

# ESSENTIALS OF ISLAM

by

Dr. Timothy Tennett

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# Lesson 2: The Qur'an and the Five Pillars of Islam

## I. The Qur'an

The purpose of this lecture is to summarize the key teachings of Islam known as the five pillars of Islam.

### A. Background

First, a little background on the Qur'an. Last time you recall we discussed the emergence of the Qur'an and the belief that it is a divine revelation from Allah. According to Islamic tradition, in the year 610 A.D. Muhammad received his first revelation from the angel Gabriel during the ninth month of Ramadan outside of the city of Mecca. I mentioned how over a period from 610, when he received his first revelation, to his death in 632, Muhammad had a number of revelations, which today compose the 114 chapters or surahs known as the Qur'an.

### B. Arrangement of the Surahs

Just to kind of orient you to the Qur'an, the Qur'an is organized in a way that may be somewhat familiar to you because again, it is somewhat similar to what we find at least in the epistles of Paul in the New Testament. The chapters of the Qur'an are not arranged according to chronology, but according to size, just the way the Pauline epistles are organized according to their length, from the largest, longest Romans, down to the shortest. In the same way, you have the Qur'an organized according to the longest surahs to the shortest surahs without any particular reference to the time frame in which they are given. This sometimes can create some difficulty or dissonance when reading the Qur'an because the Qur'an also adopts what is known as "abrogation."

## C. Abrogation

Abrogation means that an early revelation can be “abrogated” or overturned by a later revelation. Sometimes the abrogation occurs prior to when you actually read about the revelation, later on because it occurred in a shorter surah. So, there are difficulties in learning the Qur’an in a consistent way from chapter 1 to chapter 114.

## D. The First Surah

That being said, as with the New Testament, there are some variations on the theme merely by length. For example, the first surah is not the longest, but it is a very important traditional surah known as “the opening.” It only has seven verses and it is viewed as kind of summary of the entire Qur’an. If you listen to the full lectures on Islam, the full course, there you will hear a verse-by-verse exposition of all seven verses of the opening, or the opening chapter of the Qur’an. Our purpose really in this lecture is not to do a detailed study of the Qur’an, but to look at the major teachings that emerge from the Qur’an and from traditions within Islam that today are known as the five pillars of Islam.

## E. The People of the Book

We normally associate the five pillars of Islam with those things which unify the Muslim people into a united religion. One of the things that is very important to Muhammad is that the people of Arabia received a book of revelation. He calls the people who have a book of revelation “the people of the book.” This is the major way Muhammad makes reference to both Jews as well as Christians. We are called “the people of the book.” Over 40 times this reference occurs in the pages of the Qur’an. He contrasts the people of the book, Al Akatab, with the people who have no revelation. Now, Muhammad is very concerned about the Arab peoples as being people who do not have any revelation. Essentially the Qur’an is about lifting the people of no book, known as “the unium” to the status of the people of the book.

The Qur’an represents many things. It also presents a form of a new kind of anthropology because the virtue of the Qur’an emerging actually creates a

new class of people. These are people who have received “the book.” You see, the word “muslim” means “one who submits to God.” The whole idea of the revelation is given and then you submit to the truth of this revelation. Therefore, you have the people of the book, who possess the scripture, namely Jews and Christians, and people who have no revelation at all. You have the Muslims, who are those who have submitted to the “true” revelation from God. Then you have the people known as “kafir” who have heard of the revelation, are no longer ignorant, but they have rejected it. In a sense, the emergence of the Qur’an creates a new kind of way of analyzing the entire peoples of the world. There are those who have never heard of the Qur’an; those who have a revelation which in their view is corrupted, the Christians and Jews; those who have accepted it; and those who have heard it, but have rejected it. You have a wide range of people, even more recently, of whom Bin Laden made several references to the West and refers to us, not as the people of the book, but as those who have openly rejected the revelation of the Qur’an, the kafir.

## II. The Five Pillars

Our purpose at this point is to examine more fully the five principles or five pillars, which unify all Muslims together. There are many other things that divide Muslims and many particular beliefs of various groups and sects; but the five pillars represent the unifying principles of Islam.

You notice that in a way it is not so much a creed in the way that we might recite the Apostles’ Creed or the Nicene Creed. The five pillars of Islam represent more of what someone does as opposed to what someone believes. That is very important in terms of understanding how Islam views itself. It has never viewed itself as particularly creedal oriented as compared to historic Christianity, but much more interested in what someone practices. In fact, when I was in Nigeria, I was struck by the fact that in Hauserland in northern Nigeria, when someone asks in the Hauser language, “Are you a Muslim?”, they didn’t actually ask literally, “Are you a Muslim?” Instead, the way they would ask that question in translation would be, “Do you perform ritual prayer?” In other words, “Are you practicing as a Muslim would practice?”

So, the five pillars as a whole are largely about practice. But there are still some major parallels which are kind of creedal confessions that we are familiar with. I think the first one especially is that way.

## **A. Confession of Faith (Shahadah)**

The first pillar of Islam is known as the shahadah, or the confession of faith. shahadah means “to witness or to testify.” Therefore, the shahadah, or confession of faith, is a witness or a testimony to two major truths. Let me give you the confession, then we will look at the two parts of the confession.

This is the shahadah: “I bear witness that there is no god but Allah and Muhammad is the prophet of Allah.” Interestingly, this is the exact phrase that has become so important around the Muslim world, “I bear witness there is no god but Allah and Muhammad is the prophet of Allah.” That phrase does not actually occur anywhere in the entire Qur’an. It actually occurs only in parts in the Qur’an. For example, in surah 20: Iah 7 and 14, Allah declares, “I am Allah, there is no god but me.” Again, it sounds very similar to what you might find in The Old Testament. The emphasis is on the existence and the unrivaled sovereignty of Allah. “I witness there is no god but Allah.”

There are a lot of parallels between the aforementioned shahadah and the Hebrew “shama”: “Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.” To swear loyalty to God’s supreme sovereignty and power is certainly bound up in both of those great affirmations. One of the differences though is the second part of the confession, which affirms that Muhammad is the prophet of Allah; and this is where Islam begins to diverge from historic Christian or Jewish affirmation of monotheism. Jews, Christians and Muslims alike can agree that we worship one God. But Islam ties the Muslim god to the particular prophethood of Muhammad. Again, the Qur’an on several occasions makes this connection. For example, surah 48: iah 29 says: “Muhammad is Allah’s apostle.” Surah 49:15: “The true believers are those who have faith in Allah and his apostle and never doubt” is linking faith in Allah with faith in Muhammad. Listen to this from surah 44: iah 80: “He that obeys the apostles, obeys Allah himself. “ There is an equation made here between obedience to Muhammad and obedience to god. The intent of the declaration is clearly not to exalt Muhammad so much, as to

acknowledge that he is, shall we say, the conduit, through which the Qur'an comes. He becomes the final spokesman, the final prophet. In this sense Muhammad is exalted; it is not that they attribute miracles or deity to Muhammad. It is only they believe he was the perfect vessel through whom Allah chose to deliver his word. In the Qur'an itself Muhammad often compares himself to Mary, who was an untrained, probably illiterate young person you would not expect to be the conduit through whom God chose to send Jesus into the world. Muhammad makes the parallel and says, "I'm like Mary. I was from an obscure place. No-one suspected Allah would choose me to be the one who 'gives birth' to the Qur'an". In so many, many ways Muhammad identifies with Mary; and even those who rejected her and did not believe she could possibly be the mother of Messiah; in the same way, people rejected him, he couldn't be the father of the Qur'an.

Muhammad is honored because he is the conduit through whom the message came; but also because he is the first person to actually submit to Allah. They do believe that Adam and Abraham were Muslims. But in the modern period, from their point of view in the post Hegira period, he presents the first person to start this new movement. Muhammad himself says in surah 39: "I am bidden to serve Allah and worship none besides him. I am bidden to be the first of those who shall submit to him. I will serve Allah and worship him alone."

There is a great emphasis on Muhammad and his role in this process. The shahadah is the linking of monotheism with the prophethood of Muhammad. "I testify there is no god but Allah and Muhammad is the prophet of god." According to that, if you make that profession with sincerity, you are a Muslim. That is the doorway into what they call "The House of Islam." That is the first pillar of Islam.

## **B. Ritual Prayer (Salat)**

The second pillar of Islam is known as "ritual prayer" or salat. Salat is a very special kind of prayer in Islam and is not what we would call spontaneous prayer without any particular form or content. It is a particular, ritualized prayer. It is said at particular times and in particular ways. It will take some time to unpack this. There are many parts to the ritual prayer.

First, there is the call to prayer. If you notice, around the world I'm sure you have seen pictures of mosques and generally the mosque involves some kind of dome-type roof building and next to it there is a very tall, narrow, tower which is known as a minaret. It is probably the most distinguishing feature of a mosque, the way a steeple and a cross might define a traditional Christian church. The minaret is actually for the purpose of the call to prayer. A man who is known as a "muezzin" climbs to the top of the minaret and he issues the call to prayer from the top of the minaret; and this is very important in Islamic theology. It is interesting that in historical times Muslims would chastise Christians because they said that all Christians do to call people to worship and prayer is to use bells. As you know, traditionally in steeples Christians put bells in order to ring them and people hear the bells and come to worship. They would argue that "Oh, we have the living voice, the living muezzin who issues the call to prayer from the minaret." However, in my experience throughout the Muslim world – I have been in many parts of the Muslim world – it is actually quite rare today to have the experience of a living muezzin at the top of the minaret. Today, much more likely you will find speakers and the whole thing is done electronically and during certain times of prayer, the call to prayer will go forth and it has been pre-recorded and taped and played over and over again from some other time and place. The minaret today often contains speakers on the top rather than a living muezzin.

The content of the call to prayer is the same. It is very beautiful, has wonderful resonance to it and alliteration. The translation is also very, very beautiful. It goes like this: "Allah is most great. Allah is most great. Allah is most great. Allah is most great." That is the first thing you will hear in the Arabic, "Allahu akbar, Allahu akbar." It is a great declaration of god's greatness. It is followed by the shahadah: "I testify there is no god but Allah. I testify there is no god but Allah. I testify that Muhammad is the prophet of Allah." Once again, you have the testimony of Muhammad's prophethood linked with the monotheistic belief in Allah, which has already been discussed.

Then you have the actual call to prayer: "Come to prayer. Come to prayer." If it is the early morning prayer, they will usually add: "Prayer is better than sleep. Come to prayer. Come to success in this life and the hereafter. Come to success." And then they repeat: "Allahu akbar, Allahu akbar. God is great.

God is great.” And then it ends with: “Allah, Allah, Allah, Allah. There is no god but Allah.” It is a very powerful thing. Anyone in the Muslim world or who has lived in the Muslim world will be well acquainted with the call to prayer, which occurs five times every day across the Muslim world.

The person who issues the call to prayer is known as the muezzin. The call to prayer itself is known as the Adhan. The place is, as I said before, the minaret. This together forms the call to prayer. Once you hear the call to prayer, there are many aspects in terms of how the Muslim responds to that.

The first way you respond to the call to prayer, this is the first part of the salat, the ritual prayer, is known as the ablution. This is a ritual washing to prepare oneself to approach the divine presence. In front of every mosque you will find typically a wash basin where someone can wash their hands and face; they usually wash their faces and their ankles and feet and their hands prior to entering into the presence of Allah.

The second part of the salat, or the ritual prayer, besides the ablution, is the direction of prayer, known as the qiblah. This is important because in every mosque there is a niche in the wall which will demonstrate the direction of Mecca. This shows you why the ritual prayer becomes almost sacramental in the sense that you have a corporate solidarity in terms of a prayer life, which is different than something that we have experienced as Christians; but of course was very well known to the Jews, who of course pray toward Jerusalem when they pray, as you find in the Book of Daniel, for example, Daniel 6:10. In the same way the Muslims are commanded in the Qur’an. In chapter 2 of the Qur’an, verse 144, they are told to face towards the holy mosque, that is face towards Mecca. In Africa - I spent time in West Africa - even if the mosque is nothing more than a group of rocks in a circle, they will have a couple of the rocks put aside in a little prayer niche known as a qiblah to show everyone the direction of prayer. Once the direction of prayer is determined, everyone will face in that direction during their prayers.

The third part of the salat is the particular movements associated with the salat. There are a number of bowing movements known as rak’ah. On TV I am sure you’ve seen pictures of Muslims all bowing down in solidarity in a mosque as they pray. What you are experiencing is actually some of the movements of the rak’ah. The word “rak’ah” literally means “bowing” in Arabic. There are actually several movements that are involved in a full

rak'ah. You stand for Allah. You face the qiblah, the direction of prayer. You place your hands to your ears and you recite what is known as the "takbir" which is the "Allahu akbar, God is great." You stand and hold your hands upon your waist. You recite the first chapter of the Qur'an. You bow down from your hips and put your hands on your knees and you recite once again the takbir, "God is most great." You stand up again into full standing position. Then you completely prostrate yourself before Allah. You raise your body to a sitting position. You prostrate again, which is what you normally see on TV, this part of the rak'ah. Then you sit for a time of meditation and prayer. Then you may recite typically certain chapters of the Qur'an and certain passages that are very well known and popular for recitation.

Just to bring out the Jewish context for this, this was also not only commanded in the Qur'an, but was a part of Jewish practice as well. In the Jewish practice, people stood to pray, they prostrated, they knelt, the idea of praying at various times during the day. All of these things are derived from Jewish practice that Muhammad would have been familiar with as he became acquainted with all the Jewish practices in Yafrib, later known as Medina.

The fourth dimension of the salat refers to the times of prayer because the Islamic call to prayer goes forth five times a day. The five prescribed times: The first morning prayer where you perform two cycles of rak'ah. The noonday prayer where you perform four cycles of rak'ah. The third is the late afternoon prayer where you perform four cycles of rak'ah. The fourth prayer is the sunset prayer where you perform three cycles of rak'ah. Finally, the nighttime prayer where you perform four cycles of rak'ah. The Qur'an itself interestingly does not specifically sanction the five appointed times that are laid out here. The Qur'an speaks more generally about praying during the appointed hours. It reflects the Jewish practice of praying three times a day. There is not a clear reference to five times a day anywhere in the Qur'an, but it does appear repeatedly in the Islamic traditions.

Once again, the times of prayer in the Qur'an at least, are more typically present with the Jewish practice of praying three times a day. You find in Psalm 55: "Evening, morning and noon I cry out and He hears my voice". Daniel 6:10 refers to not only the postures of prayer, the direction of prayer, but the times of prayer. Even in the early church, New Testament, you have

recorded in Acts 3:1, Acts 10:9 and Acts 16:16 the reference to Christians praying during the “times of prayer.”

### **C. Almsgiving (Zakat)**

The third of the five pillars of Islam is known as zakat or almsgiving. The third pillar of Islam is very important because this is how the social and religious responsibilities are met in Islamic communities. There are some real differences between the zakat and the Christian tithe and so we want to get into that in a moment. But at least in terms of its purpose, it may be viewed as quite similar. The purpose of the zakat, according to the Qur’an, is to give relief for the poor and needy, especially the widows, the orphans and the destitute; and also to further Islamic missions. This involves people who go out to issue what they call the “gavah” or the call to faith. There is a passage in the Qur’an which is their comparable passage to our great commission where the Qur’an says, “Call men to the path of thy Lord”. This word “call” in Arabic is the word “gavah.” This is used to pray frequently as a paradigm for calling people into the household of Islam to make the shahadah, make the profession of faith and engage in the rituals that are associated with the Islamic faith. So, Islamic missions and the relief of the poor and the needy.

The Qur’an is filled with dozens of examples of the importance of giving and the importance of almsgiving. One of the real differences between the zakat and the Christian tithe is that this is actually legislated according to Muslim beliefs. Rather than 10 percent tithe, which is voluntary, zakat is typically 2.5 percent, but it is obligatory, it is part of the legal structure of the Muslim society. Therefore you are taxed according to your income and the money goes for these various purposes. It is very important and is again, paralleled in Judaism and Christianity as with the others; but the difference is that it has been institutionalized and legalized in Islamic views of giving.

### **D. Fasting (Sawm)**

The fourth pillar of Islam is known as sawm, or fasting. Again, this is not just ordinary fasting; this is a particular kind of fasting which is very, very important in the understanding of what it means to be a Muslim. This is a

fast which takes place during a particular month of the Islamic year. I want you to go back and remember in our earlier discussion what month it was when Muhammad received his revelation of the Qur'an. Remember how Muhammad went out into the caves, to Mecca in the year 16 A.D.; and it was during that time that he received the revelation of the Qur'an. This occurred in the ninth month of Ramadan. This was already a sacred month, as we mentioned, in Arab history because of the caravan trade and treaties they had made. But it becomes carried over into Islam as a sacred month for reflection because that was the month, according to Muslims, that Allah first gave the initial revelation of the Qur'an to Muhammad.

This is a very unusual fast, so I want to explain carefully what it entails. The fast involves on one hand, more than just the abstention from food. It even includes abstention from food and drink; no fluid, no food, no sexual intercourse with your spouse; no smoking; absolute full abstention from anything that would enter into your body, from dawn to sunset every day. Now that is the big difference. This is not a continual fast day and night, but only a fast during the daylight hours. Again, the Qur'an lays out the regulations for this. Essentially the muezzin stands in the top of the minaret, again in traditional Islamic society. Now it is done through clocks and all, but traditionally the muezzin would stand at the top of the minaret and he would look at two threads, a black thread and a white thread. The moment he can distinguish the first light of day, that the black thread and the white thread are different, then he issues the beginning of the fast, right when he can distinguish a black thread from a white thread. The fast continues until the evening when it starts to get dark. At that very point where the muezzin cannot distinguish anymore the black thread from the white thread, then he issues the conclusion of the fast for that day. This continues throughout the entire lunar month, which is a 28-day fast among Arabs and other Muslims around the world. As I said earlier, this is commanded in the Qur'an in chapter 2, verse 185 where it says, "In the month of Ramadan the Qur'an was revealed. Therefore, whoever of you is present in that month, let him fast, that he who is ill or on a journey, shall fast a similar number of days later on. He desires that you fast the whole month, that you may magnify him." That verse does allude to a provision made to have a makeup fast, which is generally done six months later to allow people who were unable to fast because of illness or journey or whatever, to make it up. This is the way it goes.

As this chapter continues, it does not occur during the nighttime. Let me quote from surah 2:187. “It is now lawful for you to lie with your wives on the night of the fast, eat and drink until you can tell a white thread from a black one in the light of the coming dawn. Then resume the fast until nightfall. Do not approach them, but stay at your prayers in the mosque.” This is again encouraging the idea of a daytime fast. During the night Muslims will eat and drink and engage in various activities throughout the night, but they will resume their fast during the day. It has been often noted that Muslims will actually consume more food during Ramadan than they will in any other month in the Muslim calendar because there is so much emphasis placed on eating at nighttime because you couldn’t eat during the day. Because of the lunar calendar, the fast occurs at different times of the year, it is constantly changing because it is only based on the 28-day lunar month. There are times in your life where Ramadan falls in very hot months and it is very, very difficult to fast or work during the day. There are times when the fast occurs during the cooler months and most Muslims will tell you various stories about times they fasted under very, very difficult circumstances.

The fast ends with a very famous feast known as the Feast of ‘id, ‘id al Fitr, “the feast of the breaking of the fast.” This feast, the Feast of ‘id is probably the most important feast in the Islamic calendar in terms of just celebration and general participation in a feast. The closest thing to this in our context would be how Christmas is celebrated in the West. This is a time when they will exchange gifts, visit relatives and friends and all of the things we associate with Christmas holidays, this is what occurs at the conclusion of the fast, the famous Feast of ‘id. I have been in the Muslim world during this fast and the feast; and it is truly a remarkable sight to see the solidarity with which people participate in the fast and the great sense of joy when the fast is over and they once again resume their normal activities.

That is the fourth of the five pillars of Islam. I just want to remind you, in each step along the way, at least in summary, that all of these pillars are derived from Jewish/Christian precedent. We have seen with each of these, with the shahada, the confession of faith, it is clearly inspired from the Jewish shema, where Jews also made a confession of faith in the sovereignty of Yahweh. The ritual prayer is drawn directly from Jewish practice where they pray, even the movements and the times and the direction of prayer; all of those features are clearly a part of Jewish prayer. The almsgiving, the

zakat, is once again a very important part of both the Jewish and Christian context.

The fasting as well is drawn from Jewish/Christian practice. The Christians especially had, by the fifth and sixth century, a very strongly developed sense of the Lenten fast. The Lenten fast during the 40 days prior to Easter involves an alternating feast and fast. If you know the church calendar, you will know that Lent goes from Ash Wednesday until Black Saturday, the day before Easter morning on Sunday; but it does not include Sundays. The church never fasts on Sunday because Sunday is a day to celebrate the resurrection. Instead you have an alternating fast during the week when you fast and on the Sunday when you feast. Sunday is always a feast day in the church. That concept, even though it is not day and night, is actually during the week and not on Sunday, but it is still the idea of an alternating fast. The Jews also had certain days they fasted and certain days they did not. It is not surprising that Muhammad would have drawn this idea of an alternating feast and fast from practices in Judaism and Christianity.

### **E. Pilgrimage (Hajj)**

The fifth and final pillar of Islam is known as “the hajj.” This is the word for pilgrimage. This is a special obligation for every Muslim sometime during his or her lifetime, to go on an actual physical pilgrimage to the holy Ka’ba in Mecca. You remember that we discussed the importance of Ka’ba. This is the tube-like structure which is located in the Grand Air Mosque in Mecca, which contains the black stone, which represents monotheism. This is meant to re-enact how they believe Abraham himself had migrated, in his case, from Palestine, down into Arabia to worship the one true God. There is a special month that actually occurs three months after Ramadan in the 12<sup>th</sup> month, it is the month of “kochaminch.” The pilgrimage is also commanded in the Qur’an. Let me quote from surah 3: iah 97: “The first temple ever to be built for men was that at Mecca, a blessed place, a beacon for the nations. In it there are veritable signs and the spot where Abraham stood. Whoever enters it is safe. Pilgrimage to the house is a duty to Allah for all who can make the journey.” That is one of a number of passages which talk about the hajj in the Qur’an. This is a belief that by going to this spot, you will be more in solidarity with the Muslim community around the world; and you

will be blessed if you enter into that place. It is definitely considered a duty for all true Muslims.

Like the others, especially the ritual prayer, there are aspects to the pilgrimage to make it a true pilgrimage. First of all, the pilgrim arrives in Mecca. Mecca during this month does not allow any outsiders to enter into the city. This is a completely sacred time, only for Muslims. So, you arrive. You have a letter from your mosque which verifies that you are a Muslim in good standing with your local mosque. You go through a period of consecration; that is what all of this first stage is, it is called the Ihram. The pilgrims will put on simple white robes which symbolize the equality of all humans before God. No matter whether you are a head of state or you are just a peasant person, at least theoretically the idea is that you are not treated differently. Everyone arrives, they enter into cleansing and they gird on the same plain white robes. Then you travel out to the actual site of the mosque, the ka'ba and you make seven what are called "circumambulations." That is to say, you walk around the ka'ba, the house, seven times. The ka'ba, as we discussed before, is a large cubic stone structure. The specifics, it is roughly 40 feet long, 33 feet wide and 50 feet high. It is covered with a black cloth with verses from the Qur'an embroidered in beautiful calligraphy across it.

The Grand Air Mosque where the ka'ba is located is circled around seven times and if possible, you can actually pass through the stone structure and see firsthand the black stone. The black stone is located at the southeast corner of the ka'ba. It is inside a shaped silver case because at one point in Muslim history, through many battles and fights, this stone was broken in various pieces; and therefore now it has been brought back together into a single stone and encased in this silver, doughnut-shaped casing. Every pilgrim is supposed to either gesture toward the stone or, if you can get close enough to it, to actually kiss it. I do not believe this is an act of worship, but it is meant to be a link to monotheism throughout their history. That is the second part. First you go through the cleansing, the consecration and you go through the circumambulation around the Grand Air Mosque.

The third part of the pilgrimage is known as the saai or hastening. The pilgrim runs seven times between the two small hills in Mecca, Safa and Marwa. This is important because it recalls an event which, if you know your Scriptures, is familiar to you. Remember in the Old Testament how after Sara gave birth to Isaac, Hagar was dismissed and sent back out into

the wilderness with her young son, Ishmael. She was afraid that Ishmael would die and Hagar frantically searched for water for her son. It is that passage which is actually commemorated in the hajj because the Muslims venerate Ishmael and they believe that Ishmael was the true son of promise. So they go back and forth between these hills, recalling the time when Hagar frantically searched for water for young Ishmael. There is actually a well there named Zamzam, from which you drink, which symbolizes the water that was found which saved her son's life.

The fourth and final part of the pilgrimage is traveling 13 miles out to the Plains of Arafat and listening to sermons on the site of Muhammad's last sermon. This is the place where Muhammad preached and they believe that these prayers prayed at this spot, are the best prayers that one can pray. The ritual prayer is done collectively there on the Plains of Arafat in a very dramatic scene. That is the first day of the pilgrimage.

The second day of the pilgrimage is known as the "Mina day" because you travel three miles from Mecca to a little town known as "Mina." This is a place where Muslims believe that Ishmael's sacrifice was to have taken place. In Mina there are three pillars of three different sizes and they represent the places Satan tempted Ishmael to rebel against his father; and Ishmael, according to Muslim tradition, threw stones at the Devil. During this day the pilgrims will re-enact this by throwing stones or pebbles at the pillars. You throw stones at the pillars, which is meant to be symbolically throwing stones at the Devil and you shout, "Allahu akbar, God is great, God is great."

The third day of the pilgrimage, you repeat the circumambulation of the Grand Air Mosque, around the ka'ba and you go through a final cleansing where your hair is shaved if you are a man; if you are a woman, a lock of hair is taken off. You put on ordinary clothes again and you are "spiritually reborn" is the language they use. You are given a new title at the end of your name called "Al haji" or "Al haja" if you are a woman; and this becomes a very proud title for any Muslim. It is their way of saying, "You have participated in this great pilgrimage."

A full pilgrimage can actually today be much longer than that, can involve as many as 13 days, including things like visiting Jerusalem and visiting The Dome of the Rock. There are all kinds of additional features. But these are

the ones that are required for it to be a true pilgrimage. Like the Jewish context: remember, the Jews were required to visit the temple three times a year. The Feast of Tabernacles particularly has a lot of similarities with the Islamic hajj because as you may recall, in that feast the Jews circumambulated the sanctuary just as the Muslims do. You can notice this, for example, in Psalms 26:6.

In summary, the five pillars of Islam represent the most distinguishing features of Islamic participation in their faith. These are the practices which make someone and mark someone out as a Muslim. I've tried to point out not only the distinct features of the five pillars, but also how the five pillars are clearly drawn from Jewish and Christian practice that was prevalent in Arabia and in Muhammad's contact with Jews on the peninsula during his lifetime.

I think it is fair to say that the genius of Islam is not in its originality, either in its ideas or in its practice; but is actually in the creative assimilation of explicitly Jewish and Christian practices into a new religion, which does carry distinctly new terms and new expressions.

The purpose of this lecture has been to summarize the five pillars of Islam. The next lecture will then develop other features of how Islam has developed and some differences within the Muslim community as it developed historically.