



Ramadan Prayer Guide

A 30 day prayer guide for the people of the
Middle East and North Africa

For nearly 2 billion Muslims across the world, 20% of which live in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, the 2nd April begins the holiest month of the year - Ramadan. The word "Ramadan" comes from the Arabic word **Ramidha**, literally meaning **scorching heat**. During this holy month, Muslims around the globe engage in a time of fasting from **sunrise until sunset**, known as **Sawm**, to fulfil one of the Five Pillars of Islam. For many, this is a time of **spiritual growth and reflection**, as well as **helping those in need and spending time with loved ones**.

As the Islamic calendar follows the **lunar cycle**, the month of Ramadan rotates by approximately 10 or 11 days each year, **depending on the sighting of the moon**. The month itself is also split into three periods of ten days, **Ashra**. Each ten days has its own particular focus.

Key Ramadan Dates for 2022

All dates are dependent on the moon sightings, but are expected to be as follows:

Saturday 2nd April – First day of Sawm (Fasting)
Friday 22nd April – Laylat-al-Qadr (The Night of Power)
Sunday 1st May – Eid-al-Fitr (The Breaking of the Fast)

Our prayer guide is also based on these three *Ashra*, but we also provide some prayers pointers that are going to be important throughout the month:

- For Muslims across the world experiencing hunger and weariness during the hours of fasting - for their comfort, safety, and strength.
- For those without families or close communities, and feeling loneliness during this season - for people from all faith backgrounds and none.
- As faith becomes so salient during this month across the Middle East, pray that the Holy Spirit would be ministering to people across the region. Pray for Christian media to be reaching seekers with the Gospel.
- For Christian Believers from a Muslim background (BMBs), who have difficult or completely broken relationships with their families.
- For BMBs who are not able to openly share about their faith in Jesus at this time, who have to live with a double identity and must navigate immense pressure, expectations, and spiritual warfare during Ramadan.
- For those who are not fasting, especially Christians, to be mindful of their own attitudes and behaviours this month. May they not be a stumbling block to others, but a light and encouragement.

Our friend and former trustee, Heba Hamad, is from the Middle East and now works for London City Mission. Heba shares with us her message to Christians in the West at this time of Ramadan:

"I would like us to learn from the dedication that our Muslim friends have. They really do fast for very long hours, sometimes 16 or 17 hours. I'd love for us to be inspired to be that dedicated to God. Even though sometimes it's done from a mindset of being fearful, I would still say that maybe we can learn from that as Christians."

We hope you will join us on this important journey this month! You can read the full guide online via the links and QR code provided. Never used a QR code before? Simply use your phone camera to hover over the code and tap the link when it comes up, or visit www.mem.org/pray.

Mercy (Rehmah)

2nd – 11th April

The first ten days (*Ashra*) of Ramadan, *Rehmah*, are known as the days of **mercy and heavenly rewards**. During this time, Muslims are to spend time confessing their sins, giving account, and seeking the mercy of Allah. Faithful observers of *Sawm* (fasting) and prayer are believed to evoke more divine reward. Muslims are also encouraged to give charitably (*Zakat*) and show mercy to others in hope of receiving Allah's greater blessings.

As fasting begins, communities often hold a communal *Iftar meal* each day after their **prayer at sunset**, to break the daily fast. After two years of the pandemic, this may be among the first opportunities many have had to gather together in this way. **Neighbourhoods** in the Middle East also take on a **change of pace** during Ramadan to accommodate those fasting. Often cities have less going on during the day, coming alive again for *Iftar*. For this reason, **navigating the roads** can be especially tricky and even **dangerous** during this time. Fasting can mean that people drive less safely, and often speed, particularly just before sunset as they head home for *Iftar*.

Prayer points

- **Saturday 2nd - Monday 4th April:** As Muslims begin to fast and pray over the coming days, pray with us that they would encounter God during this time and begin to question their traditions.
- **Tuesday 5th - Thursday 7th April:** For the Holy Spirit to be revealing Himself to those from all faith backgrounds in the region who are unsure or are questioning their faith. May the mercy of our God be revealed and astonish those who have never encountered it before.
- **Friday 8th & Saturday 9th April:** For safety on the roads this month, particularly for MEM teams and partners in the region.
- **Sunday 10th & Monday 11th April:** For families and communities gathering together for meals, may their time together be blessed.



Scan to view the extended version of our prayer guide online, including recipes, information, quotes, and more!

Forgiveness (Maghfirah)

12th – 21st April

This Ashra is called **Maghfirah**, the *days of forgiveness*. During this time, Muslims must seek the forgiveness of Allah for their sins and for the strength not to repeat them. It is also a time where Muslims seek to forgive one another.

For those reading the entire Quran throughout the month of Ramadan, many will be reading **Surah 19** by day 15 or 16. This is where **Jesus' birth and life** are recounted.

Forgiveness is a **frequently misunderstood** concept in Arab cultures, irrespective of religion. Forgiveness is seen as a weakness and a letting go of rights. Even for Arab Christians, they tend to 'forgive', but it is not Biblical forgiveness. This is mainly to avoid problems and confrontation, and keep the peace so that they can survive socially.

For this reason, our North Africa team are creating a new 2D animation tackling the cultural misconceptions surrounding forgiveness. The series will demonstrate the freedom and healing that Biblical forgiveness brings. **To find out more:** www.mem.org/forgiveness-campaign

Prayer points

- **Tuesday 12th – Thursday 14th April:** For Believers from a Muslim background (BMBs) who are estranged and have been cast out by their families. We pray for forgiveness, reconciliation, and peace among these families. We think particularly of Basma, Naomi, Fullah, and their families (perhaps you could dedicate a day to praying for each of them).
- **Friday 15th & Saturday 16th April:** For those reading *Surah 19*, we pray that they might be intrigued and inspired by the person of Jesus and want to find out more about Him.
- **Sunday 17th April (Palm Sunday in the MENA, Easter Sunday in the West):** Give thanks for the grace we have in Jesus, made possible by His death and resurrection! Pray that people from all backgrounds across the MENA region would encounter and be transformed by His grace this season.
- **Monday 18th - Tuesday 19th April:** As many Christians in the MENA region begin Holy Week preparations, pray that they would act as powerful witnesses to the hope of forgiveness we have in the Gospel.
- **Wednesday 20th - Thursday 21st:** Please pray for our Forgiveness Campaign.

What is Eid?

On the 29th day of Ramadan, people go out and look for a new crescent moon. If it is sighted, the end of Ramadan is declared and Eid can begin. **Eid-al-Fitr** is the act of celebration following a month of fasting. During Eid, which is usually celebrated for 2-3 days, Muslims wear their best clothes and attend **Eid prayers**. Following this, friends and family share a **big celebratory meal together**, and children are often given gifts or money.

Prayer Points for Eid

- For families gathering together to feast and celebrate, many for whom this may be the first time in a few years that gathering in person has been possible. Pray this would be a time of safety, peace, and gladness for Muslim families across the world.
- For Muslims who do not have close community or family to celebrate with. Pray that they would be welcomed by neighbours and not be left alone for the holiday. Pray also for the Holy Spirit to be at work in their hearts, revealing His love and comfort to them.
- For BMBs who are segregated from their families because of their faith. Pray that they would be strengthened and encouraged, and they would have the courage to continue following Jesus whatever the cost. May the Lord be close to them and comforting them during this time.

Salvation/Safety (Nijat)

22nd April – 1st May

Nijat is the third and most important Ashra because of the inclusion of a number of important dates in the Islamic calendar. It begins on the Friday evening (22nd April) with *Laylat-al-Qadr* (**The Night of Power**). This is the night on which Muslims believe the verses of the Quran were descended upon the Prophet Mohammed. During this Ashra, Muslims **pray for their salvation from eternal punishment**. These final days of Ramadan are also believed to evoke the highest heavenly rewards for the most faithful.

This time also **coincides this year with Easter** in the Middle East (Easter Sunday is 24th April, 7 days later than in the West according to the Coptic tradition). This could be a really powerful opportunity for Christians in the Middle East to be a light to others.

“For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive **salvation** through our Lord Jesus Christ.”
1 Thessalonians 5:9

Prayer points

- **Friday 22nd - Sunday 24th April (Easter Weekend in the MENA):** Pray that Christ might be revealing Himself as the true source of salvation to Muslims, and those from other or no faith backgrounds, during this time. Pray for media productions communicating the Gospel to reach seekers with the message of Easter and the beauty of the resurrection.
- **Monday 25th - Wednesday 27th April:** Pray for Christians in the Middle East as they celebrate Easter. Pray that they would be sensitive to those fasting, as not to be a stumbling block, and that their faith would be a powerful witness to others in their communities. Pray particularly for Christians in areas where they experience extreme persecution because of their faith.
- **Thursday 28th - Saturday 30th April:** Continue to pray for BMBs wrestling with conflicting identities, spiritual warfare, and familial pressures. Pray for opportunities for them to share and practise their true faith without reprisal.
- **Sunday 1st May:** Pray for Muslims as they come to the end of their month of fasting and prepare for Eid celebrations.

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Thank you for your support, through prayer, giving, and advocacy, which make it possible for us to do our vital work across the Middle East and North Africa.

*To give and get involved in our latest Forgiveness Campaign, head to:
www.mem.org/forgiveness-campaign*



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