

Appendix: If You Decide To Convert

Although this is an appendix, this section should not be regarded as an afterthought. It is merely serving a different purpose than the rest of the book. You may regard this section as a brief technical manual on what to do and the basics of what you need to know if you decide to become Muslim. This section contains some information on web sites and mailing addresses that are accurate at the time of writing but I can't guarantee their accuracy for all future dates.

If you decide to be Muslim, this means that you believe that there is only one, indivisible God, and you believe in all the prophets sent by Him, including Prophet Muhammad (saw). You must state this belief to God. This is called Shahada and is stated as follows:

Ash hadoo an laa ilaahaa ilallaah [I bear witness that there is no god but Allah (one god)]

Ash hadoo anna Muhammadan Rasoolallah (I bear witness that Muhammad is the Prophet of Allah). If you state those two things with belief and conviction, you are Muslim.

The following may be added if you wish to declare that you have consciously decided to accept the Ja'fari school of thought with Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib (as) as the divinely appointed guide and ruler after the Holy Prophet.

Ash hadoo anna Alioon Wallioollah Wasiyo Rasoolillaah, Wa Khalifatahoo Bilaa Fasl [I bear witness that Ali is the successor appointed by Allah, inheritor of the Prophet, and the rightful ruler or Caliph (immediately after the Prophet)]

It is tradition to state your belief in the presence of a few Muslim witnesses, often in a mosque, but this is not required for your conversion to be valid before God. So, what's next?

The information and instructions I will provide now are based on the Shia (Ja'fari) school of thought in Islam and may have slight variations from other schools. It is intended to be general to get you started and is not meant to be an authoritative set of instructions, as I am not at all qualified to be authoritative.

There are five roots of religion (Usool e deen) that are considered the major components of Shia Islamic belief. These are monotheism, justice of God, prophethood, imamat, and resurrection.

Monotheism – This is the belief in a single, indivisible God.

Justice of God – This is the belief that God is by nature just and fair.

Prophethood – This is the belief in all the prophets sent by God and their uniform message of guidance.

Imamat – This is the belief in maintainers and protectors of religion appointed by God, particularly the twelve appointed after the death of Prophet Muhammad (saw), including the Imam of our time. (as)

Resurrection – This is the belief in a life after death, including a Judgment Day and punishment or reward in hell or heaven.

Similarly, there are ten branches of religion (Furoo e deen) that are considered the major components of Islamic practice. These are *salaat* (the daily prayer), *sawm* (fasting), *hajj* (pilgrimage), *zakat* (tax on wealth), *khums* (tax on money),

Jihad (struggle), *amr bil ma'ruf* (enjoining good), *nahi 'anil munkar* (forbidding evil), *tawalla* [loving the Prophet and his family (as)], and *tabarra* [disassociating with the enemies of the Prophet and his family (as)].

Prayer

The first major obligation once you become Muslim is the daily prayer. Most converts are very eager and stressed about knowing how to perform it correctly immediately. Following are some basic instructions to get you started with the daily prayer. You can hold this if necessary for awhile until you start to memorize things. When you get the chance, meet with someone who already knows the prayer and they can help you with the Arabic and little details, God willing. In the meantime, try to pray with concentration and when you prostrate place your forehead on soil, rock, wood, or blank paper.

The five daily prayers are as follows:

Morning prayer is two *rakaats* (cycles) performed approximately 70 minutes prior to sunrise.

Noon-ish prayer is 4 *rakaats* performed just after true noon (when the sun reaches the highest point in its path across the sky, or passes from the eastern half into the western half of the sky.)

Afternoon prayer is 4 *rakaats* performed anytime between the noon prayer and the evening prayer, with its ideal time when an object's afternoon shadow just becomes longer than the object itself.

Evening prayer is 3 *rakaats* performed roughly 15 minutes to half an hour after sunset, when redness has left the western half of the sky.

And the night prayer is 4 *rakaats* performed after the evening prayer ideally when twilight is over, which is usually about one and a half hours after sunset.

Prior to praying you should perform *wudhu*, the ritual ablution. This is done by washing your hands with water, then covering the face with water from the top down. Then using your left hand, cover your right arm from the elbow to the finger tips with poured water, then using your right hand do the same to your left. Next, without getting new water, wipe the top of your head with the wetness on your right hand fingers (usually done in a parting in your hair), and finally, similarly wipe the top of your right foot with your wet right hand from toes to ankle, and likewise wipe your left foot with your left hand.

If you are a female just finishing your monthly cycle, or if you have had intercourse or a wet dream since your last prayer, or in a few other less likely cases, instead of performing *wudhu*, you should perform *ghusl*, which is a shower, prior to your prayer. This is usually performed by rinsing your head and neck area, then your right front all the way to your toes, then your right back, left front and left back so that your whole body is touched by running water. It is best to overlap your coverage area (do a little of the left front while washing your right front and vice versa) to guarantee coverage.

Also, whenever you use the toilet, you should rinse the affected area with water three times and make sure no more urine or feces are present. Men should learn how to perform *istibra*, which is a process of pushing out any left over urine from the urethra. Detailed instructions on *wudhu*, *ghusl*, *istibra* and so on may be found in books of Islamic laws such as "*Islamic Laws*" published by The World Federation and available online from .

Finally, before beginning, if you are a male you should make sure your privates are covered, or preferably from the navel to the knee (more is better). And if you are female everything should be covered but hands, face and feet.

Prayer is performed facing a house of worship to God built by Prophet Ibrahim (as) in Mecca. Look at a globe and find the shortest curve from your location to Mecca (a great circle) and that will show you which way to face in prayer. For North Americans, that is Northeast.

Prayer begins with *Niyyat* (You make an intention in your mind that you are praying so and so prayer for seeking nearness to Allah). Then recite *takbir* (saying *Allahoo Akbar* (*God is greater than description*, roughly, with hands held up by your ears). Then lower your arms to your sides.

1st cycle (*rakat*)

STANDING:

1) Recite *Surah Fateha*:

Bismillaahir Rahmaanir Rahim (In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful)

Alhumdoolellaahi Rabbil Aalameen (Praise be to Allah, Lord of the worlds).

arrahmaan irraheem (the Compassionate, the Merciful)

maaliki yowm ideen (Owner/master of the day of Judgment)

iyaaka na' boodoo wa iyyaaka nas taeen (Thee alone we worship and Thee alone we ask for help.)

ihdinas siraatal moostaqeem (Show us the straight path)

siraatal ladheena anamta alayhim (The path of those whom Thou hast favored)

ghayril maghdoobi alayhim waladhaalleen (Not the path of those who have earned Thine anger nor of those who have gone astray.)

2) Then recite any other *surah* of Qur'an. Probably the shortest and easiest, and one that is also highly recommended to recite, is *Surah Ikhlas*:

Bismillahir Rahmanir Raheem (In the name of Allah, the Compassionate the Merciful)

Qul hoo wallahoo ahad (Say: He is Allah, the One!)

Allaahus samad (Allah, the eternally besought of All!)

Lam yalid walam yoolad (He begetteth not nor was begotten)

walam yakool lahoo koofoo wan ahad (And there is none comparable to Him.)

3) Say *Allaahoo Akbar* again

BOWING (Bend forward with your hands on your knees, males keeping the knees unbent and ladies bending their knees slightly):

1) Say: *Soobhaana rabbi al adheemi wabihamdih* (Roughly, Glory be to my High Sustainer and I praise Him)

2) While going back to standing position: *Sami' Allahu liman hamidah* (Allah hears and accepts the praise of one who praises)

3) While standing again briefly: *Allaahoo Akbar*

PROSTRATING/SITTING:

1) After that *Allaahoo Akbar*, go to the ground and put head, knees, toes, and palms on the ground (elbows usually recommended for women as well).

Say: *Soobhana Rabbi al Aa'laa wa bihamdih* (Glory be to my Great Sustainer, Most High, and I praise Him)

2) Go to sitting position, say *Allaahoo Akbar*, then say *Astaghfirullaahaa Rabbi wa atooboo ilayh* [I seek forgiveness from Allah my Sustainer and I turn to Him (repent)] then *Allaahoo Akbar* again

3) Repeat #1 (*Soobhana Rabbi al Aa'laa wa bihamdih*)

4) Sit up, say *Allaahoo Akbar*, and return to standing position while saying *Bi haw lillaahi wa qoowwatihi aqoomoo wa aqa'ood* (I stand and sit with the help and strength of Allah.)

THAT IS END OF RAKAT #1.

RAKAT #2

Perform like rakat #1, except for the addition of *qunoot* and the following modification to step#4 in

PROSTRATING/SITTING: (new parts are marked with asterix*)

**Qunoot*: In the second *rakat*, after reciting the two *surahs* and before bowing, place your hands palms up, together at about chest level and say:

La ilaaha illallaahool halimool kareem (There is none worshipping but Allah, the Forbearing and Generous.) There are many other things you could say here, but that is a simple one to learn for starters. After *qunoot*, continue with the prayer as in the first *rakat*, with bowing.

Then in step 4) take note of these modifications:

Sit up, say *Allahoo Akbar*,

*Then say *Al hamdoo lillaah, Ash hadoo an laa ilaha il Allahoo wah dahoo laa sharika lah* (All praise is for Allah, and I testify that there is none worth worshipping except Allah, who is one and has no partner.)

*Then say: *Wa Ash hadoo anna Muhammadan 'abdoohoo wa Rasooloh* (And I testify that Muhammad is His servant and messenger)

*Then say: *Allah hoomma salli'ala Muhammadin wa aali Muhammad* (O Allah, send your blessings on Muhammad and his progeny).

IF THIS IS NOT THE LAST *RAKAT*,

Then say: *Bi haw lillaahi wa qoowwatihi aqoomoo wa aqa' ood* while standing up.

**IF THIS IS THE LAST *RAKAT*, SAY THE FOLLOWING TO END THE PRAYER, WHILE STILL IN SITTING POSITION:

**Assalaamoo alayka ayyoohan Nabiiyoo wa rahmatullaahi wa barakaatoh* (O Prophet, Allah's peace, blessings and grace be upon you!)

Assalamoo 'alayna wa 'ala ibaadillaahis saaliheen (Allah's peace be on us, and all pious servants of Allah)

Assalaamoo 'alaykoom wa rahmatoollaahi wa barakaatoh (Allah's peace, blessings and grace be on you.)

IF IT IS NOT THE LAST *RAKAT* CONTINUE AS FOLLOWS:

3RD & 4TH *RAKAT*:

Just like 1st *rakat* except for the Standing part:

STANDING:

1) While standing say either *Surah Fateha* or the following, which is most recommended:

Subhaanallaahi wal hamdoo lillaahi wa laa ilaahaa illallahoo wallaahoo akbar (Glory be to Allah, and praise be to Allah, there is no God but Allah and He is greater than description)

You may say this once, or three times.

IF THIS IS THE LAST *RAKAT*, SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *RAKAT #2* MARKED WITH THE ** SIGN TO END *SALAAT*.

There are online prayer and *wudhu* instructions at <http://www.playandlearn.org/Fiqh/index.htm> [1].

Also, you can purchase video instructions from Idara e Jaferia in Maryland. Their tape is distributed by Khatoons Inc., 6650 Autumn Wind Circle, Clarksville MD 21029 USA and online at <http://www.khatoons.com> [2].

You can usually obtain a prayer timetable to get the most accurate local times for prayer from a mosque in your area, or download computer software that calculates prayer time and direction from this site: <http://www.ais.org/~islam/subject/praytime.html> [3].

Now, continuing with the Branches of Religion:

Fasting

During the month of Ramadhan Muslims are required to fast from about a half-hour prior to the morning prayer until the time for the evening prayer. The month of Ramadhan on the Islamic calendar cycles throughout the seasons with a nice result that no matter where you live you will get to experience long days and short days of fasting over the years. For those living in extreme northern or southern locales so that they may not experience any sunrise or sunset in a 24-hour period, they follow the timings of

another, less extreme location. Fasting means no eating, drinking, intercourse, immoral behavior, etc. People who have medical reasons for not fasting are exempted but should donate the equivalent of a meal to charity for days when they miss a required fast. Also, menstruating women do not fast but make up missed fasts at a later date.

The month of Ramadhan is a time of spiritual renewal and there are many special prayers during this time. If you need to know when the month of Ramadhan is likely to begin, please visit the following website: .

Pilgrimage

Every individual with the physical and financial means is obliged to perform the pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in his/her lifetime. It is a very spiritual and exciting event that happens once a year. Its rituals are generally related to events involving the Prophet Ibrahim (as), and are designed for spiritual reflection and renewal. If you plan to go you should read up on it first and make your arrangements through an established *hajj* travel organization that is based on the particular school of Islam that you follow.

Zakat and Khums

Muslims who possess certain things like amounts of gold, grain or livestock are required to give a percentage of their wealth, usually 5 or 10% to the needy. Since most people don't have the wealth to have to pay this, I won't go into a lot of detail. However, all Muslims are likely to have to pay *Khums*, the other kind of charity tax. *Khums* is a tax of 20% on your surplus earnings. Let's say that at the end of this month after paying all your expenses you have \$500 in unused goods and/or money in the bank. Next year, you should take new account of your surplus earnings. If it is less or the same, you do not have to pay *khums*, and you record the new amount of surplus for comparison with the following year. If you have more, then you pay *khums* on the difference. For example, if you have \$600, the difference is \$100 and 20% of that is \$20, so you owe *khums* of \$20 dollars. This money should be sent to people and organizations who have been given authority to accept and/or distribute *khums* money.

Jihad

This is the struggle for Allah (swt), discussed in the main portion of the book.

Enjoining Good and Forbidding Evil

These are the practices of encouraging each other to do good deeds and avoid sin.

Tawalla and Tabarra

These are the practices conforming your heart and behavior to standards that demonstrate your love and devotion to the Prophet and his family (as). And conforming your heart and behavior to standards that demonstrate that you are not like and do not associate with those who act as enemies of the Prophet and his family (as).

Those are all the branches of religion, but, there are some other acts that are compulsory, such as observing the Islamic modest dress and avoiding consumption of certain foods/drinks. For women, as mentioned in the main portion of the book, this standard of dress requires covering all but hands and face in loose clothing.

Muslims do not allow any intoxicating substances into their bodies, do not eat pork, and otherwise only eat meat that is permissible according to the Qur'an and has been slaughtered in an Islamic manner. This meat is obtained from special stores and is called *halal* meat. There is a directory of Islamic clothing retailers (for men, children and women) at:

and a directory of *halal* meat grocers/restaurants at

< <http://www.geocities.com/~iaba/res.html> [4]>.

For the sake of not becoming overwhelming, God willing, I will conclude the appendix at this point. If you are ready for more information, refer to the suggested reading list, contact Muslims in your area, or examine the following recommendations:

The Islamic Correspondence Course

Contact: Islamic Education and Information Center 5359 Timberlea Blvd., Unit 52
Mississauga, Ontario L4W 4N5
Canada

Phone 905-212-9676 Fax 905 212-9690

This is a 50 lesson postal mail course that is very nice. The first six lessons are free so that you can see if you are interested. After that, there is a one-time fee to help cover the postage costs.

The World Islamic Network book club

Contact: World Islamic Network
67/69 H. Abbas (as) Street
Dongri, Mumbai 400 009 India
e-mail: win@bom4.vsnl.net.in [5]

This is an organization that distributes Islamic literature for free to anyone who asks. In order to receive more literature after the first shipment, you need to write a summary/commentary of what you read and send it back to them by post.

May Allah (swt) guide us all on the straight path and grant us the good of this world and the hereafter.

Source URL:

<https://www.al-islam.org/seeking-straight-path-reflections-new-muslim-diana-masooma-beatty/%C2%A0appendix-if-you-decide-convert#comment-0>

Links

- [1] <http://www.playandlearn.org/Fiqh/index.htm>
- [2] <http://www.khatoons.com>
- [3] <http://www.ais.org/~islam/subject/praytime.html>
- [4] <http://www.geocities.com/~iaba/res.html>
- [5] <mailto:win@bom4.vsnl.net.in>