

It is Ramadan, again

Today is the first day of Ramadan, 2025. If you have neighbors, friends, or coworkers who observe Ramadan, you may notice that they do not eat or drink during the day (from dawn to sunset). They may not go out with you for dinner at noon as they might be used to, or you may notice that they perform more of their prayers. If your children have Muslim friends or classmates at school, they may come back with questions about their friends who do not eat or drink during the school day. They may come asking you “What is Ramadan?”

Ramadan is the ninth month of the Hijri calendar. The Hijri (from “Hijrah” which means migration) calendar is based on lunar months. Watching for the crescent that signifies the beginning of the new lunar months is one of the customs of Muslims. This is why the “waxing” crescent moon sometimes serves as a symbol of Islam. Muslims do not worship the moon or any other deity except for God, the Almighty. Muslims do not associate any other deity with God (Allah, with emphatic L, in the name of God in Arabic and Aramaic). Islam is a purely monotheistic religion. God says in the Qur’an (Muslims’ sacred book): **“I did not create jinn and humans except to worship Me.”** [Qur’an 51: 56]. The Qur’an also says, **“We (God - We is the royal “we” not the plural one) sent a messenger to every community: [with the message] “Worship Allah, and avoid idolatry.”** Some

of them Allah guided, while others deserved misguidance. So travel through the earth, and see what the fate of the deniers was.” [Qur’an 16:36]

Almost all Muslims, worldwide, observe Ramadan. It is the month of fasting and performing good deeds. Muslims love the month and revere it. Ramadan is neither a hunger strike nor an uncommon fad diet. During Ramadan, Muslims strive to devote themselves to worshipping God, the Almighty, reflecting on the meaning of life, the perfection of their character, and increasing God-consciousness. Feeling hungry reminds them of the blessings of having food all year long and the good health they enjoy. It also reminds them that these blessings should not be taken for granted or because they deserve them. God the Almighty, the All-Giver, the Bestower, should be thanked for all these blessings.

Ramadan is a revered month. It is not a holy month as in worshipping the month, but because of all the good deeds Muslims strive to do and work hard to achieve. Ramadan is revered for its meaning and because of the blessings Muslims believe are bestowed upon them during the month. Muslims were taught that good deeds in Ramadan are multiplied. Ramadan is a remarkable, special month, observed and fasted by Muslims.

In Islam fasting means abstaining from eating, drinking (even water), and



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having intimate relations between spouses from dawn. Relieved of these basic human needs for a restricted period, a Muslim focuses on spiritual development, his innermost feelings, and emotions. When our bodies are relieved of all the food and drinks we consume daily. When our digestive system takes some rest, our souls become closer to some form of purification. We become closer to God. We try to behave like angels whom Muslims believe do not eat, drink, or have sex. They were created to worship God alone and that’s what we humans try to do.

Muslims devote themselves to increased prayers, charitable giving, and acts of kindness during Ramadan while strengthening family and community bonds. This sacred month is a time for deep reflection, spiritual renewal, and the cultivation of self-discipline, patience, gratitude, and forgiveness. It presents a profound opportunity to deepen one’s connection with God. Socially, Ramadan fosters unity, bringing families and friends together in joyful gatherings to break their fast. It is also a time to reconcile differences, extend forgiveness, and embrace love.

Fasting during Ramadan is one of the Five Pillars of Islam, the foundational acts of worship that define a Muslim’s faith and practice. These pillars include bearing witness that there is no deity worthy of worship except Allah and that Muhammad is His Messenger, performing the five daily prayers, giving Zakat (almsgiving – 2.5% of one’s annual savings), fasting during Ramadan, and undertaking the pilgrimage (Hajj) for those who are physically and financially able. Interestingly, many assume these pillars constitute Islam itself, whereas the Prophet Muhammad clarified that Islam is built upon them, but it extends far beyond them.

Fasting—abstaining from food and drink—is not a form of worship exclusive to Islam. Many other religions incorporate fasting into their spiritual practices, though the manner, duration, and specific restrictions vary. In different faith traditions, fasting often involves abstaining from something cherished or valuable for a designated period. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said that God said, “Fasting is for Me, and I alone will reward it. He abandons his desires, food, and drink for My sake. Fasting is a shield. The fasting person experiences two joys: one at breaking his fast and another when he meets his Lord. And the breath of a fasting person is more fragrant to Allah than the scent of musk.”

In Islam, fasting is a

highly encouraged act of worship, serving as a means of spiritual purification and self-discipline. It helps expiate sins, refine the soul, and cultivate righteousness. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) advised Muslims to fast regularly throughout the year, not only during Ramadan, as a means of drawing closer to God and nurturing spiritual growth.

Although fasting is an obligatory act of worship in Islam, it is forbidden for those whose medical conditions would worsen due to fasting, as preserving life takes precedence. Exceptions are also made for nursing mothers, young children, travelers on long journeys, and others who may face undue hardship. Those exempted are required to make up for the missed fasts at a later time or, in certain cases, provide compensation through feeding the needy.

Among the many virtues of Ramadan, fasting cultivates self-discipline and fosters empathy for those who endure hunger daily. It instills gratitude for the countless blessings one enjoys, deepening awareness of God’s mercy. Through fasting, a person realizes that their blessings are not a mark of superiority but a test—an opportunity to demonstrate to the Bestower, Allah, how they will use and appreciate what has been granted to them.

Ramadan offers countless opportunities for self-improvement, encouraging humility, generosity, and a greater inclination

toward good deeds. Many Muslims dedicate this sacred month to acts of charity and deep self-reflection. Through fasting, one cultivates self-control and gains profound insights into their character and the nature of others. Hunger and thirst reveal a person’s true self, exposing weaknesses that can be acknowledged and refined, fostering personal growth.

The conclusion of Ramadan is marked by Eid al-Fitr, the “Festival of Breaking the Fast.” This joyous occasion is celebrated with communal prayers, festive gatherings, and expressions of gratitude. Muslims adorn their homes, wear their finest attire, and attend prayers at mosques or open spaces. A key tradition before the Eid prayer is Zakat al-Fitr – a mandatory charity, traditionally given in food but now often in monetary form – to ensure that the less fortunate can also partake in the celebrations. The common greeting exchanged is “Eid Mubarak,” meaning “Blessed Festival.” Families and friends come together to share meals, exchange gifts, and rejoice after a month of physical and spiritual renewal.

By fasting, Muslims perform a vital act of worship that was practiced by all Prophets, including Nuh (Noah), Ibraheem (Abraham), Musa (Moses), Isa (Jesus), and Muhammad (peace be upon them all).

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