



## The Five Pillars of Islam

*"As he waited, a priest climbed to the top of a nearby tower and began his chant; everyone in the market fell to their knees, touched their foreheads to the ground and began to chant. Then, like a colony of worker ants, they dismantled their stalls and left. The sun began its departure, as well" (38)*

The **Five Pillars of Islam** are foreign to Santiago's personal legend. The one being witnessed by Santiago in this instance is the Islam daily obligation to prayer. Santiago just expects to get to the pyramids without help from anyone, or exposure from anything. Santiago's ignorance about the Islam religion makes him very uncomfortable in the beginning of his personal legend. He went from being surrounded by his sheep to being completely alone in a city that has "strange" customs and people all in one day. The important theme of this allusion is being open and aware of surroundings, or, in Santiago's case, his personal legend. If Santiago lived his personal legend within a shell, he would not be exposed to his personal legend itself.

These are religious Pilgrims at Mecca. In this scene, they are most likely following the religious ritual of circling the Kaaba seven times.



These are religious Pilgrims at Mecca. In this scene, they are most likely following the religious ritual of circling the Kaaba seven times.

The **Five Pillars of Islam** are the basic guidelines of the Islam religion which all Muslims are supposed to fulfill:

1. Profession of the Faith (shahada)
2. Prayer (Salat)
3. The Giving of Alms to the poor (Zakat)
4. Fasting (Sawm)
5. Pilgrimage –journey to Mecca (Haji)

### *1. Profession of Faith*

Many find Islam a difficult religion to understand, but in reality it is very similar to other western religions such as Judaism and Christianity. Profession of Faith, Shahada, is one of the more basic pillars out of the five. Some of the main aspects of the profession of faith are understanding there is no god besides Allah, and Muhammad is his messenger, or prophet. Islam is a monotheistic religion much like Christianity and Judaism. Muhammad is an example for every Muslim to look up to and strive to be like. Religious texts such as the Qur'an outline in greater detail the profession of faith, and what a practicing Muslim needs to learn.

## *2. Prayer*

Prayer, or Salat, is a major part of the daily life of a Muslim as well as the Five Pillars. Unlike profession, prayer is a lot more involved and specific. According to the Qu'ran, you must perform at least three daily ritual prayers. However, most Muslims are issued to pray five times. Prayers are recited within mosques, and people are called to pray by the mu'adhdhin, prayer leader of the mosque. Nowadays, people are usually called by speakers and other technology instead of the more traditional method. When "believers" hear, they prepare themselves to pray by bowing in the direction of Mecca to pray. The typical times people are called to pray are at daybreak, just after noon, mid-afternoon, sunset, and evening. At a typical mosque, Muslims recite the traditional peace: "Peace be upon all of you and the mercy and blessing of Allah" (Qu'ran).

## *3. The Giving of Alms*

The Giving of Alms, or Zakat, is the charity portion of Islam which practicing Muslims are required to do. Muslims must take care of all members of their community and are expected to help the needy. Almsgiving is a required tax of 2.5 % which all Muslims are obligated to give. Almsgiving is not just taken out of annual income; it is taken also out of wealth and assets. However, this is not considered charity because it is required by the Islam religion. Zakat helps orphans, poor, widows, travelers, slaves, and debtors. It also helps spread the message of Islam. All volunteer charity is called Sadaqa, which is mandatory.

## *4. Fasting*

Fasting, or Sawm, is a major custom of the Islam religion. Muslims reenact what Muhammad had to go through to receive Allah. Ramadan is a time for meditation, prayer, and family gatherings, all in order to pay respects to Allah. From sundown to dawn, Muslims must avoid food, drink, and certain physical activities. It is said that taking part in this period of fasting helps to discipline and to increase a Muslim's spiritual focus, and symbolizes purification. However, there are a few requirements involved in taking part in this tradition. You must be past puberty, you cannot be pregnant, you cannot be elderly, you cannot be a nursing mother, you cannot be a traveler, and you cannot be sick in order to participate in Ramadan.

## *5. Pilgrimage*

Pilgrimage is known to be one of the most difficult pillars to fulfill. It is very hard to just leave everything, and go on a tiresome journey to Mecca. Most Muslims plan their whole lives out revolving around pilgrimage. The concept behind pilgrimage is that once in every adult Muslim's lifetime, he/she is expected to make a sacred pilgrimage, also known as the Haji, to Mecca. Mecca is a major religious location, said to be where Muhammad was born, and the Qu'ran composed. Pilgrimage happens during the 12th month of the Islamic calendar, al-Hijja. Some Haji rituals that take place during pilgrimage: walking counterclockwise around the Kaaba seven times, kissing or touching the black stone, and sacrificing animals. Pilgrimage made at any other time is called Umran. It is not mandatory, but highly recommended. Those who make one pilgrimage, let alone several, are very highly placed in their hometowns by fellow Muslims. It is also recommended that Muslims take a pilgrimage to Jerusalem because of the Islam roots and religion within the city.

## WORKS CITED

Whiteman, Kim. Islam: The Basics. Broomall, PA: Mason Crest Publishers, 2004. Print  
"What are the Five Pillars of Islam Facts." Your Dictionary. Love to Know, Corp., n.d.1996-2012  
N.P.Web. April 4th, 2012 < <http://www.follow-islam.com/tag/pilgrims/page/7/> >