



Eid Al-Fitr

Rituals & Celebrations



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Introduction

After the last night's moon sighting, indicating that the blessed month of Ramadan is over, Muslims wake for the Dawn Prayer and the beginning of a very special day.

In the early morning, Muslims bathe and put on their best clothes in preparation for a special day with special rituals, the day of `Eid Al-Fitr. Muslims can be seen walking and driving to the praying area, carrying Prayer rugs and glorifying Allah. His or her words ringing out – "Allah is great, there is none worthy of worship but Allah; Allah is great, Praise be to Him."

It is a day of joy, thanksgiving, worship, brotherhood, solidarity, and morality. A Muslim is encouraged to celebrate by glorifying Allah, and reminded that the ability to love life and to celebrate is only one of Allah's bounties.

The dates and days of celebration are set according to the Islamic calendar.



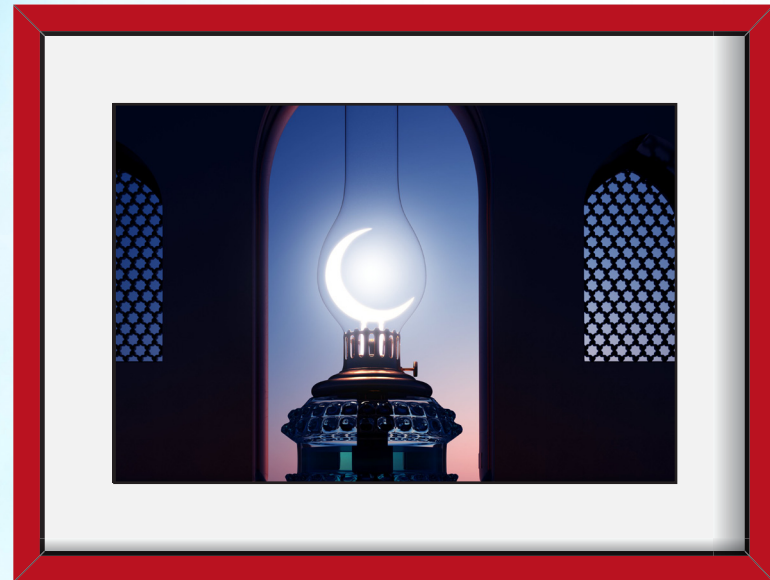
Islamic Calendar

The Islamic calendar consists of twelve lunar-based 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 is 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 (peace be upon him) require Muslims to see the new crescent physically before announcing the first day of the month. Hence, there is uncertainty in fixing the date.

The twelve months of the Islamic calendar are Muharram, Safar, Rabi` Awwal, Rabi` Thani, Jumada Awwal, Jumada Thani, Rajab, Sha`ban, Ramadan, Shawwal, Dhul-Qi`dah and Dhul-Hijjah.



The Concept of `Eid in Islam

In Arabic "Eid" means something which returns and is repeated every certain period of time. The word "Eid", however, has evolved to mean a festivity.

There are two such `Eids. The first is called 'Eid Al-Fitr (Festival of Fast-Breaking). It falls on the first day of the month of Shawwal the tenth month of Muslim year, following the month of Ramadan in which the Qur'an was revealed and which is the month of Fasting.

The second is called `Eid Al-Adha (Festival of Sacrifice). It falls on the tenth day of Dhul-Hijjah, the last month of the Muslim year, following completion of the course of Hajj (pilgrimage to Makkah), an extremely devotional course

The Islamic `Eids are unique in every way. To them there can be no similar in any other religion or any other sociopolitical system.

Besides their highly spiritual and moral characteristics, they have matchless qualities:

1- Each `Eid is a wholesome celebration of remarkable achievement of the individual Muslim in the service of God.



The first `Eid comes after an entire month of “absolute” fasting during the days of the month. The second `Eid marks the completion of Hajj to Mecca, a course in which the Muslim handsomely demonstrates his renouncement of the mundane concerns and hearkens only to the eternal voice of God

2- Each `Eid is a thanksgiving day where the Muslim assemble in a brotherly and joyful atmosphere to offer their gratitude to God for helping them to fulfill their spiritual obligations prior to the `Eid.

This form of thanksgiving is not confined to spiritual devotion and verbal expression. It goes far beyond that to manifest itself in a handsome shape of social and humanitarian spirit. The Muslims who have completed the fasting of Ramadan express their thanks to God by means of distributing alms among the poor and needy.

Similarly, the Muslims who have completed the course of Hajj at Mecca, as well as those who are at home, offer their sacrifices by slaughtering oblations to be distributed among the poor and needy. The distribution of alms and oblations constitutes a major part of the `Eid’s highlights.

This Islamic form of thanksgiving is a wholesome combination of spiritual devotion and humanitarian benevolence, a combination which cannot be found except in Islam.



3- Each `Eid is a Day of Remembrance. Even in their most joyful times the Muslims make a fresh start of the Day by a plural session of worship to God. They pray to Him and glorify His name to demonstrate their remembrance of His favors.

Along with that course, they remember the needy by extending a hand of help, the grieved by showing them sympathy and consolation, the sick by cheerful visits and utterances of good wishes, the absentees by cordial greetings and sincere considerateness, etc.

4- Each `Eid is a day of victory. The individual who succeeds in securing his spiritual rights and growth receives the `Eid with a victorious spirit. The individual who faithfully observes the duties, which are associated with the `Eid, is a triumphant one. He proves that he holds a strong command over his desires, exercises a sound self-control and enjoys the taste of disciplinary life.

And once a person acquires these qualities he has achieved his greatest victory; because the person who knows how to control himself and discipline his desires is free from sin and wrong, from fear and cowardice, from vice and indecency, from jealousy and greed, from humiliation and all other causes of enslavement. So, when he receives the `Eid, which marks the achievement of this freedom, he is in fact celebrating his victory, and the `Eid thus becomes a day of victory



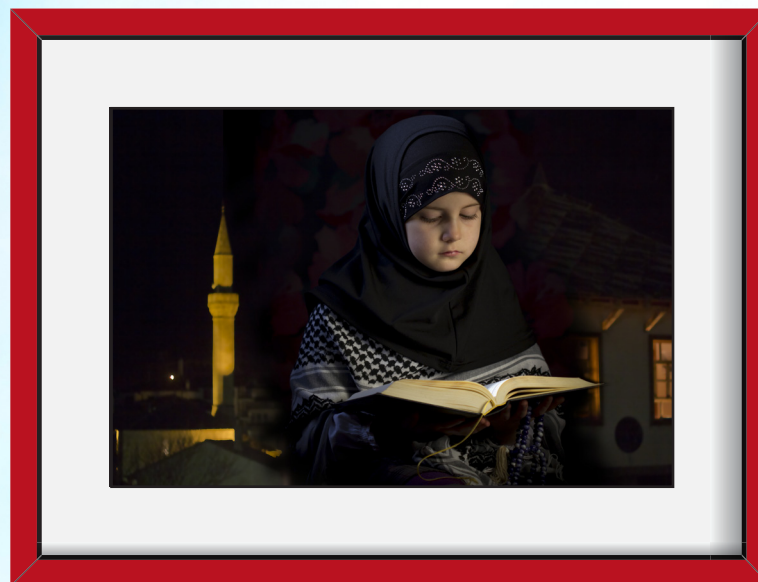
5- Each `Eid is a Harvest Day. All the good workers in the service of God, all the faithful believers reap the fruits of their good deeds on the Day, as God grants His mercy and blessings abundantly.

The Islamic society, on the other hand, collects the due subscriptions to religious brotherhood and social responsibility, in which subscriptions are paid in the form of mutual love, sympathy and concern.

Every member of the Islamic society will be reaping some fruits or collecting some revenue in one way or another. God gives infinitely, especially to those who are sincerely concerned with the general welfare of their fellow believers. Those beneficiaries who cannot give will receive, along with God's enormous grants, the contributions of their fellow benefactors. The haves and have-nots will all enjoy the providence of God in a most plural fashion, and the Day will indeed be a good harvest day

6- Each `Eid is a day of forgiveness. When the Muslims assemble in the congregation of the day, they all wholeheartedly pray for forgiveness and strength of faith. And God has assured those who approach Him with sincerity of His mercy and forgiveness.

In that pure assembly and highly spiritual congregation any true Muslim would feel ashamed of himself before God to hold any enmity or ill feelings toward his brethren. A true Muslim would be deeply impressed by this brotherly and spiritual assembly, and would overcome his ill feelings if he has been exposed to any.



Consequently, he would find himself moving along with others responding to the spirit of the Day to purify his heart and soul. In this case, he would forgive those who might have wronged him; because he himself would be praying for God's forgiveness, and would do his best to acquire it.

The spirit of this highly devotional assembly would teach him that if he forgives he will be forgiven. And when he forgives, the virtue of forgiveness will be mercifully exercised by God, and widely exchanged between the Muslims. And that marks the day as a day of forgiveness.

7- Each `Eid is a day of peace. When the Muslim establishes peace within his heart by obeying the law of God and leading a disciplinary life, he has certainly concluded a most inviolable treaty of peace with God. Once a person is at peace with God, he is at peace with himself and, consequently, with the rest of the universe.

So when he celebrates the `Eid in the right manner, he is actually celebrating the conclusion of a peace treaty between himself and God, and this marks the `Eid as a day of peace.

That is the proper meaning of an Islamic `Eid: a day of peace and thanksgiving, a day of forgiveness and moral victory, a day of good harvest and remarkable achievements, and a day of festive remembrance. An Islamic `Eid is all this and much more; because it is a Day of Islam, a Day of God.



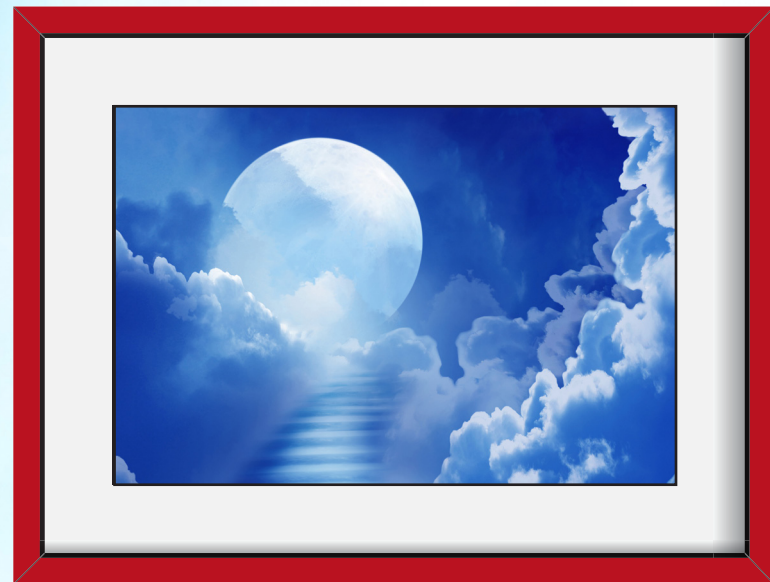
ʿEid Al-Fitr

The first day of the month following Ramadan is ʿEid Al-Fitr (ʿEid of Breaking the Fast). 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 beginning of ʿEid day. If the crescent is not sighted within $\frac{1}{2}$ 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 ʿEid Al-Fitr.

On ʿEid day, Muslims gather in a larger facility than the neighborhood masjid and join in Salat Al-ʿEid which is composed of salah followed by an address by the imam (leader of the prayer).

This is a major holiday for the Muslims. On this day, they visit many relatives and friends and give gifts to the children.

ʿEid is, first, a day of thanks to Allah, and next, a gathering of families and friends. All financially able Muslims are re-



quired to give Sadaqat Al-Fitr, a form of charity, on behalf of each and every person of the family, including newborns, to the poor and needy during the Ramadan but before the `Eid Prayers.

There are a number of etiquettes and acts of Sunnah that the Muslim should observe on that day, including:

1. Ghusl (taking a bath):

One of the good manners of `Eid is to take bath before going out to the Prayer. It was reported that Sa`id ibn Jubayr said: "Three things are Sunnah on `Eid: to walk (to the prayer-place), to take a bath, and to eat before coming out (if it's Eid Al-Fitr)."

2. Eating before coming out:

One should not come out to the prayer-place on `Eid Al-Fitr before eating some dates, because of the hadith narrated by Al-Bukhari from Anas ibn Malik who said: "The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) would not go out in the morning of `Eid Al-Fitr until he had eaten some dates... and he would eat an odd number." On `Eid-ul-Adha, on the other hand, it is Mustahab (recommended) not to eat until after the Prayer, when one should eat from the meat of one's sacrifice.

3. Takbir on the day of `Eid: This is one of the greatest Sunnahs of this day. Al-Daraqutni and others reported that

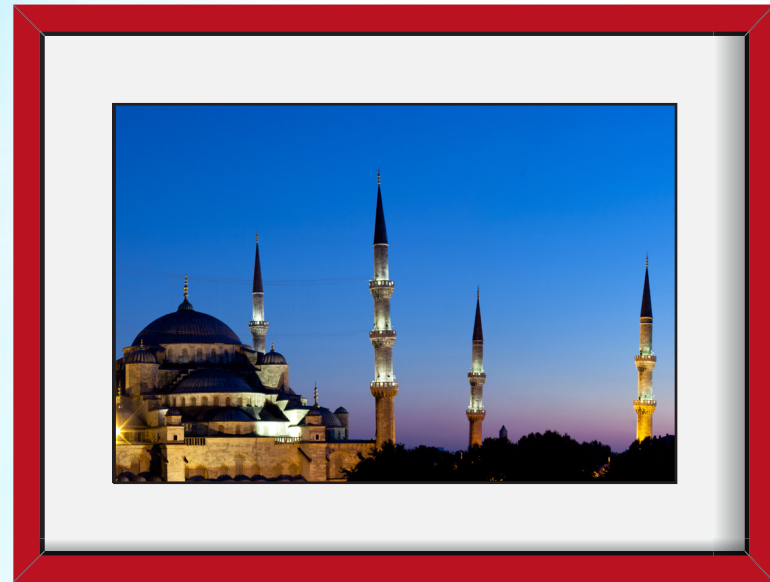


when Ibn `Umar came out on `Eid Al-Fitr and `Eid-ul-Adha, he would strive hard in making Takbir until he reached the prayer-place, then he would continue making Takbir until the Imam came.

4. Congratulating one another: People may exchange congratulations and good greetings on `Eid, no matter what form the words take. For example they may say to one another, "Taqabbal Allahu minnaa wa minkum (may Allah accept from us and from you our good deeds!)". Jubayr ibn Nufayr said: "At the time of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) when people met one another on the day of `Eid, they would say, 'Taqabbal Allahu minnaa wa minka.'" (Reported by Ibn Hajar)

5. Wearing one's best clothes for `Eid: Jabir (may Allah be pleased with him) said: "The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) had a Jubbah (cloak) that he would wear on `Eid and on Fridays." Al-Bayhaqi reported that Ibn `Umar used to wear his best clothes on `Eid, so men should wear the best clothes they have when they go out for `Eid.

6. Changing route on returning from Prayer-place: Jabir ibn `Abdullah (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) used to change his routes on the day of `Eid. (Reported by Al-Bukhari)



`Eid Prayers

The `Eid prayer is to be held outdoors in a large open ground. In inclement weather, or due to a lack of adequate arrangements, `Eid prayer is sometimes performed in the mosques. Muslims can be seen walking and driving to the praying area, carrying prayer rugs and glorifying God. His or her words ringing out: "Allahu Akbar, Allahu Akbar, Allahu Akbar, La Ilaha Illa Allah, Allahu Akbar, Allahu Akbar wa lillahi El-Hamd" (God is the Greatest, God is the Greatest, God is the Greatest, there is none worthy of worship but God; God is the Greatest, God is the Greatest, Praise be to Him.)

As Muslim families begin to congregate at the prayer place, the praising of God is joined with words of congratulations. Children dart about in anticipation of gifts and feasts, older people reflect on the success of Ramadan and the Magnificence of God.

A quiet hush then spreads across the crowd as the `Eid prayer begins. It differs slightly from the normal prayers, and although it is not obligatory, it is highly recommended that Muslims attend.

Muslims stand shoulder to shoulder and give thanks to God not only for the joy of Ramadan, but also for the countless blessings He bestows upon us every day.



Performance of `Eid Prayers

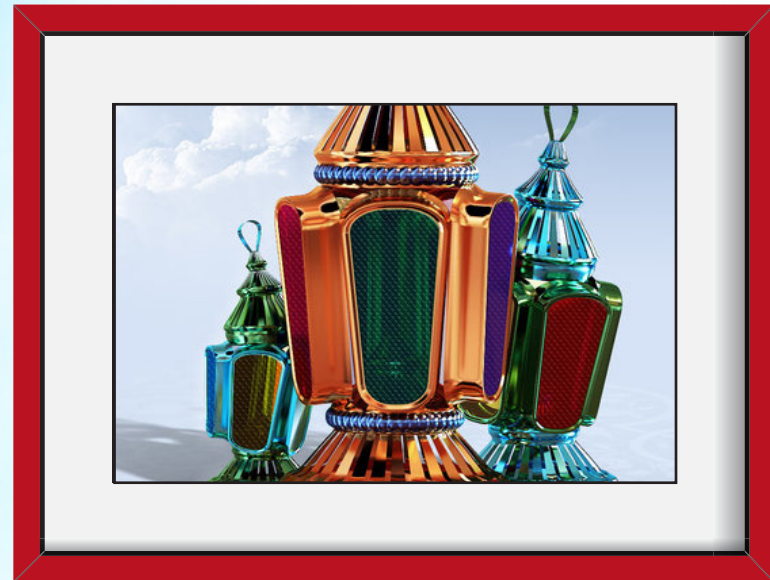
1- As on Friday, every worshipper should go to the `Eid Congregation in his best, neat, tidy and high-spirited. In the mosque or the place of assembly a certain verbal prayer is said before the actual prayer begins. This is known as Takbir.

2- The time of the `Eid prayers is any time after sunrise and before noon. No adhan or iqamah is required. The prayer consists of two units with the Imam reciting in each the Al-Fatihah (the 1st chapter of the Qur'an) and another passage from the Qur'an audibly.

3- The Imam declares his intention to lead the prayer saying Allahu Akbar (God is the Greatest of all), then he repeats the same utterance seven times, raising his hands up to the ears and dropping them by his sides at the end of each utterance.

On completion of the seventh Takbir (utterance) he places the right hand over the left one under the navel as in other prayers. The worshippers follow the Imam in these movements step by step, doing and saying exactly the same

4- At the end of the first unit, the Imam rises up for the second, saying Allahu Akbar. Then he adds five such utterances doing the same thing as he did in the first unit, and followed by the congregation in a like manner



5- After the prayer is completed in two units, the Imam delivers a sermon of two parts with a short recess in between. The first part is begun by saying Allahu Akbar, nine times and the second by making same utterance seven times. The rest of the sermon goes along the lines of exhortation and advice like those of the Friday sermon

6- We must draw the attention to the matter of sadaqat Al-Fitr (the charity of breaking the fast). This is an obligatory tax, whereby every individual Muslim who can afford it must give at least one full meal, or its value, to the poor.

If he has any dependents, he must do the same thing for each one of his dependents. For example, if he provides for himself and three dependents, he has to distribute as a minimum four full meals or their value to the needy.

This charity should be distributed early enough before the Eid-I-Fitr prayer so that the poor may be able to receive the Day in a festive and cheerful spirit

7. In the sermon of the Second 'Eid, the Imam should draw the attention to the duty of Sacrifice. On the day of `Eid Al-Adha (Festival of Sacrifice) every Muslim with means is to offer an oblation. A goat or sheep suffices for one household. A cow or steer suffices for seven different households. It is preferable to slaughter the animal of Sacrifice on the `Eid day after prayers. But if it is slaughtered on the second or the third day, it will be accepted. With regard to the meats of the slaughtered animals the Qur'an stipulates these instructions:



“Eat of them and feed the poor man who is contented and the beggar...” (Al-Hajj 22:63)

In the same reference, the Holy Qur’an declares that God is neither interested in nor does He get the meats of the oblations or their blood; but it is the piety of His worshippers that He gets and is interested in

It should be repeated that the `Eid prayers do not substitute for the Fajr (obligatory early morning) Prayers, and cannot themselves be substituted for by any other prayers

The Takbir, which is said before the prayers of both `Eid and after the ordinary congregations prayers offered during the three days following the second `Eid, is called Takbir At-Tashriq. It goes as follows:

Allahu Akbar, (thrice)

La illaha illa Allah

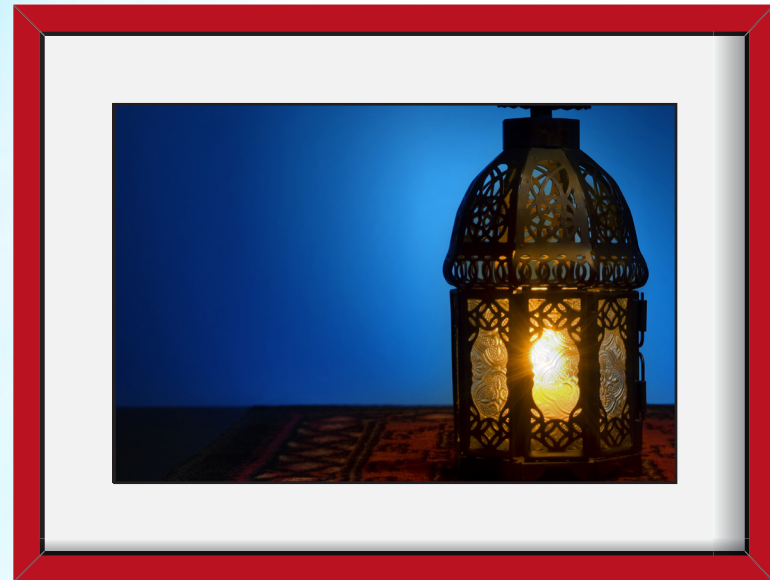
Allahu Akbaru (twice) wa lil-Lahi-l-hamd.

This Takbir means:

God is the Greatest, (three times)

There is no god but the One God.

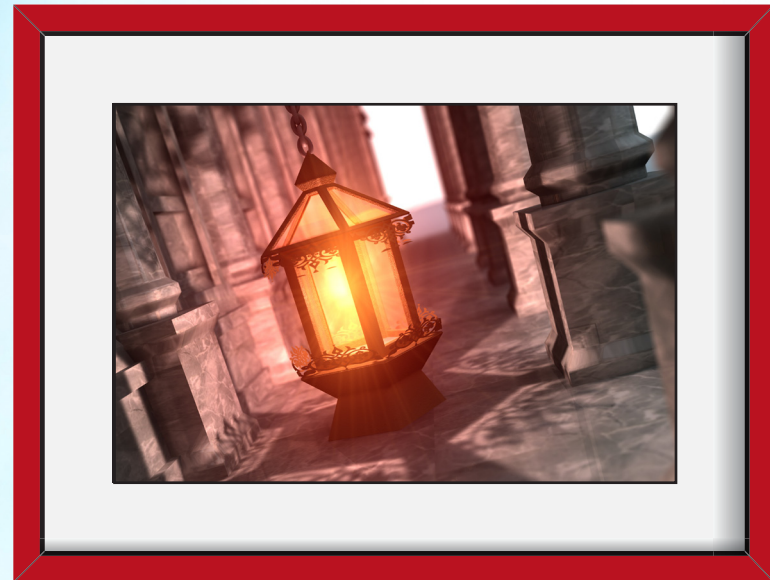
God is the Greatest, (twice), and praise be to Him



Zakat Al-Fitr

Before the prayer begins a special charity is to be offered. It is called Zakat Al-Fitr. Each adult Muslim, who is financially able, is expected to offer a small amount, roughly equivalent to \$10 U.S, from which foodstuff is bought and distributed to the poor.

Ramadan was a time when Muslims attempt to give generously and the celebration at the conclusion of Ramadan is conducted with the same spirit of generosity, ensuring that all Muslims have the opportunity to enjoy the day with feasting and celebration.



ʿEid Celebration

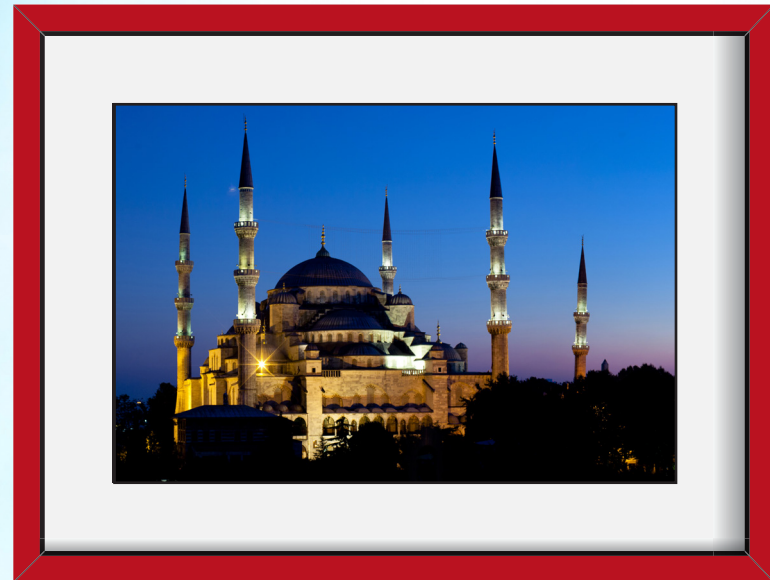
At the end of the prayer the congregation disperses and travels home or onto celebrations via a different route. Muslims try to emulate the guidance of Prophet Muhammad to travel to and from the Eid praying place using different routes.

This and the fact of the prayer being held in open areas are done to show the strength of the Muslims, to induce pride on one's faith, and to celebrate the praises of Allah openly.

The actual ʿEid Al-Fitr is one day, but in many Muslim countries, businesses and offices may close for up to a week. Due to time constraints and the fact that this Muslim holiday is not always recognized in western countries, some Muslims are unable to participate in more than a few hours of celebration. Muslims in different countries and different families celebrate in different ways.

There are gatherings of family and friends for breakfast, brunch or lunch. It is an occasion for visits, greetings, love and good wishes. It is a time to heal lost bonds, make amends, and revitalize relationships. Special foods are prepared and often dishes are sent to neighbors and friends.

Each country or community has its signature dish, and a special benefit to being part of a Muslim community in the



west means being able to sample delicious cuisine from around the world. Gifts, money and sweets are usually given to children and some adults exchange gifts too. Celebrations differ from community to community.

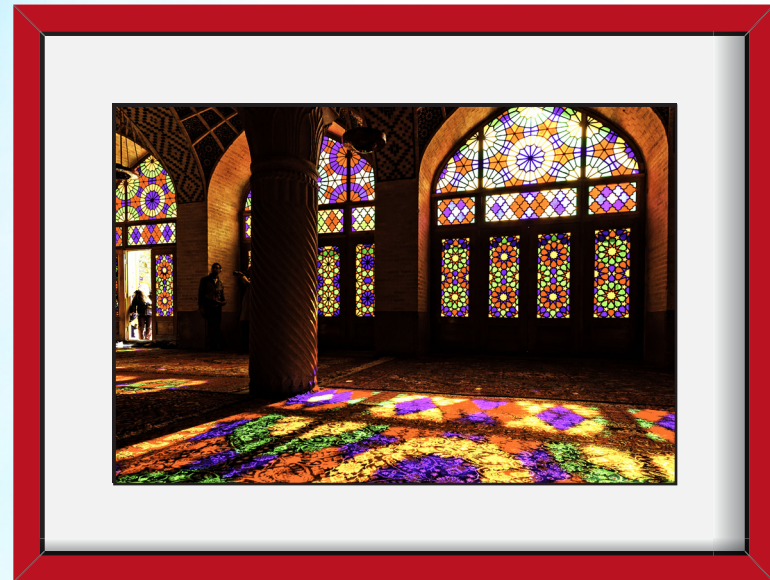
There are picnics and barbeques, fairs and neighborhood feasts, community events lasting into the night, and fire-works or laser light displays. New friends are made, old acquaintances renewed and families spend quality time together.

The celebration of `Eid demands contact with relatives, kindness to parents, empathy for the poor and distraught and compassion for neighbors. It is a day of visiting and well wishing, and some Muslims take the opportunity to visit the graveyards. It is important not to make visiting the graveyards an annual `Eid ritual.

Ramadan was a time of reflection and `Eid is a time of celebration; however, lavish displays of wealth and materialism are to be avoided.

Muslims who seized the benefits inherent in Ramadan are grateful for this time to celebrate and understand it is but one of the ways that God bestows His mercy upon us.

Life can sometimes be full of tests and trials, but through the trying times as well as the celebrations God, there is with wisdom, mercy and forgiveness. A Muslim is encouraged to celebrate by glorifying God, but reminded never to forget that the ability to love life and to celebrate, is but one of God's bounties.



Warning against Wrongdoing

Some people think that Islam tells us to stay up and pray on the night of `Eid, quoting an unsound hadith which says that "Whoever stays up and prays on the night of `Eid, his heart will not die on the day when hearts die." This hadith was reported with two isnads (chain of narration), one of which is weak and the other is very weak. Islam does not tell us to single out the night of `Eid for staying up and praying; if, however, a person habitually stays up and prays at night (qiyam), there is nothing wrong with him doing so on the night of Eid as well.

Mixing of men and women in some prayer-places, streets, etc., it is a pity that this happens at a time of worship. Many women (may Allah guide them) go out not properly covered, wearing make-up and perfumes and flaunting their adornment, although going for an act of worship. This indeed unallowable because women should go out properly covered, not wearing perfumes and not mixing with men.

Some people get together on `Eid for the purpose of singing and other forms of idle entertainment, and this is not permitted.



Some people celebrate on `Eid because Ramadan is over and they no longer have to fast. This is a mistake, the believers celebrate at Eid because Allah has helped them to complete the month of fasting, not because the fasting ,which some people regard as a heavy burden, is over.

Sources:

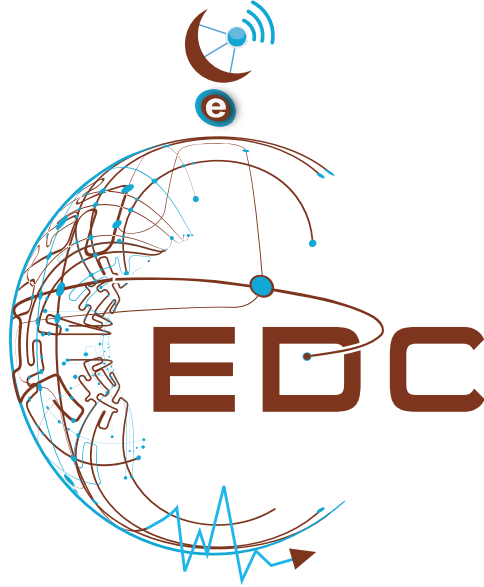
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