



Read about this important twice yearly Muslim celebration, including information on the Holy Qur'an and prayer.

Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha

There are two Eid celebrations in the Muslim faith - **Eid al-Fitr** and **Eid al-Adha**.

Eid al-Fitr

Eid al-Fitr is a joyful celebration marking the end or fast-breaking of Ramadan.

Ramadan is a period of 29 – 30 days when all Muslims who are able must fast from dawn to sunset. It should be a time of reflection and prayer.

Ramadan and Eid fall at different times every year based on the 9th month of the Islamic lunar calendar. The exact date is subject to the sighting of the moon of Shawwal, 1442, 10th month of Islamic Calendar

This is when the holy Quran was first revealed to the Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him) in 610CE.

To prepare for the celebration, houses are thoroughly cleaned, and many are adorned with decorations such as garlands, tinsel, balloons and banners to make them look extra special.

The day begins with morning prayers and breakfast. Everyone washes and puts on their newest or best clothes.

There is a visit to a mosque for prayers. There is an emphasis on charitable acts and giving during Ramadan and Eid. As part of this, money is saved up and collections are taken.

People enjoy spending time with their family and friends. Cards and presents are exchanged, and an abundance of food is prepared as people eat and give thanks for their first daylight meal in a month.

Celebrations continue for up to 3 days and people wish each other happy Eid, saying either "**Eid Mubarak**" or "**Eid Said**".



Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha

Eid al-Adha

Eid al-Adha (also written as Eid ul-Adha and known as Qurbani Eid, Bakra Eid and Greater Eid) is the second Eid festival. It means **'festival of the sacrifice'** and is considered the holier of the two. It is in honour of Ibrahim (also known as Abraham) because of his absolute, unwavering commitment to God. Ibrahim is an important figure in Islam, Christianity and Judaism.

Just as Eid al-Fitr comes at the end of Ramandan, so Eid al-Adha is celebrated at the end of the Hajj period.

All Muslims who are able must undertake at least one pilgrimage (journey) in their lifetime to Mecca in Saudi Arabia; it is called the Hajj.

Every year 2 to 3 million people gather in **Mecca**, making it the biggest single gathering on the planet. Pilgrims wear simple white clothes – Ihram - and take part in rituals, including:

- Tawaf – Pilgrims walk around the cube building called the Ka'aba seven times in an anti-clockwise direction. The Ka'aba is the direction for prayer for Muslims all over the world and is the most sacred sight in Islam.
- Al-Safa and Al-Marwah – Pilgrims run between these two mountains, just as Ibrahim's wife, Hajar, did many years previously to look for water.
- Mount Arafat – Pilgrims visit Mount Arafat where the Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) gave his last sermon.
- Stoning the Devil – Pilgrims pick up pebbles and throw them at three walls known as jamarat. This is to remember Ibrahim throwing stones at the devil when he tried to convince him to turn away from Allah.

Eid al-Adha is celebrated at the end of the Hajj in honour of Ibrahim. The 'feast of the sacrifice' refers to the fact that Ibrahim was even prepared to sacrifice his own son. Ibrahim believed God wanted him to sacrifice his son, Ismail. The devil appeared to try to stop him, but Ibrahim threw stones at Satan and was not deterred. At the last second God stopped the sacrifice by replacing Ismail with a goat. Muslims mark the occasion by sacrificing a lamb, goat, cow or other animal and sharing the meat with friends and neighbours, and with the poor and needy.

Eid al-Adha is celebrated in a similar way to Eid al-Fitr - by prayer, the exchanging of gifts and by sharing meals with family and friends. Eid al-Adha is celebrated by Muslims all over the world and is a public holiday of 4 or 5 days or more.



The Holy Qur'an

The Qur'an is the holy book of Islam. It was written much later than the Old and New Testaments of Christian and Jewish faith and is sometimes known as the 'Final Testament'.

It is believed to be the sacred word of Allah (God) told directly to the Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) by the Angel Gabriel over a period of 23 years. Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) did not write the book as he could not read or write. It was mainly memorised and written down after his death.

The Qur'an is written in Arabic and is over 1400 years old. There are 114 chapters and all but one begins with the words: **"Bismillahir rahmanir Raheem" – "In the name of Allah the most merciful and the most kind"**.

Each chapter (surah) is separated into verses. The shortest surah has 3 verses and the longest has 286.

The Qur'an is a sacred text and should be handled with care and respect. When not in use it should be closed. It should not be placed on a floor or have anything placed on top of it. Muslims believe that people reading the Qur'an must make sure they have washed, as one of the verses says: **'...none shall touch but those who are clean...'**.

The Qur'an has been translated into more than 40 languages, but Muslims are taught to read and recite it in Arabic. Some people memorise the whole of the Qur'an by heart and anyone who has managed to do this is known as a hafiz.

The book stand is known as a rehal and is used to hold the holy book whilst reading or reciting from it. A rehal is usually foldable and made of wood.



Prayers

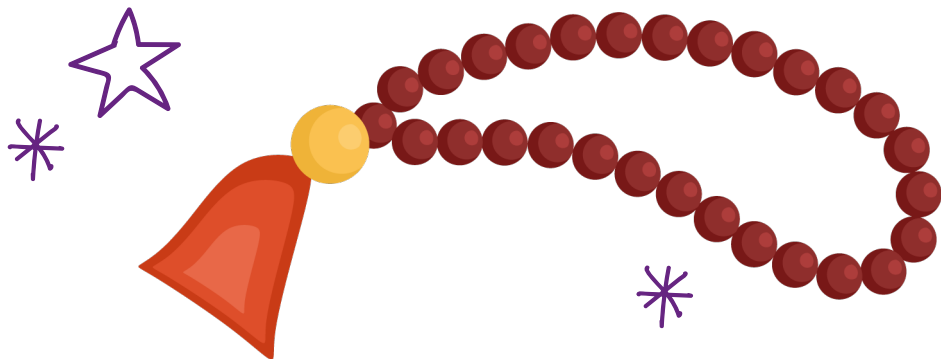
Islamic Prayer Beads: Subha

Subha beads (also known as Tasbeih) are usually made from wood, glass, plastic or gemstones. There are 99 beads in total, often with a larger bead at one end and a tassel. The subha is used in prayer to count recitations and to help concentration. Recitations are words or phrases repeated from memory.

Muslims often recite the **'99 names of Allah'** touching each bead as they do so. Some examples are:

- Al-Khaaliq – The Creator
- Al-'Aleem – The All-Knowing
- Al-Baseer – The All-Seeing
- Al-Wadood – The Loving

Prayer beads are often given as gifts. They may also be carried as a comforter or to relieve stress.



Prayer Mat

Muslims pray five times a day - dawn, midday, afternoon, after sunset and at night, so it is not always possible to do so in a mosque. Prayers are said facing towards Mecca, and if in a new or different location, the direction may be found using a compass (nowadays there are online apps too).

According to Islamic tradition, no people or animals are depicted on prayer mats. They will often have geometric patterns, flowers, pictures of a mosque or Arabic writing as part of the design.

