

Name _____

The Fourth Pillar: Sawm

Sawm is perhaps the most demanding of the Five Pillars. It requires that Muslims fast during the month of Ramadan. Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar. During this period, food and drink are not allowed between dawn and sunset. After sunset, only light snacks are allowed.

The fast represents a special time of purification and religious devotion. Stronger ties are made with family and community. Alcohol and tobacco are prohibited the entire month. Both the elderly and children are exempt from the fast.

The Festival of Eid-Al-Fitr

When the month of Ramadan ends, the festival *Eid-al-fitr* is celebrated. The rejoicing begins on the first day of the tenth month of the Islamic calendar. Although the month of Ramadan is spent fasting, families begin preparing for the celebration far in advance, sending cards to relatives and preparing gifts.

When the day finally arrives, Muslims attend special morning prayers in the local courtyard or park. In western countries, the faithful usually take the day off from work or school. In Muslim countries, *Eid-al-fitr* is considered a three-day national holiday! Throughout the celebration, presents are shared and families gather to rejoice. It is also a time to share food and money with those less fortunate.