

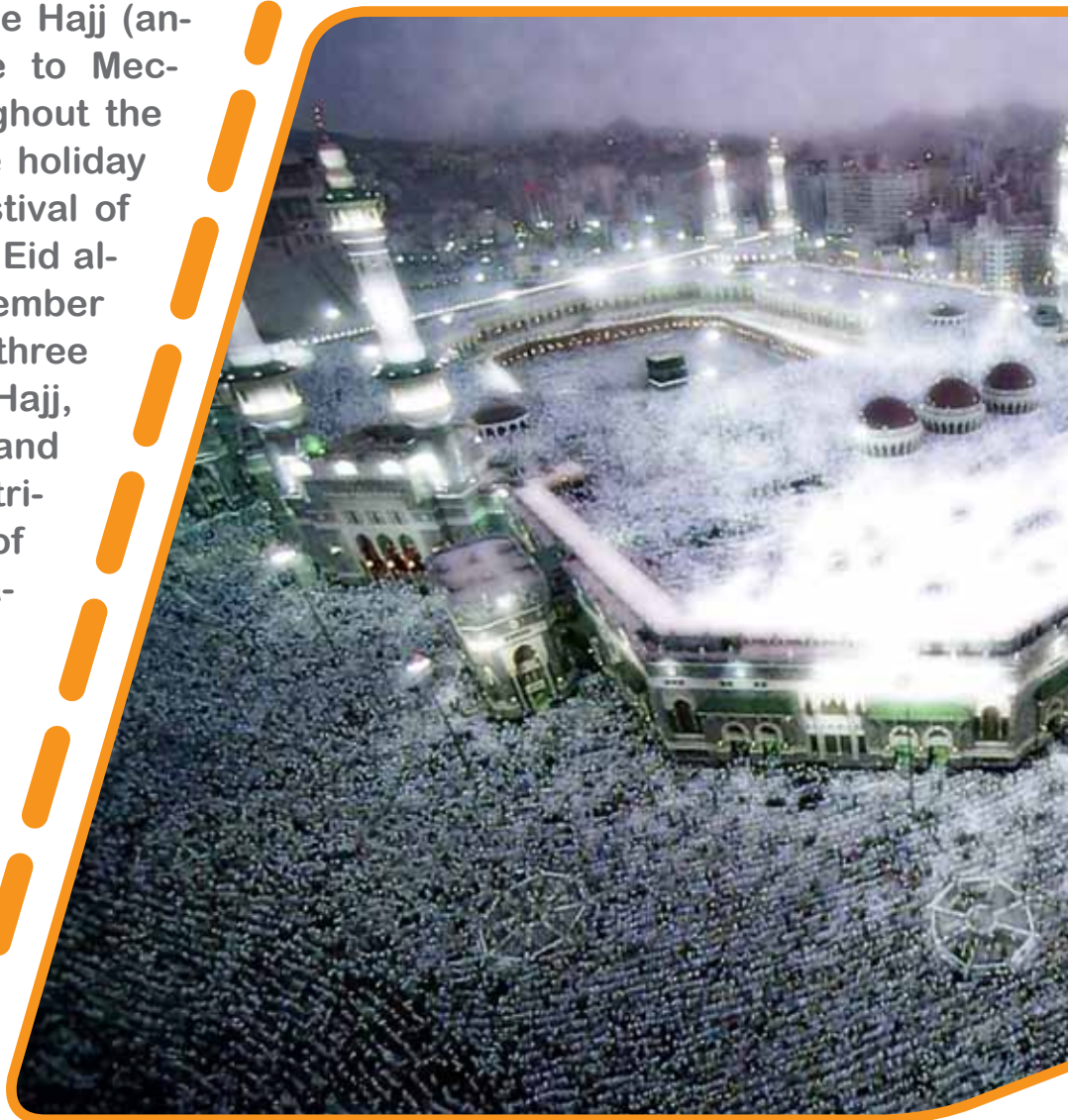
ZAMZAM

monthly

Heartly Sacrifice and Obedience in

Eid al-Adha

At the end of the Hajj (annual pilgrimage to Mecca), Muslims throughout the world celebrate the holiday of Eid al-Adha (Festival of Sacrifice). In 2011, Eid al-Adha begins on November 15th, and lasts for three days. During the Hajj, Muslims remember and commemorate the trials and triumphs of the Prophet Abraham (a.s.).



Abraham's Story and the Zamzam Well

One of Abraham's main trials was to face the command of Allah to sacrifice his only son. According to Islamic traditions, approximately four thousand years ago, the valley of Mecca was a dry, rocky and uninhabited place. By God's command, Abraham was instructed to bring his Egyptian wife Hagar and Ishmael- his only child at the time- to Arabia from the land of Cana'an.



As Abraham was ready to return to Cana'an, Hagar asked him, "Did Allah order you to leave us here? Or you are leaving us here to die?" Abraham faced his wife sadly without saying anything. He pointed to the sky showing that God had commanded him to do so. Hagar said, "Then Allah will not waste us; you can go." Though Abraham had left a large quantity of food and water with Hagar and Ishmael, the supplies quickly ran out, and within a few days the two began to feel the pains of hunger and dehydration.

Hagar ran up and down between two hills called Safa and Marwah seven times, in her desperate quest for water. Exhausted, she finally collapsed beside her baby Ishmael and prayed to God for deliverance. Miraculously, a spring of water gushed out of the earth at the feet of baby Ishmael. Other accounts have the angel Gabriel (Jibrail)

ZAMZAM

monthly

striking the earth and causing the spring to flow in abundance. With this water supply – known as the Zamzam Well – they were not only able to provide for their own needs, but could also trade water with passing nomads for food and supplies.

Construction of Ka'aba

Years later, God instructed Abraham to return from Cana'an and build a place of worship close to the Zamzam Well. Abraham and Ishmael constructed a stone and mortar structure – known as the Ka'aba – which was to be a place of gathering for all who wished to strengthen their faith in God. As years passed, Ishmael was blessed with Prophethood and gave the nomads of the desert his message of submission to God. After many centuries, Mecca became a thriving desert city and a major center for trade, thanks to its reliable water source, the



Zamzam Well.

When Ishmael was about 13, God decided to test their faith. Abraham had a recurring dream, in which God commanded him to offer his son as a sacrifice. This was an unimaginable act as God had granted him his son after years of praying. Abraham knew that the prophets' dreams were divinely inspired, and were one of the ways in which God communicated with his prophets. When the intent of the dreams became clear to him, Abraham decided to fulfill God's command and offer Ishmael for sacrifice. Although Abraham was ready to sacrifice his dearest for Allah's sake, he could not just take his son to the place of sacrifice without his consent. Ishmael had to be consulted as to whether he was willing to give up his life in fulfillment of God's command. This consultation would be a major test of Ishmael's faith, commitment and love for Allah, as well as his willingness to obey his father and sacrifice his life for the sake of Allah.

Abraham presented the matter to his son and asked what he thought about his slaughter. Ishmael did not show any hesitation or reservation even for a moment. He said, "Father, do what you have been commanded. You will find me, God willing, to be very patient." His mature response, his deep insight into the nature of

father's dreams, his commitment to Allah, and ultimately his willingness to sacrifice his own life for the sake of Allah were all unprecedented. When both father and son showed their perfect obedience to Allah and practically demonstrated their willingness to sacrifice their most precious possessions for His sake - Abraham by laying down his son for sacrifice and Ishmael by lying patiently under the knife - Allah called out to them



ZAMZAM

monthly

emerged victorious out of the test they were put to. During the celebration of Eid al-Adha, Muslims commemorate and remember Abraham's trials, by slaughtering an animal such as a sheep, camel, or goat. This action is very often misunderstood by those outside the faith. One-third of the meat is eaten

stating that his sincere intentions had been accepted, and that he need not carry out the killing of Ishmael. Instead, Abraham was told to replace his son with a ram to sacrifice instead. Allah also told them that they had

by immediate family and relatives, one-third is given away to friends, and the other third is donated to the poor. The act symbolizes our willingness to give up things that are of benefit to us or close to our hearts, in order to follow Allah's commands. It also symbolizes our willingness to give up some of our own bounty in order to strengthen our ties with other people and help the needy. The sacrifice itself, as practiced by Muslims, has noth-

November 2011
NO.121

ing to do with atoning for sins or using the blood to wash away the sins which have been committed. This is a misunderstanding by people from previous generations. A true Muslim, one who submits his or herself completely to the Lord, is willing to follow Allah's commands completely and obediently. It is this strength of heart, purity in faith, and willing obedience that our Lord desires from us.

celebration of
Eid al-Adha