Many children begin saying prayers at age seven. Muslims pray to show obedience to God, and to ask God for guidance in daily life. The Arabic word for prayer is **SALAH**.

Prayer occurs five times a day: before sunrise, at noon, in mid-afternoon, immediately after sunset, and before midnight or going to bed. Muslims can either pray together at a mosque, or on their own, wherever they are. Prayers must be said while facing towards Mecca.

## Preparing for prayer

Before praying, Muslims remove their shoes and go through a routine washing ritual, cleansing themselves in preparation for prayer. The ritual washing, called **WUDU**, can be done in any clean place where there is water. There are special rules to allow for situations when water is not available (for example, in a desert).



◀ Remove your shoes.



▲ Wash both hands up to the wrists. Do this three times.



▲ Rinse the mouth with water using the right hand. Do this three times.



▲ Wash the nostrils by sniffing up water and blowing it out. You perform this three times.



▲ Wash the face three times.



▲ Wash each arm up to the elbow. Do this three times.



◀ Wipe or rub the head with the fingers. Do this once.



▲ Clean the inside of the ears with the index fingers and the back of the ears with the thumbs. Do this once.



▲ Wipe the back of the neck. Do this once.



▼ Wash the feet up to the ankles. Do this three times.

## Salah (prayer)

The sequence of daily prayers is called **SALAH**. Salah is a time to re-dedicate yourself to Allah. The movements of the prayer help you to make contact with God. The set of movements is shown here. One complete set of movements is called a **RAK'AH**. During prayers, the rak'ah is repeated two, three or four times – the exact number depends on which of the five daily prayers is being performed.

▼ **TAKHIR**. Shut out everything and concentrate on God. Do this by facing Mecca and making a clear intention to pray for God as God has commanded.

▼ Begin the rak'ah. Stand straight up with your hands by your ears and say "Allahu Akbar" (God is Supreme).



▼ Put your left hand on your chest and your right hand over it and say quietly: "Glory and praise to you, O God; blessed is your name and exalted is your majesty. There is no God other than you. I come seeking shelter from Satan, the condemned one." Now recite the opening chapter of the Qur'an. After this you may recite any other passage from the Qur'an.



◀ **RUKU**. Bow by bending forwards with your hands on your knees while keeping the back straight. While doing this, say "Glory be to God the great, and praise to him." Repeat this three times.

▲ **SUJUD**. Prostrate yourself by kneeling, with your forehead, nose, hands, knees and toes all on the ground. Say, "Glory be to my Lord, the Most High. Allah is greater than everything else." Repeat this three times.

◀ **QUIYAM**. Stand up with your hands by your sides and say, "God hears those who praise him. Oh God, all praise be to you, O God greater than everything else."

▶ **JULUS**. Rise to a kneeling position with your hands on your knees and say a short, silent prayer. Then repeat sujud. Then say a short prayer for the community of Muslims and for your sins to be forgiven.

▼ **SALAM** (peace). Look right and then left and then say, "Peace be with you and the mercy of Allah."



▼ Group worship: stages 2, 3, 4, 6 and 7 of a rak'ah of prayer (see pages 18–19).



### Friday prayers (Yawm-al-jumu'ah)

Friday is the day of congregational worship, that is the time when all Muslims meet and pray together at a mosque or other place (such as a large room which has been prepared by laying down clean sheets). The **JUM'AH** (Friday) congregational prayer is held in the early afternoon.

### Third pillar: Almsgiving (zakah)

The Qur'an teaches that wealth and money should be used to help Islam. Every Muslim who can afford it should give up part of their money every year to help others. This is called **ZAKAH**. The word zakah means to purify, or to make clean.

### Who pays zakah

Only people who can afford it have to pay zakah. Zakah is not paid out of duty or law, but out of belief in Islam.

The amount that should be paid is usually one-fortieth (2.5%) of all the money, land, property and jewellery that a person has. The money can be given to mosques, schools or organisations that help the poor.

Charity is different from zakah. Many Muslims also give to charity, in addition to zakah. Zakah is a certain amount that should be paid each year, but the amount given to charity is up to each person to decide.

### Fourth pillar: Fasting (sawm)

Mohammed (pbuh) received the first verses of the Qur'an during the month of Ramadan (the ninth month of the Islamic calendar) and so this month has a special significance.

Every day during Ramadan, Muslims fast from dawn to sunset, in remembrance of Allah's gift of the Qur'an. The period of fasting

is set out in the Qur'an:

"O You who believe! Fasting is prescribed for you, even as it was prescribed for those before you, that you may attain God-consciousness."

Most older children and all adults observe the fast, except those who are ill or travelling, or women who are pregnant or nursing. These people can make up the fast later.

During Ramadan, everyone gets up before dawn and eats a big meal, called **SOHAR**. Nothing else will be eaten or drunk until sunset. As soon as the Sun sets, the fast can be broken, traditionally by eating a few dates and drinking water. This is followed by prayer, and then a proper meal, called **IFTAR**, is eaten.

Ramadan is more than a time of not eating, it is a time to reflect on the teachings in the Qur'an and on God.



### Taraweeh

During Ramadan there is a special night-time prayer session called **TARAWEEH**. Traditionally, a person who has memorised the whole Qur'an recites it, in small portions and in the correct order, every night, completing the recitation of the entire Qur'an just before the end of the month of Ramadan.

## Seclusion

The prophet Mohammed (pbuh) spent the last ten days and nights of Ramadan praying in seclusion. To keep up this tradition, some people spend the last ten days of Ramadan praying in the mosque.

## The day of Eid

This festival marks the end of Ramadan. You will find information about it on pages 28–29.

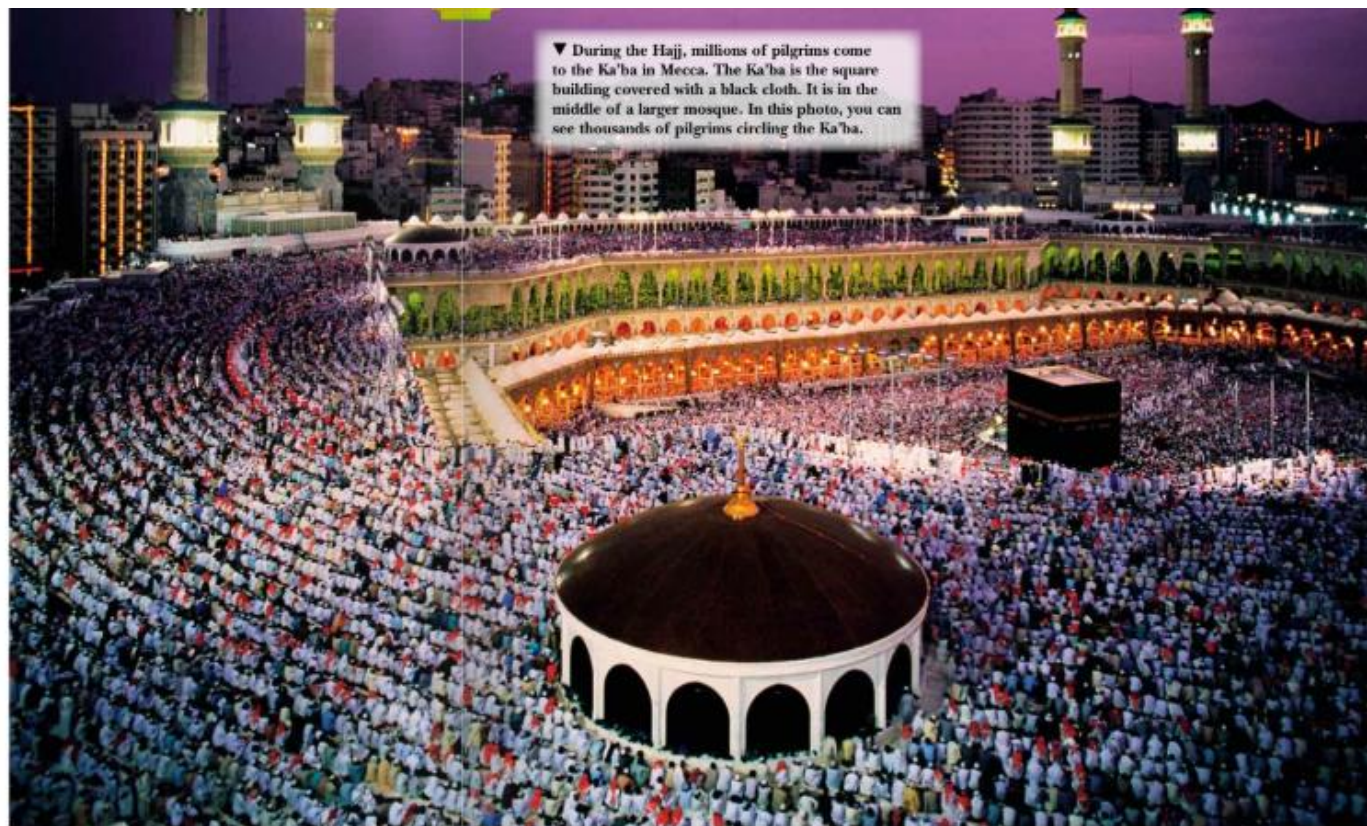
## Fifth pillar: Pilgrimage (Hajj)

The final pillar of Islam is the pilgrimage (**Hajj**) to Mecca during the twelfth month of the Islamic calendar, called Dhu al-Hijjah. Every Muslim aims to perform this at least once in their life.

The Hajj involves a visit to Mecca (see diagram on pages 24–25). Once there, a series of rites are performed over several days at the Ka'ba and in the nearby areas of Mina, Muzdalifah and Arafat. Each of these places has a special significance for Muslims. A shorter pilgrimage, called umrah, forms part of the Hajj, but may be performed by itself at any time.

## Ihram

Before leaving for the Hajj, pilgrims must be in a special state of holiness and purity, called **IHRAM**. This is achieved by washing and declaring their intention, through prayer, to make the pilgrimage for God.



Once they have declared their intention, men put on two large pieces of seamless, unstitched white cloth that symbolises the purity of ihram. Women wear a similar garment made of three pieces of cloth. Most pilgrims will wear only these clothes and a pair of sandals throughout their pilgrimage.

## The Ka'ba

The Hajj begins at the Ka'ba in Mecca. The Ka'ba is a cube-shaped, brick building, about 15 m high, in the centre of the mosque called the Masjid al-Haram (Great Mosque). The Ka'ba is covered with a black silk cloth embroidered with gold lettering. Inside the Ka'ba is a sacred black stone, the Hajar al-Aswad.

The Ka'ba was originally built by Adam, the first human, as the first place to worship God. After Adam finished building the Ka'ba, God gave him a white stone to put inside. When people touched the stone as they worshipped, the stone absorbed their sins and began to turn black. This is the black stone inside the Ka'ba today. Later, the Ka'ba was rebuilt by the prophet Abraham.

Over the centuries, the Ka'ba was destroyed and rebuilt several times, and in Mohammed's (pbuh) time it had become a shrine to P~~A~~GAN gods. Mohammed (pbuh) re-dedicated it as a house of God.

Upon their arrival in Mecca, pilgrims enter the Great Mosque and perform umrah – they circle seven times around the outside of the Ka'ba. After this, pilgrims pray at the Station of Abraham and drink from a spring, called the zamzam, which runs through the Great Mosque. Pilgrims then walk seven times between the nearby hills of Safa and Marwah.

According to Muslim tradition, Ishmail, the son of Abraham, and his mother Hagar, were wandering between these hills and dying of thirst, when God caused a spring to start flowing. The water came out so fast that Hagar shouted "Zam! Zam!", which means "Stop! Stop!" in Arabic.

### Arafat and Mina

After performing umrah, pilgrims leave Mecca and travel to the nearby valley of Mina. On the next day, they leave before dawn for the plain of Arafat, where they perform

'the standing'. This is the central rite of the Hajj. Here pilgrims pray for forgiveness as a reminder of the Day of Judgement.

It was at Arafat, on the Mount of Mercy, that Mohammed delivered his last sermon, asking God to pardon the sins of pilgrims who stood at Arafat.

At Arafat, Muslims feel the presence and closeness of a merciful God. This is why the pilgrims leave Arafat joyfully, feeling reborn and without sin.

On their way back to Mina the pilgrims stop at Muzdalifah to

rest, pray and gather small stones. Once back in Mina, pilgrims throw seven pebbles at each of three stone pillars. The pillars represent Satan. In Mina, pilgrims also sacrifice an animal. This is a reminder of the time God asked Abraham to prove his faith by sacrificing his son. Abraham agreed, but at the last moment, God told Abraham to sacrifice a sheep instead.

After this, pilgrims return to Mecca and again walk seven times around the Ka'ba. Men shave or cut their hair (and shave their beards) and women trim their hair. This is the end of the Hajj.

#### ▼ The stages of the Hajj.

(1) Before the eighth day of Dhu al-Hijjah, pilgrims bathe, change into special clothes and declare their intention to make the pilgrimage for God.

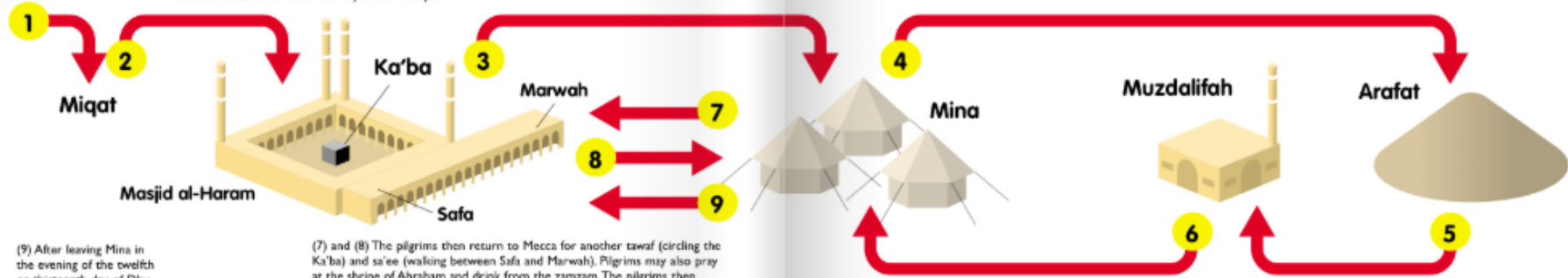
(2) On the eighth day of Dhu al-Hijjah, the pilgrims enter Mecca and go to the Great Mosque and perform tawaf-circling seven times around the Ka'ba without stopping, while reciting prayers. Then the pilgrims perform sa'ee – they walk seven times between the hills of Safa and Marwah. The hills are under a covered walkway in the mosque.

(3) In the evening of the eighth day of Dhu al-Hijjah the pilgrims travel about six kilometres to Mina and say prayers. Pilgrims spend the night in Mina and leave after sunrise on the ninth day of Dhu al-Hijjah.

All throughout the Hajj, pilgrims recite a prayer called Talbiya: "Hera I am, Oh God, at Your command! Here I am at Your command! Here I am at Your command! You are without associate! Here I am at Your command! To You are all praise, grace and dominion! You are without associate!"

(4) Pilgrims arrive in Arafat, about three kilometres from Mina, on the ninth day of Dhu al-Hijjah. Special prayers are said on entering Arafat. Pilgrims can stay anywhere in Arafat or on the Mount of Mercy. Pilgrims stay here until sunset, reciting prayers, reading the Qur'an and asking God for forgiveness.

(5) After sunset on the ninth day of Dhu al-Hijjah the pilgrims leave Arafat for Muzdalifah, about three kilometres away. Here, pilgrims spend the night. While in Muzdalifah, each pilgrim collects small stones.



(9) After leaving Mina in the evening of the twelfth or thirteenth day of Dhu al-Hijjah, the pilgrims return to Mecca to perform a farewell tawaf and farewell prayers.

(7) and (8) The pilgrims then return to Mecca for another tawaf (circling the Ka'ba) and sa'ee (walking between Safa and Marwah). Pilgrims may also pray at the shrine of Abraham and drink from the zamzam. The pilgrims then return to Mina for the night. Beginning on the tenth of Dhu al-Hijjah is the Muslim holiday of Eid al-Adha. Pilgrims celebrate this in Mina.

On the eleventh and twelfth days of Dhu al-Hijjah the pilgrims stay in Mina and stone the Jamarat pillars each day. The pilgrims can leave Mina on the twelfth day, or they may stay another day.

(6) Before sunrise on the tenth day of Dhu al-Hijjah, the pilgrims go back to Mina. At Mina, pilgrims throw their stones at three pillars (Jamarat pillars), which represent Satan. Each pilgrim then buys and sacrifices an animal. After this pilgrims shave and cut their hair and can change into normal clothes.