

Staff Development  
Package



# Islam



**The Five Pillars**

**– Saum –**

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## The Five Pillars - Saum

(All words within the text in **bold** are in the glossary)

### Eid ul Fitr - East & West

“For a month the Muslims of Bukittingi had been fasting from dawn to sunset. For a week I had stayed with them, living in the almost finished but still corrugated iron shrouded **mosque**, and finishing the **Ramadhan** fast I had begun a month before in Darwin. The mosque was full each night for 'Isha salaah and **Tarwih**, the men at the front in their multicoloured sarongs and black kopias, and behind a low screen the ladies almost all in white followed the prayer with the men. After Tarwih people relaxed, and discussed community matters (which at that time inevitably involved the collection of the **Zakat**), and listened to stories of the **Prophet** and his companions late into the night. Finally the night arrived when the first thin sliver of the new moon of the month of Shawwal appeared, and we knew that it was the end of the fast and the start of the **Eid-ul-Fitr**.

Next morning we did not have to wake long before dawn to eat and drink sufficient for the day. It was still before first light, however, when I was woken by the **muezzin** when he rose to wash and prepare himself for the Fajr Azan. I had to wash quickly myself, as I was being whisked across the road to a nearby house in which I had been invited to break my fast between the azan and the morning prayer. I had thought it would be rather a hurried sort of breakfast, but somehow we also managed to have a second breakfast with the people in the house next door, who would have been most hurt if we had ignored them after visiting their neighbours. Nonetheless, we made it back to the mosque in time for the morning prayer, admittedly helped by the fact that the imam of the mosque happened to be in our party.

After the **Salaah** it was time for a few more leisurely breakfasts as we visited other local neighbours. Then, as morning began to wear on, we stopped socializing and prepared ourselves for the Eid-ul-Fitr Salaah. After showering, perfuming, and donning the best clean clothes that we could muster, we set out for the playing fields on the edge of the town that was to be the site for the Eid prayer. As we walked through the town in the bright morning sunlight, the streets were full of people walking in the same direction. Different mosque communities join together on this day, ignoring differences and recognizing their shared commitment to an Islamic way of life, and the month of fasting that is one of the Five essential Pillars of that Islam.

As we drew near to the prayer site, a chanted refrain became faintly audible, growing stronger by the moment as we approached. Finally, we could hear the words quite clearly, ....*Allahu akbar, Allahu akbar, La ilaha illa'llahu, Allahu akbar wa lilahi'lhamd*, chanted to remind ourselves of those who in a few short weeks would be setting off on **Hajj**. Mats had been placed on the grass to establish the lines for the prayer, but many had brought their own prayer mats, while a few were using for a prayer mat the ihram garments they had worn for Pilgrimage. After the Salaah was over, followed by a long period of general mingling and greeting, we began what seemed like an



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endless succession of visits to various family, friends and acquaintances, of the members of the small but constantly changing group who were making sure that I was well looked after, and certainly on this day well fed.

In every house we were first greeted with tea or a small glass of some variety of fruit juice, accompanied by a tray of dishes containing tiny cracker biscuit appetizers in different shapes. No matter how many houses we visited, the hosts always seemed to have at least one biscuit shape that no-one else had provided. This variety and originality was also to be seen when after a few minutes of conversation the ladies of the house would bring in dishes they had prepared especially for the Eid, some of them dishes that would only be prepared for this one day each year, and each one different to the last. As we moved from house to house, however, it became increasingly difficult to think of eating yet more food, having just had a month of losing the habit, and while our hosts did their best to persuade us to eat until we dropped, we managed to reduce our intake to the merest sip and nibble, the least possible for us to satisfy protocol and enable our hosts to receive the blessings that accrue to those who feed unexpected guests and travellers. The more serious eating could safely be left to the families of those we were visiting, as the social round and celebrations were likely to continue for two or three days.

After having visited everyone I had met during the days of my stay in Bukittingi, a trail of food and friendly conversation which carried on into the night with only brief pauses for the usual prayers, it was time for me to leave the next morning, my visa having almost expired. As I was about to board the bus, two ladies came hurrying through the crowd towards me, each carrying a large newspaper-wrapped parcel which they pressed into my hands as they made their farewells. The parcels contained a huge selection of Eid delicacies, as they were apparently worried that I might starve on my two day journey to Malaysia. This way they guaranteed that my Bukittingi Eid was still with me a week later in Penang.

With the Muslim months set to a lunar calendar, Ramadhan starts and finishes earlier each solar year, travelling through the seasons. But although this means that occasionally Ramadhan coincides with our brief Glasgow summer, in general the Scottish climate would make kneeling and prostrating in a playing field a rather muddy business, so Eid prayers are usually celebrated in the local mosques. With many people making a special point of visiting the mosque at Eid for whom a trip to the mosque at any other time of year would be a rarity, the mosques are filled to overflowing with many people participating in the prayer from the street outside the mosque. Often several Eid prayers will be made in one mosque, and at my local mosque the sermon which is integral to the event is given in English, Urdu and Arabic at different times for the different language communities.

Where possible, families come to the Eid prayer together, and children especially will often be wearing new clothes bought for the event and clutching new toys they have received that morning, though thankfully the Eids have not yet been reduced to a competitive materialist orgy of advertisement-fuelled obligatory present buying.



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Before the prayer there is one last chance for the people to pay their Zakat .... if they have not already done so. After the prayer, some members of the congregation will usually take it upon themselves to distribute sweets and cakes, and small toys are often given to the kids. Outside the mosque many effusive greetings take place as people wish each other a blessed Eid, "Eid Mubarak".

عيد مبارك

Eid Mubarak

Indonesian students wearing national dress remind me of Sumatra. You can tell the regions they come from by the pattern of their clothes if you know how. They usually invite me along to eat Indonesian food in a tenement flat near Kelvingrove. As in Bukittingi, for them it is open house today, with Eid cards on the mantelpiece and visitors forever arriving. Often around this time the Muslim house blossoms tinsel which at another time of year would be thought of as Christmas decorations. If the weather is fine, a group of Arab families will probably take their children for a picnic in the park, or if the sun is out perhaps even a trip into the country. But for all it is a day of giving and receiving food and giving praise and thanks for God's bounty, just as everywhere else in the Muslim world." (Michael Malik)





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### Ramadhan

The fourth Pillar of Islam is **Saum** (fasting), which takes place for the entire month of Ramadhan the 9th month of the Islamic Year. The Muslim calendar follows the moon's twenty nine day cycle without the adjustments necessary to fit twelve months into a solar year. Each month begins when the first thin crescent of the moon is sighted, or in the case of cloud when it is calculated that the crescent would certainly be visible, to a maximum of thirty days.

Narrated Ibn Umar "I heard Allah's Apostle saying `When you see the crescent of Ramadhan, start fasting, and when you see the crescent of Shawwal, stop fasting; and if the sky is overcast then regard the month of Ramadhan as of 30 days'"

*(Bukhari)*

The months of the Islamic year are:

- 1) Muharram
- 2) Safar
- 3) Rabi Al-Awwal
- 4) Rabi Al-Thani
- 5) Jumada Al-Ula
- 6) Jumada Al-Thani
- 7) Rajab
- 8) Sha'ban
- 9) Ramadhan
- 10) Shawwal
- 11) Dhu Al-Qa'da
- 12) Dhu Al-Hijjah

The lunar year being ten or eleven days shorter than the solar year, has the effect that over time the Islamic months move back through the seasons, from summer through spring to winter over a period of about fifteen years, then through autumn and back to summer again completing the cycle. As the Muslim fasts in Ramadhan, this change can have a profound effect on the experience of the fast.



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Ramadan Timetable										1992 C.E. / 1412 A.H.
Day	Date	Sahoor	Fajr	Sunrise	Dhohr	Asr	Magrib	Isha	Ramadan	
Thur	5/3	5.01	5.09	6.54	12.33	4.01	6.06	7.41		
Fri	6	4.59	5.07	6.52	12.34	4.02	6.08	7.43	1	
Sat	7	4.56	5.05	6.49	12.34	4.04	6.10	7.46	2	
Sun	8	4.53	5.03	6.46	12.34	4.06	6.12	7.48	3	
Mon	9	4.51	5.01	6.44	12.34	4.07	6.14	7.50	4	
Tues	10	4.48	4.58	6.41	12.33	4.09	6.16	7.52	5	
Wed	11	4.45	4.57	6.39	12.33	4.11	6.18	7.54	6	
Thur	12	4.42	4.55	6.36	12.33	4.13	6.20	7.56	7	
Fri	13	4.39	4.53	6.34	12.33	4.14	6.22	7.59	8	
Sat	14	4.36	4.51	6.31	12.32	4.16	6.24	8.01	9	
Sun	15	4.34	4.49	6.28	12.32	4.18	6.27	8.03	10	
Mon	16	4.31	4.47	6.26	12.32	4.19	6.29	8.05	11	
Tues	17	4.28	4.45	6.23	12.31	4.21	6.31	8.08	12	
Wed	18	4.25	4.42	6.21	12.31	4.23	6.33	8.09	13	
Thur	19	4.22	4.39	6.18	12.31	4.24	6.35	8.10	14	
Fri	20	4.18	4.36	6.15	12.30	4.26	6.37	8.12	15	
Sat	21	4.16	4.34	6.13	12.30	4.28	6.39	8.13	16	
Sun	22	4.12	4.31	6.10	12.30	4.29	6.41	8.15	17	
Mon	23	4.09	4.28	6.07	12.30	4.31	6.43	8.16	18	
Tues	24	4.06	4.28	6.07	12.29	4.33	6.45	8.17	19	
Wed	25	4.03	4.22	6.02	12.29	4.34	6.47	8.19	20	
Thur	26	4.00	4.19	6.00	12.29	4.37	6.49	8.20	21	
Fri	27	3.57	4.16	5.57	12.29	4.37	6.51	8.21	22	
Sat	28	3.53	4.13	5.54	12.28	4.39	6.53	8.23	23	
Sun	29	4.50	5.09	6.52	1.28	5.40	7.55	9.24	24	
Mon	30	4.47	5.06	6.49	1.28	5.42	7.57	9.25	24	
Tues	31	4.43	5.03	6.46	1.27	5.43	7.59	9.27	26	
Wed	1/4	4.40	5.00	6.44	1.27	5.45	8.01	9.28	27	
Thur	2	4.36	4.57	6.41	1.27	5.46	8.03	9.30	28	
Fri	3	4.33	4.54	6.39	1.26	4.48	8.05	9.32	29	
Sat	4	4.29	4.50	6.36	1.26	4.49	8.07	9.33	30	



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In Glasgow during summer the days are so long that the sky never gets completely dark, and some Muslims say that it is better to ignore the local conditions and follow the timings of the fast as they are in Makkah. But the vast majority of Glaswegian Muslims follow the counsel of their **imams**, who calculate the timings for the fast based on the time of dawn and sunset, and though they know that this way summer fasts are eighteen hours long, they also know that winter brings it down to about eight hours. The days are cool and damp, however, and rarely over 100 degrees all day as is often the case in **Makkah**.



Narrated Abu Hurairah

*"Allah's Apostle said `When Ramadhan begins the gates of Paradise are opened."*



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الصَّوْمُ

### Saum

The fourth Pillar of Islam, saum means to abstain. For the month of Ramadhan through the hours of fasting, a Muslim abstains from ingesting anything through the mouth and nose apart from air. No food, no drink, no cigarettes. The fasting is not meant to be deleterious to the health in any way, however, and it is permitted to clean the teeth.

Narrated Amir bin Rabiah "I saw the Prophet cleaning his teeth with miswak (a toothbrush) while he was fasting so many times that I cannot count."

*(Bukhari)*

What is absorbed through the pores of the skin, or the tearducts, does not break the fast, so ointments, injections or eye drops are permitted, and Anas, a Companion of the Prophet, reported that he would wear kohl on his eyes while fasting.

During this time, a Muslim abstains not only from food, but also from sexual relations, though kissing is permitted.

It is confirmed that Aisha said "The Prophet would kiss and embrace while he was fasting for he had the most control of all of you over his desires." Umar said "I was excited one time I kissed my wife while I was fasting. I went to the Prophet and said 'Today I committed a horrendous act. I kissed while I was fasting.' The Prophet asked 'What do you think of rinsing with water while fasting?' I said 'There is nothing wrong with that' The Prophet said 'Then what is the question about?'"

*(Bukhari)*

But the fast is not simply to do with controlling the bodily urges, and it also required of those who fast that they abstain from bad deeds, arguments, envy, arrogance etc.

Abu Hurairah reported that the Prophet said "Fasting is not abstaining from eating and drinking only, but also from vain speech and foul language. If one of you is being cursed or annoyed, he should say 'I am fasting. I am fasting.'"

*(Ibn Hibban Khuzaimah)*

Abu Hurairah also reported that the Prophet said "Allah does not need the fast of one who does not abandon false speech, or acting according to his false speech."

*(Bukhari & others)*



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### Who fasts and who can refrain?

It is expected that every adult will fast for the month, although there are some situations in which a Muslim need not fast, but the days missed must be made up at a later. To this rule there are few exemptions.

The Prophet said "The Pen is raised for three groups - that is, they will not be responsible for their actions; the insane until they become sane, those who are sleeping until they awaken, and the young until they reach puberty."

*(Abu Daud and At-Tirmidhi)*

Although children have no obligation to fast until they reach puberty, they are encouraged to participate by fasting up to their capacity according to their age and strength, but in no way to be forced.

The old and the sick are not required to fast, nor pregnant women or nursing mothers, nor even those on a journey.

Narrated Aisha: "Hamza bin Amr al-Aslami asked the Prophet 'Should I fast while traveling?'. The Prophet replied 'You may fast if you wish, and you may not fast if you wish'"

*(Bukhari)*

Umar ibn Abd al Aziz said "The best of the two acts is the easier of the two. If it is easier for one to fast than to make up the days later on, then, in his case, to fast is better."

*(Bukhari)*

Narrated Anas bin Malik "We used to travel with the Prophet, and neither did the fasting persons criticise those who were not fasting, nor did those who were not fasting criticise the fasting ones."

Exemption is also made for those who are required to do very heavy or strenuous work, and for those at war. Fast days should be made up during the year that follows, or in the case that this is not possible, preferably immediately after the next Ramadhan.

### Hours of Fasting

The fasting begins at first light. The Companions of the Prophet, living in the Arabian desert were told to begin the fast when they could distinguish the white thread from the black, meaning the line of the first light in the sky. Those from cloudier climes and city dwellers are nowadays more likely to follow a timetable issued from their local mosque, with the times of **Sahur** listed along with the calculated prayer timings. The fast then continues until the sun has fully set below the horizon, when the fast is broken immediately before the Maghrib salaah.



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### Breaking the fast

It is recommended to be prompt in breaking the fast, and the Companions of the Prophet only used to eat and drink a little before the salaah. It is considered preferable to eat before drinking, and most Muslims will break their fast with a few dates or some pieces of fruit. After prayer the main meal is usually served, and families will eat together and often have friends visit for dinner, while in the mosques food has usually been prepared for those who prefer not to make the journey home before they eat.

Sahl ibn Sad reported that the Prophet said "The people will always be with the Good as long as they hasten in breaking the fast."

*(Bukhari & Muslim)*

Anas reported "The Messenger of Allah would break his fast with ripe dates before he would pray. If those were not available he would eat dried dates. If those were not available he would drink some water."

*(Abu Daud & Al-Hakim)*

Anas reported that the Messenger of Allah said "If the food is already presented, eat before the sunset prayer, and do not eat your meals in haste."

*(Bukhari & Muslim)*

### Sahur

Before commencing the fast at first light, it is recommended that Muslims take a morning meal, as close to the time of fasting as possible. Although it is often called "breakfast", sahur is really quite the opposite being the time when Muslims eat and drink what they feel they will require for the day. Some eat lightly, perhaps sweet rice dishes or eggs, and some prefer to eat more serious food such as curries or meat stews, and almost everyone will be trying to drink lots of liquid, tea, milk, juices or water, to serve the body's needs.

Anas reported that the Messenger of Allah said "Eat a pre-dawn meal for there are blessings in it."

*(Bukhari)*

Abu Said al-Khudri reported that the Messenger of Allah said "The pre-dawn meal is blessed, so do not neglect it, even if you only take a sip of water. Verily Allah and the angels pray for those who have pre-dawn meals."

*(Bukhari)*

Zaid ibn Thabit reported "We ate the pre-dawn meal with the Messenger of Allah, and then we got up for the prayer." He was asked: "What was the amount of time between the two?" He responded "The time it would take to recite fifty verses."

*(Bukhari & Muslim)*



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Amr ibn Maimun adds "The companions of Muhammad would be the first to break the fast, and the last to eat their pre-dawn meals."

*(Al-Baihaqi)*

### Extra prayers

In Ramadhan it is recommended that Muslims make extra prayers, and this is formalised in the Tarwih prayers after the 'Isha salaah in the mosque. Each night, spread over twenty **rakahs**, one thirtieth of the **Qur'an** will be read by the Imam if he is hafiz (has memorized the Qur'an from start to finish), so that the entire Qur'an will have been recited by the end of Ramadhan. Mosques will sometimes pay a Qari, a specialist in Qur'an recitation, to lead the Tarwih prayers in Ramadhan. These prayers are not obligatory, and many Muslims leave before the thirtieth is completed, either after eight rakahs or another group of four.

Narrated Abu Hurairah "Allah's Apostle said 'Whoever prayed at night, the whole month of Ramadhan, out of sincere faith and hoping for a reward from Allah, then all his previous sins will be forgiven.'"

*(Bukhari)*

Abdur Rahman bin Abdul Qari said "I went out in the company of Umar ibn al Khattab one night in Ramadhan to the mosque, and found the people praying in different groups. A man praying alone or a man praying with a little group behind him. So Umar said 'In my opinion I would better collect these people under the leadership of one Qari.' So he made up his mind to let them congregate behind Ubai bin Kab. Then on another night, I went again in his company, and the people were praying behind their reciter. On that, Umar remarked 'What an excellent innovation this is; but the prayer which they do not perform, but sleep at its time, is better than the one they are offering.' He meant the prayer in the last part of the night"

*(Bukhari)*

### I'tikhaf

It is a tradition of the Prophet that he would spend a number of days during Ramadhan without leaving the mosque environs. This seclusion from the outside world to concentrate on prayer and remembrance is known as I'tikhaf, and its preferred time is the last ten days of Ramadhan. A small group of people will usually gather in any local mosque to spend their days following this tradition. Other Muslims will bring food, and perhaps share a meal and leave, but those in I'tikhaf will usually be there until the 'Eid.

Narrated Abdullah bin Umar "Allah's Apostle used to practise I'tikhaf in the last ten days of Ramadhan."

*(Bukhari)*



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This withdrawal is not entirely restricted to those who stay in the mosque. All Muslims are expected to refrain from idle chatter, as it is said that the three main recommendations of saum are:

- Hastening to break the fast
- delaying the pre-dawn meal
- keeping the tongue from superfluous speech.

### Extra good works

As well as fasting and making a special effort to avoid doing what is bad, in Ramadhan Muslims are expected to do extra good. They are expected to give greater stress to charitable acts and feeding others, as well as putting more time than they would normally into the reading of Qur'an, or perhaps the Life of the Prophet.

### Forgetfulness

Humans are weak and, especially during the early days of the month before a routine has been established, it is easy enough for Muslims to forget what they are doing and eat or drink by accident. This is particularly easy in a situation where food is being handled and the fingers might be licked. Such forgetfulness does not break the fast, which is recommenced after the realisation of what has happened.

Abu Hurairah "The Prophet said `If somebody eats or drinks forgetfully, then he should complete his fast, for what he has eaten or drunk has been given to him by Allah."

*(Bukhari)*

### Lailat ul Qadr

The Prophet did not receive the first revelation of the Qur'an until he was over forty, but prior to that time he had already the practice of spending much of the month of Ramadhan in seclusion in a small cave in a mountain near to Makkah. Towards the end of one Ramadhan he was to experience something which was to change the world.

"He laid himself down to rest, and was in a state of meditation and prayer when a vivid light shone into his eyes. He opened his eyes in fright and heard a commanding voice: "Muhammad!"

Sweat broke out all over his body. Trembling, he answered:

`Who is it?'



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`Read!" said the voice.

`I am not of those who read."

Someone took hold of Muhammad, hugged him vehemently and then released him.

`Read!

`I am not of those who read.'

Once again Muhammad was hugged till he was exhausted.

`Read!

`I am not of those who read.'

He was hugged for the third time.

`Read!

`What shall I read?'

`Read in the name of your Lord who creates, creates man from a clot! Read, for your Lord is most Generous, who teaches by means of the pen, teaches man what he does not know.'"

*(Muhammad: Ziauddin Sardar)*

This first night of the Revelation is known as Laylat ul Qadr, the **Night of Power**, and in some mosques people will gather on a night at the end of Ramadhan to celebrate that momentous occasion by a night of remembrance and prayer.

Narrated Ibn Abbas "The Prophet said `Look for the night of Qadr in the last ten nights of Ramadhan, on the night when 9 or 7 or 5 nights remain out of the last ten nights of Ramadhan."

*(Bukhari)*

Ahmad recorded with a Sahih chain from ibn Umar that the Prophet said "He who likes to seek that night should do so on the 27th" Ubay ibn K'ab said "By Allah, and there is no God but Him, it is due in Ramadhan - and he swore to that - and by Allah I know what night it is. It is the night during which the Prophet ordered us to make prayers, the night of the 27th. Its sign is that the sun rises in the morning white and without any rays."

*(Muslim)*

Abu Hurairah reported that the Prophet said "Whoever prays during the night of Qadr with faith and hoping for its reward will have all of his previous sins forgiven."

*(Bukhari and Muslim)*



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Aishah said "I asked the Messenger of Allah. 'Oh Messenger of Allah, if I know what night is the night of Qadr, what should I say during it.' He said 'say: Oh Allah, you are pardoning, and You love to pardon, so pardon me.'"

*(Ahmad ibn Maja)*

### Extra Fasts

Fasting need not be restricted to fulfilling the Ramadhan obligation. The Prophet fasted often, but stressed to his Companions that they should not commit themselves to extra fasts that would be too onerous.

Narrated Abdullah bin Amr bin al-As "The Prophet said to me 'You fast daily all the year and pray every night all the night?' I replied in the affirmative. The Prophet said 'If you keep on doing this your eyes will become weak, and your body will get tired. He who fasts all the year is as he who does not fast at all. The fasting of three days a month will be equal to the fasting of the whole year.' I replied 'I have the power for more than this' the Prophet said 'Then fast like the fasting of David, who used to fast on alternate days, and would never flee from the battlefield, on meeting the enemy.'"

*(Bukhari)*

### The Virtues of Fasting

Abu Hurairah reported that the Messenger of Allah said: "Allah says 'Every action of the son of Adam is for him except fasting, for that is solely for Me. I give the reward for it.' The fast is a shield. If one is fasting, he should not use foul language, raise his voice, or behave foolishly. If someone reviles him or fights with him he should say, 'I am fasting' twice. By the One in whose hand is the soul of Muhammad the bad breath of the one who is fasting is better in the sight of Allah on the Day of Resurrection than the smell of musk. The one who is fasting is happy two times: when he breaks his fast he is happy with it, and when he meets his Lord he will be happy that he has fasted. 'He leaves his food drink and desires for My sake. His fasting is for Me...I will give the reward for it, and for every good deed he will receive ten similar to it.'"

*(Bukhari)*