378 - Declaring shahaadah and performing salat for a new non-Arabic speaking Muslim

the question

I have read the many pages of your web site that instructs a non-believer. I believe that there is only Allah (one God). Ibelieve that Muhammed is the seal of the prophets. History bears this out. My question is: How do I declare this (shahadah) if I do not speak arabic? How do I perform the five daily prayers (salah) without understanding arabic? Finally would I have to change my name?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

To the dear inquirer:I welcome you with a warm greeting. I was besieged with great joy as I discovered your question while browsing through the ten questions which arrived during the past hour today, and it was the dearest question for me. This fact is not surprising, as how could our hearts not open to a wise man who has discovered the truth and has acknowledged and confirmed it for himself--one who wishes to embrace Islaam and asks about the next steps?

In reality, everything that poses a problem for you is actually an easy matter, and can be solved simply, God willing (in shaa' Allah), so let's take them one by one:

First: all that is required of you to embrace this religion right now as you are reading these lines is to pronounce al-shahaadatain, or the two confirmations and attestations of faith, to the best of your ability. Perfect pronunciation of the Arabic letters is not required, and the following is a transliteration of the phrases with English letters to help you:

ash-hadu an laa ilaahah illAllah (I bear witness and attest that there is no god worthy of worship

but the One God Allah)

ash-hadu anna muhammad-ar-rasool ullaah (I bear witness and attest that Muhammad is the messenger of Allah)

After pronouncing them, you should promptly hasten to take a shower to purify yourself and prepare to start performing your regular prayers which will be an obligation as soon as you have declared your belief.

Second: If you have not yet learned the manner and characteristics of performing the prayer (i.e. at least the movements and positions), appended to this message is a description from which you can learn. What is requried from you for the time being is to say in the beginning of the prayer and between each movement between positions "Allahu ak-bar" (a glorification of Allah). While standing, bowing, prostrating, and sitting, you should say "subhaan Allah wal-hamdu lillaah wa-laa ilaaha illAllahu wAllahu akbar." (Glory be to Allah, and praise and thanks be to Allah, and there is no god but Allah, and Allah is the most Exalted and Great.) Then conclude the prayer by turning your head to the right then left, each time saying "as-salaamu alaikum."

This way of performing salat is permissible for you until you can learn and memorize what should be said in each movement and position of the salat.

Third: You are not required to change your name, and in fact, a number of scholars among the forefathers and modern-day Muslims have indicated declared that your name is in fact the name of one of the prophets!

I ask Allah to aid you and ease your affairs, and to bestow upon you the blessing of Islaam and perseverence in adhering to it. We are ready and willing to assist in explaining or helping to solve any problem or difficulty you may face, and to provide support and aid in any way possible.