

# Islamic Celebrations:

Islamic holidays and observances, such as Ramadan, rotate through the calendar each year.

With the new moon comes the lunar New Year of the holy month of **Ramadan**, sacred to the world's 1.8 billion Muslims (there are about 250,000 Muslims in the Bay Area). This holy month commemorates the revelation of the Koran (also spelled Qur'an), the holy book of the Muslim religion and way of life. From the time of sunrise until sunset each day of the month of Ramadan, Muslims abstain from all food and all liquid, even water. In the evening iftar is the meal at which the fast is broken each day, often with special foods. The month ends with the next new moon and a holiday called Eid-al-fitr.

The Islamic calendar is a lunar calendar, based on the cycles of the moon rather than the sun. As a result, Ramadan (the Islamic New year) moves backwards relative to the solar year and Gregorian calendar, and completes the backward cycle every 33 years. The Islamic calendar began with Muhammad's flight from Mecca to Medina (al-Hijira) which took place 1379 years ago. **In some years, Ramadan is observed during the winter; in 2023, Ramadan begins at sundown on March 22.**



## The Five Pillars of Islam

The "Five Pillars" of Islam, contain the mandatory acts of faith a Muslim must perform: daily prayers, annual tithe, onetime pilgrimage to Mecca, study of the Qur'an, and fasting. During the holy month of Ramadan Muslims renew a sense of connection with God through fasting, prayer, and good works; coming together each night to pray and break the fast, they draw closer to each other. Young Muslims usually begin full-time Ramadan fasting around the age of 11 or 12. There are parties for first-time fasters, with gifts and houses full of proud families. Fasting teaches self-control and is a reminder that everyone is equal before Allah in that all feel

hunger and thirst. It is one way of achieving taqwa, a quality essential for the devout Muslim which connects with the feeling that Allah is within one. It's about being mindful of one's duties; being very

careful and responsible in life, and aware of the rights of others. It's a way of working with one's God-given faculties to inculcate a sense of companionship with God. Following the end of Ramadan comes the holiday of Eid al-Fitr, which begins with prayer and then becomes a full day of feasting and socializing.

## Al-Fatihah

Al-Fatihah, "The Opening," or Fatihatu'l-Kitab, "The Opening of the Scripture" or Ummu'l-Quran, "The Essence of the Qur'an," (as it is variously named), has been called the Lord's Prayer of the Muslims. It is an essential part of all Muslim worship, public and private, and no solemn contract or transaction is complete unless it is recited. The word "Allah" means "God" in Arabic. The word "Islam" means "surrender." A Muslim is one who surrenders to Allah.

*Bismillaahir-Rahmaanir-Rahiim.*

*Ar-Rahmaanir-Rahiim;*

*'Iyyaaka na'-budu wa 'iyyaaka nasta-'iin.*

*Siraatal-laziina 'an-'amta 'alay-him —*

*'Al-Hamdu lillaahi Rabbil-Aalamiin;*

*Maaliki Yawmid-Diin!*

*'Ihdinas-Siraatal-Musta-qim —*

*Gayril-magzuubi 'alay-him wa laz-zaaalliin.*

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful. Praise be to God, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the Worlds; Most Gracious, Most Merciful; Master of the Day of Judgment. Thee do we worship and Thine aid we seek. Show us the straight way, the way of those on whom thou hast bestowed Thy Grace, those who have not earned Thine anger and who go not astray.

## Reading from the Qur'an, Sura 24 — al-Nuur, "Light"

*God is the light of the heavens and the earth.*

*The simile of God's light is like a niche in which  
is a lamp,*

*The lamp in a globe of glass,*

*The globe of glass as if it were a shining star,*

*Lit from a blessed olive tree*

*Neither of the East nor of the West,*

*Its light nearly luminous*

*Even if fire did not touch it.*

*Light upon light!*

*God guides to this light*

*Whomever God will:*

*And God gives people examples:*

*And God knows all things.*

