

Binyamin Abrahamov

**The Sufis' and Ibn al-'Arabī's  
Attitudes Towards the  
Pillars of Islam**



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# **The Sufis' and Ibn al-'Arabī's Attitudes Towards the Pillars of Islam**



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In memory of our beloved daughter  
**Dr. Tsippi Kauffman**



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# Introduction

The present research examines the Sufis' and particularly Ibn al-ʿArabī's attitudes toward the five pillars of Islam (*arkān al-islām*). Each chapter deals with one pillar of Islam beginning with the prominent Sufi manuals that lead into an exposition of Ibn al-ʿArabī's main views on the fundamental tenets of the faith. The Sufi manuals present the background to the Greatest Master's notions. The comparison that emerges between the Sufi authors and Ibn al-ʿArabī's view demonstrates the Sufis' impact on him on one hand and his unique approach to these basic religious obligations on the other. This book focuses on the characterization of the Sufis' attitude toward the pillars of Islam – is this attitude mystical, or philosophical or theological, or ethical? For this purpose, the rules of each pillar are introduced as they appear in the Qur'ān or in the Tradition or in Islamic Law. Because ritual purity (*ṭahāra*) is a necessary condition for performing some of the pillars (prayer, pilgrimage), a chapter dealing with this practice precedes the five pillars. Notably, all the Sufi authors deal with all the pillars and with the ritual purity, the only exception being al-Muḥāsibī who does not treat the *ṭahāra*.

As a rule, Ibn al-ʿArabī's discussion of the pillars of Islam is the most detailed exposition among the Sufis mentioned here. Each of his chapters is divided into two sections, the first treats the rules of the pillar and the second the inner consideration (*i'tibār*) or the spiritual perspectives of the rules. Of interest in Ibn al-ʿArabī's discussion is the fact that he not only introduces mystical aspects, but also theological, philosophical and ethical

perspectives. Sometimes the mystical considerations are absent and instead our author interweaves perceptions of the cosmos in his examination of certain pillars of Islam. In all the chapters, I did not follow Ibn al-ʿArabī's sequence of the sections, because he did not always arrange them in keeping with logical order, as one would expect. For example, one would naturally expect to find the order of the Ḥajj's rites as they actually take place in the Ḥajj. But Ibn al-ʿArabī abandons this order. Hence, I decided not to follow his order and to discuss the various items in each pillar according to their significance as perceived by our author.

As for the sequence of this book's chapters, I followed Ibn al-ʿArabī's order with one exception: I prioritized the chapter on ritual purity, placing it first, although Ibn al-ʿArabī ordered this chapter (ch. 68 in the *Futūḥāt*) after chapter 67 on the witness of faith (*shahāda*). In so doing, our author seems to emphasize the position of belief as the root of all the other precepts. Put differently, belief essentially precedes ritual purity without attention (as noted previously) to the fact that ritual purity is a necessary condition for performing some pillars of Islam.

Another important aspect of Ibn al-ʿArabī's discussion of the pillars of Islam is the fact that there is no common denominator among them in relation to the use of mystical, theological, philosophical and ethical<sup>1</sup> perspectives. In a specific pillar theology is conspicuous, while in another mysticism is prevalent.<sup>2</sup>

In the following sections I survey the ideas of the Sufi authors, but mainly Ibn al-ʿArabī's thoughts on ablution and the five pillars of Islam. Already in the discussion on ritual purity we find elements requiring later mention in the exposition of the pillars of Islam.

1 Ethics is a part of Sufism, but of course not exclusively.

2 An anonymous reviewer of my article "Ibn al-ʿArabī on Divine Love," was surprised to see theological notions of our author appearing in his treatment of this issue. Thus, also here, Ibn al-ʿArabī appears as a theologian, and not only as one who espouses mystical philosophy.

Early Sufis emphasize stories of piety related to ablution, such as obsessive engagement with washing one's body. Exaggeration in carrying out ablution was rejected by those who adhered to the spiritual interpretation of ablution. Abstinence is shown, for example, in the conduct of Sufis who immersed in cold water in order to perform complete ablution (*ghusl*). Others behaved with pious modesty when bathing in a public bath.

The difference between the physical, outward (*ẓāhir*) and the spiritual, inward (*bāṭin*) aspects of fulfilling this precept is also found in the treatment of this issue. It is analogous to differentiating between the Law (*sharī'a*), the external aspect, and the Truth (*ḥaqīqa*), the internal aspect. The Sufis did not deny the importance of the outward perspective of ablution but rather they asserted that both the outward and the inward aspects should be performed simultaneously. Both ways serve the aim of coming close to God. However, some Sufis, like al-Ghazālī, preferred spiritual means to attain this target. Here, also the theocentric approach to ablution is discerned. The Sufis also differentiated between the common people who adhered to the outward implementation of ablution as opposed to the elite who preferred the inward way of ablution.

Ibn al-'Arabī's explanation of the division between the outward and the inward aspects of ablution reflects his admirable thought. He argues that since God addresses all the human parts, physical as well as spiritual, one should worship Him by using all his capacities. For example, belief resides in the human heart; it is the purity of the heart and it corresponds to the outward state of purity of the body.

The theological notion of *tanzīh*, that is, denying that God has human traits, is incorporated in the discussion of ablution. Ablution means freeing oneself from impure things. Thus, the state of one's purity is equal to God's state of being free from human characteristics. However, whereas God is essentially pure, the human being's purity is achieved by one's efforts and is accidental.

The Greatest Master adds another theological principle in his discussion of ritual purity. To wit, whoever does not know that God's will is equal to his command, loses his purity. Thus, true knowledge, which is naturally an inward element of theological tenets, safeguards one's purity. Impure substances are compared to doubts and false proofs.

Ethical values are incorporated in the treatment of ablution. Accordingly, just as one has to purify his organs as the Law prescribes, one should purify his organs of vices, such as theft done by the hands or looking at unlawful things. In Ibn al-'Arabī's view, there is an inevitable connection between body and soul. Hence, fulfilling the outward rules of ritual purity serves as a necessary condition for complying with the inward, spiritual requirements. Additionally, the heart is the place of morals and true knowledge. Hence, one should purify his heart of ignorance, doubts and hypocrisy. Purity of the heart causes the presence of God to enter into it. Thus, purity observed in its two aspects, the outward and the inward, makes one come close to God.

The first part of the witness of faith (*shahāda*), there is no god but God (*lā ilāha illā allāh*) is the call to unify God (*tawhīd*). The unification of God is interpreted by the Sufis to mean God's transcendence, that is, His being totally different from all other entities. They also add the notion that all things originate in God. Al-Makkī states that in this matter the people are divided into two types: the first are the common people who learn God's unity from the sacred texts and the second are the elite who receive the knowledge of the mystery of God's unity by His revelation to them. Some Sufis add the notion of passing away from one's consciousness (*fanā'*) as the highest stage of the unification of God. Those who are immersed in this state are aware only of God's existence and do not even see themselves.

The Sufis do not ignore the second part of the *shahāda*, the belief in Muḥammad the Messenger of God. Here also,

the difference between outward and inward perspectives proves meaningful. To meet the requirements of the outward aspect, one should emulate the behavior of the Prophet and assimilate his virtues. However, this is the outward side of the belief in Muḥammad's prophecy. In the inward realm, the Sufis should adhere to the mystical stations (*maqāmāt*), such as fear of God (*khawf*), thanks to Him (*shukr*), and relying on Him (*tawakkul*). Only the elite among them are qualified to reach this stage.

According to Ibn al-ʿArabī, God's unity can be achieved by rational knowledge or by the Tradition. Belief in the veracity of the Prophet and hence in his message enables one to relinquish engaging in rational arguments. The true believer is one who unifies God because the Qur'ān commands him to do so. The witness of faith pillar does not allow one to connect between the two parts of the witness, because God as perceived by reason is transcendent, while God as depicted in the Qur'an is immanent. Our author likens Islam to a house founded on five pillars, and the witness of faith stands at the center of the house. Ibn al-ʿArabī also refers to the numbers four (the four words *lā ilāha illā allāh*) and twelve (the twelve letters of this formula) and their meanings.

From the thirty-six Qur'ānic verses in which the first part of the *shahāda* occurs, Ibn al-ʿArabī learns God's attributes: His providence, reliance on God, the asking for help from Him, the mystical philosophical notion of God's penetration into everything, the consideration of all parts of the cosmos as one and even the logical system of syllogism. All in all, the Greatest Master on this issue appears to be more oriented toward theology and philosophy, especially mystical philosophy, than toward mysticism.

Elements of mysticism and of mystical philosophy are more prominent in the discussion of prayer than in the two previous sections of ablution and witness of faith. The Sufis consider prayer as a conversation with God and hence intimate nearness to Him up to the highest level of union with God or meeting Him. The

inward aspect of prayer is spirituality which elevates the essence of the human being and is deemed as a kind of ascension (*mi'rāj*) to heaven. However, these notions do not diminish the value of the outward perspective of prayer which has an influence on the spiritual perspective.

Al-Ghazālī addresses six conditions for the implementation of prayer: 1) presence of the heart (*ḥuḍūr al-qalb*); 2) understanding (*tafahhum*); 3) exaltation of God (*ta'zīm*); 4) fear of God (*hayba*); 5) hope (*rajā'*) and 6) shame (*ḥayā'*), two of which (fear and hope) are mystical stations (*maqāmāt*). And the presence of the heart is a clear element of mysticism.

Ibn al-'Arabī regards prayer as the best object of worship (*al-ṣalāt khayr mawḍū' al-'ibādāt*). Like his predecessors, he speaks of prayer as an intimate conversation with God and as mutual seeing by the two conversationalists. Three mystical stations, patience (*ṣabr*), thankfulness (*shukr*) and recollection of God (*dhikr*) are involved in prayer. Through prayer one expresses his thankfulness to God and recollects Him. *Ṣabr* defined as stableness, continuity and constraint of the soul affects the two preceding stations enabling them to be a regular part of prayer. Apart from the Sufi stations mentioned here as essential parts of prayer and its aims, an important target of prayer is adherence to God and abstention from committing sins.

In addition to the mystical ideas in Ibn al-'Arabī's discussion of prayer, we find philosophical notions such as God's being pure good, and furthermore existence as a reflection of God's attributes means that existence is good. Prayer is supplication, and the believer requests from God forgiveness, protection and guidance. However, since all things are the reflection of God's attributes, he asks refuge from the Real by the Real. Thus, the Greatest Master's conception of the unity of existence (*waḥdat al-wujūd*) is interwoven in one of the components of prayer. Another element of Ibn al-'Arabī's mystical philosophy is the unity of manyness (*aḥadiyyat al-kathra*), which means the existence of God in each

part of the world or the notion that the cosmos is the reflection of God's attributes. This notion is exemplified by the Friday congregational prayer, because it is one but can be performed only by many people. Also the Greatest Master states that the cosmos is God's shadow. Thus, one is not allowed to pray at the time of the zenith in which he does not see his shadow, that is, God's signs in the world.

Also theology is not absent from Ibn al-ʿArabī discussion of prayer. For example, he follows the Muʿtazilites in explaining leading astray (*idlāl*) and guidance (*hidāya*) as a punishment and reward respectively. However, elsewhere he espouses the Ashʿarite theory of the acquisition of one's acts (*kasb*) without trying to reconcile the Muʿtazilite and Ashʿarite positions regarding human acts. The seven body parts which touch the ground when prostrating during prayer are compared to the seven essential attributes of God. Now, just as God is not God without any one of these attributes, so if one of the seven bodily parts does not touch the ground, the prayer is not valid. Thus, theology solves a legal question regarding prostration.

Those who pray are not only God, angels and human beings, but also all other entities of the cosmos – animals, plants and inanimate entities. Concerning human beings, our author makes a distinction between the common person (*ʿammiyy*) and the gnostic (*ʿārīf*), who is considered the most revered mystic. He emphasizes the conclusion of the gnostic, which is actually Ibn al-ʿArabī's own idea, saying that since the whole of existence is one – “There is neither one who praises, nor praised one but You” (*lā ḥāmida wa-lā maḥmūda illā anta*). The gnostic's supplications from God are spiritual, while those of the common person are material. Another distinction is made between those who pray considering their stations. Our author asks why the believers perform the *rakʿas* of the Friday prayer in rows (shoulder to shoulder)? He answers that this arrangement is enacted in order to remind the believers the Resurrection when they will stand before God in rows just as the angels do.

Ibn al-'Arabī ascribes great importance to knowledge, because knowledge makes the human being aware of God's favors to him and hence obliges him to thank Him by prayer. His knowledge of the cosmos enables him to compare the structure of the cosmos with the different kinds of prayers. The cosmos has three parts: the world perceived by the senses (*'ālam al-shahāda*), the hidden world (*'ālam al-ghayb*), identified with the world of the intellect (*'ālam al-'aql*), and the world of imagination and isthmus (*'ālam al-takhayyul wa'l-barzakh*), which is neither sensual nor hidden. Prayers performed at daybreak correspond to the sensual world, those performed at night belong to the hidden world and prayers performed between night and day or vice versa belong to the intermediate world, the world of isthmus. In like manner, he compares the acts done in prayer with parts of the cosmos, such as the Throne and the earth.

According to Ibn al-'Arabī's teachings, physical acts influences spiritual approaches and vice versa. Thus, physical prostration may affect the spiritual prostration of the heart, which attests to one's pure servanthood to God. In addition, physical things like perfume, tooth-stick and fine clothes have their spiritual counterparts. Perfume symbolizes one's knowledge of God's Breaths, that create and maintain the cosmos, the tooth-stick signifies the purity of the tongue and the heart and fine garments are a sign of God's fearful worshipper. He also refers to the acts performed during prayer and ascribes to them spiritual meaning, for example, two rak'as signify the nature and the intellect of the human being.

In this chapter I demonstrate that the Greatest Master treats prayer from various perspectives and that he does not satisfy himself merely with the symbolic perspective. The ontological aspect of his philosophy also plays a part in his discussion, where segments of prayer represent his perception of the cosmos.

Interestingly, some Sufis omitted to mention almsgiving in their writings. Others like al-Makkī and al-Ghazālī devote a chapter



to this topic mainly surveying pietistic and ethical notions in the literature of the Tradition and in the Qur'ān together with their interpretations. The mystical dimension is almost absent in their writings. Probably this attitude toward almsgiving originates in the Sufis' teachings to reject possession of property.

The spiritual or inward part of the *zakāt* is revealed in the will to come close to God, to reach the middle way of generosity between the two extremes of miserliness and wastefulness. Also discussed is the avoidance of hypocrisy by means of almsgiving in secrecy. But public almsgiving too has a positive place, others advocated, such as expressing gratitude to God.

Ibn al-'Arabī differentiates between the rules of almsgiving, the outward perspectives of the Law, and the inward, spiritual dimensions of these rules. He begins his chapter on almsgiving by explaining the rationale behind this precept: All entities belong to God, for He is the only real existent. God's property of minerals, plants and animals are pure; however, when they are in the possession of the human being they become impure. Almsgiving purifies the property possessed by the human being. Almsgiving not only purifies one's property, but also changes one's personality. The free person is the one who frees himself from the enslavement by property of any kind.

In Ibn al-'Arabī's view, number values or measures of worldly entities are not random because their interpretations point to God and His attributes. For example, the payment of *zakāt* is made in the form of four comestibles, wheat, barley, dates and raisins. They correspond, inter alia, to four principal divine attributes – life, knowledge, will and power. Thus, these four materials were enacted because of the importance of the number four and what it signifies.

The Greatest Master also widens the scope of almsgiving to include immaterial elements. Knowledge is regarded by him as a property possessed by the human being. One has to pay alms from this property by delivering his knowledge to others.

Thus, the teacher imparts his knowledge to his students. However, knowledge should not be given to unfit persons, those who cannot understand it. He also learns from the correspondence between the eight material substances to which almsgiving apply and the eight organs of the human, that from these organs one should pay alms. For instance, the almsgiving of the eyes is expressed by not looking at forbidden entities, such as women, whereas by looking at lawful entities, such as the Qurʾān and the Kaʿba one comes close to God. Since the soul governs the organs, one also gives alms to his soul. Thus, a mystical facet is connected to an ethical behavior. As previously noted, just as everything in the world is pure before becoming the property of the human being, so too the human organs are essentially pure before one commits transgressions in their use, hence making them impure.

To sum up, Ibn al-ʿArabī's principal idea of *zakāt* is that one should pay alms from each kind of property he possesses, whether material or spiritual and that he performs *zakāt* even for the sake of himself and his soul.

Many Sufis express the notion of the ethical value of fasting, which subdues the human desires when one refrains from eating. This is the first step to overcoming the carnal soul. Some stress the need to behave in a moral way while fasting, because fasting is not only not eating but also not committing evil acts, such as slander. The Ramaḍān fast without performing moral precepts is valueless. Another characteristic of the Sufi attitude toward fasting is their reducing the importance of the Ramaḍān fast while raising the value of other fasts, such as the fast of thirty or forty days without the interruption of eating every night. Some Sufis make no mention at all of the Ramaḍān fast and treat only other kinds of fasting or speak of hunger. This attitude suggests that the Ramaḍān fast is best suited to the ordinary people, whereas other more difficult kinds of fasting better befit the Sufis or their elite.

In al-Ghazālī, who treats the Ramaḍān fast, we find a tripartite

division of those who fast. At the lowest level are those who only observe the physical rules of fasting, which is the fast of the common people (*al-‘amma*). Above them are the elite (*al-khāṣṣa*), who in addition to complying with the formal prescripts of the fast perform moral precepts. And at the pinnacle are the elite among the elite, those who detach themselves from worldly material things and think only of God.

Following certain Sufis, the Greatest Master does not prefer the Ramaḍān fast to other fasts, but raises David’ and Mariam’s fast to the level of the best fast. Each fast is important by virtue of itself without considering its mystical, philosophical and theological perspectives. The fast facilitates one’s coming close to God, because it subdues one’s desires which are equal to impurity, hence makes one pure. When fasting the believer is compared to God, for just as nothing is like God, no other act of worship is like fasting. In addition, one is like God when he prevents himself from committing transgressions during fasting. Thus, one achieves the temporal state of transcendence (*tanzīh*), which is ascribed essentially to God.

In contradistinction to other Sufis, Ibn al-‘Arabī states that the Ramaḍān fast is important because a) Ramaḍān is one of God’s names; b) those who fast during the month will be treated in a special way in Paradise; c) God sent down his decree to the earth on one of its nights (*laylat al-qadr*) and d) because God sent the Qur’ān to the Preserved Tablet (*al-lawḥ al-mahfūz*).

Appearing as a theologian, Ibn al-‘Arabī states that God’s names play a significant role in the cosmos, for God acts by activating these names, which from the perspective of His essence are equal, but from the perspective of the names, there is a hierarchy of names. The condition for the act of a specific name depends on two factors, the first is the essence of the name, and the second is the entities’ readiness to receive a specific name. Our author uses God’s names to solve legal problems relating to fasting and also to explain the role of His names when one commits a sin.

Ibn al-'Arabī discusses three mystical terms, namely, tasting (*dhawq*), drinking (*shurb*) and quenching thirst (*riyy*) in the context of the knowledge of God. A mystical interpretation is applied to two persons who can dispense with fasting – the sick (*marīḍ*) and the traveler ('*alā safar*'). The first is in God's custody (*fī ḥabs al-ḥaqq*), probably meaning one who is very near to God, and the second is one who on his way to God through stations and states (*maqāmāt, ahwāl*). The author derives from the word *safar* (travel) the verb *asfara* meaning "he disclosed or revealed." Thus, God reveals to the mystic his virtues and his stations and states.

Answering the question of whether to fast on Saturday or not, our author uses two mystical terms, the first refers to the state of distress and fear (*qabḍ*) and the second to the state of relief and joy (*bast*). Whoever experiences the first state, fasts on this day, because distress and fear are among the characteristics of Hell, and fasting protects him from Hell. Whoever is in the second state, is free from fasting on this day. Thus, two mystical terms help Ibn al-'Arabī to solve a legal problem. It is to be noted that in Ibn al-'Arabī's view, the implementation of the fast rules themselves, without engaging in moral acts, brings the Sufi to one of the highest rank of the Sufis. Thus, fast has its own power to change the state of the believer.

In sum, mystical notions and terms appear in this chapter, but are not so prominent as in the chapters on prayer and pilgrimage.

It seems that among the five pillars of Islam the Ḥajj is the most complicated precept, because it includes various events and things. One who lives outside Makka has to travel in order to perform the pilgrimage. The pilgrim has to wear special garment, to perform different types of devotion, such as prayers, circling the Ka'ba, standing in a specific place, throwing stones, calling God by a specific formula, running from one place to another and scarifying animals. All these acts and rites have attracted the attention of the Sufis who have tried to show the inward spiritual meanings existing beyond the formal implementation of all these requirements.

However, some of them totally reject this precept claiming, for example, that it is better to feed and dress orphans than to carry out the Ḥajj. Sufis also repudiated the Ḥajj with the argument that whoever attains perfection is exempt from physical acts of devotion. Others, who did not reject the Ḥajj, advised the pilgrims to pay attention to the Lord of the Ka'ba and not to the Ka'ba itself, thus preferring the inward to the outward perspective of the precept. Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī differentiates between outward and inward perspectives which apply to all the rites of the Ḥajj, ascribing the outward perspectives to the common people and the inward perspectives to the elite. He prefers the Truth (*ḥaqīqa*), the inward meaning, to the Rule (*sharī'a*), the outward meaning. Still others wished to concentrate on the moral precepts and on subduing human desires rather than enduring physical efforts involved traveling to Makka and staying therein.

The Sufis used various methods to explain the Ḥajj's rites. One way is to change the order of letters in a specific word and thus change its meaning. For example, the word *mansak* (pl. *manāsik*, root *n.s.k*) designate a physical rite of the Ḥajj. Now, the Sufis transpose the order of the letters to form the root *s.k.n* which in the first form (*sakana ilā*) means to have confidence in God. Naturally, in some cases concerning events and places, there is no need to change the order of letters, but to create from the unchanged root another meaning. Thus, standing in 'Arafāt (root '*r.f*') is interpreted to mean knowing God ('*arafa*', form 1).

Notwithstanding the spiritual approach of the Sufis, some, like al-Ghazālī, personify the Ka'ba and the Black Stone therein and claim that both know the type of one's belief and the nature of one's performance of the rites.

Al-Ghazālī also explains away the unintelligible acts, such as throwing stones and running between two hills, as signs of servanthood and obedience to God, because pilgrims perform them without understanding their meanings. However, he regards the Ḥajj as a parable that illustrates the believer's advancement

from this to the next world. In this parable each part of the Ḥajj, whether physical or spiritual, whether an event or state, is turned into something which serves the pilgrim on his way to God. For example, provisions for the journey in the ordinary Ḥajj represent fear of God and the *iḥrām* clothes are shrouds.

Ibn al-ʿArabī's approach is reminiscent of al-Ghazālī in two significant points: first, he does not reject the physical rites of the Ḥajj, and second, he thinks that the aim of the pilgrimage is to visit God, and the various Ḥajj rites purify the pilgrim and ready him to meet God. Although the Greatest Master emphasizes the importance of God's House, that is, the Ka'ba, he paradoxically defines God's House as every place in which prayer is legitimate. Obviously aware of this paradox, he explains the word *ziyāra* (visit) as inclination. One can incline toward God by various means, prayer, fasting and pilgrimage. Pilgrimage is performed when one wishes to incline toward God through servanthood. However, the rites themselves transform the pilgrim to the divine domain. The Ka'ba is like the human heart in which God resides, and just as one circles the Ka'ba, one's thoughts circle his heart. Our author, it seems, prefers the human heart to the Ka'ba. This may imply that the Ḥajj is superfluous, but Ibn al-ʿArabī does not express this idea explicitly. Strictly speaking, he adheres to the formal rites, but states that the Ḥajj is not complete without its spiritual perspectives.

Ibn al-ʿArabī incorporates his mystical philosophy into the discussion of the Ḥajj. Since the cosmos is the reflection of God's attributes, that is His self-manifestation, the human being is also one of his manifestations. However, in the Ḥajj he becomes more manifest, because of his unusual clothes and acts.

Following the Sufi system of etymological derivation, Ibn al-ʿArabī analyzes the structure of the word *bayt* (house) in order to reach a spiritual religious conclusion. From the verb *bāta* (root *b.y.t*, form I), which means "he spent the night in a place," the word *mabīt*, which conveys the sense of "a place in which one

spends the night,” is derived. Consequently, *bayt* is like *mabīt*. Since God’s revelation occurs at night (Qur’ān 17:1), the Ka’ba, His House, serves as an allusion to His revelation, and this is the rationale of calling the Ka’ba “the House.” The importance of the Ka’ba in the eyes of the Greatest Master is also proven by his conversation and correspondence with it expressed in a specific epistle by him.

Numbers of acts are connected to the structure of the cosmos and correspondingly to the human being. Thus, the seven circumambulations of the Ka’ba reflect the seven celestial spheres. The three occasions in which one circles the Ka’ba – on coming into the sacred place, after offering the sacrifice and in the departure from the pilgrimage – derive from the three sources of knowledge, the intellect, one’s states and the highest source is God’s revelation to His prophets and saints. The four *rak’as* performed at ‘Arafāt are explained in a theological way. The first two relate to God’s essence and to His being known by human beings, and the second pair are connected to the human being’s essence and to his being created by God.

In sum, in comparison with the teachings of other Sufis as mentioned above, Ibn al-‘Arabī’s chapter on the Ḥajj is replete with theological and philosophical notions, sometimes in the form of considerations and others as allusions. Mystical ideas, such as coming close to God as an aim of the pilgrim, occur, but not often.