



— RULINGS OF —
ISLAMIC LAW
A SIMPLIFIED PRESENTATION

◆ CHAPTER 1: ◆

THE PILLARS OF ISLAM



Chapter 1

The Pillars of Islam

It is important to define the term '*rukṅ*' at the outset. Linguistically speaking, *rukṅ* denotes the mainstay of something which provides it with strong support. This is why it is often referred to as '*pillar*'. In an Islamic context, *rukṅ* is a part of something that is essential for its completion. Thus both the *rukṅ* and the condition are essential for something to take place, but a condition is not part of that something, while a *rukṅ* is.

'Bowling', or *rukū* [, is a *rukṅ* of prayer, because it is a part of it and its omission renders the prayer invalid, while ablution, or *wudu*', is a condition, because it is essential for the validity of prayer but is not a part of it.¹⁴

To re-emphasize, both *rukṅ* and condition are essential for the validity of prayer, but they differ in the following ways:

1. Conditions take place before the prayer, while *rukṅs* are within it;
2. Conditions start before a prayer and continue until it has finished, while *rukṅs* are temporary, with one yielding to the next. Each of the following consecutive acts is a *rukṅ*

¹⁴ Abd al-Karim ibn Ali Namlah, *Al-Muhadhdhab fi [Ilm Uṣūl al-Fiqh al-Muqaran]*, vol. 5, p. 1,963; M.A.A. Bādishāh, *Taysir al-Tahrir*, vol. 2, p. 236.

of prayer: standing up, bowing, standing up again, prostration, rising, etc.

3. The combination of all *rukns* constitute the prayer, but this is not so with the conditions. To cover up certain parts of the worshipper's body is a condition but it forms no part of the prayer.¹⁵

The first *ruk'n*: the declaration

‘I bear witness that there is no deity worthy of being worshipped other than Allah, and I bear witness that Muhammad is Allah’s messenger.’ This declaration testifying to two important facts is the gateway to Islam. It is indeed the most essential aspect of Islam. No one is considered a Muslim unless he or she makes this declaration. Once it is said by a disbeliever, he becomes a Muslim.¹⁶

What the declaration means

The first part, ‘There is no deity worthy of being worshiped other than Allah’, means that no one may be rightly worshipped except Allah, the Glorious, the Most High. This part includes two essential elements: a negation and a confirmation. It negates the “worthiness of being worshipped” of anyone other than Allah, and it confirms that divinity belongs to Him alone, without partners. It implies disbelief in all that was ever worshipped other than Allah, whether they were human,

¹⁵ Ibn Uthaymeen, *Al-Sharh al-Mumtī* [*ala Zad al-Mustaqni*], vol. 3, p. 315.

¹⁶ Abd al-Rahman ibn Muhsin, *Fath al-Majīd*, vol. 1, p. 97.



animate or inanimate objects. It further implies the disavowal of any such worshipped person or object and hating these. Allah says: ‘And your god is one God. There is no deity [worthy of worship] except Him, the Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful.’ (2: 163). ‘There shall be no compulsion in religion. The right way is henceforth distinct from error. He who rejects false deities and believes in Allah has indeed taken hold of a most firm support that never breaks. Allah hears all and knows all’ (2: 256).

The Arabic word *ilah*, i.e. deity, means ‘the God who is rightfully worshipped’. A person who believes that Allah is the Creator and Provider, or that He is the One able to accomplish everything, thinking that this is sufficient without believing that to Him alone all worship should be addressed and offered, benefits nothing by stating the first part of the declaration. In this case, stating that ‘there is no deity other than Allah’ does not bring him into the fold of Islam in this life and will not save him from Allah’s punishment in the life to come.¹⁷ ‘Say: “Who is it that provides for you from heaven and earth? Or, who is it that has power over hearing and sight? Who brings forth the living out of that which is dead, and brings forth the dead out of that which is alive? Who regulates all affairs?” They will say: “Allah.” Say, then: “Will you not, then, fear Him?”’ (10: 31). ‘Yet if you ask them who created them they are sure to answer, “Allah.” How is it, then, that they are so misled?’ (43: 87).

¹⁷ Abdullah al-Tayyar, *Arkan al-Islam*, p. 5.

‘There is no deity other than Allah,’ is a great statement, because it makes clear that Allah is one, and this is the essence of Allah’s oneness which was the issue of contention between all Prophets (peace be upon them all) and their communities. Indeed, all messengers were sent to establish Allah’s oneness in human life. Allah says: ‘Indeed, We have raised a messenger in every community, [who said to them]: “Worship Allah and shun all that is falsely worshipped.”’ (16: 36). ‘Before your time We never sent a messenger without having revealed to him that there is no deity other than Me. Therefore, you shall worship Me alone’ (21: 25). When we speak of Allah’s oneness, or *tawhid*, we are indeed implying all this.¹⁸

The second part, ‘Muhammad is Allah’s messenger’, means that we are required ‘to obey all his orders, believe whatever he stated, refrain from everything he prohibited and to worship Allah according to the way he taught.’¹⁹ This part of the declaration is implemented by fully believing that Muhammad (peace be upon him) was Allah’s servant and messenger, whom Allah sent to all mankind and jinn as His last Prophet and messenger. He was a human servant of Allah to whom Allah assigned a high position. It further means that all his commands must be respected and observed in word, action and belief. Allah says: ‘Say: “Mankind, I am indeed Allah’s messenger to you all”’ (7: 158). ‘And We have not sent you except comprehensively to mankind as a bringer of good tidings and a warner. But most of the people do not know.’ (34: 28).

¹⁸ A.F.R. Hanbali, *Kalimat al-Ikhlās wa Tahqīq Ma [naha]*, vol. 1, p. 52; H.A. Ḥakamī, *Ma [arij al-Qabul]*, vol. 1, p. 98; ibn Muhsin, *Fath al-Majīd*, vol. 1, p. 83.

¹⁹ Al-Barrak, *Sharḥ al- [Aqīdah al-Tahawīyah]*, vol. 1, p. 85.

‘Muhammad is not the father of any one of your men, but is Allah’s messenger and the seal of all Prophets’ (33: 40). ‘Say, "Exalted is my Lord! Was I ever but a human messenger?"’ (17: 93).

This second part of the declaration has several implications:

1. An acknowledgment of Prophet Muhammad’s (peace be upon him) message and believing in it;
2. Declaring this belief verbally;
3. The practical implementation of the truth he delivered and refraining from all that he prohibited;
4. Believing in all that he stated;
5. Loving him more than one loves oneself, one’s property, offspring, parents and anyone else, because he is Allah’s messenger. As such, to love him is part of loving Allah. To love him truly is to follow him, implementing his orders and refraining from what he prohibited, and to support him and his cause;
6. Following his Sunnah, giving priority to whatever he said, accepting it and happily implementing his code. Allah says: ‘But no, by your Lord, they will not [truly] believe until they make you, [O Muhammad], judge concerning that over which they dispute among themselves and then find within themselves no discomfort from what you have judged and submit in [full, willing] submission.’ (4: 65).²⁰

²⁰ Al-Tayyar, *Arkan al-Islam*, p. 10.

The importance of the declaration

The declaration confirming belief in Allah's oneness and Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) as Allah's messenger is of great importance. This is made clear in numerous Qur'anic and *Hadith* statements. What proves its importance includes:

- That it is the first *ruk'n* of Islam, providing the essence of faith and religion. It is what brings a person into the faith of Islam, and it is the basis upon which the heavens and earth are set aright.
- It is the best action any person ever does, and it is the one thing that ensures the forgiveness of sins. It is a cause for admission into heaven and being safe from hell. To understand its true value one should realize that it is weightier in Allah's scales than the heavens and the earth put together. Imam Muslim relates on [Ubadah's authority: 'Whoever bears witness that there is no deity other than Allah and that Muhammad is Allah's servant and messenger, Allah will prevent the Fire of hell from touching him.'
- It combines Allah's glorification with supplication and praise. It includes a supplication of worship and a supplication of request. It is the one glorification of Allah that is easiest to say. It is the good word, the firmest of ties and the statement that indicates purity of faith. It is the tenet by which the heavens and earth are set aright, and for which creation has taken place, messengers were sent by Allah and divine revelations were vouchsafed to them. To

put effect to it acts of worship, both obligatory and recommended, have been outlined and jihad has been permitted. Whoever makes this declaration and acts upon it with true intention, sincerity and love will be admitted by Allah into heaven.²¹

The second *rukn*: prayer

Prayer is the second most important act of worship. It makes one's status as a Muslim clearly evident. Therefore, Islam attaches great value to it, highlighting its status as a bond between man and Allah and demonstrating man's obedience of his Lord.²²

Status of one who does not pray

Whoever does not offer prayers, denying it as an obligation, is, in effect, a disbeliever and such deliberate negligence places the one who is guilty of it outside the Islamic faith. Such a person is an apostate, rejecting Islam altogether, because he or she disobeys Allah, neglecting what Allah has made obligatory. Such a person is instructed to repent and mend his ways. If he does not, he becomes an apostate. As such, his body is not washed when he dies, the funeral prayer for the deceased is not

²¹ Hakamī, *Ma [arij al-Qabul*, vol. 1, p. 23; *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 92.

²² W. al-Zuhayli, *Al-Fiqh al-Islami wa Adillatuh*, vol. 1, p. 655.

offered for him and he must not be buried in Muslims' graveyards because he does not belong to them.²³

The third *rukn*: zakat

Definition: Linguistically speaking, zakat means growth and increase. It also refers to praise, cleansing and good behaviour. Hence, the money paid out of one's assets is called zakat because Allah blesses one's property as a result, leading to its growth, and the person paying zakat is cleansed as Allah forgives him his sins.²⁴ In an Islamic context, zakat means a duty paid out of certain types of property, by certain people, to one of the eight specified categories mentioned in 9:60 at a specific time.²⁵

Importance: Zakat is one of the five pillars upon which the structure of Islam is built. It is often mentioned in the Qur'an alongside prayer, as in: 'Establish prayer, pay your obligatory charity [i.e. zakat]...' (73: 20). 'And they were not commanded except to worship Allah, [being] sincere to Him in religion, inclining to truth, and to establish prayer and to give zakah' (98: 5). The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: 'Islam has been built on five pillars: testifying that there is no deity but Allah and that Muhammad is Allah's messenger, performing the prayers, paying the zakat, making the pilgrimage to the House, and fasting in Ramadan.' (Related by al-Bukhari and Muslim).

²³ Ibid., vol. 1, p. 660.

²⁴ Abi Bakr al-Rāzī, *Mukhtar al-Sihah*, vol. 1, p. 136.

²⁵ S. Sabiq, *Fiqh al-Sunnah*, vol. 1, p. 327.



Allah has made zakat obligatory so that it cleanses people's hearts of greed and miserliness, provides help for the poor and the needy, ensures the growth of people's property and gives it Allah's blessing. Needless to say, all this helps to combat corruption, serve public interests and bring happiness to the community. Allah states the purpose of zakat in the Qur'an as He instructs His messenger in the following terms: 'Take, [O, Muhammad], from their wealth a charity by which you purify them and cause them increase' (9: 103).

Status: Zakat is obligatory to every Muslim who owns more than its threshold. There are certain conditions that apply to various types of property. It is obligatory even to a child and an insane person who meet its conditions. In this case their guardians are responsible to pay their zakat on their behalf. A person who knowingly denies its obligation is deemed an unbeliever, but the one who does not pay it out of negligence or stinginess commits a major sin. Zakat is collected from him by the force of law and he is liable to punishment for incurring a sin. Should he die in such a condition his fate is left to Allah, who may or may not forgive him. Allah says: 'Allah will never forgive that partners are associated with Him. He forgives any lesser sin to whomever He wills' (4: 48).

A stern warning is given in the Qur'an to those who do not pay their zakat, as Allah says: 'To those who hoard up gold and silver and do not spend them in Allah's cause, give the news of a painful suffering, on the day when it will all be heated in the

fire of hell, and their foreheads, sides and backs will be branded with them. [They will be told]: “This is what you have hoarded up for yourselves. Taste, then, what you have been hoarding” (9: 34–5). Abu Hurayrah quotes the Prophet (peace be upon him) as saying: ‘Anyone with hoarded property for which he does not pay zakat shall have his property heated in the fire of hell and made into [burning metal] sheets so as to brand his forehead and sides. Allah will then judge His creatures on a day the length of which is equal to 50,000 years. He will subsequently find his way to either heaven or hell...’ (Related by Muslim, *hadith* No. 987).

The fourth *rukn*: fasting in Ramadan

Definition: Linguistically speaking, fasting means abstention. In an Islamic context it is to abstain from whatever breaks the fast from dawn until sunset with the intention of worshipping Allah.²⁶

Status: Fasting the days of the month of Ramadan is one of the main pillars of Islam, as Allah says: ‘Believers, fasting is decreed for you as it was decreed for those before you, so that you may develop piety’ (2: 183). Also note the *hadith* that quotes the Prophet (peace be upon him) as saying: ‘Islam has been built on five pillars: testifying that there is no deity but Allah and that Muhammad is Allah’s messenger, performing the prayers, paying the zakat, making the pilgrimage to the

²⁶ Al-Nadawi, *Al-Fiqh al-Muyassar*, p. 149.

House, and fasting in Ramadan’ (Related by al-Bukhari and Muslim).

Fasting in Ramadan was made obligatory to all Muslims during the second year of the Prophet’s (peace be upon him) migration to Madinah. The Muslim community is in unanimous agreement that fasting in Ramadan is obligatory and that it is one of the pillars of Islam that are essentially known to all. Anyone who denies its obligation is an apostate unbeliever. We note that this obligation is confirmed in the Qur’an, the Sunnah and by unanimous agreement. Indeed all Muslims agree that whoever denies this obligation is an unbeliever.²⁷

The fifth *rukn*: the pilgrimage

Definition: Linguistically speaking, *hajj*, or pilgrimage, means ‘setting off for a definite destination’.²⁸ In an Islamic context, it means travelling to Makkah to perform this duty according to a particular manner, at a specific time and under specific conditions.²⁹

Status: The Muslim community is unanimous that the pilgrimage is obligatory to every Muslim who can afford the journey once in a lifetime, and that it is one of the five pillars upon which the structure of Islam is built.³⁰ Allah says:

²⁷ Ibid., p. 150.

²⁸ Ibn Manzur, *Lisan al-Arab*, vol. 2, p. 226.

²⁹ Husain al-Awayshah, *Al-Mawsu’ah al-Fiqhiyyah al-Muyassarah*, vol. 4, p. 270.

³⁰ Ibid., vol. 4, p. 239; al-Zuhayli, *Al-Fiqh al-Islami*, vol. 3, p. 2,065; Sabiq, *Fiqh al-Sunnah*, vol. 1, p. 626.



‘Pilgrimage to this House is a duty owed to Allah by all people who are able to undertake it. As for those who disbelieve, Allah does not stand in need of anything in all the worlds’ (3: 97). The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: ‘Islam has been built on five pillars: testifying that there is no deity but Allah and that Muhammad is Allah’s messenger, performing the prayers, paying the zakat, making the pilgrimage to the House, and fasting in Ramadan’ (Related by al-Bukhari and Muslim). He also said in his speech during his farewell pilgrimage: ‘Mankind, Allah has made it obligatory for you that you should perform the pilgrimage to the House. Therefore, perform it’ (Related by Muslim).