

Salat-ul-Jumu'ah

Salat ul-Jumu'ah are Friday prayers so this festival takes place once a week.

How Muslims observe Salat-ul-Jumu'ah

Jumu'ah (Friday) is the Muslim holy day. Friday is Yaum ul-Juma't, the Day of Assembly, when Muslims meet at the mosque for midday prayers.

It is not a day of rest. Business may continue as usual on Friday, as there is no religious reason against this (except at the time of prayer). However, in most Muslim countries, the weekend is Thursday and Friday, or Friday and Saturday.

The Friday congregational prayers at the mosque should be attended by every male Muslim who is able to do so. Women are exempt from attending. The prayers are led by the imam (leader) who knows the Qur'an and is respected by fellow Muslims. At the start and the end there is a time for optional prayers. The main features are that there is a **khutbah** (sermon) which is read in the language of the community, except for an introduction and conclusion in Arabic, and then the imam leads two



Prayers at the London Central Mosque.

rak'ah fard (compulsory prayers) instead of the usual four. (See page 72 for the usual pattern of worship in the mosque.) After the prayers there is a time of discussion about topical events.

The significance of Salat-ul-Jumu'ah for Muslims

O ye who believe! When the call is proclaimed to prayer on Friday (the Day of Assembly), hasten earnestly to the Remembrance of Allah, and leave off business (and traffic): That is best for you if ye but knew!

(Surah 62:9)

The Qur'an states the importance of Salat-ul-Jumu'ah and therefore Muslims accept that Friday prayers are significant. The Qur'an is the word of Allah and Muslims accept its authority and obey what it says. Experience proves that there is wisdom in what the Qur'an says. Meeting regularly as a community is helpful and often there are practical matters to discuss and problems to be solved. Having prayed together there is a sense of unity, co-operation and singleness of purpose. The sermon may have directed people's thoughts towards the celebration of some event, such as the annual festivals, or to some issue which affects the whole of the ummah (the Islamic global community). Talking together in the mosque afterwards, the men can discuss how this issue might affect the local Muslim community and the religious principles involved. This opportunity may be very important for Muslim communities, particularly those in non-Muslim countries. Afterwards, Muslims return to their ordinary daily lives. Friday is not a day of rest for them. Religion is part of everyday life, not separate from it.

Muhammad ﷺ is reported to have said:

If a person takes a bath on Friday, washes himself thoroughly, oils his hair, uses such perfume as is available, sets forth for the mosque, does not intrude between two persons, offers the prescribed prayer and listens in silence to the imam, his sins, committed since the previous Friday, are forgiven.

And also:

The sun has neither risen nor set on a better day than Friday. Therein is an hour in which a believing servant praying to Allah for good things finds Allah responding to him.

FOR DISCUSSION

Look again at the quotation on the opposite page from the Qur'an about the call to prayer. Why might prayer be good for people?

Mawlid an-Nabi

'Birth of the prophet'

This festival celebrates the birthday of Muhammad ﷺ which takes place in the month of Rabi al-Awwal, the third month of the Islamic calendar. The first recorded celebration of this festival was by **Shi'ah** Muslims in Egypt in the eleventh century CE. Shi'ah Muslims observe Mawlid on the seventeenth of the month which coincides with the birth date of the sixth Shi'ah Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq. The **Sunnis**, however, celebrate Mawlid an-Nabi on the twelfth. In the eighth century CE, the house in which Muhammad ﷺ was born was made into a place of prayer by Al-Khayzuran, the mother of Khalifah Harun al-Rashid, and it appears that the Prophet's birthday was marked at this time. The first Sunni celebrations took place in Syria in the twelfth century CE. Mawlid is now celebrated in most Muslim countries and in other countries where there are Muslims such as India, Britain and Canada. Saudi Arabia is the only Muslim country where Mawlid is not an official public holiday.

In some countries Mawlid is celebrated almost as a carnival, with street processions and the decoration of homes and mosques. Charity and food are distributed, and stories about the life of Muhammad ﷺ are told with children reciting poetry.



A boy holds a toy horse as his sister shows off her 'Al-Mawlid' doll during the Mawlid an-Nabi celebrations in Cairo, Egypt.

In Pakistan the national flag is flown on public buildings, and a 31-gun salute is fired. On the eleventh and twelfth of Rabi religious films are shown in cinemas.

Islamic scholars disagree about the celebration of Mawlid and some say that it should not be observed. According to **hadith**, Muhammad ﷺ recommended fasting on Mondays as this was the day on which he was born and also of the Night of Power when he first started to receive the Qur'an. Some scholars say that the celebration is permissible as long as there is no behaviour such as drinking alcohol, which is forbidden in Islam. Other scholars say that although the birth of Muhammad ﷺ was the most significant event in Islamic history, neither the companions of Muhammad ﷺ nor the next generation observed the event. Furthermore, Muhammad ﷺ did not mark the birth or death anniversaries of any of his family including those of his first wife Khadijah, and he did not tell his followers to observe his birthday.