

Eid-Ul-Adha, Festival of Sacrifice

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Eid ul-Adha or Festival of Sacrifice is in commemoration of the sacrifices of Abraham and his family. All the other Muslims in the world join the hajjis (pilgrims) in Mecca, in celebrating the Eid ul Adha (Festival of Sacrifice), marking the end of the pilgrimage. On the 10th of Dhul-

Hijjah,

Muslims around the world wear their nicest clothing and attend a special prayer gathering in the morning. This is followed by a short sermon, after which everyone stands up to hug and greet one another. Next, people visit each other's homes and partake in festive meals with special dishes, beverages, and desserts. Children receive gifts and sweets on this joyous occasion.

In addition, like the pilgrims in Mecca, those Muslims who can afford to do so offer domestic animals, usually sheep, as a symbol of Abraham's sacrifice. The meat is distributed for consumption to family, friends, and to the poor and needy.

The Eid ul-Adha is a major religious event in the lives of Muslims. Usually, communities celebrate this occasion over a period of several days.

Who is Abraham?

Abraham is a figure revered by Muslims, Jews, and Christians alike as a righteous person who lived over four thousand years ago. His story can be found in the Bible as well as the Qur'an. Abraham is considered to be the patriarch of monotheism, or "belief in the One God," who sought a personal relationship with his Creator. He and his son, Isma'il constructed the Ka'ba, an empty cube-shaped building, as a place dedicated for the worship of the One God.

What is the Hajj?

Hajj is in commemoration of the trials of Abraham and his family in Mecca, which included Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son, Ismail, in response to God's command. It was, no doubt, the most strenuous test for Abraham; when he finally brought himself together to obey, followed by God's will to spare the boy and ransom him with the ram.

The Hajj consists of several ceremonies, meant to symbolize the essential concepts of the Islamic faith and to re-enact the Divine rituals observed by the Prophet Abraham and his son Isma'il, who were the first pilgrims to the House of Allah on earth: the Ka'ba. It is also to

remember the great assembly of the Day of Judgement when people will stand equal before Allah.

On the first official day of Hajj (8th of Dhul-Hijjah), the two million pilgrims travel a few miles to the plain of Mina and camp there. From Mina, pilgrims travel the following morning to the plain of Arafat where they spend the entire day in earnest supplication and devotion. That evening, the pilgrims move and camp at Muzdalifa, which is a site between Mina and Arafat. Muslims stay overnight and offer various prayers there.

Then the pilgrims return to Mina on the 10th, and throw seven pebbles at a stone pillar that represents the devil.

This is re-enacting Abraham's throwing stones at Satan when he tried to tempt Abraham against sacrificing his son, which is symbolic of conquering temptation.

Then the pilgrims sacrifice a sheep, reenacting the story of Abraham, who, in place of his son, sacrificed a sheep that God had provided as a substitute. The meat from the slaughtered sheep is distributed for consumption to family, friends, and poor and needy people in the community. After the sacrifice, the pilgrims return to Mecca to end the formal rites of Hajj by performing a final tawaf (circumambulation) and walking to and from the hills of As-Safa and Al-Marwa. The rites of the Hajj were designed by God and taught through Prophet Muhammad (S).

Some Nice Suggestions

During the Eid ul-Adha celebration, how about forming a study group and interviewing a Muslim who has been to Hajj? Ask them how their life has changed as a result. You can also invite a representative from the local Islamic Center or masjid (mosque) to speak about the spirit of Hajj and Eid ul-Adha. Or how about creating a mini-Hajj gathering. End it with an Eid party with lots of treats. Set aside some of your treats for the poor and needy. Make it an unforgettable experience and a memorable occasion.

Also, give something you like most to the needy or giving up something you like most in the Way of goodness as a sacrifice in the Way of Allah like a bad habit or trait that you had been used to and think you couldn't do without. Or abandon bad things that attract you but block your way towards the Right Path.

Don't forget the significance of Eid lies in remembering Abraham and his family's sacrifices. Quran says: "Their flesh and their blood reach not Allah, but the devotion from you reacheth (Him." (22:37) That is the real Islam. Last Updated (Thursday, 26 November 2009 05:23