

*al-'Eid* which is composed of *Salat* followed by an address by the *Imam* (leader).

This is a major holiday for Muslims. On this day, they visit many relatives and friends and give gifts to the children. 'Eid is, first, a day of thanks to Allah, and next, a gathering of families and friends. All financially able Muslims are required to give *Sadaqat al-Fitr*, a form of charity, on behalf of each and every person of the family, including newborns. This charity is given to the poor and needy during the Ramadan, but before the 'Eid prayers.

#### 'EID AL-ADHA

This is the celebration of sacrifice which comes two months and ten days after 'Eid al-Fitr. Muslims remember Prophet Abraham sacrificing a lamb in place of his son, Ishmael. On this day, after *Salat al-'Eid* (the prescribed 'Eid prayers), Muslims sacrifice an animal: a ram, goat, sheep, cow, or camel. The meat is divided into three parts: one part is distributed among the poor and needy, one part is distributed among relatives and friends, and one part is used by the family. This is also a major holiday for Muslims to visit each other and give gifts to the children. 'Eid al-Adha is celebrated on the 10th of Dhul Hijja, the 12th month of the Islamic lunar calendar, and again depends upon the crescent sighting for the first of the month. For those people who have gone to Makkah for Hajj (the pilgrimage), staying in the Plain of Arafat on the 9th of Dhul Hijja is the most important event. However, for those not performing Hajj, 'Eid al-Adha is the 10th of Dhul Hijja and one of the two most important celebrations of the year. In the Arabian Peninsula, the calendar follows the local crescent sighting criterion. In the U.S., the local crescent sighting is used for the determination of dates. Eid al-Adha may be celebrated for four days from the 10th to the 13th of Dhul Hijja.

#### CULTURAL CELEBRATIONS

There are many other occasions which Muslims celebrate that are developments of local cultures and traditions. Some celebrations are more widespread than others. However, these are innovations in Islam and have no foundation in the Quran, the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (SAW), or practices of the *Sahaba*, the companions of the Prophet (RA). These innovative celebrations are not found in the early generations of Muslims. In fact, Prophet Muhammad (SAW) has declared all innovations (in the religion of Islam) to be heresy (*bid'ah*) and he declared that all *bid'ah* leads to misguidance (*dalalah*) and all *dalalah* leads to the hell-fire. The following celebrations are religious/cultural innovations which are discouraged by the informed Islamic scholars.

##### 'Eid Milad Al-Nabi or Mawlid Al-Nabi

This is the most common innovative celebration in the Muslim world. It is supposed to celebrate the "birthday" of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW). However, there is no authentic record that the Prophet (SAW) or his companions celebrated his birthday. Besides, there is no verifiable proof of the Prophet's date of birth. It is an innovation of later times, reported to have been introduced by the Fatimids in Egypt, a very corrupt *Shi'ite* sub-sect.

##### Laylat Al-Isra & Al-Me'raj or Shab-E-Me'raj

A verse in the Quran (17:1) states that the Messenger of Allah (SAW) was taken one night to Jerusalem and brought back to Makkah. In addition, authentic traditions add that he was led to the Heavens to visit the signs of Allah. However, there is no authentic day or date of this event recorded nor did the Prophet (SAW) or his companions ever celebrate this night.

Despite the lack of evidence, many Muslims continue to celebrate it.

##### Laylat Nisf Sha'ban or Shab-E-Barat

This is a celebration which takes place on the 15th night of the 8th month of the Islamic lunar calendar, Sha'ban, but has no foundation in the Quran or teachings of the Prophet (SAW).

##### Birthdays and death days of saints (awlia-Allah) and Imams

Some *Sunni* Muslims celebrate such days for many assumed saintly persons and *Shi'as* celebrate such days for their assumed Imams. There is no evidence to permit such celebrations in Islam. There are related celebrations held annually at the graves and mausoleums of reputedly virtuous men (assumed saints or *awlia-Allah*) of the past era. Such celebrations on or off the grave sites are not permitted according to the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW).

#### NATIONAL CELEBRATIONS AND HOLIDAYS

Celebrations such as Independence Day, Republic Day, Memorial Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, and others are rooted in the secular lives of nations. Such celebrations are not mandated in Islam and have no Islamic significance.

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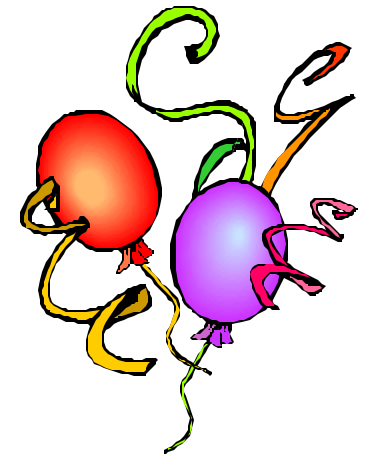
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# ISLAMIC CELEBRATIONS



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## IN THE NAME OF GOD, MOST GRACIOUS, MOST MERCIFUL

In Islam, celebration is a form of thanking Allah, the One True God. Celebration, in Islam, is merry-making, going out to parties, visiting and meeting friends and relatives, and having clean fun it is also a form of physical and spiritual purification. Islamic celebrations include taking a bath, putting on clean or new clothes, wearing perfume and going to the mosque or a place of congregation for *Salat*, a form of prescribed prayers. The Islamic celebration of Eid is also a day when children and adults may get new clothes and gifts. The dates and days of celebration are set according to the Islamic calendar.

### THE ISLAMIC CALENDAR

The Islamic calendar consists of twelve lunar months. A new month begins with the sighting of the new crescent. Since lunar months are 29 or 30 days long, a year has 354 or 355 days, 10 or 11 days shorter than the solar year. Another characteristic of Islamic months is that the number of days of a month are not fixed. For example, the month of Ramadan may be 30 days in one year and 29 days in another year. In this age of advanced astronomy and mathematics, it is possible to calculate the first of the month years ahead of time, but conservative interpretations of the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad(SAW) require Muslims to see the new crescent physically before announcing the first day of the month. Hence, there is uncertainty in fixing the date. In practice, Muslims look toward the western horizon for the new crescent. on the 29th of the month, immediately after sunset. If the crescent is not sighted they complete 30 days of the month, then start the new month. If the moon is sighted on the 29th, the new month has already begun with the sunset.

The twelve months of the Islamic calendar are:

Muharram, Safar, Rabi' Al-Awwal, Rabi' Ath-Thani, Jumada Al-Ula, Jumada Ath-Thaniya, Rajab, Sha'ban, Ramadan, Shawwal, Dhu al-Qi'dah and Dhu al-Hijjah.

The moon itself is not holy or sacred in Islam. The moon, as a symbol which appears on flags and minarets, may have been an adaptation from the Romans or the Turks in the early period of Islam, but after the period of the companions of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW). Islamic teachings do not place any significance on the moon, sun, or other heavenly objects except as creations and signs of Allah.

### PRESCRIBED PRAYERS (SALAT) AND THE TIME TABLE

The *Salat* is a form of worship, a celebration of the holiness, praise, and glorification of Allah and the renewal of dedication of oneself to Him. Every adult Muslim is required to perform *Salat* five times a day. For the preparation of the *Salat* time table, the position of the sun in relation to a location on the earth is used: of that is, sunrise, meridian, and sunset. Before sunrise but after dawn (which commences 80 to 90 minutes before sunrise), is the time for the morning or *Fajr* prayer. Immediately after the meridian is the beginning of early afternoon or *Zuhr* prayer, which lasts midway to sunset. From midway to sunset till shortly before sunset is the mid-afternoon or *'Asr* prayer time. Immediately after sunset is the *Maghrib* prayer time, which lasts until the disappearance of twilight (approximately an hour). After *Maghrib* until dawn is the *'Isha* or night time prayer. Each of the prayers lasts five to ten minutes, but it must be done within its own time slot. All Muslims who have attained puberty are required to perform prescribed prayers (*Salat*) at the proper time. A brief washing is required as a preparation for the prayers.

The following weekly and annual celebrations are mandated in Islamic textual sources, that is, the Quran and the Hadith.

### YAWM AL-JUMU'AH

The literal meaning of these two words is "the day of congregation", which is Friday. Muslims gather in the *masjid* (mosque) for a *khutba* (sermon or address) followed by *Salat* led by an *Imam*. After the *Salat*, people meet each other in the masjid and may visit relatives and friends. In Islam there is no Sabbath; therefore, there is no mandatory closing of businesses on Friday, except for the duration of congregational services. However, in a majority of Muslim countries, Friday is the weekly holiday, sometimes combined with Thursday or Saturday. In the West, Muslims take a couple of hours from their jobs or businesses to go to the Masjeed on Friday. The Friday prayer, held in the early afternoon, lasts less than an hour in general.

In large work places where many Muslims are employed, Muslims use a room and prepare it for the Friday *Salat*. In some places, a community center room is rented for a couple of hours on Friday for holding the congregation. Since a part of the *Salat* requires prostrating and sitting on the floor, it is covered with clean sheets or rugs.

### RAMADAN, THE MONTH OF FASTING

Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar and is known as the month of fasting. During Ramadan, Muslims get up before dawn, 2-3 hours before sunrise, and eat a pre-dawn meal. There is no eating, drinking, or sexual activity between dawn and sunset. In addition, Muslims must implement the moral code of Islam very strictly. The violation thereof nullifies their fast. During the night, Muslims eat, drink (intoxicants are forbidden), and carry on their normal daily activities.

### LAYLAT AL-QADR

The literal meaning is "the night of decree," "the night of measure," or "the night of value." It is sometimes translated as "the night of power." The worship and deeds of this night carry more value than the worship and works of one thousand months. This is the night when angels descend with the decree of Allah. This night may be any of the odd nights of Ramadan during the last ten days, meaning, *Laylat al-Qadr* may be the 21<sup>st</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup>, 27<sup>th</sup>, or 29th night of Ramadan. Some Muslims celebrate only on the 27th night and, by doing so, they may be missing the real *Laylat al-Qadr*. During these nights, Muslims stay awake all night reading and studying the Quran, listening to religious speeches, and performing *Salat*. They go home for the pre-dawn meal to prepare for the fast, and naturally, they need to sleep the next day.

### I'TEKAF

Some Muslims take time off from their work for the entire last ten days of Ramadan and stay in the masjid, day and night, until the end of Ramadan. This is called *I'tikaf* or isolation from the worldly affairs. Those who are in *I'tikaf* are allowed to go out for necessities only, such as for food and to use the bathroom and shower, if not found within the Masjeed area.

### 'EID AL-FITR

The first day of the month following Ramadan is 'Eid al-Fitr. This is the celebration of fast-breaking. Muslims watch the western horizon immediately after sunset on the 29th day of Ramadan for the crescent. If the crescent is sighted, it is the first day of the new month and the beginning of 'Eid day. If the crescent is not sighted within ½ an hour after sunset on the 29th day of Ramadan, the Muslims complete 30 days of fasting. Either way, the 1st of Shawwal, the 10th month of the Islamic lunar calendar is 'Eid al-Fitr. On 'Eid day, Muslims gather in a larger facility than the neighborhood Masjeed and join in *Salat*