



RAMADAN FESTIVAL (RAMAZAN BAYRAMI)



Ramadan (also written *Ramazan*, *Ramzan*, *Ramadhan*, *Ramdan*, *Ramadaan*) is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar. It is the Islamic month of fasting, in which participating Muslims refrain from eating, drinking, smoking, and indulging in anything that is in excess or ill-natured; from dawn until sunset. Fasting is meant to teach the Muslim patience, modesty and spirituality. Ramadan is a time for Muslims to fast for the sake of God and to offer more prayer than usual. During Ramadan, Muslims ask forgiveness for past sins, pray for guidance and help in refraining from everyday evils, and try to purify themselves through self-restraint and good deeds. As compared to the solar calendar, the dates of Ramadan vary, moving forward about ten days each year as it is a moving holiday depending on the moon. Ramadan was the month in which the first verses of the Qur'an were revealed to the Islamic Prophet Muhammad.

Origins of Ramadan

The name "Ramadan" had been the name of the ninth month in Arabian culture long before the arrival of Islam; the word itself derived from an Arabic root *rmḍ*, as in words like "ramiḍa" or "ar-ramad" denoting intense heat, scorched ground and shortness of rations. In the Qu'ran, God proclaims that "fasting has been written down (as obligatory) upon you, as it was upon those before you".

Sometimes referred to as "the night of fate", *Laylat al-Qadr* is considered the most holy night of the year, as it is the night in which the Qur'an was revealed



to Muhammad. Muslims believe it to have occurred on an odd-numbered night during the last 10 days of Ramadan, either the night of the 21st, 23rd, 25th, 27th or 29th (in Sunni thought) or the 19th, 21st or 23rd (in Shi'a thought). Ramadan ends with *Eid ul-Fitr* on the 1 of Shawwal, with much celebration and feasting. During the month following Ramadan, called *Shawwal*, Muslims

are encouraged to fast for a further six days, known as *as-Sitta al-Bīd*, or "the white six." When fasting is over, Muslims go to mosques in nice clothes to pray the first Eid prayer. They give out presents to the young ones and greet their friends and families. They then thank God for what he has given them.

Practices during Ramadan

Fasting

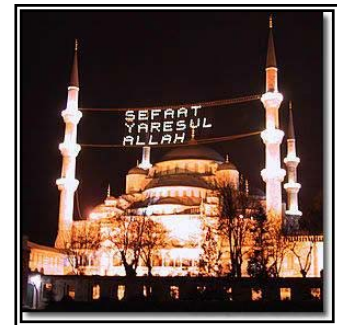


The most prominent event of this month is fasting. Every day during the month of Ramadan, Muslims around the world get up before dawn to eat *Sahur* or *Sehri* or *Sahari* (meaning "something we eat at Sahur"), (in Turkey there is a tradition for getting up, in the night a man plays drum and say a poem so he helps the people to awake) then they perform the *fajr* (or *Sobh*) prayer. They have to stop eating and drinking before the call for prayer starts until the fourth prayer of the day, *Maghrib*. Muslims break their fast at Magrib (at sunset) prayer time with a meal called Iftar. Muslims may continue to eat and drink after the sun has set until the

next morning's prayer call. Then the process starts all over.

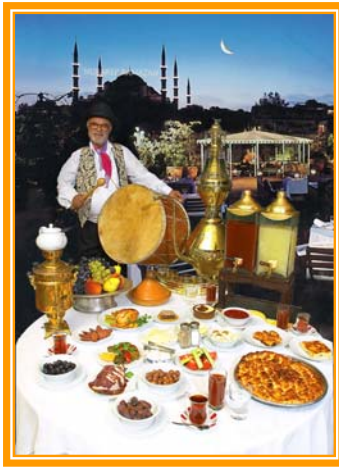
Ramadan is a time of reflecting and worshiping God. Muslims are expected to put more effort into following the teachings of Islam and to avoid obscene and irreligious sights and sounds. Sexual activities during fasting hours are also forbidden. Purity of both thoughts and actions is important. The fast is intended to be an exacting act of deep personal worship in which Muslims seek a raised awareness of closeness to God.

The act of fasting is said to redirect the heart away from worldly activities, its purpose being to cleanse the inner soul and free it from harm. It also allows Muslims to practice self-discipline, self-control, sacrifice, and empathy for those who are less fortunate; thus encouraging actions of generosity and charity (Zakat).



Muslims should start observing the fasting ritual upon reaching the age of puberty, so long as they are healthy, sane and have no disabilities or illnesses. The elderly, the chronically ill, and the mentally ill are exempt from fasting, although the first two groups must endeavour to feed the poor in place of their missed fasting. Also exempt are pregnant women, women during the period of their menstruation, and women nursing their newborns. A difference of opinion exists among Islamic scholars as to whether this last group must make up the days they miss at a later date, or feed poor people as a recompense for days missed. While fasting is not considered compulsory in childhood, many children endeavour to complete as many fasts as possible as practice for later life. Lastly, those traveling (*musaafir*) are exempt, but must make up the days they miss. More specifically, Twelver Shī'ah define those who travel more than 40 mi (64 km) in a day as exempt.

The elderly or those who suffer from a disability or disease and have no prospect of getting better in the future can pay the cost of *Iftar* for a person who cannot afford it, or else they can host such a person in their house and have him eat with them after sunset as a way of repaying for the days they could not fast.



A person who is observing Ramadan might break the fast accidentally, due to having forgotten it. In such an instance, one should spit out the food being eaten or cease the forbidden activity, immediately upon remembering the fast. This can usually happen in the early days of Ramadan because that person might have not yet been acclimated into fasting from dawn till dusk.

When Ramadan came to overshadow Ashura in importance, it took on some characteristics of the latter. According to a well-known hadith, the person who observes Ramadan properly will have all their past sins forgiven. According to another, "When Ramadan arrives, Heaven's gates are opened, Hell's gates are closed, Satan is chained up and jinns are also locked up" and who ever dies will enter paradise.

Prayer and reading of the Qur'an

In addition to fasting, Muslims are encouraged to read the entire Qur'an. Some Muslims perform the recitation of the entire Qur'an by means of special prayers, called *Tarawih*, which are held in the mosques every night of the month, during which a whole section of the Qur'an (*Juz'*, which is 1/30 of the Qur'an) is recited. Therefore the entire Qur'an would be completed at the end of the month.

Ramadan is also a time when Muslims are to slow down from worldly affairs and focus on self-reformation, spiritual cleansing and enlightenment; this is to establish a link between themselves and God through prayer, supplication, charity, good deeds, kindness and helping others. Since it is a festival of giving and sharing, Muslims prepare special foods and buy gifts for their family and friends and for giving to the poor and needy who cannot afford it; this can involve buying new clothes, shoes and other items of need. There is also a social aspect involved the preparing of special foods and inviting people for Iftar.



In many Muslim and non-Muslim countries with large Muslim populations, markets close down in the evening to enable people to perform prayers and consume the *Iftar* meal - these markets then re-open and stay open for a good part of the night. Muslims can be seen shopping, eating, spending time with their friends and family during the evening hours.

Ramadan Festival and Eid ul-Fitr

The Islamic holiday of Eid ul-Fitr marks the end of the fasting period of Ramadan and the first day of the following month, after another new moon has been sighted. The Eid falls after 29 or 30 days of fasting, per the lunar sighting. Eid ul-Fitr means the Festival of Breaking the Fast; a special celebration is made. Food is donated to the poor ; everyone puts on their best, usually new clothes; and communal prayers are held in the early morning, followed by feasting and visiting relatives and friends. During the Ramadan Festival ,the children visit their relatives and neighbours, they kiss their elders' hand after that the elders give them candies and money. Therefore in Turkey Ramadan Festival is also called " Candy Festival (Şeker Bayramı)".



Determining the start date

Hilāl (the crescent) is typically a day (or more) after the astronomical new moon. Since the new moon indicates the beginning of the new month, Muslims can usually safely estimate the beginning of Ramadan.

So when you see the new moon you should fast the whole month (Qur'an 2:185)

