



**Ramadan, Islam's Holy Month**

**Ramadan** is the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar, observed by practicing Muslims as a month of fasting, reflection, and prayer. It commemorates the first revelation of Muhammed and, as such, observance of the month is considered one of the five pillars of Islam.

### **When Is Ramadan?**

As part of the Islamic lunar calendar, Ramadan's dates vary according to the lunar cycle. In 2023, Ramadan begins on the evening of Wednesday, March 22 and ends at sundown on Thursday, May 20. The observance of the new crescent moon marks the official start of Ramadan.

Ramadan lasts 29 or 30 days, depending on the year. The holiday of Eid al-Fitr marks the end of Ramadan and the beginning of the next lunar month.



## **Ramadan History**

Ramadan celebrates the date in 610 CE when, according to Islamic tradition, the Quran was first revealed to the Prophet Muhammad. During the month, Muslims the world over are called upon to renew their spiritual commitment through daily fasting, prayer, and acts of charity. Although the fasting elements are perhaps the most noticeable parts of observation, Ramadan is much more than abstaining from food and drink. It is a time to purify the soul, refocus attention on God, and practice self-discipline and self-sacrifice.

## **Ramadan Worship and Prayer**



During Ramadan, prayer is an important element for much of the Muslim faithful. Muslims are encouraged to pray and attend a mosque for special services. Nightly prayers called *tarawill* are common, as is rereading the Quran over the course of the month, often in the form of an epic prayer. At the end of Ramadan, before the final fast is broken, Muslims also recite a prayer called the *takbeer*, which gives praise to Allah and acknowledges his supremacy.

### **Fasting**

Fasting during the month of Ramadan, called the *sawm*, is considered one of the five pillars of Islam that shape a Muslim's life. The Arabic word for fasting means 'to refrain,' not only from food and drink but also from evil actions, thoughts, or words.

The physical fast takes place daily from sunrise to sunset. Before dawn, those observing Ramadan will gather for a pre-fast meal called the *suhoor*; at dusk, the fast will be broken with a meal called the *iftar*. Both meals may be communal, but the iftar is an especially social affair when extended families gather to eat and mosques welcome the needy with food.





## Charity

The practice of charity or *zakat* is another of Islam's five pillars. Muslims are encouraged to give regularly as part of their faith (*zakat*), or they may make a *sadaqah*, an additional charitable gift. During Ramadan, some Muslims choose to make particularly generous *sadaqahs* as a demonstration of their faithfulness.



## Eid Al-Fitr

The end of Ramadan is marked by the Islamic holy day of Eid Al-Fitr, sometimes just called Eid. Eid begins on the first day of the Islamic lunar month of Shawwal, and the celebration may last as long as three days.

According to custom, observant Muslims must rise before dawn and begin the day with a special prayer called the Salatul Fajr. After that, they must brush their teeth, shower, and put on their best clothes and perfume or cologne. It's traditional to greet passers-by by saying 'Eid Mubarak' ('Blessed Eid') or 'Eid Sain' ('Happy Eid'). As with Ramadan, acts of charity are encouraged during Eid, as is the recitation of special prayers at a mosque.



### Important dates

**Beginning** - Ramadan beginning dates between Gregorian years 1938 and 2038; including an error on the ante-penultimate line. Because the *Hilāl*, or crescent moon,

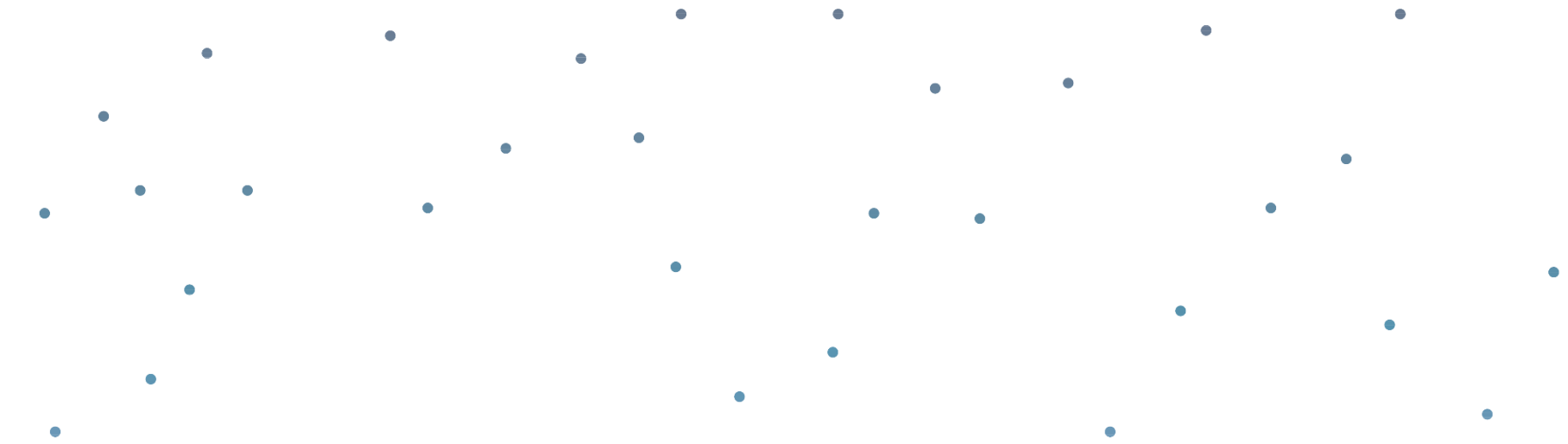


typically occurs approximately one day after the new moon, Muslims can usually estimate the beginning of Ramadan; however, many prefer to confirm the opening of Ramadan by direct visual observation of the crescent.

**Night of Destiny - *Qadr Night*** is considered the holiest night of the year. It is generally believed to have occurred on an odd-numbered night during the last ten days of Ramadan; the Dawoodi Bohra believe that *Laylat al-Qadr* was the twenty-third night of Ramadan.

***Eid*** - The holiday of *Eid al-Fitr*, which marks the end of Ramadan and the beginning of *Shawwal*, the next lunar month, is declared after a crescent new moon has been sighted or after completion of thirty days of fasting if no sighting of the moon is possible. *Eid* celebrates of the return to a more natural disposition of eating, drinking, and marital intimacy.





*Arabian  
Night*

