**Ramadan**

Ramadan (/ˌræməˈdɑːn/; Arabic: رمضان‎‎ Ramaḍān, IPA: [ramaˈdˤaːn];[note 1] also romanized as Ramazan, Ramadhan, or Ramathan) is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar,and is observed by Muslims worldwide as a month of fasting to commemorate the first revelation of the Quran to Muhammad according to Islamic belief. This annual observance is regarded as one of the Five Pillars of Islam.[5] The month lasts 29–30 days based on the visual sightings of the crescent moon, according to numerous biographical accounts compiled in the hadiths.

The word Ramadan comes from the Arabic root ramiḍa or ar-ramaḍ, which means scorching heat or dryness. Fasting is fardh (obligatory) for adult Muslims, except those who are suffering from an illness, travelling, are elderly, pregnant, breastfeeding, diabetic or going through menstrual bleeding.[9] Fasting the month of Ramadan was made obligatory (wājib) during the month of Sha'aban, in the second year after the Muslims migrated from Mecca to Medina. Fatwas have been issued declaring that Muslims who live in regions with a natural phenomenon such as the midnight sun or polar night should follow the timetable of Mecca.

While fasting from dawn until sunset, Muslims refrain from consuming food, drinking liquids, smoking, and engaging in sexual relations. Muslims are also instructed to refrain from sinful behavior that may negate the reward of fasting, such as false speech (insulting, backbiting, cursing, lying, etc.) and fighting.[11] Food and drinks are served daily, before dawn and after sunset.[12][13]Spiritual rewards (thawab) for fasting are also believed to be multiplied within the month of Ramadan.[14] Fasting for Muslims during Ramadan typically includes the increased offering of salat (prayers) and recitation of the Quran.

The month of Ramadan is that in which was revealed the Quran; a guidance for mankind, and clear proofs of the guidance, and the criterion (of right and wrong). And whosoever of you is present, let him fast the month, and whosoever of you is sick or on a journey, a number of other days. Allah desires for you ease; He desires not hardship for you; and that you should complete the period, and that you should magnify Allah for having guided you, and that perhaps you may be thankful.[Quran 2:18

It is believed that the Quran was first revealed to Muhammad during the month of Ramadan which has been referred to as the "best of times". The first revelation was sent down on Laylat al-Qadr (The night of Power) which is one of the five odd nights of the last ten days of Ramadan. According to hadith, all holy scriptures were sent down during Ramadan. The tablets of Ibrahim, the Torah, the Psalms, the Gospel and the Quran were sent down on 1st, 6th, 12th, 13th[note 2] and 24th Ramadan respectively.

According to the Quran, fasting was also obligatory for prior nations, and is a way to attain taqwa, fear of God.[19][Quran 2:183] God proclaimed to Muhammad that fasting for His sake was not a new innovation in monotheism, but rather an obligation practiced by those truly devoted to the oneness of God.[20] The pagans of Mecca also fasted, but only on tenth day of Muharram to expiate sins and avoid droughts.[21]

The ruling to observe fasting during Ramadan was sent down 18 months after Hijra, during the month of Sha'aban in the second year of Hijra in 624 CE.

Abu Zanad, an Arabic writer from Iraq who lived after the founding of Islam, in around 747 CE, wrote that at least one Mandaean community located in al-Jazira (modern northern Iraq) observed Ramadan before converting to Islam.[22][not in citation given]

According to Philip Jenkins, Ramadan comes "from the strict Lenten discipline of the Syrian churches".[23][dubious – discuss] However, this suggestion is based on the orientalist idea that the Qur'an itself has Syrian origins, which was refuted by Muslim academics such as M. Al-Azami.

**Important dates**

The beginning and end of Ramadan are determined by the lunar Islamic calendar.

Beginning[edit]

Ramadan beginning dates between Gregorian years 1938 and 2038.

Hilāl (the crescent) is typically a day (or more) after the astronomical new moon. Since the new moon marks the beginning of the new month, Muslims can usually safely estimate the beginning of Ramadan. However, to many Muslims, this is not in accordance with authenticated Hadiths stating that visual confirmation per region is recommended. The consistent variations of a day have existed since the time of Muhammad.

**Night of Power**

Main article: Laylat al-Qadr

Laylat al-Qadr, which in Arabic means "the night of power" or "the night of decree", is considered the holiest night of the year. This is the night in which Muslims believe the first revelation of the Quran was sent down to Muhammad stating that this night was "better than one thousand months [of proper worship], as stated in Chapter 97:3 of the Qu'ran.

Also, generally, Laylat al-Qadr is believed to have occurred on an odd-numbered night during the last ten days of Ramadan, i.e., the night of the 21st, 23rd, 25th, 27th or 29th. The Dawoodi Bohra Community believe that the 23rd night is laylat al Qadr.[29] [30]

**End**

The holiday of Eid al-Fitr (Arabic:عيد الفطر) marks the end of Ramadan and the beginning of the next lunar month, Shawwal. This first day of the following month is declared after another crescent new moon has been sighted or the completion of 30 days of fasting if no visual sighting is possible due to weather conditions. This first day of Shawwal is called Eid al-Fitr. Eid al-Fitr may also be a reference towards the festive nature of having endured the month of fasting successfully and returning to the more natural disposition (fitra) of being able to eat, drink and resume intimacy with spouses during the day.

**Religious practices**

Azim Azimzade. Ramadan of the poor people. 1938

The common practice during Ramadan is fasting from dawn to sunset. The pre-dawn meal before the fast is called the suhur, while the meal at sunset that breaks the fast is the iftar. Considering the high diversity of the global Muslim population, it is impossible to describe typical suhur or iftar meals.

Muslims also engage in increased prayer and charity during Ramadan. Ramadan is also a month where Muslims try to practice increased self-discipline. This is motivated by the Hadith, especially in Al-Bukhari[32] and Muslim,[33] that "When Ramadan arrives, the gates of Paradise are opened and the gates of hell are locked up and devils are put in chains."

**Fasting**

Ramadan is a time of spiritual reflection, improvement and increased devotion and worship. Muslims are expected to put more effort into following the teachings of Islam. The fast (sawm) begins at dawn and ends at sunset. In addition to abstaining from eating and drinking, Muslims also increase restraint, such as abstaining from sexual relations and generally sinful speech and behavior. The act of fasting is said to redirect the heart away from worldly activities, its purpose being to cleanse the soul by freeing it from harmful impurities. Ramadan also teaches Muslims how to better practice self-discipline, self-control,[35] sacrifice, and empathy for those who are less fortunate; thus encouraging actions of generosity and compulsory charity (zakat).

It becomes compulsory for Muslims to start fasting when they reach puberty, so long as they are healthy and sane, and have no disabilities or illnesses. Many children endeavour to complete as many fasts as possible as practice for later life.

Exemptions to fasting are travel, menstruation, severe illness, pregnancy, and breastfeeding. However, many Muslims with medical conditions insist on fasting to satisfy their spiritual needs, although it is not recommended by the hadith. Professionals should closely monitor such individuals who decide to persist with fasting.[37] Those who were unable to fast still must make up the days missed later.

**Suhur**

Iftar at Sultan Ahmed Mosque in Istanbul, Turkey

Each day, before dawn, Muslims observe a pre-fast meal called the suhur. After stopping a short time before dawn, Muslims begin the first prayer of the day, Fajr.[39][40] At sunset, families hasten for the fast-breaking meal known as iftar.

**Iftar**

In the evening, dates are usually the first food to break the fast; according to tradition, Muhammad broke fast with three dates. Following that, Muslims generally adjourn for the Maghrib prayer, the fourth of the five daily prayers, after which the main meal is served.

Social gatherings, many times in a buffet style, are frequent at iftar. Traditional dishes are often highlighted, including traditional desserts, and particularly those made only during Ramadan. Water is usually the beverage of choice, but juice and milk are also often available, as are soft drinks and caffeinated beverages.

In the Middle East, the iftar meal consists of water, juices, dates, salads and appetizers, one or more main dishes, and various kinds of desserts. Usually, the dessert is the most important part during iftar. Typical main dishes are lamb stewed with wheat berries, lamb kebabs with grilled vegetables, or roast chicken served with chickpea-studded rice pilaf. A rich dessert, such as luqaimat, baklava or kunafeh (a buttery, syrup-sweetened kadaifi noodle pastry filled with cheese), concludes the meal.

Over time, iftar has grown into banquet festivals. This is a time of fellowship with families, friends and surrounding communities, but may also occupy larger spaces at masjid or banquet halls for 100 or more diners.