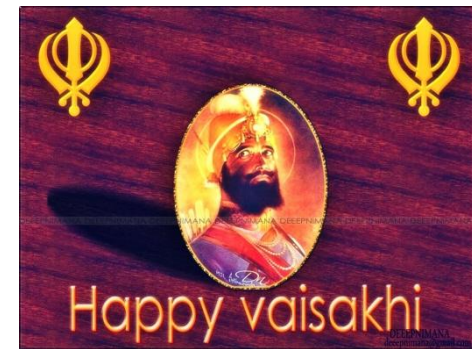


# Religious Holidays

- Most religions have holy days—holidays.
- These days are celebrated to help followers of the religion remember important events from their religion's history.



# Christmas

- Christian holiday
- Celebrated December 25<sup>th</sup> of every year
- Christians are celebrating the birth of Jesus on this day.
- They celebrate by going to church, reading scripture, singing hymns and Christmas carols, decorating in expectation of the holiday and giving gifts to loved ones to express the joy of the season.
- It is important to realize that gift giving is not the focus of the holiday. It is a time when Christians give thanks to God for the birth of their Savior.



**Christians worship on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day**



# Easter

- Christian holiday
- The date changes every year, but it is always on a Sunday in the Springtime.
- Christians are celebrating the miraculous resurrection of Jesus from the dead.
- The week before Easter is a very solemn time in the Christian church as Christians remember the last days and the death of Jesus.
- But Easter Sunday is a joyous celebration. Christians go to church (often at sunrise), read scripture, and sing hymns to celebrate.
- Many children also participate in an Easter Egg Hunt, but that is not part of the religious celebration of Easter. The egg is often seen as a symbol for Spring.



**Worship Service at Sunrise**



**Easter Lilies: Easter Flowers**

# Ramadan

- Muslim holiday
- It is celebrated at different times each year because Islam uses a lunar calendar.
- It is part of the Five Pillars of Islam.
- It consists of 29 to 30 days of fasting dawn-to-sunset.
- This is a time of spiritual reflection and increased devotion and worship.
- Muslims are expected to put more effort into following the teachings of Islam.
- Food and drink is served before sunrise and after sunset.
- The holiday of *Eid al-Fitr* "festivity of breaking the fast" marks the end of Ramadan.



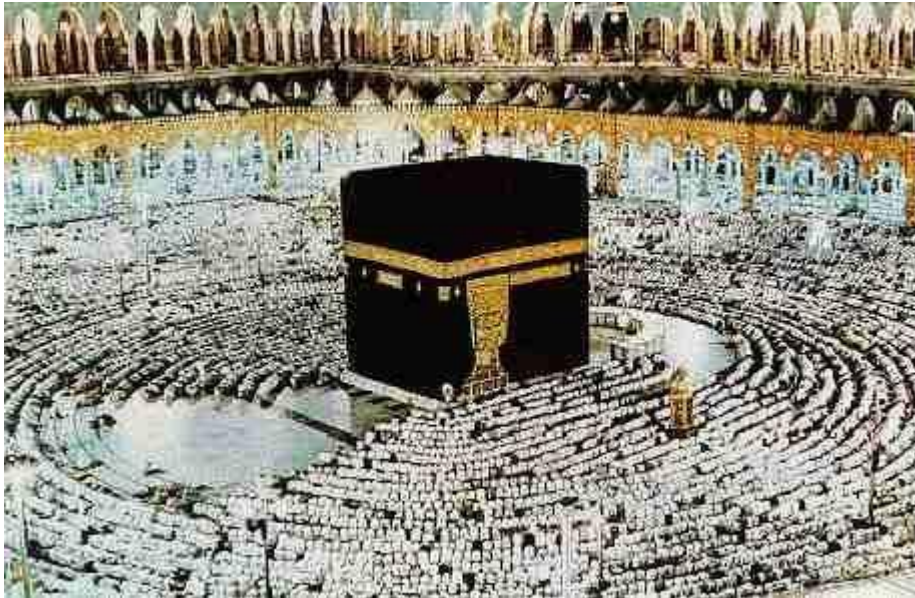
**Suhoor--Breakfast before Dawn**



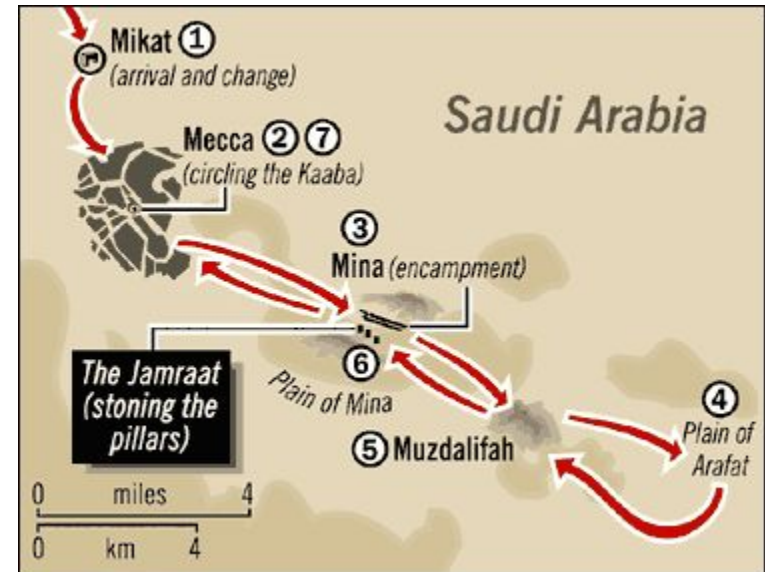
**Iftar—Meal after Sunset**

# The Hajj

- Muslim holiday
- It is the Muslim pilgrimage (holy journey) to Mecca (in Saudi Arabia) that all Muslims are expected to make at least once during their lifetime if they are financially able.
- The Hajj is part of the Five Pillars of Islam.
- It is a demonstration of solidarity by Muslim people from all over the world. There are pilgrims from every country who go to Mecca for the Hajj.
- By making this journey and completing the rituals and prayers it requires, Muslims show their submission to Allah.



**Muslim pilgrims dressed in white circle the holy monument called the Kab'ah in Mecca.**



**Map of places the pilgrims visit to pray and perform rituals.**



# Yom Kippur

- Jewish holiday; also called The Day of Atonement
- It is the holiest day of the year for the Jewish people.
- They observe this holy day by fasting and intensive prayer, often spending most of the day in synagogue services. Yom Kippur has five prayer services throughout the day.
- Yom Kippur is set aside for public and private confessions of guilt. One asks for forgiveness for sins against God and humanity.
- At the end of Yom Kippur, one hopes that they have been forgiven by God.
- In order to apologize to God, one must pray, repent and give to charity.



**Prayer Service at the Synagogue**

# Rosh Hashanah

- Jewish holiday; it is the celebration of the Jewish New Year
- It usually occurs in the early autumn of the Northern Hemisphere.
- Rosh Hashanah is a two-day celebration.
- The Jewish New Year is a time to begin introspection, looking back at the mistakes of the past year and planning the changes to make in the new year.
- No work is permitted on Rosh Hashanah. Much of the day is spent in the synagogue.
- Rosh Hashanah customs include sounding the shofar (a hollowed-out ram's horn) and eating symbolic foods such as apples dipped in honey to evoke a "sweet new year".
- Another popular practice of the holiday is *Tashlikh* ("casting off"). Jews walk to flowing water, such as a creek or river, on the afternoon of the first day and empty their pockets into the river, symbolically casting off their sins.



**Blowing the Shofar**



**Apples dipped in Honey**

# Diwali

- Hindu holiday; also known as the “Festival of Lights”
- Celebrated between mid-October and mid-November of every year
- The festival gets its name from the row of clay lamps that Indians light outside their homes to symbolize the inner light that protects us from spiritual darkness.
- At Diwali, Indians seek the divine blessing of Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth, as they begin a new year of business.
- Indians celebrate with family gatherings, glittering clay lamps, festive fireworks, strings of electric lights, bonfires, flowers, sharing of sweets, and worship of Lakshmi.
- Some believe that Lakshmi wanders the Earth looking for homes where she will be welcomed. People open their doors and windows and light lamps to invite Lakshmi in.





# Vaisakhi

- Sikh holiday
- Celebrated mid-April
- The festival celebrates the Sikh New Year and the founding of the Sikh community, known as the **Khalsa**, in 1699.
- It was originally a harvest festival in the Punjab before it became the Sikh's most important festival.
- Sweets are distributed, old quarrels are forgiven and people celebrate.
- Fairs are organized at various places in Punjab, where besides other recreational activities, wrestling bouts are also held.
- Sikhs also celebrate by attending Gurdwara before dawn with flowers and offerings.

