The Five Pillars of Islam



Salat (Prayer)

Sawm Al-Ramadan (Fasting the Month of Ramadan)

Zakat (The Prescribed Purifying Alms)

Hajj (Pilgrimage)

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# The pillars of Islam and a Muslim’s daily life[[1]](#footnote-2)

Islam is based on five pillars: 1) Bearing witness to God’s Existence and Oneness and the Messengership of Muhammad, 2) praying five times a day, 3) fasting during the month of Ramadan, 4) paying zakat (the prescribed purifying alms), and 5) *hajj* or pilgrimage.

# Tahara (Cleanliness or Purification)

Islam requires physical and spiritual cleanliness. On the physical side, Islam requires Muslims to clean their bodies, clothes, houses, and community, and they are rewarded by God for doing so. While people generally consider cleanliness desirable, Islam insists upon it and makes it an indispensable fundamental of religious life. In fact, books on Islamic jurisprudence often contain a whole chapter on this very requirement.

Prophet Muhammad, upon him be God’s blessings and peace, advised Muslims to appear neat and tidy in private and in public. Once when returning home from battle he advised his army: *“Soon you will meet your brothers, so tidy your saddles and clothes”* (Abu Dawud, “Libas,” 25). On another occasion he said: *“If I had not been afraid of overburdening my community, I would have ordered them to use a miswaq (to brush and clean their teeth) for every prayer”* (Bukhari, “Jumu‘a” 8).

Moral hygiene also was emphasized, for the Prophet, upon him be God’s blessings and peace, encouraged Muslims to make a special prayer upon seeing themselves in the mirror: *“God, You have endowed me with a good form; likewise bless me with an immaculate character”* (Ibn Hanbal, *Musnad*, 1:34, 6:155). He advised modest clothing, for men as well as for women, on the grounds that it helps one maintain purity of thought.

Being charitable is a way of purifying one’s wealth. A Muslim who does not give charity (*sadaqa*) and pay the required annual *zakat* (the prescribed alms), contaminates his or her wealth by hoarding that which rightfully belongs to others: *Of their wealth take alms so that you may purify them* (9:103).

All the laws and injunctions given by God and His Prophet, upon him be God’s blessings and peace, are pure. Any law established by Divine guidance is just and pure.

## The Purity of Water

Pure water is used essentially in matters of purification or *wudu’* (minor ablution) and *ghusl* (major ablution). Hence the necessity to investigate water’s purity. Water has four essential attributes: smell, color, taste, and fluidity. Any pure and purifying water is judged according to whether it retains these attributes or not. As a result, water is classified into two categories: *mutlaq* and *muqayyad* water.

*Mutlaq* water is “*natural*” water, such as that which comes from rain water, snow, hail, sea water, and water from the Zamzam well.

It is subdivided as follows:

* Water that is both pure and purifying (e.g., rain water, snow, hail, sea water, and water from the Zamzam well).
* Water that drips from a person after he or she has performed the minor or major ablution, and therefore is considered “used.” It is considered pure, but cannot be used for another minor and major ablution.
* Water that is both pure and purifying, but whose usage is disliked (*makruh*) (e.g., water left in a container after a cat, bird, or another “allowed” animal has drunk from it).
* Water mixed with impure elements. Water whose taste, color, or smell has been altered by an impure substance cannot be used for purification. However, if the liquid is still considered water, meaning that the impure substance has not altered its taste, color, or smell, it can be used for purification.
* Water that is pure but may not be purifying. One example of this type of water is the water that remains in a pot after a donkey or a mule has drunk from it.

*Muqayyad* water includes naturally *muqayyad* water, such as fruit juices and water that has been mixed with various substances (e.g., soap, saffron, flowers) or objects that the Shari‘a considers pure. Such water is considered pure until, due to being mixed with other substances, one can no longer call it water. In this case, the water is still considered pure, but it cannot be used for purification (minor and major ablution).

## Types of Impurities

*Najasa* refers to impure substances that Muslims must avoid and wash off after coming into contact with them. God says: *Purify your raiment* (74:4) and: *God loves those who repent and who purify themselves* (2:222).

* Animals that died naturally (e.g., not killed in the Islamic manner) are impure, as is anything cut off a live animal. However, dead sea animals and those that have no flowing blood (e.g., bees and ants) are not impure. The bones, horns, claws, fur, feathers, and skin of dead animals, except for pigs, are pure.
* Any blood that flows from a person’s or an animal’s body (e.g., blood from a killed animal or menstrual blood) is impure. However, blood that remains in the veins is permissible. Also, any blood that remains in edible meat, livers, hearts, and spleens is not impure, provided that the animal was sacrificed in the Islamic way.
* A person’s vomit, urine, excrement, *wadi* (a thick white secretion discharged after urination), *mazi* (a white sticky fluid that flows from the sexual organs when thinking about sexual intercourse, foreplay, and so on), prostatic fluid, and sperm is impure. However, according to some, sperm is not impure but should be washed off if it is still wet, and scratched off if it is dry. Any part of human flesh is impure.
* The urine, saliva, and blood of all animals whose meat is prohibited, and the excrement of all animals except birds whose meat is allowable, are impure.
* The excrement of poultry (i.e., geese, hens, and ducks) is impure.
* Pig and alcohol are impure.
* Dogs are considered impure. Any container that a dog has licked must be completely washed and sterilized. If a dog licks a pot that has dry food in it, what it touched and what surrounds it must be thrown away. The remainder may be kept, as it is still pure. A dog’s hair is considered pure.
* The impurities mentioned are considered “gross impurity” (*najasat al-ghaliza*). Any amount of them contaminates whatever it touches. However, if it is on person’s body or clothes when he or she is praying, or on the ground or mat where he or she is praying, its amount is taken into consideration. Any solid filth weighing more than 3 grams, and any liquid more than the amount that spreads over a person’s palm, invalidates the prayer.
* The urine of horses and domestic or wild animals whose meat is allowed to eat is weak impurity (*najasat al-khafifa*). When more than one-fourth of a limb or one-fourth of one’s clothes are smeared with it, the prayer is invalidated.

## The Ways of Purification

**Purifying the Body and Clothes:** If these are contaminated, they must be washed with water until no impurity remains. This is especially so if the impurity is visible, such as blood. If some stains remain after washing, such as those that would be extremely difficult to remove, they can be overlooked. If the impurity is not visible, such as urine, wash and wring whatever it has contaminated three times.

**Purifying the Ground:** Purify the ground by pouring water over it. If the impurity is solid, the ground will become pure only by its removal or decay.

**Purifying Contaminated Butter and Similar Substances:** If a dead animal has fallen into a solid matter but has not swollen or disintegrated, whatever the corpse touches and what is around it must be thrown away, provided that one can make sure that it did not touch the rest of the matter. If it fell into a liquid substance, the majority say that the entire liquid becomes impure.

**Purifying a Dead Animal’s Skin:** Tanning purifies a dead animal’s skin and fur. The Prophet said: *“If the animal’s skin is tanned, it is purified”* (Muslim, “Hayz,” 105).

**Purifying Mirrors and Similar Objects:** Mirrors, knives, swords, nails, bones, glass, painted pots, and other smooth surfaces that have no pores are purified by removing the impurity.

**Useful Points:**

* If an unknown liquid falls on a person, there is no need to ask about it or to wash one’s clothes.
* If a person finds something moist on his or her body or clothes at night and does not know what it is, he or she does not need to smell it in order to identify it.
* Clothes that have street mud on them do not have to be washed.
* If a person finishes praying and sees some previously unseen impurity on his or her clothes or body, or was aware of but forgot about them, his or her prayer does not have to be repeated.
* If a person cannot determine what part of his or her clothes contains the impurity, the whole garment should be washed, for “if an obligation can be fulfilled only by performing another related act, that act also becomes obligatory.”
* If a person mixes pure clothes with impure clothes (and cannot tell them apart), he or she should investigate the matter and pray once in one of the clothes.
* It is not proper to carry something that has God’s Name upon it while going to the bathroom, unless he or she is afraid of losing it or having it stolen.
* One should not talk in the bathroom, respond to a greeting, or repeat what the muadhdhin is saying. One may speak if there is some necessity. In the event of sneezing, one should praise God silently by moving his or her lips.
* One should neither face nor turn his or her back on the *qibla* while answering a call of nature, especially if in an open area.
* One should seek a soft and low piece of ground to protect against any impurity. The Prophet said: “When one of you urinates, he should choose the proper place to do so.”
* One should avoid shaded places and places where people walk and gather.
* One should not answer a call of nature in bathing places or in still or running water.
* One should not urinate while standing, though some allow it.
* One must remove any impurities from one’s clothes and body after relieving oneself.
* One should not clean himself or herself with the right hand.
* One should remove any bad smell from one’s hands after answering a call of nature.
* One should enter the bathroom with the left foot, saying: “I seek refuge in God from noxious male and female beings (devils),” and exit with one’s right foot, saying: “O God, I seek your forgiveness.”
* After a man has relieved himself, he should wait until the urine stops completely and make sure that none of it has fallen onto his clothes. This is called *istibra* (seeking full purification). Ibn ‘Abbas related that the Messenger of God, upon him be God’s blessings and peace, passed by two graves and said: “They are being punished, but not for a great matter (on their part). One of them did not clean himself from urine, and the other used to spread slander.” (Tirmidhi, “Tahara,” 53) To erase all doubt, the person should sprinkle his penis and underwear with water.

## Acts That Correspond to Human Nature

God has chosen certain acts for all of His Prophets and their followers to perform. These acts, are known as *sunan al-fitra* (acts required by human nature), are as follows:

**Circumcision.** This prevents dirt from getting on one’s penis and also makes it easy to keep clean. The Shafi‘i scholars maintain that it should be done on the seventh day after birth, although it is permissible to do it later.

**Shaving Pubic Hairs and Pulling out Underarm Hairs**: Doing so is *sunna*. However, it is enough to trim or pull it out.

**Clipping Fingernails, Trimming and Shaving the Moustache, and Keeping the Beard Tidy:** Abu Hurayra reported that the Messenger of God, upon whom be God’s blessings and peace, said, “Five things are part of one’s *fitra*: Shaving the pubic hair, circumcision, trimming the moustache, removing any underarm hair, and trimming the nails.” (Muslim, “Tahara,” 49) A moustache should not be so long that food particles, drink, and dirt accumulate in it. If one grows a beard, it should not be untidy.

**Honoring and Combing One’s Hair:** Abu Hurayra reported that the Prophet, upon whom be peace, said: “Whoever has hair should honor it” (Abu Dawud, “Tarajjul,” 3:4163). Cutting one’s hair off is permissible, and so is letting it grow if one honors it.

**Leaving Gray Hairs in Place**: This applies to both men and women. ‘Amr ibn Shu‘ayb related, on the authority of his father from his grandfather, that the Prophet said: “Do not pluck the gray hairs, as they are a Muslim’s light. A Muslim never grows gray in Islam except that God writes for him, due to that, a good deed, raises him a degree, and erases for him, due to that, one of his sins” (Ibn Hanbal, 2:179; Tirmidhi, “Adab,” 56).

**Dyeing One’s Gray Hair:** According to the accepted opinion, dyeing one’s gray hair by using henna, red dye, yellow dye, and so on is permissible, provided that the dyes are religiously allowable.

**Using Perfume:** Using musk and other perfumes that are free of alcohol and similar forbidden things is highly advisable, for they are pleasing to the soul and beautify the atmosphere.

**Menstruation and Post-Childbirth Bleeding:** Menstruation is a natural type of blood that flows at regular intervals from a woman’s uterus after puberty. God has laid down certain rules in connection with this, as a concession to the woman, in consideration of her condition. Menstruation usually lasts 3 to 10 days and nights, varying from woman to woman. Most women have a regular number of days for their monthly menstrual period. The number of days may fluctuate and the period might come a little early or a little late. So when a woman sees menstrual blood, she should consider herself to be menstruating. When it stops, she should consider herself clean. If more blood appears after her menstrual period has ended, but does not have the same color as menstrual blood, it should not be considered as menstruation. Post-childbirth bleeding is the blood that comes during and after childbirth. It may begin to come 2 or 3 days before delivery and be accompanied by labor pains. There is no minimum limit as to how long a woman will bleed, but generally the upper limit is within 40 days.

Women are prohibited from performing certain acts while they are in this condition, such as follows:

* She cannot pray (*salat*) after she begins to bleed and does not have to make up any missed prayers.
* She cannot observe any obligatory (Ramadan) or supererogatory fasts. She must make up the obligatory fasting days after regaining her ritual cleanliness. If bleeding begins during a supererogatory fasting day upon which she had intended to fast, she must make it up.
* She can do all pilgrimage rites except circumambulating the Ka‘ba (*tawaf*).
* She should avoid mosques or places of worship, and cannot touch the Qur’an, whether the original or in translation. She cannot recite it from memory, but can read the verses of prayer and supplication with the intention of praying. (She cannot perform *salat* but can supplicate and recite the prayers mentioned in the Qur’an with the intention of saying prayers or making supplications.)
* A man cannot have sexual intercourse with his wife while she has post-childbirth bleeding, for she is not allowed to make herself available to him. However, he can kiss, hug, or touch her anywhere besides the pubic region. It is better and highly advisable to avoid the area between the navel and the knees.

When a menstruating woman stops bleeding, she must perform a complete *ghusl* (major ablution). After this, she must resume praying and fasting, can enter the mosque, make *tawaf*, recite the Qur’an, and engage in allowable sexual intercourse. She must make up the fasting days that she missed during Ramadan, but not the prayers. The same rules apply to women in post-childbirth bleeding.

*Istihadha (Non-menstrual Vaginal Bleeding):* In some women, bleeding never stops; in others, it continues for longer than normal. This blood is called *istihadha*. Likewise, any blood coming before puberty and after menopause is also considered *istihadha*. A woman with this condition should calculate when her period would normally end, and then stop praying during the days of her calculated period and follow all of the other menstruation-related rules. For the rest of the days, her bleeding should be treated as *istihadha*. If she does not have a regular period or does not remember when it used to occur, but can distinguish between the two kinds of blood based on color, thickness, and smell (i.e., menstrual blood is dark, thick, and has a strong odor, while *istihadha* is bright red, thin, and less disagreeable in smell), she must act accordingly. If she does not have a regular period and cannot distinguish between the two types of blood, she must consider the blood coming for 3 to 10 days every month as menstruation and calculate it from the time she first noticed her vaginal bleeding. There is no difference between a woman beset by *istihadha* and one who has a complete cessation of menstrual flow, except as follows: If the first woman wants to perform *wudu’* (ritual ablution), she should wash the blood from her vaginal area and then apply a menstrual pad or wrap the area with a clean rag on top of a wad of cotton to catch the blood. Any blood coming out after that is of no account. She must perform wudu’ for every obligatory prayer.

## Ghusl (Major Ablution)

*Ghusl* means major canonical ablution or a complete washing of the body. It becomes obligatory after sexual intercourse, even if only the head of the penis disappears into the vagina. Any discharge of semen, and the completion of menses and post-childbirth bleeding.

Taking *ghusl* every Friday before the congregational prayer is highly advisable, for the Prophet always did so. Before beginning *ghusl*, one should make the intention to perform it and, if one will pray after performing it, also the prayer.

*Things Forbidden to a Ritually Impure Person:* People who are in this state cannot pray, circumambulate the Ka‘ba (*tawaf*), enter a mosque or place of worship unless necessary, or touch the Qur’an or any of its verses except with a clean cloth or something similar.

*What Makes One’s Ghusl Valid?*

* Rinsing the mouth thoroughly so that all of its parts are cleaned properly.
* Rinsing the nose right up to the nasal bone.
* Washing all bodily parts thoroughly, including the hair. The best way to perform *ghusl* is as follows:
* Having the intention (*niyyat*) to cleanse the body from (ritual) impurity while washing oneself.
* Washing the hands up to the wrists three times.
* Washing the private parts thoroughly.
* Removing all filth from all bodily parts.
* Performing ablution.
* Washing all bodily parts three times, including the hair thoroughly. No part, even the size of a pinpoint, is allowed to remain dry. Rubbing and pressing the body is not obligatory.

## Tayammum (Ablution with Clean Soil)

When a person is too sick to use water or none is around when it is time to pray, he or she can perform *tayammum* in place of *wudu’* and *ghusl*.

The requirements are as follows:

* Intending to perform *tayammum* to remove any impurity.
* Striking the pure soil lightly with the palms of both hands and passing the palms over the face one time.
* Striking the pure soil again with one’s palms and rubbing the right and left arms alternately from the fingertips to the elbows.

*Tayammum* is nullified as soon as the cause for performing it is removed (i.e., the sick person recovers or pure water is found). If a person performs *tayammum* and then prays, he or she does not have to repeat the prayer if the conditions for it are removed before the time for that particular prayer ends.

## Wudu’ (Ablution)

*Wudu’* involves washing with water at least once the usually exposed bodily parts, namely, the face, hands and arms up to (and including) the elbows, and feet, and wiping one-quarter of the head. It is obligatory for any obligatory or supererogatory prayer, circumambulating the Ka‘ba, and touching the Qur’an with bare hands.

*Wudu’* is performed in the following manner:

* Ensure that the water to be used is pure.
* Intend to perform *wudu’* to offer prayer, if you plan to pray after taking it.
* Recite: *“Bismillahir-Rahmanir-Rahim”* (i.e., in the Name of God, the All-Merciful, the All-Compassionate).
* Wash the hands up to the wrists three times, and do not miss the parts between the fingers.
* Clean your mouth with a brush or a finger, and gargle with water three times.
* Rinse the nostrils with water three times.
* Wash the face from the forehead to the chin and from ear to ear three times.
* Wash the right arm followed by the left up to the elbows three times.
* Wipe at least a quarter of the head with wet hands, pass the wet tips of the little fingers inside and the wet tips of the thumbs outside the ears, and pass the palms over the nape and sides of the neck.
* Finally, wash the feet up to (and including) the ankles, the right foot first and then the left, taking care to wash in between the toes, each three times.

The obligatory acts are as follows:

* Washing the face.
* Washing both arms up to and including the elbows.
* Wiping a quarter of the head with wet hands.
* Washing both feet up to and including the ankles. The following acts nullify *wudu’*
* Whatever comes out from the two private parts (front and back): waste matter, urine, wind, *wadi* (a thick white secretion discharged after urination), *mazi* (a white sticky fluid that flows from the sexual organs when thinking about sexual intercourse or Foreplay, and so on), and prostatic fluid. Semen, menstrual blood, and post-childbirth blood require *ghusl*.
* Emission of blood, pus, or yellow matter from a wound, boil, pimple, or something similar to such an extent that it flows beyond the wound’s mouth.
* Vomiting a mouthful of matter.
* Physical contact for pleasure between men and women without any obstacle (e.g., clothes). If the head of one’s penis disappears into a woman’s vagina, *ghusl* is required.
* Loss of consciousness through sleep, drowsiness, and so on.
* Temporary insanity, fainting, hysteria, or intoxication.
* Audible laughter during prayer.

*Wiping over Clean, Indoor Boots (Khuffayn)*

While performing *wudu’*, one can wipe over (the top of) their clean, indoor boots once with wet hands instead of washing the feet.

* Boots should be waterproof and cover the whole foot up to (and including) the ankles. They must have no holes wider than three fingers in width. It does not matter if their mouths are so wide that the feet can be seen when looking down at them.
* They must be fit, strong, and tough enough so that the feet would not come out of them, and they should not fall down when walked in for 3 miles.
* They cannot be made out of wood, glass, or metal.
* One must put on the boots after washing one’s feet while performing ablution. One can wear it for a whole day if one is resident. If traveling, one can wear it for 3 consecutive days.

# Salat (Prayer)

Prayer is the most important type of worship, for it displays a person’s sincerity and loyalty to God. In the words of God’s Messenger, it is the pillar or main support of religious life (Daylami, *al-Firdaws*, 2:404).

There are several kinds of prayers, as follows:

* *Obligatory.* The five daily prescribed prayers and the *Jumu‘a* (Friday) prayer. The latter is not obligatory for women, but they can pray it if they wish. The funeral prayer is obligatory, but not upon every individual. If some people perform it, others do not have to.
* *Necessary (wajib).* The ‘Iyd (religious festive days) prayers and the *witr* prayer (performed after the late evening or night prayer until dawn).
* *Sunna (those performed or advised by the Prophet)*. Those performed before or after the daily prescribed prayers, *tahajjud* (performed after the late evening prayer and before the *witr* prayer), *tarawih* (performed after the late evening prayer during Ramadan), *khusuf* and *kusuf* (performed during solar and lunar eclipses), and the prayer for rain (*salat al-istisqa*).
* *Supererogatory and rewarded. Salat al-ishraq* (performed some three quarters after sunrise), *salat al-duha* (forenoon or broad daylight prayer, performed until some three quarters before the noon prayer), and *salat al-awwabin* (performed between the evening and late evening prayers). There are some other supererogatory prayers, such as *salat al-tawba* (performed before asking God to forgive us), *salat al-istikhara* (performed to ask God to make something good for us), *salat al-tasbih* (the prayer of glorifying God), the prayer performed when leaving on a journey, and the prayer performed when returning from a journey.

## Who Must Pray?

Prayer is obligatory upon every sane Muslim who has reached the age of puberty. Only women having their menstrual period or post-childbirth bleeding do not perform it. Prepubescent children do not have to pray, but God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, advises us to tell them to pray when they reach the age of 7 in order to prepare their hearts for it.

## The Times of the Five Daily Prescribed Prayers

Every sane, adult Muslim must perform the five daily prescribed prayers each within its own time. The Qur’an mentions these times. For example: *Establish the prayer at the beginning and the end of the day, and in the watches of night near to the day. Assuredly, good deeds wipe out evil deeds. This is advice and a reminder for the mindful who take heed. (11:114)*

*Establish the prayer from the declining of the sun to the darkness of the night, and (be ever mindful of) the Qur’an’s recitation at dawn. Assuredly, the Qur’an’s recitation at dawn is witnessed (by angels and the whole creation awakening to a new day). (17:78)*

*Bear patiently what they say, and glorify your Lord with His praise before the rising of the sun, and before its setting, and during some of the hours of the night glorify Him, and at the sides of the day, that you may become pleased with the reward which God shall give you. (20:130)*

*Glory be to God whenever you reach evening and whenever you rise in the morning. All praise is for Him in the heavens and on Earth, in the late afternoon, and whenever you reach the noon. (30:17-18)*

These verses circumscribe the five prescribed prayers. The prayers to be established at the sides of the day, at its beginning and end from the declining of the sun to the darkness of night, are the noon and afternoon prayers. The original word for “watches of night near to the day” is *zulef*, which is plural. In Arabic, plural includes at least three things, so it can be concluded that it refers to the three prayers to be established during night (e.g., the evening, late evening, and dawn [early morning] prayers). These five prayers were prescribed for the Muslims during the Messenger’s Ascension in the ninth year of his Messengership, 4 years before the Hijra.

Verse 17:78 also alludes to the daily five prescribed prayers and each one’s time. *Declining of the sun* means the sun’s passing its zenith, and therefore hints at the noon prayer. After the noon prayer comes the afternoon prayer. Immediately after sunset and after night has fallen, the evening and late evening prayers are performed, respectively. The verse specifically mentions the dawn prayer because of its importance, and draws attention to reciting the Qur’an during it, for the Messenger, under Divine Revelation, used to lengthen his recitation during that prayer.

Some of the *hadiths* (i.e., Tirmidhi, *“Salat,”* narrate the Messenger’s statements about the exact time of each prayer. According to these *hadiths*, as well as the practice of the Prophet and his Companions, the time of each prayer is as follows:

* The *fajr* (dawn or early morning) prayer is performed from the break of dawn until sunrise.
* The *zuhr* (noon) prayer is performed when the sun passes its zenith until a person’s shadow is the same length as his or her height.
* The *‘asr* (afternoon) prayer is performed when a person’s shadow is the same length as his or her height and continues until the yellowing of the sun.
* The *maghrib* (evening) prayer is performed as long as twilight lasts until the sun’s complete disappearance.
* The *‘isha’* (night) prayer begins with the end of twilight and continues until a short while before the break of dawn.
* The *Jumu‘a* prayer is performed during the time of the noon prayer on Friday. The time of the ‘Iyd (religious festive days) prayers is some three quarters after sunrise on ‘Iyd days. Their time continues until the sun reaches its zenith.

## The Times When Prayers Cannot Be Performed

* During sunrise and sunset.
* From sunrise until the sun has completely risen to the length of a spear above the horizon (approximately three quarters after sunrise).
* When the sun is at its zenith until it moves slightly to the west.
* After the afternoon prayer till the sun sets.

Prayers must not be offered during the approximately three quarters in the last three times in which praying is forbidden. However, if one has not been able to perform the afternoon prayer during its time, one can perform it until the sun begins to disappear in the west.

## Adhan (Call to prayer)

The *adhan* calls Muslims to prayer. Although it consists of few words, it covers the essentials of faith, expresses Islamic practices, is a form of worship, and one of Islam’s collective symbols that shows that the place in which it is made is a Muslim land. It is made at the beginning of each prescribed prayer’s time, and should be made by the man who can perform it in the best way possible. Even if one is performing the prayer alone, he or she is strongly advised to make it before beginning to pray.

The words of *adhan* are as follows:

*Allahu akbar* (God is the Greatest): 4 times.

*Ashhadu an la ilaha illa’llah* (I bear witness that there is no deity but God): twice.

*Ashhadu anna Muhammadan Rasululu’llah* (I bear witness that Muhammad is God’s Messenger); twice.

*Hayya ‘ala’s-salah* (Come on, to prayer): twice. *Hayya ‘ala’l-falah* (Come on, to salvation): twice. *Allahu akbar* (God is the Greatest): twice.

*La ilaha illa’llah* (I bear witness that there is no deity but God): once.

The *adhan* for the dawn (early morning) prayer includes *assalatu khayrun mina’n-nawm* (Prayer is better than sleep [twice]) after *hayya ‘ala’l-falah* (Come on, to salvation). God’s Messenger highly recommends that we pray after making the *adhan*.

## The Obligatory Acts before the Prayer

For the prayer to be complete and acceptable by God, one must perform the following acts:

* Purify oneself from all major and minor impurity by performing *ghusl* (the major ablution) and *wudu’* (the minor ablution), respectively. If one has not broken *wudu’* between two prayer times, it does not need to be renewed before the next prayer. The Prophet strongly recommended that one should clean his or her teeth with a *miswak*, or at least something clean, while making *wudu’*.
* Remove any impurity from one’s clothes, body, and place of prayer. The impurities that invalidate prayer were mentioned in the section on *tahara*. They are divided into two categories: gross impurity (*najasat al-ghaliza*) or weak impurity (*najasat al-khafifa*). Vomit, urine, excrement, *wadi* (a thick white secretion discharged after urination), *mazi* (a white sticky fluid that flows from the sexual organs when thinking about sexual intercourse or foreplay, and so on), prostatic fluid, are included in gross impurity. Also included in this category are the urine, saliva, and blood of all animals whose meat is forbidden, the excrement of all animals (except birds) whose meat is allowable, the excrement of poultry (geese, hens, and ducks), any part of pigs, and alcohol. Any such solid filth that weighs more than 3 grams, and any liquid more than the amount that spreads over one’s palm, invalidates the prayer.
* The urine of horses and domestic or wild animals whose meat is allowed is weak impurity. If such impurity is more than one-fourth of a limb or smears more than one-fourth of one’s clothes, the prayer is invalidated.
* Covering the area of the body that cannot be shown in public. For the men, this is from the knee to the navel; for women, the whole body except the face, hands, and feet.
* Facing the *qibla* (the direction of the Sacred Mosque in Makka) during the prayer. If one does not know its location, one must search for it. If one prays in another direction after searching, the prayer is valid. If the chest is turned from the *qibla* during prayer, the prayer is invalid. If the head is turned even for a moment, the person must immediately turn it back toward the *qibla*.
* Performing the prayer in its time.

## The Obligatory Acts during the Prayer

* Make the intention to perform a specific prayer. Bukhari, Muslim, and Abu Dawud relate from ‘Umar that God’s Messenger said: *“Actions are judged according to intentions. One is rewarded for whatever one intends to do. Whoever emigrates for God and His Messenger has emigrated for God and His Messenger; whoever emigrates to acquire something worldly or to marry has emigrated for what is intended.”* (Bukhari, “Bed’ul-Wahy,” 1; Muslim, “Iman,” 155.) Thus the intention is the aim and purpose of something. It is a condition of the heart and does not have to be spoken out loud. This is why the Prophet and his Companions never spoke their intentions.
* Say the opening *takbir* and begin the prayer. When God’s Messenger stood for prayer, he would stand straight, raise his hands as high as his ears, and, with his palms facing the *qibla*, say: “*Allahu akbar*.”
* Stand while reciting *Surat al-Fatiha* (the Opening Chapter of the Qur’an) and a selection of verses. One must stand during the obligatory prayers, if at all possible. But if this is not possible, the prayer can be performed while sitting or, if even that is not possible, while lying on one’s right side. The feet should be kept about a span or a little more apart while standing in prayer. The voluntary (supererogatory) prayers can be offered while sitting, although standing will bring a greater reward.
* Recite *Surat al-Fatiha* and another portion from the Qur’an. This is obligatory in the first two *rak‘at*s (cycles) of the obligatory prayers and in every *rak‘at* of necessary (*wajib*), recommended (*sunna*), and supererogatory (*nafila*) prayers. In the last cycle (i.e., the third *rak‘at* of the evening prayer and the last two *rak‘at*s of the obligatory noon, afternoon, and late evening prayers), reciting *al-Fatiha* is preferable, but one can glorify (*Subhana’llah*), praise (*al-hamdu li’llah*), exalt (*Allahu akbar*) God, and declare His Unity (*La ilaha illa’llah*). The portion to be recited after *Surat al-Fatiha* should be as long as the shortest *sura* (*Surat al-Kawthar*).
* No translation of the Qur’an can be recited during the prayer, for the Qur’an is composed of both its meaning and wording and is from God with both its meaning and wording.
* Bow down and remain in that position (*ruku‘*) for some time (long enough to say “*Subhana’llah*” three times). The position of ruku‘ consists of bending down and grasping the knees with the palms, and leaving the fingers partly spread apart. This position is maintained until one attains “calmness.” The back must be kept straight while bowing.
* Prostrate (*sujud*). God’s Messenger explains: *“Prostrate until you are calm in your prostration, then rise (and sit) until you are calm in your sitting, and then prostrate until you are calm in your prostration.”* The first prostration, sitting afterwards, the second prostration, and calmness during all of these acts are obligatory in every *rak‘at* of every type of prayer offered. Bukhari relates (“Adhan,” 133, 134, 137) from God’s Messenger, concerning the parts of the body that must touch the ground during prostration, that he said: “I have been ordered to prostrate on seven bodily parts: the forehead (and he also pointed to his nose), the hands, the knees and the ends of the feet.”
* The final sitting and recital of the *tashahhud*. In the prayer’s last *rak‘at*, one must sit long enough to recite the *tashahhud* before ending the prayer with giving greetings by turning one’s head to the right and then to the left and saying: “*Assalamu ‘alaykum wa rahmatu’llah*” (Upon you be peace and God’s mercy). During this sitting, one says the tashahhud or tahiyyat. Reciting words of *salat wa salam* (God’s peace and blessings) on Muhammad and his Family is necessary.

## Necessary (But Not Obligatory) Things to Complete the Prayer

* To complete the prayer, one must recite correctly, understandably, and distinctly; carry out all of the obligatory acts correctly and in the proper order; attain calmness; straighten the body while standing, bowing down, and prostrating; bow, prostrate, and stand after bowing and before prostrating and sit between prostrations as long as it takes to say *Subhana’llah* at least.
* Unless there is an acceptable impediment, prayers should be performed in congregation.
* One who prays alone should recite *al-Fatiha* and a portion from the Qur’an inaudibly in both the prescribed or supererogatory prayers performed during the day. One can recite loudly or inaudibly during the night prayers. In congregation, the imam (the one leading the prayer) should recite audibly in all *rak‘at*s of the morning, *jumu‘a, tarawih*, and *witr* prayers, and the first two *rak‘at*s of the evening and late evening prayers. He should recite inaudibly in all *rak‘at*s of the noon and afternoon prayers, the last one *rak‘at* of the evening prayer, and the last two *rak‘at*s of the late evening prayer.
* Sitting between the second and third *rak‘at*s of those prayers having three or four *rak‘at*s.
* The obligatory acts during prayers should be done one after the other, without doing anything extra between them.
* Ending the prayer by giving greetings on both sides and saying *as-salamu ‘alaykum wa-rahmatu’llah*.
* Having sincerity, humility, and concentration. Prayer is the most important kind of worship, so it must be performed in the best way possible. In addition to fulfilling its obligatory and necessary acts, praying in humility, with utmost sincerity and self-concentration on God are essential.

## Sunna Acts

Each prayer contains certain acts that are *sunna*, meaning that the Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, performed them and advised Muslims to do likewise. They are highly important for completing the prayer and receiving a greater reward.

* While beginning the prayer and saying the opening *takbir*, one should raise one’s hands (according to the Hanafis) as high as the ears and the thumbs touch the earlobes.
* According to the Hanafis, the hands should be placed below the navel, (the Shafi‘is say below the chest), and the right hand should grasp the wrist of the left arm.
* The prayer should begin with a supplication used by the Prophet, upon whom be peace, to begin his prayers. This is said after the opening takbir and before reciting *al-Fatiha*. The Hanafis prefer: *Subhanaka’llahumma wa bi-hamdik. Wa tebaraka’smuk. Wa ta‘ala jadduk. Wa la ilaha ghayruk*. (Glory be to You, O God, and to You is the praise. Blessed is Your Name and most high is Your honor. There is no deity besides You). The Shafi‘is prefer: *Inni wajjahtu wajhiya li’llezi fatara’ssamawati wa’l-ardi hanifan wa ma ana mine’l-mushrikin. Inna salati wa nusuki wa mahyaya wa mamati li’llahi Rabbi’l-alamin, la sharika lah; wa bi-dhalike umirtu; wa ana mina’l-muslimin* (I have turned my face to the One Who has originated the heavens and Earth as a sincere submissive one, and I am not one of the polytheists. My prayers, my sacrifice, my life and my death are all for God, the Lord of the Worlds. He has no partner. That is what I have been ordered and I am of those who submit.). Other supplications related from the Messenger also can be recited before *al-Fatiha*.
* Saying *Amin* after reciting *al-Fatiha*.
* Reciting considerably long passages from the Qur’an after *al-Fatiha* in the morning (about one page or more in each *rak‘at*, being longer in the first one), noon, and afternoon prayers (about one page), either a somewhat long or shorter passages in the evening prayers, and short passages in the late evening prayer.
* Saying the *takbir* upon every bowing down, sitting down, moving to and rising from prostration, and standing up after sitting. Upon rising from the bowing, all Muslims should say: “*Sami‘a’llahu li-man hamidah*” (God hears him who praises Him), and after it, “*Rabbana wa-laka’l-hamd*” (Our Lord, and to You is all praise).
* Saying “*Subhana Rabiyya’l-‘Azim*” (Glory be to my Lord, the Mighty) three times while bowing, and “*Subhana Rabbiya’lA‘la*” (Glory be to my Lord, the Most High) while prostrating.
* Supplicating after the final *tashahhud* and before giving the final salutations (that end the prayer). These may consist of any supplication mentioned in the Qur’an or reported from the Messenger.
* Saying words of remembrance, asking forgiveness, and supplicating after the prayer. The most famous and widespread one reported from the Messenger is: *Astaghfiru’llaha’l-‘Azim* (I ask God the Mighty for forgiveness: three times), and *Allahumma anta’s-Salamu wa minka’s-salam. Tabarakta ya Dha’l-Jalali wa’l-Ikram* (O God, You are the Peace, and from You is peace. All blessed and One bestowing blessings You are, O One of Majesty and Munificence). Afterwards, reciting *Ayat al-Kursiy* (2:255) and saying words of glorification (Subhana’llah), praise (*al-hamdu li’llah*), and exaltation (*Allahu akbar*) each 33 times.

## Disliked and Discouraged Things

* Beginning the prayer while feeling the need to answer a call of nature.
* Omitting any *sunna* act.
* Thinking about worldly affairs while praying.
* Doing things that cannot be reconciled with being in God’s presence (e.g., cracking one’s knuckles, playing with any part of the body or clothes, smoothing the stones on the ground, putting the hands on the hips while bending down or standing up, yawning, blowing something, coughing, or cleaning the throat without a valid excuse).
* Leaning on a post, a wall, or something similar without a valid excuse.
* Praying while having something to eat or chew in the mouth, regardless of its size.
* Praying while angry or hungry, when food has been placed nearby, or wearing something that may distract one’s attention.
* Praying in the path of people who are passing in front of one.

## Things That Invalidate the Prayer

* Omitting any of the prayer’s obligatory acts, regardless if doing so is intentional or out of ignorance or forgetfulness.
* Uttering a word, even if only 2 letters long, that is not included in the recitations of the prayer.
* Weeping, sighing and complaining about worldly things, and making any noise (except clearing the throat, coughing, or yawning) or speaking. Only weeping unintentionally out of fear or love of God and similar things does not invalidate the prayer.
* Answering any call or salutation.
* Reciting the Qur’an or supplications so incorrectly that it cannot be found in the Qur’an or among the reports from the Messenger and transforms the meaning so that it violates Islamic truths and principles.
* Saying prayers that are not found in the Qur’an or reported from the Messenger, and concerning worldly things, such as, “O Lord, enable me to pay my debts,” or “Lord, let me marry such-and-such a woman (or man).”
* Moving aside or changing places when asked or ordered to do so by one who is not praying.
* Doing something that makes someone else think that one is not praying.
* Doing something that invalidates ritual purity.
* Turning one’s chest from the *qibla*.
* Eating or swallowing anything bigger than a chickpea grain that has remained between the teeth.

## How To Pray

**The dawn (early morning [fajr]) prayer:** Having done what is necessary to have the prayer accepted, one recites the *iqama* even if praying alone. Women are not required to recite the *iqama*. The iqama is as follows:

*Allahu akbar* (God is the Greatest): 4 times.

*Ashhadu an la ilaha illa’llah* (I bear witness that there is no deity but God): twice.

*Ashhadu anna Muhammadan Rasululu’llah* (I bear witness that Muhammad is God’s Messenger); twice.

*Hayya ‘ala’s-salah* (Come on, to prayer): twice.

*Hayya ‘ala’l-falah* (Come on, to salvation): twice.

*Qad qamatu’s-salah* (Now the prayer is about to be performed): twice.

*Allahu akbar* (God is the Greatest): twice.

*La ilaha illa’llah* (I bear witness that there is no deity but God): once.

One should pause between each phrase of the *adhan*, but be quick when reciting the *iqama*.

After the *iqama*, one intends to perform the dawn prayer, and, while reciting the opening *takbir*, raises the hands with the palms facing the *qibla* to one’s ears, with the thumbs touching the earlobes, and then puts them (according to the Hanafis) under the navel with the right hand grasping the left one at the wrist. Then, recite a supplication with which the Prophet, upon whom be peace, used to begin his prayers. The Hanafis prefer: *Subhanaka’llahumma wa bi-hamdik. Wa tabaraka’smuk. Wa ta‘ala jadduk. Wa la ilaha ghayruk* (Glory be to You, O God, and to You is the praise. Blessed is Your Name and most high is Your honor. There is no deity besides You.).

Then recite *Surat al-Fatiha*, say Amin at its end, and recite a portion from the Qur’an. Then bow down and say: *Allahu akbar* and, attaining calmness with one’s back straightened, say three times: *Subhana Rabiyya’l-‘Azim* (Glory be to my Lord, the Mighty). Afterwards, rise up and say: *Sami‘a’llahu li-man hamidah* (God hears him who praises Him), and then: *Rabbana walaka’l-hamd* (Our Lord, and to You is all praise). After a short pause, prostrate and say: *Allahu akbar* with one’s palms, knees, toes, forehead, and nose touching the ground. While prostrating, recite three times: *Subhana Rabbiya’l-A‘la* (Glory be to my Lord, the Most High). Then, sit up and say: *Allahu akbar*, and, after a short pause while sitting, prostrate again and say: *Allahu akbar*. Recite the same things that were recited during the first prostration. This is the first *rak‘at* in all prayers except the ‘Iyd (religious festive day) prayers and *salat al-tasbih* (prayer of glorification), which will be described below.

Rise from prostration saying: *Allahu akbar*, and then perform the second *rak‘at* just as the first one was performed. After the second prostration, sit up and recite the *tashahhud* or *tahiyyat*, which is as follows: *At-tahiyyatu li’llahi wa’s-salawatu wa’ttayyibatu as-salamu ‘alayka ayyuha’n-nabiyyu wa-rahmatu’llahi wabarakatuh. As-salamu ‘alayna wa ‘ala ‘ibadi’llahi’s-salihin. Ashhadu an la ilaha illa’llah wa ashhadu anna Muhammadan ‘abduhu warasuluh* (Eternity and all dominion is God’s, and from Him are all blessings and benedictions. Peace be upon you O the [greatest] Prophet, and God’s mercy and gifts. Peace be also upon us and God’s righteous servants. I bear witness that there is no deity but God, and I also bear witness that Muhammad is His servant and Messenger.).

Afterwards, one calls God’s blessings and peace upon His Messenger: *Allahumma salli ‘ala Muhammadin wa ‘ala Al-i Muhammad, kama sallayta ‘ala Ibrahima wa ‘ala Al-i Ibrahim. Innaka Hamidun Majid. Allahumma barik ‘ala Muhammadin wa ‘ala Al-i Muhammad, kama barakta ‘ala Ibrahima wa ‘ala Al-i Ibrahim. Innaka Hamidun Majid* (O God, bestow Your blessings upon our master Muhammad and the Family of Muhammad, as You bestowed Your blessings upon Abraham and the Family of Abraham. Assuredly, You are All-Praised, All-Illustrious. O God, send Your abundant gifts and favors unto our master Muhammad and the Family of Muhammad, as You sent them unto Abraham and the Family of Abraham. Assuredly, You are All-Praised, AllIllustrious.). Then, pray to God. Choose prayers from the Qur’an and the prayers of God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings. Then, give greetings, turning your head to your right and left, saying: *As-salamu ‘alaykum wa rahmatu’llah* (Peace be upon you, and God’s Mercy.). While giving greetings on your right, direct them to those sitting on the right (if praying in congregation) and the noble angel who records our good deeds, and while giving greetings on your left, direct them to those sitting on the left (if praying in congregation) and the noble angel who records our evil deeds. However, according to Bediüzzaman Said Nursi, one may also intend, while giving greetings on the right, God’s Messenger, other Messengers, the believing members of their families, Companions, and all other saintly, pure, and scholarly people who have emigrated to the other world and, while giving greetings on the left, all believers to come until the Last Day.

**The noon, afternoon, and night (zuhr, ‘asr, and ‘isha’) prayers:** Having done what is necessary to have the prayer accepted, recite *iqama* even if praying alone. Women are not required to recite *iqama*. Then, perform the first two *rak‘at*s just as in the dawn prayer, except that when sitting in the second *rak‘at*, recite the *tashahhud*, stand up, and say: *Allahu akbar* (God is the Greatest). Perform another two *rak‘at*s without reciting the opening *takbir*, and, while standing, recite only *al-Fatiha* preferably; although you can recite, instead of *al-Fatiha*, words of glorification (*Subhana’llah*), praise (*al-hamdu li’llah*), and exaltation (*Allahu akbar*); and declare God’s Oneness (*La ilaha illa’llah*). While sitting in the last (fourth) *rak‘at*, recite that which was recited in the dawn and all other prayers. End the prayer by giving salutations to the right and left.

**The evening (maghrib) prayer:** One begins the prayer and prays the first two *rak‘at*s as outlined above. After reciting the *tashahhud* while sitting in the second *rak‘at*, perform the third *rak‘at* in the same way as the third *rak‘at* of the noon, afternoon, and late evening prayers. However, after the second prostration, sit again, as in the second (or last sitting) of the other prayers or in the second *rak‘at* of the dawn prayer. Do what is done in them.

## Prostrations of Forgetfulness

If any of the necessary acts are omitted or delayed for some time due to forgetfulness (e.g., sitting between the second and third *rak‘at*s of those prayers having three or four *rak‘at*s, stopping between the obligatory acts more than a few seconds, or omitting the qunut in the *witr* prayer) after giving the first salutation to the right, make two prostrations just like the other prostrations and recite the *tashahhud (tahiyyat)* and calling of God’s peace and blessings on God’s Messenger. Then, give salutations and finish the prayer.

In the congregational prayer, the imam recites only the *tahiyyat* and the initial part of calling God’s blessings and peace upon the Messenger and his Family (i.e., *Allahumma salli ‘ala Muhammadin wa ‘ala Al-i Muhammad*) before making the prostrations of forgetfulness.

**Prostrating while Reciting:** Whoever recites a verse of prostration or hears it, whether during a prayer or outside it, should pronounce the *takbir*, prostrate, recite *Subhana Rabbiya’l-A‘la* three times, and rise from the prostration. There are 15 such verses in the Qur’an. If one of them is recited during a prayer, prostrate without interrupting the prayer and then continue it.

## The Sunna Prayers

* Praying two *rak‘ats* before the dawn prayer was highly recommended and stressed by God’s Messenger. They are performed just as in the dawn prayer, except that one recites shorter Qur’anic passages after *al-Fatiha*.
* Praying four *rak‘at*s before the noon prayer was highly advised and stressed by God’s Messenger. They are performed just as in the noon prayer, except that one recites Qur’anic passages after *al-Fatiha* in all *rak‘at*s. He also prayed another two or four *rak‘at*s after the prescribed prayer, and Muslims are urged to follow his example.
* Praying four *rak‘at*s before the afternoon prayer is also recommended. They are performed just as in the noon prayer, except that one recites the calls of God’s blessings, peace, and gifts upon our master Muhammad and his Family after the *tashahhud* during the first sitting, and the supplication before *al-Fatiha* in the third *rak‘at*, which one recites while beginning the prayer after the opening *takbir*.
* Praying two *rak‘at*s after the evening and late evening prayer is highly recommended, while praying four *rak‘at*s before the late evening prayer, just as in the afternoon prayer, is an unstressed *sunna* prayer.

## Tahajjud and Witr

The *tahajjud* prayer has an extremely important place among the highly advisable, stressed *sunna* prayers. It was obligatory for the Messenger from the very beginning of his mission. Interrupting sleep for God’s sake and turning to Him with devotion and pure feelings during the night is a great support and source of feeding for human spirit. While ordering the Messenger to pray it, the Almighty declared:

*O you, folded in garments! Rise to pray by night, but not all night – half of it, or a little less, or a little more, and recite the Qur’an in measured rhythmic tones and with great care and attention. We are about to cast upon you a weighty Word. Indeed, rising by night is most potent and good for governing the soul, and most suitable for reciting and understanding the Word. There is for you by day prolonged occupation with ordinary duties. So, keep in remembrance of God’s Name and mention It, dedicating yourself devoutly to Him. He is the Lord of the east and the west. There is no deity save Him. Take Him for your Guardian and Disposer of Affairs (73:1-9).*

Since every Muslim is a devoted servant of God and dedicated to His cause, the *tahajjud* prayer’s importance is clear. According to most acceptable reports from the Messenger, together with the *Witr* prayer, it consists of eleven *rak‘at*s and is performed in cycles of two, just like the morning prayer (Bukhari, “Tahajjud,” 10). Although the *witr* prayer can be performed after the late evening prayer before going to bed, so that one will not miss it because of sleep, its preferable time is after *tahajjud*. It consists of three *rak‘at*s and is performed like the evening prayer, but with the following exceptions:

In the third *rak‘at*, a Qur’anic passage and the *qunut* prayers are recited after *al-Fatiha*. Before praying *qunut*, say *takbir* (*Allahu akbar*) by raising the hands as is done when beginning the prayer. The Messenger’s reported qunut prayers are: *Allahumma inna nasta’inuka wa nastaghfiruka wa nastahdika wa nu’minu bika wa natubu ilayk; wa natawwakkalu ‘alayka wa nuthni ‘alayka’l-khayra kullahu nashkuruka wa la nakfuruk. Wa nakhla’u wa natruku man* *yafjuruk. Allahumma iyyaka na‘budu wa laka nusalli wa nasjudu wa ilayka nas’a wa nahfidu; narju rahmataka wa nakhsa ‘adhabaka inna ‘adhabaka bi’l-kuffari mulhiq* (O God! We ask You for help, forgiveness, and guidance. We believe in You and turn to You in repentance for our sins, and place our trust in You. We praise You by attributing all good to You, and thank You, and never feel ingratitude to You. We reject and cut our relations with those who are in constant rebellion against You. O God, You alone do we worship, and we pray and prostrate for You alone. We endeavor in Your way to obtain Your good pleasure and approval. We hope and expect Your Mercy and fear Your chastisement, for Your chastisement is to surround the unbelievers.).

## Tarawih

The specific prayers during Ramadan, which are known as *tarawih*, are *sunna* for both men and women and are to be performed after the prescribed late evening prayer and before *witr*. As generally accepted, it consists of 20 *rak‘at*s and is performed preferably in cycles of two *rak‘at*s.

*Tarawih* prayers can be performed in congregation or alone. The majority of scholars, however, prefer to pray them in congregation. The Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, prayed it in congregation but then stopped doing so, fearing that it would be made obligatory. ‘Umar established the practice of praying *tarawih* behind one imam.

## The Prayer of the Sick (Salat al-Marid)

Whoever cannot stand due to illness or another valid reason can pray sitting. If this is not possible, one can pray while lying on one’s right side by making gestures. In such a case, the gestures for *sajda* should be lower than those for *ruku‘*.

## The Prayer during Times of Fear or Danger (Salat al-Khawf)

All scholars agree about the legality of such prayers:

(O Messenger!) When you are among the believers (who are on an expedition and fear that the unbelievers might harm them) and rise to lead the prayer for them, let a party of them stand in prayer with you and retain their arms (while letting the other party take their positions against the enemy). When the first party has prostrated (and finished the rak‘at), let them go behind you (to take their positions against the enemy), and let the other party, which has not prayed, come forward and pray with you, being fully prepared against danger and retaining their arms. Those who disbelieve wish that you should be heedless of your weapons and your equipment, so that they might swoop upon you in a surprise attack. But there shall be no blame on you if you lay aside your arms (during prayer) if you are troubled by rain (and the ground impedes your movement), or if you are ill. However, (always) be fully prepared against danger. Surely God has prepared for the unbelievers a shameful, humiliating chastisement. (4:102)

## The Prayer of a Traveler (Salat al-Musafir)

If one begins a journey of at least 3 days, one shortens the prescribed prayers of four *rak‘at*s (the noon, afternoon, and night prayers) and offers them as two *rak‘at*s, just like the dawn prayer. Since at that time travel was generally by foot and a day’s travel was counted as 6 hours, the distance of 3 days on foot was regarded as 90 kilometers (54 miles). However, many contemporary scholars maintain that since many people now travel by bus or train, the above-mentioned prayers can be shortened only if the distance is around 1,200 kilometers (720 miles).

Travelers are defined as people who have left their home and their town. So long as they are traveling, the above-mentioned prayers can be shortened. If they reach a place and intend to stay there for less than 15 days, they are considered as travelers and are therefore allowed to shorten their prayers as outlined above. If they are still there on the fifteenth day for reasons beyond their control, although they originally intended to stay for less than 15 days, they are still considered travelers and can shorten the appropriate prayers. Most scholars opine that travelers may offer the *sunna* and supererogatory prayers without shortening them.

The main reason for shortening the above-mentioned prayers is traveling, not the hardships of travel. Thus, these prayers are shortened even if no difficulty is encountered while traveling. The cause for establishing a rule differs from its expected wisdom and benefit. Wisdom or benefit is the reason for its preference, while the cause requires its existence. So, traveling Muslims shorten their prayers. The cause for this Divine dispensation is traveling, and the underlying wisdom is the hardship of traveling. Thus prayers are shortened even if no hardship is encountered, for the cause exists. Muslims who encounter hardships while at home cannot shorten their prayers, for the wisdom or benefit cannot be the cause for this dispensation.

Those who are traveling must pray whether they are on a ship or a train or a plane, if the prayer will be missed before reaching a place where one can offer it.

## Specific Sunna Prayers

**Asking for What Is Good (Salat al-Istikhara):** The Messenger advised all Muslims to follow his practice when confronted with having to make a choice between permissible alternatives: pray two non-obligatory *rak‘at*s and then ask God to enable one to choose what is good or better.

**The Prayer of Glorification (Salat al-Tasbih):** Ibn ‘Abbas reports that God’s Messenger said to ‘Abbas ibn ‘Abd al-Muttalib: O ‘Abbas, O Uncle, shall I not give you, present to you, donate to you, tell you of ten things which, if you do them, God will forgive your first and last sins, past and present sins, intentional and unintentional sins, private and public sins? The ten actions are: pray four *rak‘at*s, reciting in every *rak‘at al-Fatiha* and a *sura*. When you finish the Qur’anic recitation of the first *rak‘at*, say, while standing: *Subhana’llah, al-hamdu li’llah, wa la ilaha illa’llahu wa’llahu akbar* (Glory be to God, all praise be to God, there is no deity save God, and God is the greatest) 15 times. Then make *ruku‘*, and while in *ruku‘*, say the same phrases 10 times. Then stand and say the same 10 times. Then go down and make *sajda*, and while you are in *sajda*, say the same phrases 10 times. Then sit after *sajda* and say the same phrases 10 times. Then make *sajda* and say the same phrases 10 times. Then sit after the second *sajda*, and say the same phrases another 10 times. That is 75 (repetitions of the phrases) in each *rak‘at*. Do that in each of the four *rak‘at*s. If you can pray it once a day, do so. If you cannot, then once every Friday. If you cannot do that, then once a year. And if you cannot do that, then once during your life. (Abu Dawud, “Salat,” 303; Tirmidhi, “Salat,” 350.)

After saying the phrases 10 times following the second *sajda* in the second *rak‘at*, recite the *tashahhud* and calls of God’s blessings and peace upon the Messenger and his Family, and then end the first two *rak‘at*s by giving salutation. Pray the second two *rak‘at*s in the same way.

**The Prayer for Need (Salat al-Haja):** Make the proper ablution, pray two *rak‘at*s, and say the prayer reported from the Messenger concerning it (Tirmidhi, “Witr,” 345). If God’s overall Wisdom requires it to be met, God will grant whatever is asked, either sooner or later.

**The Prayer of Repentance (Salat al-Tawba):** Make the appropriate minor or major ablution, offer a prayer of two *rak‘at*s, and ask for His forgiveness. Hopefully, God will grant it.

**The Prayer during a Solar or Lunar Eclipse (Salat al-Kusuf and al-Khusuf):** Scholars agree that this is a *sunna mu’akkada*, a stressed or confirmed one, which is to be performed by both men and women. It is best, but not absolutely necessary, to pray it in congregation. Its time is from the eclipse’s beginning until its end. It is preferred to say *takbir*, supplicate, give charity, and ask God for forgiveness during the eclipse. It should be noted that this has nothing to do with asking for the eclipse to end, for its beginning and end are clear. An eclipse is only an occasion for such a prayer.

**The Prayer for Rain (Salat al-Istisqa’):** This prayer is performed to entreat to God for rain during a drought.

## Supererogatory Prayers

Supererogatory prayers are important in that they make up for any deficiencies in performing the prescribed prayers and to bring us closer to God, Who declares:

My servant cannot get near to Me through anything else more lovable to Me than doing the obligatory religious duties. However, by doing supererogatory duties he gets nearer to Me, and when he becomes near to Me, I shall be his eyes to see with, his ears to hear with, his hands to grasp with, and his legs to walk on. (Bukhari, “Riqaq,” 38)

Supererogatory prayers are offered in cycles of two *rak‘at*s. Praying two *rak‘ats* when around three quarters have passed after sunrise (*ishraq*), two to eight *rak‘ats* in broad daylight until the sun reaches its zenith (*duha*), and four *rak‘ats* between the evening and late evening prayers (*awwabin*).

Such supererogatory prayers are important, for as recorded by Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Muslim, and Abu Dawud, the Messenger said the following about the *duha* (broad daylight) prayer:

Charity is required from every part of your body daily. Every saying of “Glory be to God” is charity. Every saying of “All praise be to God” is charity. Every saying of “There is no deity but God” is charity. Every saying of “God is the Greatest” is charity. Ordering good is charity. Eradicating evil is charity. And what suffices for that (as a charity) are the two *rak‘at*s of the *duha* (broad daylight prayer). (Muslim, “Musafirun,” 84)

**Offering Supererogatory Prayers at Home:** Ahmad ibn Hanbal and Muslim relate from Jabir that the Messenger of God said: “If one of you offers his prayers in the mosque, then he should offer a portion of his prayers at home, as God has made saying prayers in one’s home a means of betterment (for him).” Ahmad records from ‘Umar that the Messenger of God said: “The supererogatory prayers prayed by a person at home are a light. Whoever wishes should light up his house.”

**Reciting Long Passages:** It is preferred to prolong one’s recitation during supererogatory prayers. God’s Messenger would stand and pray until his feet or shanks swelled. When he was asked about it, he said: “Should I not be a thankful servant?” (Bukhari, “Tahajjud,” 16)

## The Friday Congregational Prayer

The Friday congregational prayer is obligatory and a significant Islamic symbol. God’s Messenger declared that God seals the heart of one who misses it three consecutive times without a valid excuse (Abu Dawud, “Salat,” 215; Tirmidhi, “Salat,” 359). It also has aspects concerning the Muslim community’s political freedom and condition, and cannot be offered alone.

**When and Who:** It is offered during the noon prayer’s time, for the latter prayer is not performed on Friday. Every free, adult, sane, and resident Muslim who can attend must attend, unless he has a valid reason not to do so. It is not obligatory upon women, children, those with valid excuses (e.g., illness, lack of security, extreme cold), and travelers.

**Preparations:** Increase prayers, supplications, and calling God’s blessings and peace upon the Messenger and his Family on Friday, especially before the Friday prayer. Perform the major ablution (ghusl) and wear the best clothes and the best allowable perfume. It is recommended to follow the Messenger’s example of reciting 10 verses from the beginning and end of Surat al-Kahf. Also, go to the mosque early.

**Conditions for Its Validity:** The Friday congregational prayer has aspects concerning the Muslim community’s political freedom, as follows:

* It is offered in a city (*misr*) that contains a government or a village having 30, 40, or more houses – which looks like a city in its outward form.
* It is preferably offered in a central, large mosque and led by the district or city governor or imam (prayer leader) who is able to lead it and has been appointed by the governor to do so. In the capital city, it is preferably offered by the president or a capable imam appointed by him.
* There must be at least three people to form a congregation after the imam.

**The Adhan:** The call to prayer (*adhan*) is made before the Friday sermon.

**The Sermon:** A sermon must be made before the Friday prayer. The imam gives it on a pulpit while standing. He begins it by praising God and calling God’s blessings and peace upon His Messenger and his Family. Next, he gives a sermon in which he exhorts Muslims to good deeds, discourages them from evil, advises them, and seeks to enlighten them mentally and spiritually and to guide them. He should not lengthen the sermon. After this part of the sermon, he sits for a short while and then, standing up, praises God, calls God’s blessings and peace upon God’s Messenger and his Family, and prays for all Muslims. The congregation must listen carefully and silently.

**Prayers before and after the Friday Prayer:** The Friday prayer consists of two *rak‘at*s. It is sunna to offer four *rak‘at*s before it, just like the four *rak‘at*s offered before the noon prayer. After the prayer, another supererogatory prayer of four *rak‘at*s is recommended. Scholars have had some doubts about the Friday prayer’s validity for many centuries, due the Muslim community’s condition. Therefore, to be sure about performance of the prescribed noon prayer, they have ruled that another prayer of four *rak‘at*s, just like the noon prescribed prayer and with the intention of offering a later noon prayer, should be offered after the four-*rak‘at* supererogatory prayer. They also advise to follow this with another supererogatory prayer of two *rak‘at*s with the intention of offering the *sunna* prayer for that time.

## ‘Iyd (Religious Festive Days) Prayers (Salat al-‘Iydayn)

The two ‘Iyd prayers are considered necessary (*wajib*) and are to be offered on the two annual religious festive days: ‘Iyd al-Fitr (marking the end of Ramadan) and ‘Iyd al-Adha (on Dhu alHijja 10, the Day of Sacrifice). The former continues for 3 days, and the latter for 4 days.

**The Religious Festive Days:** On these days, Muslims visit, congratulate and offer gifts to one another, and display greater generosity by honoring the elders and pleasing the needy and children especially. They amuse themselves within religious and moral bounds, occupy themselves with reciting the Qur’an, mentioning God’s Names, and supplicating. It is advisable to perform *ghusl* (major ablution) and wear the best clothes and religiously allowed perfume. On the Day of Sacrifice, they offer cattle or sheep or goats to God as a sacrifice, as will be explained below.

**The Prayer:** The ‘Iyd prayers can be offered from when the sun is three spears above the horizon (approximately three quarters after sunrise) until it reaches its zenith. All men, women (regardless of marital status, age, or if they are menstruating), and children go to the place of prayer. Menstruating women do not attend the prayer. There is no *adhan* or *iqama*, unlike the Friday prayer.

**Offering the ‘Iyd Prayer:** The ‘Iyd prayer consists of two *rak‘at*s and is offered like the Friday prayer, except for extra *takbirs (Allahu akbar* [God is the Greatest]). Like other prayers, the imam and the congregation make the intention and the opening *takbir*, and then recite the supplication silently. After the supplication and before reciting *al-Fatiha*, the imam leads the congregation in three extra *takbirs* by raising his hands while saying the opening *takbir*. After the first two *takbirs*, they leave their arms down, and after the third, they hold their hands under the navel and begin to recite *alFatiha*. After completing the first *rak‘at* and reciting *al-Fatiha* and another Qur’anic passage in the second *rak‘at*, the imam leads the congregation in extra *takbirs* again. This time they say four *takbirs* and, leaving the arms down after the first three, bow after the fourth one. Then they complete the prayer.

**Sermon:** After the prayer, the imam gives a sermon just as he does during the Friday congregational prayer.

**Takbirs during the ‘Iyds:** Muslims must exalt God on the Festive Days of Sacrifice by pronouncing: *Allahu akbar, Allahu akbar; la ilaha illa’llahu wa’llahu akbar; Allahu akbar wa li’llahi’l-hamd* (God is the Greatest, God is the Greatest. There is no deity but God, and God is the Greatest. God is the Greatest and for His is all praise.). It is pronounced after every prescribed prayer after the dawn prayer on the day before the Festive Day, and ends after the afternoon prayer on the fourth day of ‘Iyd.

## The Funeral Prayer

**The Rights of a Dead Muslim upon Living Muslims:** A dead Muslim has four rights over living Muslims: The right to be washed, shrouded, prayed over, and buried. However, Muslims are not obliged to do so for those who die as apostates or while fighting against them.

**Visiting a Sick Person:** It is a highly recommended and meritorious act to visit a sick person. Muslims suggest to the dying that they should declare God’s Oneness: *La ilaha illa’llah, Muhammadun Rasulu’llah* (There is no deity but God, and Muhammad is His Messenger) or the profession of faith: *Ashhadu an la ilaha illa’llah wa ashhadu anna Muhammadan ‘abduhu wa rasuluh* (I bear witness that there is no deity but God, and that Muhammad is His servant and Messenger.).

**Washing the Corpse:** When a Muslim dies, the corpse should be washed by a knowledgeable Muslim three times. Before washing, he or she is given minor ablution. Women wash dead women, and men wash dead men. However, a woman can wash her dead husband. The deceased’s relatives and others should not see the corpse being washed, and the corpse should be scented with camphor, musk, and similar scents.

**Offering the Funeral Prayer:** After washing, a dead Muslim is wrapped in a shroud and put in a coffin. This holds true for everyone except martyrs, who are buried in the clothes in which they were martyred. The corpse is placed upon a raised platform or a smooth stone so that its right side faces the *qibla*. The congregation then stands to pray before the corpse. While this prayer is obligatory upon all Muslims and must be prayed in congregation, when only some of them offer it, the others do not have to. Women also can attend. The imam makes the intention to pray for the deceased (the deceased’s gender should be specified) for God’s sake and good pleasure. The congregation makes the same intention and then adds the intention to pray behind the imam. Then, following the imam, they begin the prayer with the opening *takbir* (as in all other prayers), supplicate, say *takbir* while keeping the hands under the navel, call God’s blessings and peace upon His Messenger and his Family (as in the final sittings of other prayers), repeat *takbir* while keeping the hands under the navel, pray for the deceased and all other Muslims (both alive or dead), say *takbir* for the third time, and give salutations to the right and left.

**Burying the Deceased:** Muslims place the deceased in the grave while saying: “*Bi’smi’llahi ala millet-i Rasuli’llah*” (In God’s Name and according to the religion and way of God’s Messenger.). The deceased is laid on the right side facing the *qibla*, and the shroud is then untied. A stone or something similar is placed in the grave diagonally and in a slanting position so that the corpse should not be covered with soil. Soil is placed on the stone and then is used to cover the grave. After reciting some Qur’anic passages and praying to God for the deceased one, the people leave.

## Congregational Prayer

Performing the prayers in congregation is a *sunna mu’akkada* (a sunna emphasized by the Messenger). Many scholars consider it necessary (*wajib*).

**Women:** It is better for women to pray in their houses than to attend congregational prayers. However, they may go to the mosque and attend the congregational prayer if they do not wear any attractive clothing or use any tempting perfume.

**Conditions to Be Met by the Muadhdhin (the Caller to Prayer):** The Messenger praised muadhdhin and gave them good tidings of great reward (Bukhari, “Adhan,” 5). However, in order to deserve this praise and reward, they have to meet certain conditions, as follows:

* Make the call to prayer for God’s sake, not for wages.
* Be clean from major or minor impurities.
* Stand and face the *qibla*.
* Turn his head, neck, and chest to the right upon saying: “*Hayya ‘ala’s-salah*” and to the left upon saying: “*Hayya ‘ala’l-falah.*”
* Insert his index fingers into his ears so that his voice may be higher.
* Raise his voice for the call, even if he is alone in the desert.
* Pause between each phrase of the *adhan*.
* Adorn the *adhan* with his beautiful voice and tune.

The *adhan* is one of the important, collective symbols of Islam, for it shows that the place in which it is called is a Muslim land. In addition, it is a declaration of Islam’s basic principles.

**Whoever Makes the Adhan Makes the Iqama:** It is highly recommended and preferable that whoever makes the *adhan* makes the *iqama*. A man who prays alone is encouraged to make the adhan, if he did not listen to its public recitation, and should make the *iqama*.

**The Adhan and Iqama for Women:** Although some scholars state that there is no *adhan* or *iqama* for women, some maintain that women can form a congregation and pray, and that one of them can serve as the imam. However, she must stand in the middle of the first row.

**The Imam:** The imam must meet several conditions, as follows:

* If the congregation includes men and women, the imam must be a man.
* He must be well-versed in Qur’anic recitation and knowledgeable of the prayer’s obligatory, necessary, and *sunna* acts.
* He should be of good character and reputation.
* He should be the most knowledgeable (of those present) of Islamic jurisprudence and Qur’anic recitation, have excellent qualities and character, a good voice, and a sound body.
* He should not have a health problem that causes him to continually lose his ablution, unless all others in the congregation have the same or a similar problem.
* According to scholars, anyone whose prayer is valid for himself is valid for others if he serves as the imam. However, Muslims do not like to pray behind an evildoer or an innovator.

**Where the Imam and the Congregation Stand:** The imam stands before the congregation. Preferably, one person stands to the imam’s right. If there are two or more people, they stand behind the imam. The Messenger placed the men in front of the young boys and the women behind the young boys.

**Correcting the Imam’s Mistake:** If the imam forgets a verse, recites incorrectly, or makes a mistake in praying, someone in the congregation should correct him, and anyone who is known to be able to correct him is preferred to stand just after the imam.

**Straightening the Rows and Filling the Gaps:** The imam should tell the members of the congregation, or the congregation should do so even if the imam does so, to straighten the rows and fill in any gaps before starting the prayer.

**The Imam’s and Congregation’s Recitation:** It is enough for the imam to recite *al-Fatiha* and another Qur’anic passage, and for the congregation to keep silent. The congregation makes all other recitations, including *takbirs*, the supplication before *al-Fatiha*, the words of glorification in *ruku‘* and *sujud*, and *tashahhud* and calls of God’s blessings and peace upon God’s Messenger and his Family.

**Following the Imam:** Every member of the congregation must follow the imam without delay, and must not to precede him in any action during the prayer.

**Putting a Partition in front of Oneself While Praying:** Anything that one sets in front of himself or herself while praying qualifies as a partition, even if it is only the bed’s end. The Messenger said: *“When one of you prays, he should make a partition for his prayer, even if it is an arrow.”* (Ibrahim Canan, *Hadis Ansiklopedisi* [An Encyclopedia of Hadiths], Ist., 8:179) This is done so that others cannot pass in front of one who is praying. It is forbidden to pass in front of one who is praying (i.e., between the person and his or her partition). If there is no such probability, making a partition is not necessary. The partition should be close enough that there is only room enough to prostrate. One can make a gesture to stop someone from passing in front of him or her; however, this must not of the kind that will invalidate one’s prayer, like speaking. The prayer is not invalidated if a person or an animal passes in front of the one who is praying.

**Joining the Congregation:** Whoever joins a congregation must say the opening *takbir* while standing and then move directly to the act that the congregation is performing. For instance, if the congregation is prostrating one should perform the opening *takbir* and then prostrate. If one joins the congregation during the *ruku‘* following any standing position (*qiyam*), one is considered to have performed that *rak‘at*. If it belongs to the first *rak‘at*, one who joins the congregation during it and completes the prayer after the imam is considered to have performed the whole prayer.

If one joins after the *ruku‘*, one is considered to have missed the *rak‘at* or *rak‘at*s preceding it. If one joins during the second *rak‘at*, no matter in which prayer it occurs, after the imam gives the first salutation (to his right), one stands up and performs the first missed *rak‘at*, reciting *al-Fatiha* and a Qur’anic passage, performs the *ruku‘*, *sujud*, and the final sitting, and ends the prayer with salutations.

If one joins after the *ruku‘* of the second *rak‘at* in the dawn prayer, one stands up after the imam gives the first salutation and performs the prayer completely, without, however, saying the opening *takbir*. If one joins the evening prayer, one follows the imam until he gives the first salutation, and then stands up, recites *al-Fatiha* and a Qur’anic passage, performs the *ruku‘* and *sujud*, and sits. This is one’s second *rak‘at*. After reciting the *tashahhud*, one stands up and recites *al-Fatiha* and a Qur’anic passage, does the *ruku‘* and *sujud*, performs the final sitting, and ends the prayer with salutations. If one joins the noon, afternoon, or late evening prayers, one follows the imam until he gives the first salutation and then stands up. One completes the prayer by performing the two first *rak‘at*s missed as if performing a prayer of two *rak‘at*s.

If one joins the congregation in the fourth *rak‘at* or after the *ruku‘* following the third *rak‘at*, one follows the imam until he gives the first salutation and then stands up. One performs the first *rak‘at* missed by reciting *al-Fatiha* and a Qur’anic passage, doing the *ruku‘* and *sujud* and sits. After reciting the *tashahhud*, one stands up, recites *al-Fatiha* and a Qur’anic passage, does the *ruku‘* and *sujud*, and stands up. Then one recites only *al-Fatiha*, does the *ruku‘* and *sujud*, and sits to recite *tashahhud*, calls of God’s blessings and peace upon the Messenger and his Family, and end the prayer by giving salutations.

If one joins the congregation after the *ruku‘* of the last *rak‘at* of any prayer, one has missed that prayer and, standing when the imam gives the salutation to the right, offers the prayer completely without, however, saying the opening *takbir*.

If one is offering the dawn or evening prayer alone and people form a congregation behind an imam in the place where one is praying, and if one has not yet prostrated after the second *rak‘at*, one must join the congregation. If one is offering a prayer of 4 *rak‘at*s and is offering the first *rak‘at*, one also joins the congregation. If one is offering the second *rak‘at*, one completes the first two *rak‘at*s, as if performing a prayer of 2 *rak‘at*s, and joins the congregation. If one is offering the third *rak‘at*, one joins the congregation. If one is offering the fourth *rak‘at*, one completes the prayer without joining the congregation.

**Earth as a Mosque:** A Muslim can pray anywhere, provided that the place does not have enough dirt to invalidate the prayer, has not been usurped, or belongs to one who will not allow prayer therein. This is a special blessing of God for the Muslim community. Given this, the whole Earth can serve as a mosque.

**Three Most Excellent Mosques:** One can pray in any mosque. However, three mosques have a particular sacredness and provide those praying within far more merit than praying in others. In order of merit and sacredness, they are the Sacred Mosque in Makka, the Prophet’s Mosque in Madina, and the Masjid al-Aqsa in Quds (Jerusalem).

**Making Up Missed Prayers:** Prayer is the most important kind of worship. It is the support of religion, and therefore can never be omitted. However, scholars agree that all prayers that have been missed for whatever reason (e.g., forgetfulness, sleep, having an operation or a serious illness) must be made up. One can perform the missed prayer at any time, except when praying is prohibited. Missed prayers should be performed in the proper order. For example, if one has missed less than six prayers, he or she should first perform that missed prayer before performing a new prayer whose time it is in. Doing so shows that one is a person of order, and making up missed prayers reinforces this. However, if one has missed more than six prayers, one can make up them in all times when praying is permissible.

# Sawm Al-Ramadan (Fasting the Month of Ramadan)

The fourth pillar of Islam is the Ramadan fast, during which Muslims abstain from eating, drinking, and sexual relations or satisfaction from dawn until sunset. Concerning the order to fast, the Qur’an declares:

*The month of Ramadan, in which the Qur’an (began to be) sent down as a pure source of guidance for people, and, (when practiced,) as clear signs of guidance and the Criterion (between truth and falsehood). Therefore, whoever of you is present at this month must fast it, and he who is so ill that he cannot fast or is on a journey must fast the same number of other days. God desires ease for you, and desires not hardship for you, so that you can complete the number of the days required, exalt God for that He has guided you, and it is hoped that you may give thanks (due to Him). (2:185)*

## Types of Fasting

There are two types of fasting: obligatory and voluntary. Obligatory fasts can be further subdivided into the fast of Ramadan, the fast of expiation, and the fast of fulfilling a vow. Here we shall discuss the Ramadan and voluntary fasts.

**When Does Ramadan Begin and End?:** Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar. A lunar month is approximately 29.5 days, which is the time it takes for the moon to orbit Earth. Since a lunar month is, on average, one day shorter than a solar month, a lunar year is 10 to 12 days shorter than a solar year. Therefore, Ramadan comes 10 to 12 days earlier each year and so moves through the seasons, providing equal conditions for people living in different lands.

A new lunar month begins when, during the moon’s orbit around Earth, the moon is in conjunction with the sun and the sun’s light hits the side of the moon that is turned away from Earth. In this position, the moon is said to be a “new moon,” with its dark side turned toward Earth. By definition, a new moon is not visible from Earth, as the sun’s light shines only on the side facing Earth.

As the moon continues to orbit around Earth, it starts to form a crescent. This will be minutes after the new moon forms, even though the crescent will not be visible for several hours. In some traditional Islamic countries, Muslims do not start fasting until they see the actual crescent. This event is confirmed by sighting the new moon, even if it is seen by only one person, or by the passage of 30 days in the immediately preceding month of Sha‘ban. However, according to some modern scholars, God has given us scientific knowledge to determine exactly when a lunar month will begin and end. Therefore, any observatory or other astronomy-related center should have this information for the area in which we live.

Fasting starts on the first dawn of the new month. During the few hours between the new moon and the following dawn, Muslims can eat and drink, and then start fasting when the first thread of light is observed in the sky.

**Different Locations:** Most scholars say that it does not matter if the new moon has been seen elsewhere. In other words, after the new moon is seen anywhere in the world, all Muslims must begin fasting.

**The End of Ramadan:** The Ramadan fast ends when the new moon (Shawwal) is seen. Most jurists state that the new moon must have been reported by at least two just witnesses.

**The Hours Decreed for Fasting:** According to the Qur’an, the fasting hours are as follows: *You can eat and drink until you can discern the white streak (of dawn) against the black streak (of night); then complete the Fast until night sets in* (2:187). Thus, the fast should start at the first thread of light at dawn (between 1.5 and 2 hours before sunrise, depending on the time of year), and maintained until sunset (the beginning of night).

**Who Must Fast:** All scholars agree that fasting is obligatory upon every sane, adult, healthy Muslim male who is not traveling or fighting on a battlefield at that time. As for women, those who are menstruating or having post-childbirth bleeding cannot fast. In addition, the following groups of people do not have to fast: those who are insane, minors, or travelers; pregnant women who fear that their unborn child might be harmed; the old and sick who think that fasting might harm them; and those who work in harsh circumstances or suffer such hunger or thirst that they fear fasting might result in death.

**Making up the Missed Days:** People who are (not chronically) ill and travelers can break their fast during Ramadan, but must make up the missed days. If travelers make the intention to fast during the night, they can still break their fast during the day. If they have already made the intention to fast while resident but then decided to travel during the day, most scholars maintain that they must fast. Those who have broken their fast because of harsh circumstances also must make up the missed days. The scholars agree that menstruating women, women with post-childbirth bleeding, and pregnant and breast-feeding women who fear that fasting might harm them or the baby, must make up the missed days.

**Paying a Recompense:** Those who are too old to fast, as well as the chronically ill, are permitted to break their fast, for fasting would place too much hardship on them. However, they must feed one poor person for each day that they did not fast. If those who were traveling or had another excuse die before making up the missed days, no recompense has to be paid. If they requested their heirs to pay such a recompense, however, the money should be taken out of the deceased’s estate. If those who died without making up the missed days, even though they had enough time to do so, must request their heirs to pay the necessary recompense.

**Days When Fasting Is Forbidden:** All scholars agree that fasting on the two ‘Iyds (‘Iyd al-Fitr and ‘Iyd al-Adha) is forbidden. It does not matter if the fast is obligatory or voluntary. Fasting voluntarily on Friday exclusively is disliked. If one fasts on the day before or after it, if it is a day on which one customarily fasts (e.g., the 13th, 14th, or 15th of the month), or if it is the day of ‘Ashura (Muharram 10), then it is not disliked to fast on such a Friday. The same rule applies to Saturday. Fasting on the “day of doubt,” when one is not sure if it is the last day of Sha‘ban or the first day of Ramadan, is also disliked, as is fasting on consecutive days without eating at all (*al-wisal*).

**Voluntary Fasts:** The Messenger exhorted Muslims to fast on the following days: six days of Shawwal; Muharram 10 (‘Ashura) and the days immediately preceding and following it; most of Sha‘ban (the month preceding Ramadan); every Thursday, Friday, and Saturday during the sacred months (Dhu’l-Qa‘da, Dhu’l-Hijja, Muharram, Rajab); every Monday and Thursday; and the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth days of each month. He also permitted those who can fast every other day, which is called *sawm Dawud* (the fast of Prophet David), to do so.

**The Predawn Meal and Breaking the Fast:** Having a predawn meal between the middle of the night and dawn is *sunna* (recommended). It is considered best to delay it so that it will be eaten as close to dawn as possible. Those who are fasting should hasten to break the fast when the sun has set and, just before eating, make the following supplication (highly recommended): *“O God, I have fasted for You, believed in You, placed my trust in You, and break my fast with Your provisions.”*

## The Essential Elements of Fasting

Making the proper intention to fast the month of Ramadan is required. Preferably, this intention should be made before dawn and during every night of Ramadan. However, it is valid if made during any part of the night and can even be made as late as noon if one forgot to make it before dawn. It does not have to be spoken out loud, for it is, in reality, an act of the heart that does not involve the tongue. In addition, it is fulfilled by one’s intention to fast out of obedience to God and to seek His pleasure. According to many jurists, the intention for a voluntary fast can be made until noon. During the fasting hours, one cannot eat, drink, or engage in marital sexual relations. Before the Qur’an’s revelation, married couples could not engage in sexual intercourse during the fasting period. This rule was alleviated by 2:187, which allows sexual intercourse between married couples during the nights of Ramadan: *It is made lawful for you to go in to your wives on the night of the Fast; (there is such an inalienable intimacy between you that) they are a garment for you (enfolding you to protect you against illicit relations and beautifying you,) and you are a garment (of the same sort) for them. (2:187)* However, it is still forbidden during the fasting hours.

**Avoiding Unbefitting Actions:** Fasting, a type of worship for drawing closer to God, was ordered to purify the soul and train it in good deeds. Those who are fasting must guard against any act that might cancel the benefits of their fast. Thus, their fast will increase their personal God-consciousness and piety. Fasting is more than not eating and drinking; it also means to avoid everything else that God has forbidden. The Messenger said: “Fasting is not (abstaining) from eating and drinking only, but also from vain speech and foul language. If one of you is being cursed or annoyed, he should say: ‘I am fasting, I am fasting.’”

**Being Generous and Doing Other Meritorious Acts:** Being generous, studying the Qur’an, and supplicating to God are recommended at all times, but are especially stressed during Ramadan. During the last 10 days of Ramadan, God’s Messenger would wake his wives during the night and then, remaining apart from them, engage in acts of worship. He would exert himself in worshipping his Lord during this time more than he would at any other time. (Bukhari, “Sawm,” 2:9; Muslim, “Siyam,” 164)

## Permitted Acts

Pouring water over oneself and submerging oneself in water.

* Applying kohl, eye-drops, or anything else to the eyes.
* Kissing, provided that one has self-control.
* Rinsing the mouth and nose, without swallowing any water.
* Tasting a liquid, food, or something else that one wants to buy. However, anything edible must not be swallowed.
* Chewing gum (unlike something that has no sweetness or fragrance) is disliked but does not invalidate the fast.
* Eating, drinking, or having sexual intercourse during the night until dawn.
* If one eats due to forgetfulness, the day does not have to be made up later or expiated.
* Performing *ghusl* before dawn is not required, but it is advisable to be pure before fasting.
* If a woman’s menstrual or post-childbirth bleeding stops during the night, she can delay *ghusl* until the morning and still fasts. However, she must perform *ghusl* before the dawn prayer.
* Those who are fasting can use a tooth stick or a brush to clean their teeth. It does not matter if this is done at the beginning or at the end of the day.
* Smelling perfumes.
* Swallowing anything wet with saliva remaining in the mouth after rising.
* Swallowing only a few drops of tears and sweat, the taste of which one does not feel.
* Eating anything edible remaining between teeth and which is smaller than a chickpea.
* Anything that is inedible and enters the mouth without intention (e.g., smoke, dust, and the taste of medicine put on teeth) does not invalidate the fast.
* Kissing, touching, and stroking the opposite sex, provided that no ejaculation occurs, as well as any sexual activity that does not result in ejaculation. Any ejaculation that is the result of looking and thinking does not invalidate the fast.
* Having a wet dream during the day or any ejaculation of seminal fluid.

## Forbidden Acts Requiring a Make-up Day:

* Eating due to a mistake (other than forgetfulness) or coercion.
* Swallowing the blood more than the saliva with which it is mixed and the taste of which one feels.
* Swallowing more than a few drops of tears and sweat the taste of which one feels.
* Removing from the mouth anything edible that remains between the teeth and which is greater than a chickpea, and then eating it.
* Vomiting a mouthful. Anything less and which goes back into the stomach does not invalidate the fast. However, if one intentionally takes it back, the fast is broken.
* Ejaculation that occurs with pleasure by kissing, touching, and masturbation.
* Menses and post-childbirth bleeding, even if either begins just before sunset.
* If one eats, drinks, or has intercourse, thinking that the sun has set or that *fajr* has not occurred.
* Any injections, whether for feeding or for medicinal purposes. It does not matter if the injection was intravenous or underneath the skin, or whether what was injected reaches the stomach.
* Any drink or medicine that passes through throat or nose. However, water that passes through the ears is allowed.
* Any fluid going into body through the rectum.

## Acts that Invalidate the Fast and Require a Make-up Day and Expiation

Intentional eating, drinking, and having sexual intercourse during the day require making up the day and an expiation. Expiation is defined as freeing a slave if one can do so; if the person has no slaves or cannot free one for a valid reason, he or she must fast for 60 consecutive days; if one cannot do so, he or she must feed a poor person for 60 days or 60 poor people for one day with meals that are similar to what one would eat at home. Most scholars say that both men and women have to perform acts of expiation if they intentionally have sexual intercourse during the day even if they had intended to fast on that day. If they engaged in it out of forgetfulness, coercion, or having no intention to fast, they do not have to perform any act of expiation. If the woman was raped or coerced by the man, only the man has to make an act of expiation. All scholars agree that people who intentionally broke the fast and made expiation, and then broke it again in a way that requires another expiation, they must perform another act of expiation. Similarly, they all agree that if people break the fast twice during a day, before performing the expiation for the first act, they need to perform only one act of expiation. If people break their fast and then repeat it during the same Ramadan without expiation, they only have to make expiation one time. The reason for this is because there is a punishment for acts that are repeated, and if the expiation or punishment is not carried out, all of these acts are combined into one.

## Places with Very Long Days and Very Short Nights

Muslims who are in such areas (e.g., close to the polar regions) should follow the norms of the areas in which the Islamic legislation took place (e.g., Makka or Madina) or follow the schedule of the closest area that has “normal” days and nights.

## The Virtue of the Night of Power (Laylat al-Qadr)

This night is the year’s most virtuous night. God says: *We revealed it (the Qur’an) on the Night of Power [Laylat al-Qadr]. What will tell you what the Night of Power is? It is better than a thousand months.* For example, any action therein (e.g., reciting the Qur’an, remembering God) brings as much reward as would doing the same action for 1,000 months that do not contain this night. It is preferred to seek this night during the last 10 nights of Ramadan, as the Prophet, upon whom be peace, strove his best to seek it during that time. For example, he would stay up during the last 10 nights, wake his wives, and then stay apart from them in order to worship. However, according to Abu Hanifa, any night during the year may be the Night of Power (Canan, *ibid*., 1:260), and so Muslims should keep vigils for some time every night in order to catch it. Such night vigils have a special importance. Al-Bukhari records from Abu Hurayra that the Messenger, upon whom be peace, said: “Whoever prays during the Night of Power with faith and hoping for its reward will have all of his or her previous sins forgiven.” (Bukhari, “Fadl Laylat al-Qadr”)

## The Meaning and Principles of I‘tikaf

*I‘tikaf* literally means to stick to something, whether good or bad, and to block out everything else. As a term, it denotes devoting oneself, especially during the last 10 days of Ramadan, to praying in a mosque. God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, performed *i‘tikaf* for 10 days every Ramadan. In the year that he died, he performed it for 20 days. *I‘tikaf* is not acceptable from an unbeliever, a non-discerning child, a person requiring major purification because of (sexual) defilement, and a menstruating woman and a woman with postchildbirth bleeding. *I‘tikaf* will be fulfilled if a person stays in the mosque with the intention of becoming closer to God. If these conditions are not met, it is not *i‘tikaf*. If an individual intends to perform a voluntary *i‘tikaf* but ends it before the 10-day period has ended, he or she must make up the remaining days later.

## Oaths and Vows

**Oaths:** Making an oath means to swear by God that one will not do something. In Islam, one can swear only by God. People who make such an oath must do their best to fulfill it, and so should not make one carelessly. People who make false statements by mistake or unknowingly, and then swear to them by God, are not held responsible for them and do not have make any expiation. However, consciously lying and then swearing by God or declaring God as a witness to the lie is an extremely grave sin that many times has resulted in misfortune descending upon the liar. Such people must perform an act of expiation, earnestly seek God’s forgiveness, and repair any damage caused by the lie. If people swear by God not to do something in the future and then do that very act, they must seek God’s forgiveness and make an expiation. In this case, this involves emancipating a slave. If this is not possible, the oath-breaker must feed a poor person for 10 days with meals that are similar to what his family eats. If this is not possible, he or she must fast for 3 consecutive days.

**Vows:** A vow is a solemn promise to do, in God’s name, something that resembles an act of worship and make obligatory upon oneself that which is not obligatory. A vow is considered “Islamic” only if it is made in God’s name and involves an obligatory or necessary act of worship (e.g., to fast or help the poor). Therefore, one can vow to perform two *rak‘at*s of prayer or fast, but not to make a prostration of recitation or perform ablution, for these latter two acts are not obligatory acts of worship in themselves but rather are the means to such acts. Also, vows can be made concerning only that which can be fulfilled. There are two kinds of vows: appointed and unappointed. An appointed vow can be, for example, vowing to fast on a certain day if one’s desire for something religiously lawful is met. If the desired thing happens, the vow must be fulfilled. An unappointed vow can be, for example, a vow to fast for one day or to give charity to the poor if one’s desire for something religiously lawful is met. If the desired thing happens, the vow must be fulfilled. If one vows to do something resembling an act of worship if something does not occur, he or she must either fulfill the vow or make an expiation. For example, if one addicted to lying vows to fast for a week if he or she does not lie again, but then does so, he or she either has to fulfill the vow or make an expiation like that made for broken oaths.

# Zakat (The Prescribed Purifying Alms)

The second important duty of servanthood is *zakat*. God’s Messenger, who depicts prayer as Islam’s pillar or support, describes *zakat* as its bridge (Canan, *ibid*., 6:346), for *zakat* not only brings the social strata closer to each other and fills in the gaps between them and their members, but also stops such gaps from forming.

*Zakat* means purity and growing. Since it purifies wealth and people’s attachment to it, and causes both it and Muslims to grow in purity and sincerity, the Qur’an calls it *zakat* (or the prescribed alms):

(O Messenger,) take alms (prescribed or voluntary) out of their wealth so that you may cleanse them thereby and cause them to grow in purity and sincerity, and pray for them. Indeed your prayer is a source of comfort for them. God is All-Hearing, AllKnowing. (9:103)

Taking into account its very nature, *zakat* constitutes one of Islam’s five pillars. It is associated with prayer (*salat*) in 82 Qur’anic verses. God, the Exalted One, prescribed it in His Book (the Qur’an), His Messenger corroborated it by his *sunna*, and the Muslim community by consensus upheld it. Ibn ‘Abbas reported that when the Prophet sent Mu‘adh ibn Jabal to Yemen (as its governor), he said to him:

You are going to a people who are People of the Book. Invite them to accept the *shahada*: that there is no deity but God and I am His Messenger. If they accept and affirm this, tell them that God, the Glorious One, has enjoined five prayers upon them during the day and night. If they accept that, tell them also that He has enjoined *sadaqa* (meaning *zakat*) upon their assets, which will be taken from the rich of the (Muslim) community and distributed to the poor. If they accept that, refrain from laying hands upon the best of their goods and fear the cry of the oppressed, for there is no barrier between God and it. (Bukhari, “Zakat,” 1:41; Muslim, “Iman,” 31.)

Many verses exhort Muslims to pay *zakat* and forbid hoarding wealth. For example:

*The believers, both men and women, they are guardians, confidants and helpers of one another. They enjoin and promote what is right and good and forbid and try to prevent the evil. They establish the prayer in conformity with its conditions, and pay the zakat (prescribed purifying alms) fully. They always obey God and His Messenger. Those are the distinguished ones whom God shall treat with mercy. Assuredly, God is the AllHonored with irresistible might, All-Wise. (9:71) and:*

*Those who hoard gold and silver and do not spend it in God’s way (to exalt His cause and help the poor and needy: O Messenger,) give them the glad tidings of a painful chastisement. (9:34)*

## Who Must Pay?

*Zakat* must be paid by every free Muslim, man or woman, who has a *nisab* (the required amount of wealth). As for the insane and children who have a *nisab*, if their wealth is under disposal or in circulation, their guardians pay it on their behalf. If a person dies before paying it, it must be taken from the estate before paying off any debts, if there are any, and the heirs share the inheritance.

## Conditions for Nisab

*Nisab* is conditioned by the following:

* *Nisab* is the amount of wealth remaining after meeting all expenses for such vital necessities as food, clothes, housing, and a mount. Thus, one does not have to pay *zakat* on what he or she needs to make a living, such as tools or machines related to carpentry, farming, tailoring, or working as a doctor. All debts are subtracted from one’s wealth. If one has enough secured credit to pay off the debt, it is added to one’s wealth, and if the resultant wealth reaches the *nisab*, one must pay *zakat*.
* For many items subject to *zakat* (e.g., money, gold, silver, and cattle), a full year of the Islamic calendar should pass, starting from the day of the *nisab’s* possession. If the wealth possessed decreases during the year but is still possessed one year later, *zakat* must be paid. What matters is the availability of *nisab* at the beginning and end of the year. However, this condition does not apply to plantations and fruits, for their *zakat* should be paid, or at least calculated, on the harvest day and include what has been consumed before the harvest.
* In short, there are two types of *zakat*: one grows by itself (e.g., crops and fruits), and the other is used for growing and production (e.g., money, merchandise, and cattle). In the former case, *zakat* should be paid at harvest time; in the later, at the end of the year.
* The wealth subject to *zakat* should be actively or potentially increasing, growing, or productive. This condition will be explained below.
* One must have private, doubtless ownership or possession and the right of disposal of the wealth liable to *zakat*.

**Intention:** Since paying *zakat* is an act of worship, its validity depends upon one’s sincere intention to pay it for God’s sake. If one pays it without making the intention, one can still intend while the wealth expended as *zakat* has not yet been consumed.

**Paying Zakat at Its Due Time:** *Zakat* must be paid immediately at its due time. Deferring it is prohibited, unless there is a valid reason not to do so.

**Holdings Subject to Zakat and Their Nisab:** Islam enjoined *zakat* on currencies and similar things, such as shares, bonds and checks, gold and silver, crops, fruit, livestock, merchandise, minerals, and treasure.

**The Standard of Richness:** Islam does not criticize earning; rather, it encourages working and earning one’s livelihood. But it does not approve of earning for luxury and a luxurious life, and urges Muslims to work, earn, and live for the other life as their goal. It encourages mutual helping in society and spending in God’s way and for the needy, and has not established a fixed standard of living. It regards having a house, a mount, two suits and other articles of clothing, and one month worth of livelihood (some say that one can keep a year of livelihood at the most) as the necessary commodities or wealth upon which one does not have to pay *zakat*.

**The Nisab and Zakat for Gold, Silver, and Other Jewelry:** The nisab for gold is 20 dinars (approximately 90 grams) and for silver is 200 dirhams (approximately 600 grams), both being owned for one year. The due on them is one-fortieth of their value. Any additional amount is to be calculated in this manner. Gold and silver are combined. Thus, if one has gold and silver whose value is equal to 200 dirhams of silver, *zakat* must be paid. Likewise, gold, silver, banknotes and the like, and commercial merchandise are also combined. Things made of gold and silver are treated like gold and silver. In other words, if the weight of gold and silver they contain amounts to the *nisab*, their *zakat* is paid. Although most of the scholars opine that no *zakat* has to be paid on diamonds, pearls, sapphires, rubies, corals, or other precious stones that women wear as ornaments and unless they are used for trade, it is piety and a measure to be saved from the obligation of *zakat*, which is both God’s and people’s right on rich people, to make some payment due to them. One should not buy such precious stones in order to avoid paying *zakat*.

**Banknotes, Checks, and Bonds:** As these are documents with guaranteed credits, banknotes, checks, and bonds are subject to *zakat*, at the rate of one-fortieth of their value, when they are owned for one year and attain the minimum of *nisab* (being equal in value to 200 silver dirhams). A person may change them into currency immediately. They are combined with currencies, gold and silver, and commercial merchandise.

**Commercial Merchandise:** Any commercial merchandise that is religiously lawful to use, consume, buy, and sell (e.g., clothes, grain, iron, copper, cattle, sheep, houses, shops, and cars) is subject to *zakat*. Their due is one-fortieth. Due to gold’s stable value, jurists maintain that it should be the basis upon which the *nisab* of commercial merchandise is determined.

**Buildings and Vehicles of Transportation That Are Sources of Income:** One who rents out a house, a shop, tools, vehicles, or land, or who has vehicles working in transportation, must pay *zakat* on the rent and income received. If their annual revenue is equal to *nisab*, after the money spent on them is deducted, the owner pays their *zakat* every month. Since they are compared with land and land products, their *zakat* rate is one-tenth.

**Industrial Investments and Means of Production:** These items are currently among the greatest sources of income. Although people’s private houses, tools, and machines by which they earn their living are not subject to *zakat*, industrial investments and means of production (e.g., factories) are, for they are growing and sources of revenue. Some jurists compare them to land and land products, and say that their *zakat* rate is one-tenth. Others compare them to commercial activities and merchandise, and say that their *zakat* rate is one-fortieth of the value remaining after debts, expenses on necessary material, workmanship, production, marketing, and financing have been subtracted.

**Wages, Salaries, and Independent Businesses:** Since wages, salaries, and earnings from independent businesses are steady and continuous and potentially growing, they are subject to *zakat* if the amount remaining after the yearly average expenditure on livelihood reaches *nisab*. The rate is one-fortieth. Although there are diverse standards of living, Muslims do not think of living a comfortable life when the majority of Muslims and humanity are living a below-average life. Some jurists say that this type of *zakat* should be paid after one year; others say that it should be paid monthly.

**Cattle, Sheep, and Goats:** Cattle, camels, sheep, and goats are subject to *zakat*. They must be commercial or grazing, and have been in one’s possession for a year. The *nisab* of each is as follows:

* When one has 5 grazing camels for one year, their due is 1 sheep, which is also the due for 5 to 9 camels. The due for 10 to 14 camels is 2 sheep, for 15 to 19 camels is 3 sheep, and for 20 to 24 camels is 4 sheep. The due for 25 to 35 camels is a 2-year-old she-camel, for 36 to 45 is a 3 year-old she-camel, for 46 to 60 is a 4-year-old she-camel, for 61 to 75 is 5-year-old she-camel, for 76 to 90 is 2 3-year-old shecamels, and for 91 to 120 is 2 5-years-old she-camels.
* The *nisab* for cattle is 30. For 30 to 40 heads of cattle, a 2.5year-old male or female weaned calf; for 40 to 60, a 3-yearold weaned calf; for 60, 2 1-year-old calves. When there are more than 60 heads of cattle, the rate is 1 calf for each 30 heads and 1 weaned calf for each 40 heads.
* When one has 40 sheep or goats, their due is 1 sheep or goat. For 40 to 120 it is the same, for 120 to 200 it is 2 sheep, for 200 to 399 it is 3 sheep, and for 400 to 500 it is 4 sheep.

**Farm Products:** The *zakat* on farm products is paid when they are harvested. One must calculate them in advance if he or she wants to use or benefit from them. Most scholars maintain than their *nisab* is about 50 quarters, that is, if one has that amount of farm products, one must pay their *zakat*. The due for farm products naturally irrigated (with rain) is one-tenth; if they are irrigated by their owner, who must pay the related expenses, the due is onetwentieth.

**Minerals, Mines, Buried Treasure, and Sea Products:** The *zakat* on such items is one-fifth. If a buried treasure is found in a land whose owner is unknown or belongs to the state, onefifth of it is given as *zakat* and the rest belongs to the finder. If it is found in a land whose owner is known, one-fifth is given to the owner. Scholars have ruled that there is no *nisab* for such items. However, some maintain that when these items are worth about 600 dirhams of silver or 90 grams of gold, *zakat* must be paid.

## Recipients

Scholars have divided property into two categories: hidden (kept at home, such as money, gold, and silver) and property kept in the open (e.g., animals and farm products). During the Prophet’s lifetime and that of the caliphs, *zakat* was collected by officials appointed for that purpose. There was even a special *zakat* fund in the state budget. In later times, the state began to collect *zakat* on the property in the open and let the owners of hidden properties take care of it by themselves. Muslims or Muslim communities must find a good, preferable way to collect *zakat* in the absence of an Islamic authority and distribute it properly, as mentioned in 9:60. They are:

* Poor people who do not earn enough to keep themselves and their families alive.
* The destitute who cannot meet their basic needs.
* *Zakat* collectors.
* Those whose hearts, due to their weak Islam, need to be reconciled or strengthened for Islam; whose hearts can be swayed toward Islam; or those whose evil against Islam and the Muslims could be avoided.
* To free Muslim prisoners-of-war and emancipate slaves.
* To help those who are overburdened with debt.
* To support those who exalt God’s word, strive for God’s cause (*mujahidun*), and provide for students and pilgrims.
* Travelers, either at home or abroad.

**The recipients of *zakat* are mentioned in the following verse:** *The prescribed alms are meant only for the poor and those in destitution (although, out of self-respect, they do not give the impression that they deserve help); those in charge of collecting and administering them; those whose hearts or friendship and support are to be won over for God’s cause, (including those whose hostilities might be prevented thereby); to free those in the bondage of slavery and captivity; to help those overburdened with debt; and in God’s way (to exalt God’s word, to provide for students and help pilgrims); and for the wayfarer (in need of help). This is an ordinance from God. God has full knowledge of everything, All-Wise. (9:60). Zakat* is distributed among the recipients according to their need and priority, assigned to those in greater need, or according to circumstances. But *zakat* is not voluntary charity given to please the poor; rather, it is spent to eradicate poverty, provide capital for the needy in order to save them from their need, to fill the gaps between classes, or to prevent such gaps from appearing in society.

# Hajj (Pilgrimage)

Hajj is a rehearsal of life in both this world and the next, a theater of all Islamic life based upon deep devotion to God and perception of one’s servanthood and God’s Divinity and Lordship. It consists of love, action, humility, God-consciousness, sacrifice, and dominion over the carnal self.

It has two pillars: staying at ‘Arafat for a certain length of time on Dhu’l-Hijja 9 (the last day of the Islamic lunar calendar) and circumambulating the Ka‘ba any day after staying at the ‘Arafat. Ihram is also essential to both the major (Hajj) and minor (‘Umra) pilgrimage. Ihram is the intention to perform either Hajj or ‘Umra, or both, and marks the beginning of Hajj or ‘Umra, or both if they are performed together. It also signifies making some things forbidden. Men wear special attire while in ihram, and this is why some people call this attire ihram.

**The Virtue of Hajj:** Hajj mabrur (a faultless Hajj that is free of sin and graced with Divine acceptance and pleasure) is one of the best, most virtuous deeds in Islam.” Bukhari and Muslim record from God’s Messenger: *“He who performs Hajj for God’s good pleasure and avoids all lewdness and sin will return after Hajj as free from all sins as he was the day his mother gave birth to him”* (Zayn al-Din al-Zabidi, Tajrid al-Sarih, “Hajj,” 756) and: *“Pilgrims and those performing ‘Umra are God’s guests. Their prayers are answered and their supplications for forgiveness are granted. The reward of Hajj mabrur is Paradise.”* (Canan, ibid., 17:383)

**Concerning the importance of Hajj, the Qur’an says:** *Behold, the first House (of prayer) established for humanity is the one at Bakka (Makka), as a blessed place and a center of guidance for the whole world. Therein are clear signs (showing that it is a blessed sanctuary chosen by God as the center of guidance), and the Station of Abraham. Whoever enters it is secure (against attack and fear). Pilgrimage to the House is a duty owed to God by all who can afford a way to it. Whoever rejects (this obligation) or is ungrateful to God (by not fulfilling this command), God is All-independent of all creatures. (3:96-97)*

## Hajj is Obligatory Only Once

All Muslim scholars agree that Hajj is obligatory only once during a Muslim’s lifetime, unless someone vows to perform an extra Hajj, in which case the vow must be fulfilled. Whatever is done over and above is supererogatory or optional.

**When Hajj Must Be Performed:** Although some scholars opine that Hajj may be performed at any time during one’s life, and that one who must perform Hajj can postpone it, it is preferred that Hajj be performed as soon as one is physically and financially able to do so. This is because if the person dies before performing the obligatory Hajj or a vowed one, one’s heirs must carry out this duty. Even if the deceased did not specify this in his or her will, if one-third of the estate is enough for an heir to make Hajj, an heir had better perform it for the deceased. All ensuing Hajj expenses, as well as any debts, must be paid from the deceased’s property. However, the heir who wants to do this must obtain all of the other heirs’ agreement, or at least resignation, before departing. If such an agreement is not reached, the heir must pay all expenses out of his or her own property.

**Prerequisites:** All jurists agree upon the following:

* Being an adult, free Muslim. Children can make Hajj along with their parents, but they have to perform it again after reaching the age of responsibility (puberty).
* Being of sound mind.
* Being physically fit and healthy enough to perform it.
* Finding a safe way to reach Makka, so that the pilgrim’s life and possessions are not in danger.
* Having the necessary provisions, meaning that they must be able to take care of themselves while performing Hajj, meet their family’s needs back home, and be able to make the trip in in a way acceptable in Islam. All of the money spent to perform Hajj must have been earned in lawful means according to Islam.
* A woman who performs Hajj from such a distance that she will be considered a traveler must be accompanied by her husband, or a man who cannot legally marry her, or one or more reliable women.

**Hajj on Behalf of Others:** If people can perform Hajj but do not do so, and then are overtaken by sickness, old age, or death, they must arrange for someone else to perform it on their behalf, for they might never have another chance to do it. If sick people recover after having sent someone in their place, some scholars say that their duty to make Hajj has been fulfilled and that they do not have to “repeat” it. However, most scholars opine that the recovered people still must perform Hajj, for a “substitutory” Hajj is not enough.

**Doing Business:** Pilgrims can pursue trade and business during Hajj or ‘Umra, provided that they are making Hajj solely to fulfill their responsibility for God’s sake. The Qur’an declares: *There is no blame on you if you should seek something of the bounty of your Lord (by trading during the Pilgrimage. But beware that you should not be over-occupied with trading to neglect any of its rituals). When you press on in multitude from ‘Arafat (after you have stayed there for some time,) mention God at Mash’ar al-Haram (i.e., Muzdalifa). Mention Him, conscious of how He has guided you, for formerly you were surely of those astray. (2:198)*

**Ihram:** Ihram is the intention to perform Hajj or ‘Umra, either singly or together, and marks the beginning of either one, or both, if they are performed together. It also signifies making some things forbidden. Men wear a special attire of two white, unstitched, cloth sheets. One of these is wrapped around the body’s upper part (except the head), and the other (izar) is wrapped around the body’s lower part. There is no special Hajj attire for women.

**Fixed Time:** This refers to the specific time during which the rites have to be performed in order to be valid. The Qur’an states: They ask you, (O Messenger,) about the new moons. Answer them: “They are signs for the people to determine time and the period of the Pilgrimage” (2:189) and: The Pilgrimage is in the months well-known to people (2:197). Muslim scholars agree that the known months are Shawwal, Dhu’lQa‘da and the first ten days of Dhu’l-Hijja. Therefore, putting on the attire for Hajj is not valid outside these months, except for ‘Umra, which can be performed at any time of the year.

**Fixed Places (Mawaqit) for Ihram and Donning the Special Hajj Attire:** Mawaqit (plural of miqat) are the specific places where pilgrims or people intending to perform Hajj or ‘Umra must declare their intention to do so and enter the state of ihram. Men put on their special Hajj attires in these places. Anyone intending to perform Hajj or ‘Umra must not pass beyond these places without ihram.

God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, specified these places (Canan, ibid., 17:385):

* For the people of Madina and those coming through Madina, the miqat is Dhu’l-Hulayfa, 450 kilometers north of Makka.
* For those coming from Syria, Jordan, Palestine, and Lebanon, the miqat is al-Juhfa, 187 kilometers northwest of Makka, and close to Rabigh, 204 kilometers from Makka. Rabigh became the miqat for people coming from Syria and Egypt after the settlement of al-Juhfa disappeared completely.
* The miqat for the people of Najd is Qarn al Manazil, a mountain 94 kilometers east of Makka, overlooking ‘Arafat.
* Yalamlam, a mountain 54 kilometers south of Makka, is the miqat for those coming from Yemen.
* For the people of Iraq, the miqat is Dhat ‘Irq, 94 kilometers northeast of Makka.
* For those living in Makka who intend to perform Hajj, the miqat is the place where they are staying in Makka. However, if they intend to perform ‘Umra, they should go to al-Khol or at-Tan’im, for that is the proper miqat for ‘Umra.
* Those who live between a miqat and Makka can make their ihram from their house.
* Those whose way does not pass through any of these places must enter the state of ihram in that place which shares the same line (latitude) as they do.

**Etiquette of Ihram:** This involves clipping the fingernails, trimming the moustache, shaving the hair under the armpits, shaving the pubic hair, making wudu’ or (preferably) performing ghusl, and combing their beard and hair (men only). Men can put perfume on their body and Hajj attire, even if it continues to smell afterwards. After cleansing oneself in accord with these rules, one should pray two rak‘ats, intend to assume the state of ihram, and perform either Hajj or ‘Umra, or both, if one intends to perform them together.

## Kinds of Ihram or Hajj

These are divided into three categories, each of which all scholars say are legitimate: Qiran (combining ‘Umra and Hajj in one state of ihram), Tamattu‘ (combining Hajj and ‘Umra with a break in between), and Ifrad (Hajj only).

**Qiran:** Here, pilgrims declare their intention to perform both Hajj and ‘Umra together, and say when doing talbiya: *“O God, I answer your call to perform Hajj and ‘Umra.”* [Talbiya is: Labbayk, Allahumma labbayk; labbayk la sharika laka; inna’l-hamda wa’lminnata laka wa’l-mulk, la sharika lak. (Here I am, my God, here I am at Your service. Here I am at Your service. You have no partner. Assuredly, all praise and gratitude are for You, and all dominion. You have no partner.)]. Such pilgrims must remain in the state of ihram until they have performed all the rites of ‘Umra and Hajj.

**Tamattu‘:** In this case, pilgrims perform ‘Umra during the Hajj season and then perform Hajj. It is called tamattu‘ (enjoyment) because these pilgrims have the added advantage of performing Hajj and ‘Umra together without having to go back home, and also because after performing ‘Umra they can wear their usual clothes, apply perfume, and do other things until they have to put on their attire for Hajj. Anyone intending to do tamattu‘ should, on approaching the miqat, make the intention for ‘Umra. While uttering talbiya, they should say: Labbayk bil ‘Umra (O God, I answer Your call to perform ‘Umra). They should wear their Hajj attire (women have no special Hajj attire) until they circumambulate the Ka‘ba, walk between Safa and Marwa to perform sa‘y, and then cut off a little of their hair or shave it off altogether (men only). After that, they may wear their usual clothes and do all that is permissible but that is prohibited while in the state of ihram. On Dhu’lHijja 8, they must declare their intention to perform Hajj, re-enter the state of ihram, and put on their special attire from Makka.

**Ifrad:** Ifrad means that pilgrims intending to perform Hajj only should only make the intention for Hajj while at the miqat. While saying talbiya, they should say: Labbayk bi-hajj (O God, I answer your call to perform Hajj) and wear their Hajj attire until all the rites of Hajj are completed. After that, they can make ‘Umra if they so desire.

## Restrictions during Ihram

These are as follows:

* Sexual intercourse and all matters leading to it (e.g., kissing, touching, or talking to one’s wife about intercourse or related matters).
* Committing sins that cause deviation from the path of obeying God.
* Disputing, arguing, or fighting with companions, servants, and other people. God declares: *The Pilgrimage is in the months well-known to people. Whoever undertakes the duty of Pilgrimage in them, there is no sensual indulgence, wicked conduct, or disputing during the Pilgrimage. (In addition to obeying this command,) whatever good you do (and help others), God knows it. Take your provisions for the Pilgrimage (and do not be a burden upon others). In truth, the best provision is piety, so be provided with piety to guard against My chastisement, O people of discernment. (2:197)*
* Wearing any sewn clothes (e.g., a shirt, hooded robes, cloak, underpants), wrapping anything around the head (e.g., a cap or a fez), wearing clothes dyed with a nice fragrant dye, or wearing shoes or sewn slippers.
* Killing any animal or game or showing it to someone else so that he or she may kill it, or cutting any green grass or trees (whether within or outside the sacred precincts of Makka).

## Penalty for Violating the Sanctity of Ihram

* Wearing perfume or similar things on any part of the body or henna on the head; wearing a stitched garment or covering one’s head (for men) for a day; shaving at least one-fourth of one’s head; clipping one’s fingernails; omitting one of the necessary things of Hajj; performing the arrival or farewell circumambulation while menstruating; or being in a state of major impurity or doing the obligatory circumambulation of visiting without having wudu’. If one does any of these things in the state of ihram, one must sacrifice a sheep or a goat.
* If one does any of these things while in the ihram for qiran, two sheep or goats must be sacrificed. If one does such things because of coercion or absolute necessity, one either sacrifices within Makka’s sacred precincts or fasts for 3 days wherever he or she pleases, or gives charity in an amount equivalent to the fitra (that which provides a person with two average-sized meals) to a poor person.
* Having sexual intercourse while in the state of ihram before or while at ‘Arafat nullifies Hajj. If one has sexual intercourse before shaving oneself or cutting some hair after staying in ‘Arafat, or performs the obligatory circumambulation of visiting in the state of major ritual impurity or menstruation or post-childbirth bleeding, one must sacrifice a cow, an ox, or a camel. If, however, one repeats the circumambulation after being purified, this sacrifice is cancelled. If one has sexual intercourse after shaving oneself or cutting some hair, but before the circumambulation, one must sacrifice a sheep or a goat.
* If one wears perfume or something similar on some part of the body, wears a stitched garment or covers one’s head for some part of the day, shaves less than one-fourth of one’s head, clips only a fingernail or another person’s fingernails, shaves someone else, or performs the arrival and farewell circumambulation without having performed wudu’, one must give a fitra amount of charity. Plucking a broken fingernail entails no penalty.
* If one kills a grasshopper, a louse, or a flea on one’s own body or on that of somebody else, he or she must pay charity less than a fitra. If one kills more than three of these vermin, one must pay a fitra amount of charity.
* If one in the state of ihram kills an animal whose meat is not edible or a game animal, an assessment should be made and then one should make compensation. For an animal whose meat is not edible, this cannot be more than a sheep or a goat. If one has an animal of equivalent value for the animal or game animal killed, one must sacrifice it and give its meat in charity. If one does not have such an animal, its value should be assessed by two just persons, and the person must give that amount of food to the poor. If one does not have enough money for this, he or she must fast according to how many poor people could be fed with that money. For example, if it is estimated that that money could feed 10 needy people, the person has to fast for 10 days. The food given to the needy must be enough to satisfy their hunger.
* If one in the state of ihram cuts off or plucks green grass or trees within Makka’s sacred precincts, and these are not privately owned, their value is given away as charity. If they are privately owned, the compensation doubles, for the owner is indemnified and its value is given to the poor as charity.

**The Sacred Precincts of Makka (Haram Makka):** The Sacred Precincts of Makka include the area around Makka, which are marked by stones a meter high, on all roads leading to or from the city. In this area, killing game animals and cutting green trees are prohibited. On the northern side, Haram Makka extends to Tan’im, 6 kilometers from the Sacred Mosque; on the southern side to Adah, 12 kilometers from Makka; on the eastern side to al-Ji’rana, 16 kilometers away; on its northeastern side to the valley of Nakhla (14 kilometers away); and on the western side 15 kilometers away (al-Hudaybiya).

**Sacred Precincts of Madina (Haram Madina):** In the Sacred Precincts of Madina, killing game animals and cutting trees also are prohibited, with the exception that Madina’s residents can use trees and grass for their animals. The sacred precincts of Madina extend from Eer to Thawr. Eer is a mountain at the miqat for Madina, and Thawr is a mountain to the north near Uhud.

## The Necessary Acts (Wajib) of Hajj

The obligatory acts consist of staying for some time in ‘Arafat after noon on the eve of ‘Iyd al-Adha (Dhu’l-Hijja 9), and performing the obligatory circumambulation (tawaf) of visiting. Ihram is also essential for Hajj.

**The necessary acts for Hajj are as follows:**

* Getting into the state of ihram in any of the miqat places.
* Doing nothing forbidden while in ihram.
* Staying in ‘Arafat until sunset on Dhu’l-Hijja 9, the eve of ‘Iyd al-Adha.
* Staying in Muzdalifa between dawn and sunrise on the ‘Iyd al-Adha for at least one hour. Muzdalifa is located about 20 kilometers from Makka and 10 kilometers from ‘Arafat.
* Performing the last three turns of the obligatory circumambulation (tawaf al-ifada or ziyara) around the Ka‘ba. (The first four turns are obligatory.)
* Doing the obligatory circumambulation of visiting during the first 3 days of ‘Iyd al-Adha, during which sacrifice is offered.
* Performing the farewell circumambulation. (This is necessary for pilgrims coming from outside of Makka.)
* Performing the circumambulation in the state of ritual purity and covering all parts of the body that must be covered.
* Beginning the circumambulation from a point on line with the Black Stone and with the Ka‘ba on one’s left.
* Offering two rak‘ats of prayer after every circumambulation.
* While performing the circumambulation, turning outside and around Hijr Isma‘il, a place to the north of Ka‘ba and surrounded by a semicircular wall.
* Performing sa‘y (slightly running seven times between the hills of Safa and Marwa, going from Safa to Marwa four times, and the other way three times).
* Throwing seven pebbles at each of three stone columns (jamarat) standing in Mina with some distance between them. These are called Jamrat al-‘Ula, Jamrat al-Wusta, and Jamrat al-‘Aqaba. On the first day of ‘Iyd al-Adha, one throws pebbles at Jamrat al-‘Aqaba, and at all of them on the following two days.
* Those coming from outside of Makka and performing Hajj al-Tamattu‘ or Hajj al-Qiran should sacrifice a sheep or a goat any time within 3 days after throwing pebbles on the first day of ‘Iyd al-Adha, and shave or cut some of their hair within Makka’s sacred precincts. Women only clip a little of their hair.
* If one of these necessary acts is omitted, a sacrifice must be offered.

## Sunna Acts

* Performing wudu’ or ghusl before putting on the Hajj attire to enter the state of ihram.
* Before wearing the Hajj attire, wearing permitted perfume.
* Offering two rak‘ats of prayer as a sunna act of ihram, and reciting Surat al-Kafirun and Surat al-Ikhlas in each rak‘at after Surat al-Fatiha.
* Uttering talbiya loudly as soon as one enters the state of ihram, and doing so whenever one climbs a hill, descends into a valley, meets one or more people, early in the morning, and after every prescribed prayer until throwing stones at Jamrat al‘Aqaba on the first day of ‘Iyd al-Adha. (Women do not raise their voices while uttering talbiya.)
* Calling God’s blessings and peace upon our Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, and upon his Family many times after each talbiya.
* Praying after calling God’s blessings and peace upon the Messenger and his Family.
* Performing ghusl before entering Makka, praying upon seeing the Ka‘ba, and exalting and glorifying God and declaring His Oneness in front of the Sacred Mosque.
* Those coming from outside of Makka perform the arrival circumambulation.
* Making voluntary circumambulations while staying in Makka.
* Walking fast, moving the shoulders vigorously, and taking small steps in order to give a sense of strength and energy during the first three turns of the obligatory tawaf of visiting.
* Being quicker between the green markers while doing sa‘y (between Safa and Marwa).
* Leaving for Mina on Dhu’l-Hijja 8 after sunrise, and spending that day and night there.
* Leaving for ‘Arafat on Dhu’l-Hijja 9 after sunrise.
* Leaving for Muzdalifa after sunset and spending that night there, and proceeding to al-Mash’ar al-Haram (near the hill of Quzah in Muzdalifa) at dawn.
* Praying sincerely and in utmost humility, especially after the daily prayers performed in ‘Arafat and Muzdalifa.
* Leaving for Mina before sunrise on the first day of ‘Iyd alAdha, and staying in Mina for its last 3 days.
* While throwing pebbles at the Jamarat, standing so that Mina will be on one’s right and Makka on one’s left, and throwing in turn beginning with Jamrat al-Ula and proceeding to Jamrat al-Wusta and Jamrat al-‘Aqaba.
* If possible, throwing the pebbles between sunrise and noon on the first day of throwing, and between noon and sunset on the other days.
* Going quickly from Mina to Makka. If leaving Mina on Dhu’lHijja 12 or the third day of ‘Iyd al-Adha, leave before sunset.
* While going to Makka, staying in Muhatab and Abtah for a short time.
* Drinking Zamzam water to one’s full satiation after making the farewell circumambulation and offering two rak‘ats of prayer.
* Rubbing one’s face and chest against Multazam, a part of the Ka‘ba between the Black Stone and its gate.
* Holding onto the curtain covering the Ka‘ba and praying without bothering and troubling anyone.
* Visiting the tomb of God’s Messenger in Madina. Performing these sunna acts increases the reward for Hajj, and omitting any of them incurs no penalty.

## Performing Tawaf

One must begin tawaf (circumambulation) with one’s right shoulder uncovered, the Ka‘ba on the left, and, while facing the Black Stone, kissing it (if possible), or touching it with one’s hand, or pointing in its direction. Jogging lightly through the first three circumambulations is encouraged. One should walk fast, keep as close to the Ka‘ba as possible, and take short steps. In the next four rounds, one should walk at a normal pace. Touching the Yemeni corner (ar-Ruknu’l-Yemeni) is encouraged, and so is kissing or touching the Black Stone in each of the seven rounds of tawaf, if possible. Remembering God and supplicating as much as possible is also encouraged.

**There are several kinds of tawaf, as follows:**

* Tawaf al-Qudum (Arrival Circumambulation). This is sunna for those coming from outside of Makka.
* Tawaf al-Ifada or Ziyara (Obligatory Circumambulation of Visiting). This is one of the two basic pillars of Hajj, and should be done during the first 3 days of the ‘Iyd al-Adha. If this is not possible, one can do it at any time during one’s life, but must offer a sacrifice as penalty.
* Tawaf al-Wada’ (Farewell Circumambulation). This is necessary for all pilgrims coming from outside of Makka.
* Tawaf al-Tatawwu’ (Supererogatory Circumambulation). Pilgrims can perform this as often as they want to during their stay in Makka.

## Making Sa‘y between Safa and Marwa

Pilgrims, whether they are performing Hajj or ‘Umra perform sa‘y after tawaf. Sa‘y means running from Safa to Marwa four times and the other way three times. The Qur’an stresses that each person meets that for whatever one strives or endeavors (53:39). Sa‘y means endeavoring or making effort. For Hajj, this is held to commemorate Hagar’s running between Safa and Marwa seven times in order to find water for her son, Ishmael, whom she was still breast-feeding. God told Abraham to leave Hagar and Ishmael, upon him be peace, in Makka, which was then an uninhabited barren valley. Both Abraham and Hagar submitted to God’s order wholeheartedly. However, their submission did not prevent Hagar from trying to find water for her son, for both of them needed it and she also needed it to produce breast-milk. Islam is the harmonious combination of submission and endeavor. Hagar did not wait for a miracle, but tried to find water in a desolate desert without losing hope. The water came miraculously from an unexpected place: under Ishmael’s feet. That water, known as Zamzam, continues to meet the needs of millions of pilgrims every year, even after so many centuries. This miracle was the result of sincere belief, confidence in and submission to God, endeavor (humanity’s duty), and never being desperate. People act, and God creates the result. This is why it has unanimously been said: *“God is not found by looking for Him, but those who have found Him are those who have looked for Him.”* Pilgrims begin sa‘y from Safa and end in Marwa. They walk from Safa to Marwa four times, and the other way three times. They jog between the two green markers along the way. They supplicate and recite the Qur’an while walking and upon reaching either hill, and face the Ka‘ba while supplicating.

**‘Umra:** The word ‘umra is derived from al-i‘timar, which means “to visit.” In this context, it means visiting the Ka‘ba, performing tawaf, walking between Safa and Marwa seven times, and then shaving one’s head or cutting one’s hair short. It is a sunna act of worship.

**The Time:** Most scholars have ruled that ‘Umra may be performed any time during the year. Abu Hanifa, however, opines that it is disliked to perform ‘Umra on five days: the Day of ‘Arafat (eve), the Day of Nahr (Dhu’l-Hijja 10, the first day of ‘Iyd al-Adha), and the 3 days of Tashriq (Dhu’l-Hijja 11, 12, and 13).

**The Miqat:** If people who are intending to perform ‘Umra are outside the miqat fixed for Hajj, they must not cross these miqats (places fixed for ihram) without declaring ihram. Those people who are already well within the miqat area, even within Makka’s Sacred Precincts, must go out to the miqat and declare ihram there.

## Hajj and ‘Umra from Beginning to End

* People who intend to perform Hajj must ensure that all of the money to be spent during Hajj was earned in Islamically lawful ways. Debts must be paid off, and everyone who has rights upon the intending pilgrim must be asked to suspend those rights. In addition, the intending pilgrims must seek forgiveness from those whom they have wronged and forgive any wrongs done to them. They seek God’s forgiveness, and offer two rak‘ats of prayer without leaving home.
* While journeying, they must occupy themselves with reflecting upon God’s works, reciting the Qur’an, supplicating, and avoiding sin, speaking in vain, and harming any living creature.
* On arriving at the miqat (the place fixed for entering the state of ihram), pilgrims should shave themselves, clip their fingernails, perform ghusl or wudu’, and wear some perfume. Men don their special Hajj attire, which is also called ihram, as it is the beginning and symbol of entering the state of ihram. There is no special attire for women. Pilgrim candidates should offer a two-rak‘at prayer and declare their intention (to perform Hajj, Hajj and ‘Umra together, or ‘Umra). It is recommendable to perform Hajj Tamattu‘ (Hajj and Umra together, with a break in between,) for pilgrims who come from far away. If one performs Hajj Tamattu‘, one makes the intention for ‘Umra at the miqat. Wearing ihram and declaring the intention for Hajj or ‘Umra is an essential part of both, and neither will be correct without ihram and intention.
* As soon as they enter the state of ihram, they must utter the talbiya loudly (women do not raise their voices) and continue saying it whenever climbing a hill, descending into a valley, meeting one or more people, early in the morning, and after every prescribed prayer until one throws pebbles at the Jamrat al-‘Aqaba on the first day of ‘Iyd al-Adha.
* While in the state of ihram, pilgrims must avoid sexual intercourse and whatever leads to it, wrangling and useless bickering, marriage or joining others in marriage, wearing any sewn clothes or shoes that cover the feet above the ankles, covering their heads (men) or faces (women), wearing perfume, cutting their hair or nails, engaging in hunting game animals, or cutting trees or grass within Makka’s Sacred Precincts.
* When entering Makka, pilgrims perform ghusl; hasten to the Sacred Mosque, and, upon reaching it, say the talbiya; ask God for forgiveness and pray to Him; call His blessings and peace on our master Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, and his Family and Companions; and recite words of God’s Oneness, glorification, praise, and exaltation. As soon as they see the Ka‘ba, they should pray for themselves, their parents, relatives, and all Muslims. In addition, they must always be humble. After this, they should proceed directly to the Black Stone and kiss it quietly or touch it with their hand. If this is not possible or doing so will harm others, one may just point toward it.
* After this, one should begin circumambulating the Ka‘ba and repeating the Prophet’s supplications, upon him be peace and blessings. In the first three turns, men should uncover their right shoulder and jog slowly. In the remaining rounds, they may walk at a normal pace. It is sunna to touch the Yemeni Corner and to kiss the Black Stone in every round. After completing this rite’s seven rounds, the pilgrims should go to the Station of Abraham, for God said: *Remember, again, that We made the House (the Ka‘ba in Makka) a sign showing people to the truth, a resort and place of rewarding visit for them, and a center and means of safety. (As in older times,) you too (O believers), stand in prayer in the Station of Abraham. We imposed a duty on Abraham and Ishmael: Purify My House for those who go around It as an act of devotion, for those who abide in devotion, and for those who bow and prostrate (in prayer). (2.125)*
* There, they should pray two rak‘ats of tawaf, if possible. If not, they can pray anywhere in the Mosque.
* Then they should approach Safa to begin sa‘y in compliance with God’s words: *(The hills of) Safa and Marwa are among the emblems that God has appointed (to represent some aspects of Islam and the Muslim community). Hence, whoever performs Hajj to the House (of God – the Ka‘ba) or does ‘Umra, there is no blame on him to run between them (and let them run after they go round the Ka‘ba as an obligatory Pilgrimage rite). (2:158)*
* They should climb Safa, look toward the Ka‘ba, and supplicate using one of the Messenger’s supplications. After this, they should climb down and start walking toward Marwa as the first of seven rounds between the two hills, while remembering God and supplicating.
* On approaching one of the two green markers, pilgrims should jog to the second green marker and, after passing it, resume one’s normal walking speed toward Marwa. Upon reaching Marwa, one should climb it, turn toward the Ka‘ba, and supplicate and glorify God. This marks one complete round. They should perform the remaining six rounds in the same manner, thereby completing all seven rounds.
* If pilgrims are performing Hajj Tamattu‘, they should shave their head or cut their hair short, for this ends all ihram-related restrictions. After this, all things that were forbidden are allowed, including sexual intercourse with one’s spouse. Those who intend to perform Hajj Ifrad (Hajj only) or Hajj Qiran (Hajj and ‘Umra together without a break) must continue in the state of ihram.
* On Dhu’l-Hijja 8, those intending to perform Hajj Tamattu‘ must resume ihram, make the intention to perform Hajj from their residences, proceed to Mina with those who have remained in ihram, and spend the night there.
* At sunrise on Dhu’l-Hijja 9, the pilgrims leave for ‘Arafat. Staying at ‘Arafat begins only after the sun has passed its zenith. During this time, they should stand by its rocks (Jabal al-Rahma) or as close as possible, because this is where the Prophet used to stand. Staying at ‘Arafat is the Hajj’s principal rite. During it, they should face the qibla, glorify and remember God, and supplicate as much as possible until nightfall.
* After nightfall, the pilgrims must leave for Muzdalifa. Upon arriving there, they must offer the maghrib and ‘isha’ prayers, combining them after an imam, and spend the night there.
* At dawn, the pilgrims stand by al-Mash’ar al-Haram, and perform waqfa there. That is, they must stay there for some time and remember and glorify God until it is almost sunrise, as God declares: *When you press on in multitude from ‘Arafat (after you have stayed there for some time,) mention God at Mash’ar al-Haram (in Muzdalifa). Mention Him, conscious of how He has guided you, for formerly you were surely of those astray. (In vainglory, do not choose to remain in Muzdalifa without climbing ‘Arafat and staying there for some time. Instead,) press on in multitude from where all the (other) people press on, and implore God for forgiveness (for your opposition until now and the errors you have done during the Pilgrimage). God is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate (especially toward His believing servants). (2:198-99)*
* Before sunrise, they should return to Mina after collecting pebbles at Muzdalifa. After sunrise, the pilgrims must throw seven pebbles at Jamrat al-‘Aqaba. Then they offer their sacrifice, have their hair cut, remove their ihram, and lead their normal life – with the exception of having sexual intercourse with their spouse.
* Then they go to Makka to perform the obligatory tawaf of visiting, an essential part of Hajj. Performing this tawaf on the first day of ‘Iyd al-Adha is recommended, but one can perform it during the following two days. After this tawaf, sexual intercourse with one’s spouse becomes permissible. If the pilgrims are performing Hajj Tamattu‘, they must perform a sa‘y after this tawaf. Those who are performing Hajj Qiran or Ifrad do not have to make this second sa‘y if they had performed the Arrival Tawaf and sa‘y upon their arrival in Makka.
* The pilgrims must now return to Mina and spend the 3 days of ‘Iyd al-Adha there. After midday on the second and third day (Dhu’l-Hijja 11 and 12), they throw seven pebbles at each of three Jamras, beginning with Jamrat al-‘Ula and then Jamrat al-Wusta and Jamrat al-‘Aqaba. They exalt God at each throwing and, after finishing their throwing at the first two Jamras,pray for themselves, their parents and relatives, and for all Muslims. If they want to stay in Mina on the fourth day of ‘Iyd al-Adha, they throw pebbles at the Jamras before noon.
* After returning to Makka, those pilgrims who will be returning to their native lands must perform the Farewell Tawaf. Afterwards, they should go to the Zamzam well and drink as much of its water as possible. Then they go to al-Multazim, rub their face and chest against it, hold the curtain covering the Ka‘ba, pray, and supplicate.

## Those Prevented from Completing Hajj or ‘Umra

* If the pilgrims intended to perform either Hajj or ‘Umra but were prevented from approaching the House of God, they must sacrifice whatever animal they can afford (e.g., a sheep or a larger animal) within Makka’s sacred precincts. After this, they can leave the state of ihram and remove their special Hajj attire.
* If the reason why they cannot complete this duty is removed before staying in ‘Arafat, they must complete their Hajj. If they are prevented (from doing so) after staying in ‘Arafat, they are not regarded as being prevented from completing their Hajj, for they can perform the obligatory tawaf anytime during their life, provided that they offer a sacrifice.
* If they are prevented from staying in ‘Arafat but can perform the obligatory tawaf, they do not have to sacrifice, but must make up their Hajj later.
* If they intended to perform the obligatory Hajj and were prevented from doing so, they must make it up later.

## Offering a Sacrifice

Offering a sacrifice (a sheep, a goat, and for seven people a camel, a cow, or an ox) is incumbent (wajib) upon every adult Muslim who has the nisab amount of wealth. The difference between having to pay zakat and sacrificing is that zakat must be paid on it if the person has had it for one year, while a sacrifice must be offered if the person has had it for only one day. The sacrifice must be made on any of the first 3 days of ‘Iyd al-Adha.

 **Sacrifice during Hajj:** Pilgrims performing Hajj Qiran and Hajj Tamattu‘, who miss any necessary act (e.g., throwing pebbles, putting on ihram from a miqat, or performing sa‘y), or violate any ihram restriction or the sanctity of Haram Makka, must sacrifice.

**Sacrificial Animals:** The most common sacrificial animal is a sheep or a goat. Cattle and camels also can be offered as sacrifice. Pilgrims must sacrifice a camel if they perform tawaf in a state of major ritual impurity (junub), are still menstruating or having post-childbirth bleeding, have sexual intercourse with their spouse after spending Dhu’lHijja 9 (eve) in ‘Arafat but before shaving or clipping the hair, or have vowed to sacrifice a camel.

**Conditions for Sacrifice:** A sacrificial animal should satisfy the following conditions:

* If it is a sheep, it must be at least 1 year old, or as fat and healthy as a 1-year-old sheep if it is more than 6 months old. A camel must be at least 5 years old, a cow 2 years old, and a goat 1 year old.
* The animal should be healthy and without defect (i.e., it must not be one-eyed, have a limp, have a broken horn, be mangy, very thin, or weak).

**Time of Offering:** The sacrifice must be made at a specific time, as follows:

* Whether one is performing Hajj or not, a sacrifice must be offered on any of the first 3 days of ‘Iyd al-Adha.
* A sacrifice made to fulfill a vow, atone for sins, or perform a supererogatory act of worship may be offered any time during the year.

**Place of Offering:** A sacrifice that will be offered during Hajj, whether it is necessary (wajib) or voluntary, must be offered within Makka’s Sacred Precincts.

**Who Must Sacrifice the Animal:** The one who slaughters the animal must be a Muslim or belong to the People of the Book (a Christian or a Jew). He must say Bismillah before sacrificing, for the meat of an animal slaughtered by an atheist, an agnostic, an apostate, or one who intentionally does not say Bismillah cannot be eaten.

**Eating the Meat of the Sacrificial Animal:** God commands Muslims to eat the meat of sacrificed animals: eat thereof and feed the poor such as (beg not but) live in contentment and such as beg with due humility (22:36). It is advisable to eat onethird, give one-third to the poor, and one-third to one’s friends and relatives. Apparently, this command applies to both the obligatory and supererogatory sacrifice. However, one cannot eat the meat of any animal sacrificed in fulfillment of a vow, for all of the meat must be distributed among the poor and needy. The sacrificed animal’s skin can be used as a rug or in another way, after it is tanned, or given away as charity. One cannot sell it.

## Visiting the Prophet’s Mosque and Tomb

Going to Madina and visiting the Prophet’s Mosque and tomb is sunna and brings great reward. God’s Messenger gave the glad tiding that visiting him after his death is like visiting him while he was alive. This visit may be made before or after Hajj. He also said: *“The space between my house (where he died and was buried) and my pulpit is one of the gardens of Paradise (Rawda), and my pulpit is at my Fountain in Paradise.”* (Bukhari, “Fazl al-Salawat,” 5) It is recommended that one calls God’s blessings and peace upon the Messenger as many times as possible and approaches his mosque calmly and with composure. One should wear perfume, nice clean clothes, and enter the mosque with the right foot. It is recommended that pilgrims first go to the Rawda and offer two rak‘ats, with calmness and humility, to “greet” the mosque. After this one should move toward the Prophet’s grave, face it, give greetings of peace to him, and call God’s blessings and peace upon him. Then, moving about a yard to the right, one should offer one’s greetings to Abu Bakr and, moving another yard in the same direction, offer greetings to ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab. Then, facing the qibla, they should supplicate for themselves, their family, friends, relatives, and all Muslims, and then leave.

One should also visit the Jannat al-Baqi cemetery, where many Companions and members of the Prophet’s Family are buried. During the visit, people should talk only loudly enough to hear themselves, and behave with utmost humility and sincerity.

**Offering Prayers in the Quba Mosque:** God’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, used to go to Quba, riding or on foot, every Saturday and offer a two-rak‘at prayer. He advised others to do the same: “Whoever makes ablutions at home and then goes and prays in the Quba Mosque will have a reward like that of an ‘Umra.” (Nasai, “Masajid” 9:2, 37) Thus, pilgrims who visit Madina should also visit the Quba Mosque and pray there.

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1. Excerpted from *Living in the Shade of Islam – How to Live as a Muslim* by Ali Unal [↑](#footnote-ref-2)