

Islam - Practices - Worship

As with their main beliefs, Sunnis and Shi'as have different important practices, though there is some overlap. Sunnis have **Five Pillars** of Islam, and Shi'as have **Ten Obligatory Acts**.

- Five Pillars of Sunni Islam**
- **Shahadah** – the declaration of faith
 - **Salah** – prayer
 - **Zakah** – a payment to help others and the Muslim community
 - **Sawm** – fasting
 - **Hajj** – a pilgrimage to Makkah

- Ten Obligatory Acts of Shi'a Islam**
- **Salah** – prayer
 - **Sawm** – fasting
 - **Zakah** – a payment to help others and the Muslim community
 - **Khums** – a tax on different things to **Zakah**.
 - **Hajj** – a pilgrimage to Makkah
 - **Jihad** – struggle for Islam
 - **Amr bil Maroof** – doing/promoting what is right
 - **Nahi Anil Munkar** – not doing / forbidding what is wrong
 - **Tawalla** – loving good

'Let there arise out of you a band of people inviting to all that is good, enjoining what is right, and forbidding what is wrong...'
(Qur'an Surah 3: 104)

- Why Muslims Pray**
- Allah commanded Muslims to pray.
 - Prayer is a constant reminder of a Muslim's faith.
- Significance and Importance**
- Muslims believe that Allah is there when they pray, so prayer allows them to have a relationship with him.
 - Muslims praying at the same time as others in the same place and all over the world helps to strengthen the Muslim community (ummah).
 - Muhammad encouraged Muslims to pray.
 - Muslims believe that praying helps them do good and act well in their lives.

- Sunni and Shi'a Differences**
- Sunnis pray five set times a day, but Shi'as may combine some of the prayers and pray three times.
 - Some movements and words are different.
 - When praying, Sunnis prostrate themselves and touch their forehead to their prayer mat, while Shi'as may place a clay block to touch their head to, preferring a natural material.

Five Pillars and Ten Obligatory Acts

- Sunnis and Shi'as share four of their acts in common.
 - The **shahadah** is important to Shi'as as well.
 - **Jihad** is important to Sunnis as well; however, **Khums** is generally not paid by Sunnis.
 - The last four of the **Ten Obligatory Acts** are not necessarily referred to by Sunnis, but the principles would be respected.
- The Five Pillars and the first six of the Ten Obligatory Acts will be covered more in their own sections.*

These actions can be obvious components of worship, e.g. **salah**, or ways in which Muslims try to incorporate **worship** of Allah, by doing his will, into their lives.

- Places of Prayer**
- Mosque**
- Muslims, particular men, will often pray in the mosque, especially on Fridays.
 - Women praying in the mosque pray separately from men.
- Elsewhere**
- Women are more likely to pray at home and not at the mosque, but men can pray at home too.
 - Muslims can pray anywhere that is clean (one function of the prayer mat is to make sure prayer space is clean).

Salah

'Establish regular prayers – at the sun's decline till the darkness of the night, and the morning prayer.. And pray in the small watches of the morning...'
(Qur'an Surah 17: 78–79)

The **shahadah**, the Muslim declaration of faith, is important to Muslims because declaring it (three times) in the presence of at least two Muslim witnesses is what makes someone a Muslim. Shahadah means 'witness' or 'testify'. It contains the two most important principles of Muslim belief – that there is one God, Allah, and that Muhammad is his **prophet** – no one can be a Muslim without believing this.

'There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is his messenger.'
(One translation of the **shahadah** into English.)



- Shi'as and the Shahadah**
- Some Shi'a Muslims add a third part to the **shahadah**:
☞ '... and Ali is the friend of Allah.'
 - This reflects the Shi'a belief that Ali was Muhammad's successor, as appointed by Allah.

Shahadah

The **shahadah** appears on the flags of some Muslim countries, such as Saudi Arabia.



If Muslims declare and accept the **shahadah**, this means that they should accept other Muslim beliefs (appropriate to **Sunni** or **Shi'a**), and also follow other Muslim practices, in order to truly be a Muslim.

- Uses of the Shahadah**
- To convert to Islam (the **shahadah** must be understood, and declared with the right intentions)
 - During the call to prayer, and during prayers, reminding Muslims of their beliefs
 - Muslims may say the **shahadah** first thing in the morning and last thing at night
 - Whispered to **newborn** babies so they hear about Islam as soon as possible
 - Muslims try to say the **shahadah** as they die, or it is whispered into the dying person's ear – this belief is there until the end.

- Jummah (Friday Prayer)**
- Friday is the most important day of the week for Muslims, and the most important prayers are at midday on a Friday – Muslims will make a special effort to pray at the mosque.
 - At Friday prayers, there will also be a sermon and a time for personal prayers (**du'a**).

- Rak'ahs (movements) and recitations**
- During prayer, Muslims must complete **rak'ahs** – cycles of movements (and words). Muslims perform the set movements and recite set verses from the Qur'an.



How do Muslims pray?

Direction
Muslims pray in the direction of Makkah. This is called **qibla** (in a mosque this is always marked).

'... When ye prepare for prayer, wash your faces, and your hands (and arms) to the elbows; rub your heads (with water); and (wash) your feet to the ankles...'
(Qur'an Surah 5:6)

- Ablution (wudu)**
This means washing – Muslims always wash before prayer.
☞ Muslims also pray on a prayer mat to keep themselves clean during prayer.

- Times**
- In Muslim countries, everyone will stop what they are doing for prayer, though in non-Muslim countries, Muslims may have to be more flexible with their prayers.
 - Muslims know when to pray when they hear the **adhan** (call to prayer).
 - Muslims (Sunnis at least) pray before sunrise, around midday, in the afternoon, after sunset, and in the evening.