

# RAMADAN IN A NUTSHELL

## An Introduction to Ramadan for the Non-Muslim

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### THE MONTH OF RAMADAN

The Qur'an (the final scripture) was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) during Ramadan, the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar. The lunar month starts with the sighting of the new moon's birth.

One of the greatest ways a Muslim honours the Qur'an is by reading it. Angel Jibreel would visit Muhammad (peace be upon him) every Ramadan and revise the Qur'an with him. Many of the pious Muslims of the past would close all books and focus on reading the Qur'an during Ramadan. Hence a Muslim should strive to read the Qur'an in Arabic at least once during this month.

The Qur'an consists of approximately 604 pages. This means a person can read the entire Qur'an by the last day of Ramadan by simply reading 4 pages after each of the five daily prayers (Salat).

### WHY FAST?

The significance of Ramadan was further enhanced during the second year of the Prophet Muhammad's [peace be upon him] migration (Hijrah) from Mecca to Madinah when Allah revealed the following statement: **"O you who believe, fasting is prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may gain Taqwa (piety)"** (Quran Chapter 2: Verse: 183)

Therefore Allah decreed the obligatory act of Fasting (Sawm) during the entire month

of Ramadan on all Muslims providing further clarification in Chapter 2; Verses 184-187.

In a Hadith Qudsi<sup>1</sup> Allah says: **"Fasting is Mine and I shall reward for it (as I wish). A Muslim gives up his (sexual) pleasure, food and drink for My sake. Fasting is a shield. He who fasts has two joys: a joy when he breaks his fast and a joy when he meets his Lord. The change in the breath of the mouth of he who fasts is sweeter to Allah than the smell of musk."**

Ramadan is a unique opportunity for Muslims to seek forgiveness and repentance from Allah. It is also a month of opportunity for enormous reward as explained in a Hadith where the The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said: **"He who fasts during Ramadan with faith and seeking reward from Allah will have his past sins forgiven."**(Bukhari)

### FOURTH PILLAR OF ISLAM

Fasting during the month of Ramadan is the **fourth pillar of Islam** In Islam, fasting involves abstaining from all the things that invalidate it from the break of dawn (Fajr) till sunset (Maghreb), coupled with the intention of doing so as an act of worship. Fasting the month of Ramadan is obligatory (Fard) on every Muslim who has reached the age of puberty, who is sane, pregnant and breastfeeding mothers and is able to fast without it being hazardous to his health due to illness.

Fasting has an element of superiority due to two reasons.

The first is that fasting is a personal, private and hidden action of obedience that is unseen to the naked eye. The second is that fasting suppresses the urge to engage in undesirable actions and hence provides the Muslim with strength in their worship and relationship with Allah.

### THIRD PILLAR OF ISLAM

Zakat, or giving Alms, is the **third pillar of Islam**, obligatory on every Muslim, male or female. Its core is giving a proportion of one's wealth towards the welfare of the less fortunate. In the process the wealth of the giver is purified and the receiver is saved from the humiliation of begging. Allah says in the Qur'an "Take alms of their wealth and make them pure and clean " (Qur'an Chapter 9; Verse 103).

**Zakat-ul-Fitr** is the primary charity obligatory upon all Muslims and should be given anytime during the month of Ramadan. It is levied on the individual (i.e. a specific amount is paid for each person in the household).

It must be paid before the **Eid-ul-Fitr** prayer. The Prophet (peace be upon him) urged Muslims to pay this charity in the month of Ramadan.

The other charity **Zakat ul Mal** (zakat of wealth) is levied as a percentage of wealth in excess of one's basic needs that have stayed in one's possession for one whole lunar year. Whilst this charity may be given during any time of the year it is common practice to pay this amount during Ramadan.

## DEFINITION AND PILLARS OF FASTING

The Pillars of Fasting are as follows:

1. Intention; the place of the intention is the heart. It is mandatory to have the intention at night, that is, before the break of dawn (Fajr).
2. Abstinence; abstaining from the things that break a person's fast from the break of dawn (Fajr) till sunset Maghreb along with a continued intention between these two periods.
3. A person must fast during the days of Ramadan and not during the nights.

There are also items that nullify the fast of a person, including, but not limited to:

1. Eating and drinking deliberately
2. Induced vomiting
3. Menstruation and Post-Natal Bleeding
4. Sexual Intercourse
5. Apostasy

Who is Exempt from Fasting?

1. Non- Muslims
2. The Sick (conditions apply)
3. Travelers (conditions apply)
4. Children who have not reached the age of puberty

Fasting from Prohibited Actions

Besides abstain from food, drink, and intercourse, the person must also ensure:

1. Their eyes fast from looking at unlawful things.
2. Their ears must fast from listening to music, and vain language.
3. Their tongue must fast from backbiting, slander, swearing and other similar types of speech.
4. Their hands must fast from striking and abusing others.

5. Their feet must fast from going to places that bring about sin and lead to transgression.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) taught us that if someone gets you angry you should say: **"I am fasting, I am fasting."**

## A DAY IN THE MONTH OF RAMADAN

A day in the month of Ramadan commences with the intention to Fast, waking up for the beneficial pre dawn meal (**Suhoor**), followed by the first daily prayer of **Fajr**, which is when the fasting commences.

The **Dhuhr** (midday) prayer is followed by Asr (afternoon) prayer. People are encouraged to make Supplication (**Dua**), Remembrance of Allah (**Thikr**) and to recite the Qur'an throughout the day.

Fasting concludes at sunset with the Maghreb prayer and the breaking of fast with a meal (**Iftar**). The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: **"My people will continue to be in good shape for as long as they hasten in breaking their fast..."** (Ahmad). The Way (Sunnah) of the Prophet (peace be upon him) is to break your fast with an odd number of fresh dates, if they are available, otherwise dry dates will suffice. If there are no dates at hand then the Sunnah is to drink water. (Abu Dawud).

It is recommended to pray your prayers at a **Masjid** (Mosque). Travelling to a place of worship for the final obligatory prayer of the day (**Isha**) and remaining for **Taraweeh** (nightly prayer) is a practice that Muslims adhere to during Ramadan.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: **"Whoever stands up in night prayers during Ramadan out of faith, and seeking reward from Allah, his previous sins will be forgiven."** (Muslim)

Furthermore, Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him) would engage in a greater amount of worship during the last ten days of Ramadan than the other days. One of the reasons for this is because of **Laylatul Qadar** (The Eve of Decree), which falls on one of the evenings of the odd days of the last ten days of Ramadan. Muslims should increase their reading of the Quran, night prayer, thikr (words of remembrance), charity, and other virtuous deeds.

The reward on this night is especially great. Allah says: **"Laylatul Qadr is better than one thousand months."** (Quran Chapter 97: Verse: 3). One thousand months is equivalent to the reward of 83.3 years of worship! One of the best actions a Muslim can observe during these blessed days is to detach themselves from worldly affairs by spending all their time in the mosque, engaging in the different forms of worship. This form of worship is known as **I'tikaaf**.

## TIME OF CELEBRATION

Eid Ul Fitr marks the end of Ramadan and the conclusion of Fasting with a joyful celebration which lasts for three days.

The day of Eid Ul Fitr is celebrated with a special morning prayer in congregation followed by an exchange of gifts and visiting family and friends.

A Muslim should not allow oneself to forget the purpose of Ramadan, namely, to gain **Taqwa** (piety or God-consciousness). The real test of success in Ramadan is whether or not one carries on the good deeds they did during Ramadan, throughout the rest of the year!

For more information about Ramadan visit: [www.ramadan.com.au](http://www.ramadan.com.au)

<sup>1</sup> Hadith Qudsi (Sacred Hadith) are the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) as revealed to him by Allah. Unlike the majority of Hadith which are Prophetic Hadith, the Qudsi authority is traced back to Allah and not the Prophet.