

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيَامُ كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

☞! You who believe! Fasting is prescribed for you as it was prescribed for the people before you, so that you may acquire self control and God-consciousness - Quran 2:183

1434th Ramadan - the Month of Blessings and Peace



2.8 billion Muslims of the world will celebrate the blessed month of Ramadan starting July 10, 2013. During this month, healthy Muslim adults will observe fasting during the daylight hours.

Muslim Fasting is a total abstention from eating and drinking from dawn to dusk for 29 or 30 days of the month of Ramadan. In addition, avoiding immoral behavior and anger and showing compassion is part of the requirements of fasting. The purpose of fasting is manifold. Allah (the God Almighty) mentioned it in the Holy Book of Islam, Quran, that fasting is prescribed for the believers as it was prescribed for the people before them, so that they may acquire self control and God-consciousness (Quran 2:183). Therefore, the purpose of fasting is to develop self-control, God-consciousness, improvement of health by reducing or eliminating impurities from the body, and to become aware of the plight of the poor, hungry, and the sick.

Ramadan is a month of spiritual consciousness and high sense of social responsibility. The fulfillment of one's obligations during this month is rewarded 70 times. Fasting is one of the 5 pillars of Islam including Announcement of Faith, Salaat (praying 5 times a day), Zakat (the right of the poor on the wealth of the financially able), Fasting during the month of Ramadan, and Hajj (once in a life time pilgrimage to Kaabah). It is an obligation on every adult and healthy Muslim to fast during the month of Ramadan.

The month of Ramadan is also the month in which Holy Quran was sent down from the highest level of heaven to the 1st level, from where it was revealed to Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) in a piece meal basis over a period of 23 years. It is a very joyous occasion for the

Muslims of the world. They fast during the day, pray, and read Quran during the part of the night.

There is a special night called the Night of Power, which is mentioned in the Quran (Chapter 97), as a night of peace, mercy, and light. Worshiping during this night is better than the worship of 1,000 months. During this night, Muhammad was chosen by Allah, as the Messenger of God, and Quran was sent to the 1st level of heaven. During this night, Allah, God Almighty, sends down an army of special angels, under the leadership of Archangel Gabriel, who go to every nook and cranny of the earth to pray for the mercy of Allah, God Almighty, and salvation of the believers.

Unlike the common calendar, which is Solar based, the Islamic calendar is Lunar based. It does not mean that Muslims worship moon. It is another way to count days of the month and the year. Like all Islamic months, Ramadan, 9th lunar month, begins after sighting the Crescent, but not the new moon. The probability to see the Crescent for Ramadan is on July 9, 2013 just after the sunset on the western horizon.

All healthy Muslim adults including homemakers, school-going kids around the age of 13, factory workers, businessmen, and others among them will be fasting. Your Muslim neighbors will be getting up very early to take their sahoor, a pre-dawn meal before starting their fast. So, don't get alarmed if you hear lot of noise next door. Summer School staff has to show understanding and consideration towards Muslim students who may be fasting during the month of Ramadan from July 10 to August 7, 2013. They should be assigned alternate activities instead of strenuous gym activities.

Physicians should also understand that their patients might be fasting. They should prescribe the medicine in a way that they could take it with their pre-dawn or after sunset meals. However, if the patients' life may be in jeopardy, explain it to the patients or seek help from a Muslim Medical Chaplain at a local hospital or an Imam/director of a local Masjid/Islamic Center. According to Muslim physicians, there are some physiological benefits from Muslim Fasting (total abstention from food and liquids) including lowering of blood sugar, lowering of cholesterol, and lowering of systolic blood pressure.

At the completion of month of Fasting, Muslims all over the world celebrate their holiday of Eid al-Fitr. It is the biggest Muslim holiday. It is a true thanksgiving for a Muslim believer for having the opportunity to obey Allah, God Almighty, by observing Fasting. It is celebrated on the 1st day of 10th lunar month, Shaw'waal. This year, it will be on August 8, 2013. The holiday begins with Muslims putting on their best, preferably new clothes and going to the Eid congregation. Eid congregations are very large gatherings of Muslim men, women, and children across the country. You can also witness these gatherings by simply finding out through Web, newspapers, radio, and TV. Afterwards, people greet each other with hugs and handshakes. The children receive gifts of money and toys. After the congregation, Muslims visit each other at their homes and hold lunches or dinners for family and friends. Don't be surprised if you are invited to an Eid dinner or Eid celebration by your Muslim neighbors or friends. Please do

accept such an invitation. The hospitality, friendliness, and variety of international Muslim cuisine will pleasantly surprise you.

Greetings of Ramadan, Ramadan Karim!

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P.S. Muslims should call their local Masjid for the beginning and end of Ramadan. Additional information can be acquired through e-mail: alisiddiqui.imam@gmail.com



About the author:

Imam Ali Siddiqui with 40 years of service, is a Friday Khatib, Islamic teacher, Muslim Chaplain, youth advisor, family counselor, educator, poet, and writer with a vision who has been involved in the teaching Islam, history, comparative religion, contemporary issues to Muslims and non-Muslims. He is actively involved in the community service including spiritual/educational development, service to the sick and the incarcerated; and the interfaith work. His work has been successfully building bridges between faiths and communities. Presently Imam Siddiqui serves the North Bay Muslim Community, CA including Muslim Institute for Interfaith Studies & Understanding, Santa Rosa, CA; North Bay Jewish Muslim Dialogue; Marin Interfaith Council, Santa Rosa Interfaith Ministerial Association, American Civil Liberties Union of Sonoma County, Japanese American Citizen League, and Khatib at North Marin Islamic Center and Muslim Society of Napa. For additional information about the author, please Google: "Imam Ali Siddiqui". For speaking engagement: alisiddiqui.imam@gmail.com.

A Brief List of Imam Siddiqui's Articles:

- Ramadan - the Month of Blessings and Peace
- Zakat-ul-Fitr is Wajib
- Zakat al-Maal - the right of the Poor
- Lai-la-tul Qadr - The Night of Mercy and Peace
- Eid al-Fitr - A True Thanksgiving
- The Significance of Eid
- Combat Islamophobia with Interfaith Engagement
- About Ramadan - A presentation for schools
- What Do You Need to Know about Islam and Muslims?
- Halal and Tayyab
- Muslims in Americas and Their Contributions: 889 AD to Present - A Brief History

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