

Muslim Practices

The 5 Pillars of Islam

Shahadah (Belief): This is the core Islamic belief 'There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is his Messenger'

Salah (Prayer): Muslims will pray 5 times a day

Sawm (Fasting): Muslims will fast during the month of Ramadan

Zakah (Giving): Muslims will give 2.5% of their earnings to help the poor

Hajj (Pilgrimage): Muslims will travel to Mecca at least once in their lifetime if they can afford it to take part in the Hajj Pilgrimage.

Salah (Prayer)

Muslims will perform Wudu (Ritual washing) before prayer. They will then perform the rak'ah which involves kneeling and prostrating themselves, before saying the recitations.

Explain how Muslims pray

1. Muslims stand at the back of the mat raising their hands to the back of their ears. This shows Allah they are listening to him.
2. Bowing shows respect for Allah. The worshipper places his hands on his knees saying 'Glory to my Lord, the Great.'
3. Muslims then kneel and places their forehead, nose, palms and knees on the floor showing Allah is greater than them, saying 'Glory to my Lord, the Highest' three times
4. At the end of the rak'ahs they sit back on their heels and say a private prayer. Then they look over their shoulders blessing fellow Muslims with the words, 'Peace and mercy of Allah be upon you.'

Why do Muslims Pray?

They believe they are closest to God when they pray

It will help them enter Jannah (Heaven) – 'Remember me and I will remember you.' – Qur'an

It allows them ask for guidance. For example if they should forgive someone who has hurt them. 'Guide us to the straight path.' – Qur'an

Sawm (Fasting)

During the month of Ramadan, Muslims are expected to fast (avoid drink and water) while the sun is in the sky (From Dawn until Dusk). Ramadan is also a time of charity. Muslims eat just before sunrise (Suhur) and then break the fast just after sunset (Iftar.) There are exceptions to the obligation to fast: Children until they are 12, Old people, for medical reasons and pregnant women. If you have to miss a few days, you can make it up by fasting those days later, or giving food to someone who is in need.

Why do Muslims Fast?

The Night of Power falls during Ramadan so it is a time of thanksgiving for the Qur'an. The night of Power is 'better than a thousand months.' – Qur'an

In The Qur'an it says 'you who believe must fast, so that you may become righteous.'

It teaches Muslims to be thankful for what Allah provides. 'If you are thankful, I will certainly give you increase.' – Qur'an

Zakah

Zakah is where you give 2.5% of your earnings to charity. Zakah should be given privately and without the hope of being praised. The money goes to people who need it regardless of their religion and race. The belief in Sadaqah links to Zakah as Muslims believe they should give to charity whenever the need arises.

Why is Zakah important?

The purpose of Zakah is to cleanse or 'make pure' the money they have earned. Muslims pay 2.5% of all their earnings to charity. 'Be steadfast in prayer and giving' The Qur'an

Muslims are expected to be kind, caring and compassionate. Zakah helps them to do this.

'Those who hoard gold and silver, give them the tidings of a painful punishment.' – Qur'an

Hajj

Hajj is a pilgrimage to Mecca. It takes place on the last month of the Muslim calendar. All Muslims are expected to go at least once in their life if they can afford it.

Muslims wear Ihram, which is two pieces of white cloth. This shows that all are equal before God.

Muslims perform various rituals which they believe helps them become closer to God. This include circling the Ka'aba, walking between two hills, meditating on Mount Arafat, throwing pebbles at the pillars at Jamarat (Symbolising rejecting Satan) and finally sacrificing a sheep or goat which is then donated to help feed the poor.

Why is Hajj significant?

The Ka'akba is known as a House of God. It is the oldest shrine on Earth, believed to have been built by Adam, rebuilt by Noah after the flood and finally rebuilt by Abraham. All Muslims perform Salah (Prayer) by praying towards it. By circling it during Hajj, they are showing that God is at the centre of their lives.

How does Hajj influence Muslims

Hajj also help Muslims feel a sense of unity, as they are perform these difficult rituals together.

Upon completion, Muslims are looked upon with more respect in their communities.

It can help Muslims find more faith, and focus their beliefs. The Black Civil Rights leader Malcolm X rejected his racist beliefs towards white people after his Hajj.

The Mosque

This is the Muslim place of worship. It contains:

A dome: This represents the worldwide community and also prevents the Imam's voice from echoing while he preaches.

A Minaret: This is a tall tower, which is used to broadcast the 'Call to Prayer' which reminds Muslims that it is time for Salah (Prayer).

Washrooms: This allows Muslims to perform ritual washing (wudu) before prayer.

Mihrab: This is a recessed alcove which indicates the direction of Mecca for Muslims to pray towards the Ka'aba.

Prayer Hall: This is where Muslims perform their Salah.

What is a Mosque used for?

Worship, Social Centre (Youth club etc.), Family Events (Funerals, weddings etc.)

Jihad

The Greater Jihad is the internal struggle to become a better Muslim. This can involve things like struggling to overcome addiction or just to be a more loving and compassionate person.

The Lesser Jihad is the external struggle against evil, and can involve physical fighting as long as the following rules are obeyed:

1. Only fight in defence of Allah (Peace)
2. To restore Peace
3. War should only be fought as a Last Resort
4. War should only be fought until the enemy lays down their arms
5. Women, children, crops and mosques must never be harmed.

10 Obligatory Acts of Shi'a Islam

In additional to the 5 Pillars, Shi'a Muslims also have additional obligations (things they must do) which make up the 10 obligation:

1. Prayer (Salah)
2. Fasting (Sawm)
3. Almsgiving (Zakah)
4. Pilgrimage (Hajj)
5. Jihad (Struggle)
6. Khums (An additional 20% tax to charity on earnings after household expenses)
7. Directing others towards good
8. Forbidding evil
9. Expressing love towards good people/acts
10. Expressing hatred towards those who oppose peace/evil

Festivals

Eid ul-Fitr (The Feast of breaking the Fast)

This is a celebration at the end of Ramadan. It celebrates the end of a long period of fasting which helps remind them of how thankful they should be for the things they have.

Eid ul-Adha (The Feast of the sacrifice)

This is the celebration of the end of Hajj, whereby a lamb sacrifice (or charity donation) is made to help those in need to show that faith requires sacrifice.

Ashura

For Sunni Muslims this is the Day of Atonement where they seek forgiveness for their sins.

For Shi'a Muslims this is a day of sorrow where they remember the death of Hussein, the grandson of Muhammad.