



THE ISLAMIC BULLETIN

Issue 4

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HAJJ MUBARAK!!! EID MUBARAK!!!

HAJJ -- THE PILGRIMAGE

The annual pilgrimage to Mecca is an obligation only for those who are physically and financially able to perform it.

Nevertheless, about two million people go to Mecca each year from every corner of the globe providing a unique opportunity for those of different nations to gather together.

Although Mecca is always filled with visitors, the annual Hajj begins in the 12th month of the Islamic year.

Pilgrims wear special clothes: simple garments which strip away distinctions of class and culture, so that all stand equal before God.

The rites of the Hajj, which of are of Abrahamic origin, include circling the Ka'ba seven times, and going seven times between the mountains of Safa and Marwa as did Hagar during her search for water.

Then the pilgrims stand together on the wide plain of Arafa and join in prayers for God's forgiveness, in what is often thought of as a preview of the Last Judgement.

The close of the Hajj is marked by a festival, the Eid-ul-Adha, which is celebrated with prayers in Muslim communities all over the world.

On behalf of The Islamic Center of San Francisco, the Editors, and the Board of Directors wish all the readers and all the Muslim brothers, sisters, and their families and friends a happy Eid-ul-Adha.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



Assalamu alaikum

Dear Editor:

We read your Islamic Bulletin and were pleased with its clear, informative style. We hope this bulletin, along with other Islamic activities, will help promote the Islamic movement.

Unfortunately, with hope there is also frustration and sometimes even anger over the slow progress of the Islamic movement. Many Muslims feel that our respective scholars are the creators of this frustration and act as obstacles to the Islamic movement.

This is caused by the fact that the majority of Islamic scholars, who reside in California, are incompetent with the English language. This incompetence produces a negative impact on the American Muslim population, and the devastating results may carry on to our future generations if nothing is done to correct this problem.

A good American Muslim friend of mine once said, "I am reluctant to come to the local masjid, because the Imam doesn't give an English translation of his sermon, and I don't understand what he's saying." Don't you think it's about time we understand what our Imams are screaming about?

N. Akhtar
Stockton

Response:

Assalamu Alaikum

Dear N. Akhtar:

First of all, I would like to thank you for writing and state that you have a very valid point. I do believe that in order to further the Islamic movement here in the United States, we do indeed need our Imams to speak English and to give sermons in English.

But on the other hand, we need to give our Imams credit for being so learned (hafiz) in the Quran. It is not their fault if they happen to be of Pakistani, Arab, and Indian descent and therefore, their knowledge of the English language is not fluent.

It would be ideal for our Imams to be fluent in English so that many new Americans could learn about Islam. Since that is not always the case, however, we must work with the current situation.

For example, here in San Francisco, we have a large number of American Muslims who regularly attend the Friday prayers. Since they obviously do not understand the Khutba, which is delivered in Arabic by the Imam, we have a solution for this.

NEED TO CONTACT US?

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There is an English talk given by one of the knowledgeable English-speaking people before the actual Khutba. In this way, American Muslims attending feel happy to be a part of this program and look forward to Friday prayers where they can pray in congregation.

One of the ways Islam was propagated in the world was through Muslims good qualities. From the beginning of Islam, non-Arabic speaking Muslim scholars like Abu Hanifa, Bukhari, Muslim, etc. grew to become Muslim scholars and leaders of the whole Muslim world in general.

So hopefully history will repeat itself. We are waiting for the day to see Americans who will have the zeal and knowledge to lead the ship of the United States to Islam.

Please do not feel embarrassed to explain to your Imam the need for an English talk to be included. God willing, we will also talk to your Imam in Stockton and explain to him this need.

There are many Americans interested in Islam who are turned-off by the illusion that Islam is for Arabs only. That is not the case. Islam is the religion for all people of every color and nationality.



Oldest Printed Copy of the Holy Qur'an

Venice - A 16th century copy of the Holy Qur'an, believed to be the first printed copy, was discovered from the St. Michele Library in Venice, Italy. The copy of the Holy Qur'an was found among other old books that were kept without officials knowing about it.

Professor Sergio Noia of the Arabic language and literature at Milan University said the Qur'an was probably printed in 1537 by an individual named Peganino Dei Peganini in Venice. Before this discovery, the oldest printed copy of the Holy Qur'an dated back to 1604, printed in Hamburg, Germany.

World Muslim Population Crosses the Billion Mark

Cairo - The world Muslim population has reached 1,225 billion, according to an official at the International Islamic Center for Population Studies in Al-Azhar University of Cairo.

Dr. Imam Abdurrahim said about 800 Muslims were living in Asia, approximately 309 million in Africa, 16 million in Europe, 5 million in America, and about 1.5 million in Australia. - Reported by Ashraq Al Aswat.

2645 Embrace Islam in Riyadh

Jeddah - A total of 2645 people from 39 different countries embraced Islam during the last four years, according to a study conducted by the faculty of Social Science at the Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud Islamic University.

Of the sample survey conducted, 83% were Christians before embracing Islam. The remaining 17% consisted of Hindus, Buddhists and other minority religions.

The survey also reflected, 41 % embraced Islam through colleagues, 34% embraced through one of their friends who themselves embraced Islam at some point in life and 12% embraced Islam through one of their family members.

Reading Islamic books led to the embracing of Islam by 40%, while scenes of the prayers at mosques and performing of the pilgrimage at Mecca observed on television convinced 13%.

Seminars and lectures conducted by the Islamic organizations all over the world led 30% to Islam.

- Reported by Al-Muslimoon.

And Here in the US.....

Muslims in America Fight Stereotypes

It is unfortunate that some teachings of Islam have been distorted and misrepresented in the West and the Communist world.

The main distortions relate to the status of women, marriage, divorce, Jihad (holy war), the authenticity of the Prophethood of Prophet Muhammed (peace be upon him), and the distinctions between the Holy Qur'an and the Ha'dith.

Shabbir Mansuri, a Muslim educational reformer from California, is working diligently in conjunction with other Muslims to change the image of the Muslims in the United States.

Muslims are misrepresented by stereotyping them as terrorists, as Bedouins, and quite other negative images in the American school books, movies, newspapers and the marketplace.

Such negative images are fueled not only by the main events, like the gulf war, but also by an abiding ignorance of the Muslim culture.

Scott Easton of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee in Washington D.C. said, "We are concerned now about more subtle forms of discrimination that have been there all along, like the anti-Arab jokes on the radio. The 25,000 member civil rights organization marked the start of the holy month of Ramadan by petitioning the U.S. Secretary of Education for a task force on the treatment of Islam and the Arab world in the elementary and the secondary school system in United States."

Former teacher Audrey Shabbas of Berkeley believes the war opened a "window of opportunity" to learn more about Islam and the Middle East. Books on the Middle East are selling briskly, enrollment in a UC-Berkeley class on Muslims in America is 50 percent, and calls requesting information flood in to nonprofit groups like Arab World and Islamic Resources in Berkeley and Muslim mosques like our Islamic Center.

See also The S.F. Examiner Sunday March 31, 1991 Page B-1.

GEOGRAPHY

One of the factors that stimulated geographical research among the Muslims was the annual pilgrimage to the Holy City of Mecca (Hajj). The Muslims conceived Mecca as the central point of the world and tried to find easily accessible routes, and the distances and directions of different cities and towns from the central point. It was also necessary to find the correct direction of each place from Mecca so that Muslims could offer their daily prayers facing the direction of Mecca.

As the Muslims influence and faith spread to far distant places in the north, east, west, and south, efforts to find direction and location of each region from Mecca became all the more necessary. This led to the determination of points of longitude and latitude of hundreds of towns and cities with greater exactness and accuracy than before. The invention of the compass was also made possible by this urge to find the correct direction of Mecca from different parts of the world.

Again, the daily prayers necessitated the proper timing of each prayer and proper times of fast. This urge to worship God at the proper times and to fast for His pleasure during the correct timing of the day in the different parts of the world led to great efforts and research into these subjects.

Philip K. Hitti, "History of the Arabs", rightly admits the influence of worship and the Ka'bah in stimulating scientific studies by the Muslims in the field of geography.

"The institution of the Holy Pilgrimage, the orientation of the mosques towards Mecca and the need for determining the direction of the Ka'bah at the time of prayer gave religious impetus to the Muslims' study of geography. Astrology, which necessitated the determining of the latitudes and longitudes of all places throughout the world, added its scientific influence. Muslim traders between the 7th and 9th centuries reached China on the east both by sea and by land, attained the island of Zanzibar and the farthest coasts of Africa on the south, penetrated Russia on the north and were checked in their advance westward only by the dreaded waters of the 'Sea of Darkness' (the Atlantic)."

The main stimulus to acquire knowledge of everything, including geography, came from the Quran and the Hadith of the Prophet, which led the Arabs to find knowledge from the four corners of the world. In this search they found instruments and tools in Greek literature which proved very useful to them in their quest for geographical knowledge.

As they advanced in geographical knowledge, these tools enabled them to make their studies more systematic and scientific. But this in no way means that their geographical studies were stimulated by the Greeks, because the stimulus to knowledge had already been provided by the Revelation which encouraged them to acquire all the existing knowledge through translating useful works of other peoples.

However, they continued their studies of different regions and lands and discovered new fields of geographical knowledge unknown to previous nations, including the Greeks and the Romans.

HAJJ (PILGRIMAGE)

HAJJ - HOW IT ALL BEGAN

Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) (A.S.) and Prophet Isma'il (Ishmael) (A.S.)

Nearly four thousand and six years ago, in the Summertime town of Ur, the capital of the Babylonian Kings, in the valley of river Euphrates (which at present is Southern Iraq), lived a young man named Ibrahim (Abraham) (PBUH). The people of Ur had once worshipped God but as time passed they forgot the true religion and started praying to idols, statues made of wood or clay and sometimes even precious stones.

The Prophet Ibrahim (PBUH) was the son of Terah Azar, an idol carver and a staunch idol worshiper. He did all he could do to compel Ibrahim (AS) to worship the idols, but he flatly refused to do so. Even as a small child Ibrahim (AS) could not understand how his people, and especially his father, could make these images with their own hands, call them gods, and then worship them. He had always refused to join his people when they paid respect to these statues. Instead he would leave the town and sit alone, thinking about the heavens and the world around him. He was sure his people were doing wrong and so alone he searched for the right way.

One clear night as he sat staring at the sky he saw a beautiful shining star, so beautiful that he cried out: "This is my Lord." (Qur'an 6:76) He looked at it in awe for some time, until suddenly it began to fade and then it disappeared. He turned away in disappointment saying: "I love not those that set." (Qur'an 6:76) On another night Ibrahim (AS) was again looking at the sky and he saw the rising moon, so big and bright. He said: "This is my Lord." (Qur'an 6:77) But it was not long before the moon set as well. Then he said, "Unless my Lord guides me, I shall surely be among those who go astray." (Qur'an 6:77)

Abraham (PBUH) then saw the beauty and splendor of the sunrise and decided that the sun must be the biggest and most powerful thing in the universe. But for the third time he was wrong, for the sun set at the end of the day.

"When he saw the sun rising (in splendor) he said: "This is my Lord; this is the greatest (of all)." But when the sun set, he said: "O my people! I am indeed free from your (guilt) of giving partners to God. For me, I have set my face, firmly and truly, towards Him Who created the heavens and earth, and never shall I give partners to The Almighty." (Qur'an 6:78-79)

It was then that he realized that God is the Most Powerful, the Creator of the stars, the moon, the sun, the earth and of all living things. Suddenly he felt himself totally at peace, because he felt that he had found the Truth.

Speaking highly of him, the Holy Qur'an states: "Ibrahim was indeed a model, devoutly obedient to The Almighty, and true in faith, and he was not of those who set up equals to The Almighty. He showed his gratitude for the favors of The Almighty, Who chose him and guided him to a straight path. And We gave him good in this world, and he will be, in the Hereafter, in the ranks of the Righteous." (Qur'an 16:120-122)

The Prophet Ibrahim's Teachings

Gradually the Prophet was commanded to commence preaching. Prophet Ibrahim (AS) was a man of strong will and determination and he argued with his people with great vigor regarding the folly of worshipping the idols.

"And rehearse to them (something of) Abraham's story. Behold, he said to his father and his people: "What worship ye?"

They said: "We worship idols, and we remain constantly in attendance on them."

He said: "Do they listen to you when ye call (on them),
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Or do you good or harm?"

They said: "Nay, but we found our fathers doing thus (what we do)."

He said: "Do ye then see whom ye have been worshipping,
"Ye and your fathers before you?

"For they are enemies to me; not so the Lord and Cherisher of the Worlds;

"Who created me, and it is He who guides me;

"Who gives me food and drink,

"And when I am ill, it is He who cures me;

"Who will cause me to die, and then to live (again);

"and who, I hope, will forgive me my faults on the Day of judgment.

"O my Lord! Bestow wisdom on me, and join me with the righteous;

"Grant me honorable mention on the tongue of truth among the latest (generations);

"Make me one of the inheritors of the Garden of Bliss;

"Forgive my father, for that he is among those astray;

"And let me not be in disgrace on the Day when (men) will be raised up;

"The Day whereon neither wealth nor sons will avail,

"But only he (will prosper) that brings to God a sound heart.

(Qur'an 26:69-89)

Opposition by the People and Discussion with the King

The people paid no heed to his teachings and did not refrain from idol worshipping. The ruler at that time was king Nemrud, who claimed himself to be a god. He conducted a meeting with Prophet Ibrahim (PBUH). In the meeting Nemrud asked: "What is this thing you are calling people for? Why do you persuade the people to worship an invisible God?" The Prophet replied back boldly: "My God is the One Who gives and takes away life." Nemrud answered arrogantly: "I also have the power to do that. I can kill the people and also spare them." Prophet Ibrahim at this point couldn't resist asking Nemrud. He asked: "My God makes the sun rise in the East and set it in the West, can you make it rise in the West and set it in the East?" At this Nemrud couldn't say anything.

Breakage of the Idols

Once there was a grand celebration and everybody in town was attending it except Prophet Ibrahim (PBUH). He had a special plan in his mind. He proceeded towards the temple and started axing down the idols. When the people returned they were shocked to find their idols smashed to pieces except the chief idol. Someone suggested that it was the work of Ibrahim (PBUH) and he was immediately summoned in.

He was sentenced to be burned alive. A huge furnace was created for this purpose. The Prophet had full faith in The Almighty and remained calm.

When he was tossed in the center of the furnace, the flames were blazing, but the Prophet was unharmed and sometime later Prophet Ibrahim (PBUH) walked out of the fire safely. All the spectators were surprised at the miracle.

Still Abraham (PBUH) tried to persuade his own dear father not to worship powerless, un-seeing, un-hearing statues. Abraham explained that special knowledge had come to him and implored his father, "So Follow me: I will guide Thee to a Way that is even and straight. O my father! Serve not Satan: for Satan is a rebel against (God) Most Gracious." (Qur'an 19:43-44)

But Azar would not listen. He threatened his son with stoning if he would reject the gods of Ur. He ordered Abraham to leave the city with these words: "Now get away from me for a good long while!" Abraham said: Peace be on thee: I will pray to my Lord for thy forgiveness: for He is to me Most Gracious." (Qur'an 19:46-47)

Imagine how terrible it must have been for him to leave his home, his family and all that he knew, and set out across the wilderness into the unknown.

But at the same time, how could he have remained among people who did not believe in God and who worshiped statues? Abraham always had a sense that God cared for him and he felt God near him as he traveled.

At last, after a long hard journey, he arrived at a place by the Mediterranean Sea, not far from Egypt. There he married a woman by the name of Sarah and settled in the land of Palestine.

Many years passed but Abraham (AS) and his wife were not blessed with any children. In the hope that there would be a child, and in keeping with tradition, Sarah suggested that Abraham (AS) should marry Hagar, her Egyptian handmaid.

Birth of the Prophet Isma'il (A.S.) and the Migration to Mecca

Prophet Ibrahim (PBUH) prayed for a son in all sublimity and his prayer was granted. Hagar gave birth to a baby boy Isma'il (AS). Soon after, The Almighty commanded the Prophet Ibrahim (PBUH) to migrate to the Holy Land of Ka'bah in Makkah.

In accordance with the Divine Commandment, the family set out on a long and troublesome journey. Towards the end of the journey the family set up their tents in a hilly area without any trees or water source around.

The Prophet Isma'il (PBUH) was a few months old. He began crying because of thirst. His mother ran desperately in quest of water between the two hillocks called Safa and Marwa but found no water.

When she returned back to the thirsty infant she was surprised to see the spring of Zam Zam emerged beneath the foot of the Prophet Isma'il (PBUH). She heaved a sigh of relief and quenched the thirst of her baby with the water.

People came from far and wide to observe the miracle and gradually this locality named Mecca became the birth place of Islam.

Vision of the Prophet Ibrahim (AS) Regarding the Sacrifice of the Prophet Isma'il (AS)

Prophet Ibrahim (AS) received a Commandment in his vision to sacrifice his only son Isma'il (AS). The Prophet Ibrahim (PBUH) had no hesitation in complying with what he was ordered to do. The father told the son about the dream. To his great surprise, Isma'il (PBUH) had no objection and was willing to be sacrificed as The Almighty had willed. Prophet Isma'il (PBUH) said, "O my father! Do as thou art commanded: thou will find me, If God so wills, one of the steadfast." (Qur'an 37:102)

The Ordeal of the Sacrifice of Prophet Isma'il (PBUH)

On the tenth day of Dhul Hijja, the father and his beloved son walked side by side. A young lad possessed forbearance and the old man was full of determination and spirit to complete his submission to The Almighty. Their purpose was to carry out the orders of their Lord.

They proceeded towards Mina. Finally they reached a special spot. The father's heart was beating violently as he laid his son prostrate

on the ground.

Prophet Ibrahim (PBUH) was shaking with emotions as he drew the knife across the son's neck, a moment of action, that isn't possible to describe on paper - they heard a Divine Voice:

"O' Ibrahim! You have indeed shown the truth of the vision. Surely do We reward the doers of good." (Qur'an 37:105)

Prophet Ibrahim (PBUH) was commanded not to sacrifice his son, instead a ram was provided for the sacrifice. The great moment of suspense came to an end. Both the father and son expressed a deep sense of happiness and gratitude to The Almighty.

Glad Tidings Regarding the Birth of Prophet Ismaq (AS)

When the Prophet Ibrahim (PBUH) displayed his unstinted submission to the orders of The Almighty, he was informed of the glad tiding regarding the birth of a baby from Sarah, his first wife. The Holy Qur'an affirms:

"And We gave him the good news of Ishaq (Isaac)-a prophet, - one of the Righteous. We blessed him and Ishaq: but of their progeny are (some) that do right, and (some) that obviously do wrong, to themselves." (Qur'an 37:112-113)

The Construction of the Ka'bah

The Ka'bah was constructed by the Prophet Ibrahim and the Prophet Isma'il (PBUH). The Holy Qur'an states:

"Remember We made the House a place of assembly for men and a place of safety; and take ye the Station of Abraham as a place of prayer; and We covenanted with Ibrahim and Isma'il, that they should sanctify My House for those who compass it round, or use it as retreat, or bow, or prostrate themselves (therein in prayer)." (Qur'an 2:125)

So both the father and son laid the foundations of the Ka'bah. Ishmael brought stones and Ibrahim fixed them. When the walls became higher, Ibrahim brought that stone which is famous by the name of Muqam-Ibrahim and stood on it and began fixing stones and raised the walls higher.

The Qur'an mentions in these words, **"And remember Abraham and Isma'il raised the foundations of the House (with this prayer): "Our Lord! Accept (this service) from us: for Thou art the All-hearing, The All-knowing. "Our Lord! Make of us Muslims, bowing to Thy (Will), and of our progeny a people Muslim, bowing to Thy (Will); and show us our places for the celebration of (due) rites; and turn unto us (in Mercy); for Thou art the Oft-Relenting Most Merciful. "Our Lord! Send amongst them a Messenger of their own, who shall rehearse Thy Signs to them and instruct them in Scripture and Wisdom, and purify them: for Thou art the Exalted in Might - The Wise."** (Qur'an 2:127-129)

Burial Place

The Prophet Ibrahim (PBUH) lived for 175 years. His life was full of happenings, tests and trials. He had a firm faith in The Almighty. He gained thousands upon thousands of believers. When he passed away, he was buried in Hebron, about twenty-one miles southwest of Jerusalem.

Mecca is Habituated

The Prophet Isma'il (PBUH) and his mother settled down in the vicinity of the Kab'ah. From the descendants of Ishmael would form a nation from which would come a great Prophet, who would guide the people in the way of God. This was Muhammed (SAW), the Messenger of God. From the descendants of Sarah's child, Isaac, would come Moses (AS) and Jesus (AS).

HAJJ: THE FIFTH PILLAR OF ISLAM

Hajj demonstrates the essence of Islam which is belief in one God, alone. All the ceremonies a pilgrim performs, all the places through which he goes during Hajj remind him of a great deal of history of this belief, Tawhid.

The performance of Hajj becomes obligatory (fard) upon those Muslims 1) who have the means to afford the journey and 2) are physically able to do it and 3) if the way is safe and free from dangers. Hajj is obligatory once in a lifetime. The Prophet (pbuh) said, "He who performs (Hajj) with no obscenity or evil practices will come out as a newly born baby - free from all sins." (Bukhari & Muslim)

BLESSINGS AND EFFECTS OF HAJJ

The pilgrim's mind which pulsates with the desire to visit the House of God, learns to retain only virtuous thoughts. He repents for his past sins and seeks forgiveness from people whom he might have wronged. He is careful that nobody is harmed by him while he tries to render whatever service or help he can do to others.

He desists from abuse, indecency, dishonesty, squabbles and bickering. Thus the entire journey constitutes Ibadah. This is the journey which continuously purifies man's nafs (soul).

Every year, in each of the different parts of the world, hundreds of thousands of Muslims get prepared for Hajj with a newly kindled spark of the love of God; their influence will improve the moral state of vast numbers of people.

When these people, filled with the thrill of Hajj return from the center of their religion to their cities and villages all around the world, and meet thousands of individuals, and relate to them their Hajj experiences, it causes an awareness, an awakening and God-consciousness throughout the whole Muslim Ummah (nation).

Hajj demonstrates the real and practical unity and brotherhood of mankind. Pilgrims belonging to hundreds of countries and communities, languages and colors, flock to one center through a thousand and one routes. They remove their national dress and everybody without exception puts on Ihram, nothing more than two sheets of unsown cloth and a pair of slippers.

Pride and vanity are given up. Poor and rich, black and white, Arab and non-Arab, American and African, rulers and ruled, are all clad in similar dress, moving simultaneously in the same direction, raising one slogan, Talhiya. In this way, the differences of nationalities and races and colors are obliterated and a universal group of God-worshippers is constituted.

The month of Hajj is the season of peace, Mecca is the place of peace; Hajj is the greatest conference of peace known in the history of mankind.

Hajj is a declaration of strong rejection of all kinds of shirk (worship of any other than God). The pilgrim rejects all concepts of special holiness related to man or place or even prophets. In Islam, nothing is holy other than God, The Almighty. He alone is Quddus (holy); it is His name. He has no partner in any of His Attributes.

HAJJ IN OUTLINE

8th Zul-Hijjah

- Enter Ihram from Miqat or from the staying place at Mecca.
- Crying out of Talbiya ("Labbayk Allahumma Labbayk, Labbayk la sharika laka Labbayk, Innal hamda, wanni' mata laka walmulk La sharika lak."
- "Here I am, O Allah, (in response to Your call), here I am. Here



I am, You have no partner, here I am. Indeed all the Praise, Grace and Sovereignty belong to You. You have no partner."

- Set out for Mina the same day and stay there at night (offering the five prayers: zuhr, asr, mahgrib, isha and fajr)

9th Zul-Hijjah

- Leave Mina for Arafat before midday.
- Stay at Arafat plain praying to God until sunset. This is the most important part of Hajj (pray zuhr and asr prayers together at zuhr time)
- Return to Muzdalifa, pray mahgrib and isha together, sleep, offer fajr prayers and leave before sunrise.

10th Zul-Hijjah

- Come back to Mina and throw seven pebbles at Jamrat ul-Aqaba (the last pillar).
- Sacrifice of animals, usually cattle, camels and goats.
- Go to Mecca and perform Tawaf and Sa'ee.
- Return to Mina and stay 2 or 3 nights there.

11th and 12th Zul-Hijjah

- Throw seven pebbles at each pillar each day.

Before Leaving

- Come back to Mecca and perform Tawaf.

One who arrives in Mecca on the 9th of Zul-Hijjah must go straight to Arafat and perform the rest of the rites. His Hajj is completed.

ISLAMIC VOCABULARY

HAJJ VOCABULARY

Tawhid - belief in one God, alone.

Ka'aba - a cubic structure, the most ancient structure dedicated to the worship of God; first built by the Prophets Ibrahim and Isma'il (peace be upon them.)

Al-Masjidul Haram - the large star-shaped mosque around the Ka'bah, also called Haram for short.

Mecca - the ancient city in Arabia where the Haram and the Ka'bah are situated.

Qibla - the direction of the Ka'bah which all Muslims face when they pray from any place on earth.

Hajj - to set out for the Ka'bah and perform specific rites during 8th through 13th ZulHijjah, the 12th month of the Islamic calendar.

Umra - to set out for the Ka'bah and perform some specific rites at any time during the year.

Ihram - to take off usual clothes and put on two seamless sheets; to enter into a state of devotion with the intention of Hajj or Umra. The dress and the intention are both called Ihram.

Miqat - the place for Ihram.

Talbiya - the devotional calls to be recited loudly, "Here I am, here I am, O God!" frequently during the Hajj period.

Tawaf - to circumambulate the Ka'bah.

Al-Hajarul Aswad - the Black Stone, a remainder of the original Ka'bah built by the Prophets Ibrahim and Isma'il (pbuh)

Muqamu-Ibrahim - the stone on which Ibrahim (pbuh) stood while building the Ka'bah, now situated about ten yards from the Ka'bah covered with a glass box. Also called Muqamu for short.

Zamzam - the ancient well about thirty yards east of the Ka'bah, first found by the Prophet Isma'il (pbuh).

Safa & Marwa - two hills near the Ka'bah now enclosed by the Haram buildings.

Sa'ee - to walk between Safa and Marwa.

Mina - a town five miles east of Mecca.

Arafat - the plain about fourteen miles east of Mecca.

Muzdalifa - a place between Mina and Arafat where the Masha'rul Haram mosque is located.

Jamrat - three pillars of stone at Mina.

Ramy - to throw pebbles at Jamrat.

Nahr - to slaughter a camel, sheep, goat or cow, etc.

Wuqoof - to stay at Arafat from midday to sunset of the 9th of Zul-Hijjah.

Mabit - to stay nights, first in Muzdalifa, later on in Mina.

Masjid an-Nabawi - the mosque of Medina.

Masjid Quba - the mosque near Medina.

Ibadat - complete acceptance of God's will, of which formal worship is a part.



Q: 1. Who was the first man to embrace Islam?

Q: 2. Is it OK to talk during the Khutbah of the Friday prayers?

Q: 3. If you started Prayers (Salah) and remembered that you did not have Wudhu (ablution), what should you do?

Q: 4. How many times does a Muslim have to make a pilgrimage (Hajj)?

Q: 5. What was the name of Prophet Ishmael's mother?

A: The first man to embrace Islam was Abu Bakr Siddiq.

A: No, it is not OK to talk during the Friday prayer Khutbah.

A: If you started the prayer (Salah) and remembered that you did not have the ablution (Wudhu) then stop performing the prayer (Salah), make Wudhu and repeat the Salat.

A: A Muslim is supposed to make the pilgrimage (Hajj) at least once a lifetime.

A: Hagar (Hajar) was the name of Prophet Ishmael's mother.



SAMBOOSA AL-MOTHILTHA (TRIANGLE)

(Serves 10 - 12 persons)

Dough Ingredients:

- 5 cups of flour
- 1 tablespoon gee or corn oil
- Warm water
- Pinch of salt

Stuffing Ingredients:

- 2 1/2 lbs of minced meat
- 1/2 bunch finely chopped parsley
- 4 hard-boiled eggs
- 1/2 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 2 finely chopped onions

Preparation:

1. Put flour in a large bowl, make a well, add oil and stir thoroughly.
2. Add water a little at a time and mix to a soft dough.
3. Cut dough into hand-sized pieces, and stretch dough over back of hands.
4. Place stretched rounds on an oiled tray, cover with a damp cloth and set aside for at least one hour.

Stuffing:

1. Sauté the meat, onions, salt and pepper.
2. Remove from heat.
3. When cool, add parsley and the chopped hard boiled eggs.

Cooking:

1. Prepare your work surface for dough by covering a table with a large white cloth.
2. Taking one piece of dough at a time, dip in flour, roll out, then stretch over back of hands. Repeat with each piece of dough, ending up with thin rounds of dough.
3. Place each round of dough (separately) on the covered table and stretch it so the dough is thin.
4. Starting with the first round, trim the uneven edges, then cut into strips.
5. Place a tablespoon of meat mix on the top corner of the strip.
6. Formed into triangular shapes, place them on a floured tray.
7. When finished, heat oil, and fry samboosa.

Serve hot and enjoy it!!!



THE STORY OF HADRAT HAGAR (R.A.A.)

Hadrat Hagar was the wife of Prophet Abraham and the mother of Prophet Ishmael (peace and blessings of God be upon them).

When Ishmael was a bay, Prophet Abraham was commanded by God to take his son to the Holy Land of Ka'bah in Mecca and leave him there so that when he grew up, he would spread the Word of God in that part of the world. Accordingly, Abraham took his wife Hagar with his baby and left them in Mecca with a bucket of water and some dates.

Hagar followed him and said, 'O Abraham! Where are you going leaving us in this bare and lifeless valley?' She said this a number of times but he did not say anything. Then she said, 'Has God commanded you to do so?'

In reply, he simply said, 'Yes!' Then she said that if that was the case, God would not destroy them and went back to her baby.

When Ibrahim (A.S.) went behind the side of the mountain where he could not see his wife and son, he turned towards that place (Ka'bah) where it was to be built later and prayed to God in these words,

"O our Lord! I have made some of my offspring to dwell in a valley without cultivation by Thy Sacred House: In order, O our Lord, that they may establish regular prayers. So fill the hearts of some among men with love towards them and feed them with fruits, so that they may give thanks." (Qur'an 14:37)

Hagar suckled her child and drank water for some days until the bucket was empty, then she and her baby suffered thirst. She saw her child crying from thirst and could not help him. So she left him there and went towards the valley to look for help but could not find anyone.

Hagar traveled between the mountains of Safa and Marwa, sometimes running, especially in the low ground where she could not see her son, and sometimes walking, seven times. But still, she could not find anyone. When she was doing it for the seventh time and going up the mount Marwa, she heard a voice. She said to herself, 'be quiet' and listened carefully. She heard a voice again and said, "O, man! You have made your voice heard to me. Have you got something to help us?" Suddenly, she returned to her baby and to her amazement, she saw water emerging beneath the foot of her baby.

Thus, Hagar began to drink water and suckle her baby. The angel said to her, "Don't fear death. This is God's house which will be built by this child and his father. And God will not destroy the people of this House."

Hagar was a true example of a woman who had great faith in God. Although she was left with her baby, Ishmael, alone in the desert without any food and water, she was still able to remain steadfast. Hagar had no doubt that since she was being left in the desert for the sake of God, that God would indeed take care and provide for her and her baby son, Ishmael. And it is from Hagar's sacrifice of running back and forth looking for water for her child, that Muslims do Sa'ee (running between Safa and Marwa), when they perform the Umra and Hajj.

ISLAMIC DIETARY LAWS

EID UL-ADHA

Every year, Muslims celebrate the Feast of Sacrifice (Eid ul-Adha), on the tenth day of the last month (Zul Hijjah) of the Islamic lunar calendar.

This festival reminds Muslims of the great sacrifice of the Prophet Ibrahim (pbuh) when he was about to sacrifice his only son Ishmael for the love of God.

Every Muslim, who can afford it, is expected to sacrifice an animal, a sheep or goat.

For bigger animals (a cow or camel), a group of five individuals may share the cost of sacrificing one animal.

After sacrificing an animal, Muslims are to distribute the meat into three parts: one-third to the needy, one-third to relatives, friend and neighbors, and the remaining one-third for one's own family.

This tradition inculcates into the minds of Muslims the concept of sacrificing one's money, time, efforts, etc., all for the love of God.

It also builds up a feeling of concern and a sense of sharing among friends, relatives, neighbors, and the needy.

Muslims from all over the world, who can afford it, congregate at Mecca, Arabia, for the performance of Hajj and celebrate this occasion.

TEACHINGS OF THE PROPHET (SAW)

HAJJ (PILGRIMAGE)

God the Exalted, has said: "And pilgrimage to the House of God is a duty unto God for mankind, for him who can find a way thither. As for him who disbelieveth (let him know that) lo! God is independent of (all) creatures." (Quran 3:97)

Hazrat Abu Hurairah (r.a.a.) says: "The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) once delivered a sermon and addressing us said: 'O people! God has made it obligatory for you to perform Hajj (the pilgrimage), and as such you should perform it.'

A man asked: 'O Messenger of God, should we perform Hajj every year?'

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) kept quiet, till the man repeated his question thrice. Then the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) said: 'Had I said 'yes', then this Hajj would have become a yearly obligatory duty, and this you could not have afforded.'

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) further said: 'Leave me when I omit

something for you (i.e.) don't pester me with such questions, when I am not imposing anything on you. Some people who lived before you, used to ask too many unnecessary questions, and would disagree with their prophets. On this account they were destroyed. As such when I call you to do something, you must obey and carry out my direction as far as it may be within your capacity, and when I forbid you to refrain from anything then avoid it.'" (Muslim)

Hazrat Abu Hurairah (r.a.a.) says that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) was once asked: 'Which action is the best of all?' He (s.a.w.) said: 'To believe in God and his Messenger (s.a.w.).'

He (s.a.w.) was further asked: 'And what next?' He (s.a.w.) said: 'Jihad (fighting) in the cause of God.' He (s.a.w.) was asked again. And what after that?' He (s.a.w.) answered: 'The Pilgrimage free from vices and defects.' (Bukhari and Muslim)

It is also reported by Hazrat Abu Hurairah (r.a.a.) that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) said: 'Umrah followed by another Umrah atones for the sins committed between the two. The recompense for a pilgrimage (free from vice) is nothing but the paradise.' (Bukhari and Muslim)

Hazrat Ayesha (r.a.a.) relates: 'I once requested the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) 0' Messenger of God, we (the women folk) consider that Jihad (fighting) in the cause of God is the best deed, then may we not go forth fighting in the cause of God?

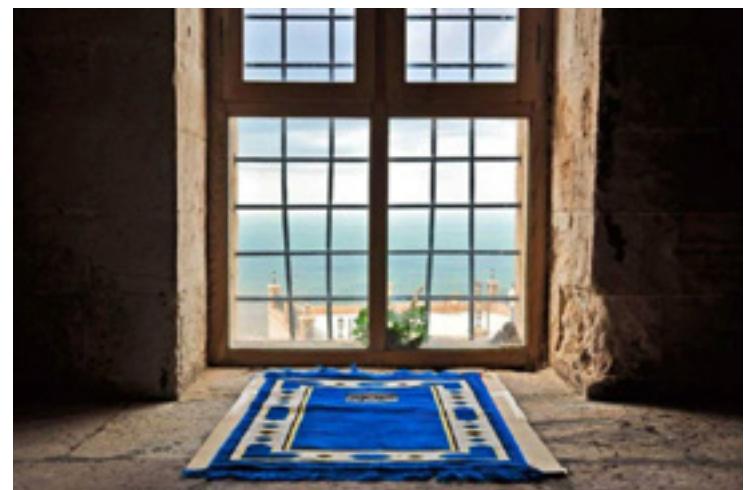
He (s.a.w.) said: The best form of Jihad in the cause of God for you is the pilgrimage, free from all vices and defects. (Bukhari)

Hazrat Ayesha (r.a.a.) relates that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) said: 'There is no other day on which God frees the largest number of his bondsmen from the fire of Hell than the Day of Arafat.' (Muslim)

Hazrat Ibn Abbas (r.a.a.) says that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) said: 'Umrah performed during the month of Ramadan is equivalent to a pilgrimage or equals to the pilgrimage performed in my company.' (Bukhari and Muslim)

Hazrat Laqit bin 'Aamir (r.a.a.) says that once he visited the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) and submitted: 'My father has grown very old and is not strong enough to undertake the journey to perform the pilgrimage or Umrah.'

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) said: 'You perform the Hajj and Umrah on behalf of your father.' (Abu Daud and Tirmizi)



THE ACCOUNT OF A CATHOLIC CHRISTIAN WHO EMBRACED ISLAM

by Noor Cassim

I was Father Anthony Perera O.M.I. (Order of Mary Immaculate). I am now Noor Cassim. I was born in a devout Catholic family and received training in a seminary in Central Sri Lanka during 1962-71 and emerged Father Philip Rodrigo O.M.I. I served as the parish priest in my native village.

The parishioners raised many questions to some of which my elders could give only one answer. 'It is a mystery.'

One particular problem that worried me considerably, was 'How could God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit be such a distinct God yet all three be also one God?'

It was an impossible formula akin to one plus one plus one is equal to one. All my attempts to find an answer from our literature and from the older priests did not take me anywhere. In fact the Bible does not support it.

Yet another point of my inquiry was the concept of original sin. If it is true it would mean that all the Prophets including Abraham, Moses and David before Jesus (A.S.) had died in sin. This is preposterous.

I remained in this mentally troubled state for one year when one night in my dream I saw a holy man in Muslim garb with a hurricane lamp in hand, whose light shone differently from that of a normal lamp. He asked me: "If I reduce this light, what would there be?" I replied: "Less light." He asked. "If I raise it?" I replied: "There will be more light." He said: "The choice is yours", and disappeared.

My worry increased. I know that I had received a message of a Muslim nature, but I did not know what it meant. By training and environment, to say the least, I had no desire to have anything to do with Islam. To be frank, I disliked it. But the dream was quite clear, though the message was not. What was the message? I remained in this struggle for about one year.

Finally I summoned up all my courage. Deciding that there would be nothing lost by merely discerning the meaning of the dream, I went to a Muslim holy man.

He told me that the holy man of my dreams was probably Khidhr (A.S.) who helps seekers after truth, if God wills, to guide them, and he said, "The Almighty is described in the Qur'an as the 'Light of the heavens and the earth', and the message of the dream was to choose between the bright light of The Almighty and other Gods.

My plight was miserable. On one side was the salvation promised to the Christian believer in a Living Jesus as the Savior which I had been trained to accept as the sole truth and everything else as false. On the other hand I was being told to choose Islam of which I knew nothing. I did not wish ever to question my mentor.

I remained in this mental frame of mind for six months when I decided to seek the advice of my mother. She was a very devout Catholic. Her reply was: "Son, do what you think is best." This was least expected and I realized then that there was a Being who was guiding my destiny and that it was the Almighty.

Now I went back to my mentor and questioned him about Islam. He told me about Islam. He told me that Jesus was only a Prophet even as Abraham, Moses and Muhammad (S.A.W.) were, and belief in Jesus as God is, according to Islam, an unforgivable sin.

My troubles commenced again. Which is the safe religion? But now it did not take long to make a decision. I embraced Islam.

Now I had to learn Islam and I was advised that the best school for a man of my age is the Thablig Jma'at. I attended their programs regularly and went abroad too. I picked up the Arabic letters.

I had learned that the Almighty answers the prayers of his worshippers especially at Tahajjud, the past midnight prayer. I prayed and implored and wept. My yearning was acute and the Almighty answered my prayer.

I have experienced miracle after miracle leading me to be, I hope, a true Muslim. Originally I had taken the name of Noor Cassim. When I found that light has played a significant part in my life and Noor means light, I have changed my name to Noor Cassim.

I have seen the nobility of Islam in theory and practice. The God of Islam is uncomplicated. He is One and Only, and there is none comparable to Him. Everything on the earth is contingent on Him and He alone is Independent. Prayer is direct conversation with Him five times a day and there is no need for a priest to intercede. There is no distinction of any form between men in the Mosque, and outside.

No one is superior to another except the pious. No one bears another's sin except the parent who had not brought up his children in religion. Faith alone is not sufficient to gain salvation but it should be testified by good deeds. Evil will be rewarded with evil unless the Almighty pardons by genuine plea for His forgiveness.

Charity is so obligatory that the giver would seek the taker. Fasting for a month, though rigorous without food and liquid for about 14 hours in a day, is observed even by children. The assembly of Hajj in Makkah in millions all garbed in two pieces of unsewn white cloth, reminds us of the assembly on the Judgment Day when virtue will be rewarded and vice punished.

I have found the Qur'an most inspiring. It is no wonder that Yusuf Islam (Cat Stevens) embraced Islam by only reading the Qur'an. Scientists and scholars are attracted by the Qur'an. Among non-Muslims there has been a carefully nurtured hatred for the Qur'an and this great treasure of wisdom and moral guidance has been neglected by non-Muslims.

My message to the Christian and other people is to read the Qur'an with sincerity and an open mind so as to discover the Truth.

It may be that you too will receive the signs by which 'the Almighty opens your hearts' to Islam or at least to its noble principles.

You shall not certainly lose. The choice is yours.