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Ramadan begins on March  
11 in 2024

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Ramadan, the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar, is a period of profound spiritual significance for Muslims worldwide. It commemorates the month in which the first verses of the Quran were revealed to the Prophet Muhammad by Allah, marking a time of reflection, prayer, and community.

The origins of Ramadan date back to 610 CE when, according to Islamic belief, the archangel Gabriel began revealing the Quran to the Prophet Muhammad in the cave of Hira on the Night of Power (Laylat al-Qadr). This event laid the foundation for Ramadan as a period dedicated to fasting, prayer, and reflection.

The central practice of Ramadan is fasting from dawn until sunset. This fast includes abstaining from eating, drinking, smoking, and marital relations during daylight hours. The purpose of the fast is multifaceted, serving as a means to cultivate self-discipline, empathy for the less fortunate, and spiritual growth. Muslims begin their day with a pre-dawn meal known as *suhoor*, followed by the first prayer of the day (Fajr). The fast is broken at sunset with the *iftar* meal, traditionally starting with dates and water, followed by *Maghrib* prayer and then dinner.

Fasting during Ramadan is one of the Five Pillars of Islam, fundamental acts of worship that form the foundation of a Muslim's faith and practices. In addition to fasting, Muslims are encouraged to engage in increased prayer and recitation of the Quran, seeking forgiveness, and performing acts of charity known as *zakat*.

Exemptions: Not all Muslims are required to fast during Ramadan. Exemptions are made for those who are ill, as well as for the elderly, young children, pregnant or nursing women, and travellers. Those unable to fast due to health reasons are encouraged to feed the poor as compensation.

Ramadan is not only a time for fasting but also a period for strengthening community bonds and family ties. Muslims often gather with family and friends to break their fast together and engage in communal prayers, especially the *Tarawih*, an extra prayer performed during the nights of Ramadan. The end of Ramadan is marked by Eid al-Fitr, a festive day of celebration, thanksgiving, and feasting, which begins with a special communal prayer.