

Good News

...And give good news to those who do good (to others) - HQ22:37

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Eid ul Adzha - Celebrating the Sanctity of Human Life

*(An abridged version of the Eid ul
Adzha sermon by Ebrahim
Mohamed)*

‘And proclaim to men the Pilgrimage (*Hajj*): they will come to thee on foot and on every lean camel, coming from every remote path:’ - (Holy Quran 22:27)

Today is known as *Eid ul Adzha* also referred to as *yaum al-nahr* which literally means, *the day of sacrifices*. Normally on this day which comes towards the end of the *Hajj* (i.e. the annual pilgrimage to Makkah),

the fifth pillar of Islam, animals are sacrificed to commemorate and honour the great spirit of sacrifice shown by the Prophet Abraham, on whom be peace, when he was ready to sacrifice his own son Ishmael in obedience to a Divine command (Holy Quran 37:102). However, when he was about to execute the command, he received the assurance from on High that he had fulfilled the sacrifice; and the sacrifice of animals fit for human consumption such as sheep, goats, camels etc. were introduced. Hence animal sacrifices form a prominent feature of the devotions attributed to the *Hajj* thereby putting an emphatic end to human sacrifices that were common in the ‘Abrahamic Age’.

The Prophet Abraham – his background, faith and contributions to civilization:

The Prophet Abraham is commonly known as the ‘Father of Nations’ and well-known for his leading role in the establishment of pure monotheism in the world. He had two famous sons who were both prophets. The eldest was Ishmael, mentioned above, born of Hagar and the second, Isaac born of Sarah. The dynasty of Prophet Abraham stretches over many generations which were blessed with many great prophets such as Ishmael and Isaac already mentioned, Joseph, David, Solomon, Moses, Aaron, Jesus, and the universal and last prophet Muhammad (s¹). The Prophet Abraham, like prophets before him was a vital link in the progression of the universal religion of ‘Islam’ which means ‘Peace’ through complete submission to Almighty God. The Holy Quran tells us:

He has made plain to you the religion which He enjoined upon Noah and which We have revealed to thee, and which We enjoined on Abraham and Moses and Jesus – to establish religion and not to be divided therein...- (42:13)

In his English translation of the Holy Quran, Maulana Muhammad Ali comments as follows on the said verse:

Even so early did the Quran announce that the religion preached by the Prophet was not a new religion, but, so far as its basic principles were concerned, it was the same religion as preached by Noah and Abraham and Moses and Jesus. The basic principle of Islam – entire submission to One God only – is, in fact, the basic principle of the common religion of humanity. (footnote 13a)

Although Judaism and Christianity emerged out of the progeny of

¹ *Salalahu alayhi wassalaam* – salutations of Allah be upon him

Abraham, the faith of Abraham was 'Islam'. The Holy Quran puts his position into perspective as follows:

Abraham was neither a Jew nor a Christian, but he was (an) upright (man), a Muslim; and he was not one of the polytheists – 3:67

Here his description as 'a Muslim' means he was one who completely submitted to the 'will of Allah'; and this is how we come to know the noble prophet Abraham.

Abraham lived approximately 2000 years BC. He came from the city known as UR, about seven hundred miles from the ancient city of Babylon in Mesopotamia, held by many historians as the cradle of civilization. UR was located near the modern town of Nasiriya in the far southern region of what is known today as Iraq. He lived at a time when idol worship and human sacrifices were rife. His countrymen in Mesopotamia believed in four different Gods, hewn out of marble or stone. In honour of these lifeless Gods they built towers and effigies.

Elaborate rituals accompanied human sacrifices to satisfy these supposed bloodthirsty Gods. He later migrated to Canaan, which comprised what is today known as Israel, Palestine, Lebanon and parts of Syria and Jordan.

Abraham, as indicated, played a leading role in laying the foundation of Islam brought to perfection by Almighty Allah through the final prophet to humankind, the Prophet Muhammad (s) as indicated in the Holy Quran:

This day have I perfected for you your religion and completed My favour to you and chosen for you Islam as a religion- 5:3

Abraham was a forerunner in the struggle against polytheism, the worship of tyrannical Gods whose anger could only be appeased by human sacrificial offerings. On one occasion he, at great risk to his own life, destroyed the stone idols of his father and fellow country-men, leaving only one big idol untouched. When questioned who the culprit

was who destroyed their prized idols, he challenged them to ask the one that was left standing, thus proving the ‘lifeless’ nature of their Gods and introducing them to the one and only Living, Loving, Merciful, Caring God, Lord of all the worlds. Assisted by his son, Ishmael, they laid the foundation stones of pure monotheism. The Holy Quran refers to this as follows:

‘And We enjoined Abraham and Ishmael, saying: Purify My House for those who visit (it) and those who abide in (it) for devotion and those who bow down (and) those who prostrate themselves’- 2:125

‘And when Abraham and Ishmael raised the foundations of the House: Our Lord! Accept from us’ - (2:127).

The ‘House’ in these verses is a reference to the *Ka’bah* in Makkah regarded by many as the first house of worship of the ‘One True God’ on earth and thus we find it referred to

in the Holy Quran as *Beitul Atiq*, ‘the Ancient House’- (22:29; 22:33). The *Ka’bah* is thus symbolic of pure, unadulterated ‘monotheism’, the bedrock on which Islam is based.

The abolition of human sacrifices:

Another great contribution made to civilization by Prophet Abraham was his celebratory role in the abolishment of the foul practice of ‘human offerings’. Under Divine instruction he introduced an entirely new meaning to the concept of sacrifice. He championed what can most probably be seen today as ground breaking ‘human rights’ activism i.e. the abolition of human sacrifices. Under Divine Guidance, he entrenched what all Muslims celebrate today and that is the creation of a pronounced awareness of the ‘**sanctity of human life.**’ He came to understand that the up-offering of his son Ishmael only meant that he was to play a great role in laying the foundation of a futuristic New World Order of Peace in the form of the Religion of Islam.

The true significance underlying 'substitute' animal sacrifices:

The Holy Quran explains the significance of the sacrifice of the animals at the end of the **Hajj** in the following verses:

And for every nation We appointed acts of devotion that they might mention the name of Allah on what He has given them of the cattle quadrupeds... – (22:34)

Neither their flesh, nor their blood reaches Allah, but to him is acceptable observance of duty on your part - (22:27)

'Eat of them and feed the contented one and the beggar'
- (22:36)

The universal law of cause and effect tells us that everything we do has a consequential effect. Therefore it is important that the devotions that we perform during the **Hajj** should not be done in a ritualistic manner. The animal sacrifices are meant to impress on us the need to sacrifice our own bestial natures that prevent

us from reaching out and drawing closer to Allah. This is the underlying significance of the Arabic term *qurban* used in connection with the sacrificial offerings of *Eid ul Adzha*. The animal sacrifices evoke feelings of humility and compassion in us and we soon realise what a great opportunity is afforded to bring some relief to famine stricken countries such as Yemen and war ravaged Iraq and Syria nearby. Regardless of politically driven tensions in the region, authorities should allow those in charge of the distribution of the meat unhindered access to the poor and needy. The Holy Quran warns:

O you who believe, violate not the signs of Allah, nor the Sacred Month, nor the offerings...And let not hatred of a people – because they hindered you from the Sacred Mosque incite you to transgress. And help one another in righteousness and piety, and help not one

another in sin and aggression...- (5:2)

This verse is as relevant today as it was in the early days of Islam. It appropriately lays down a code of conduct which the modern world, beset by strife and division, is sorely in need of. As a consequence of the violence in the territories in close proximity of Makkah, millions have already been killed, displaced and orphaned. On days like today when we celebrate the ‘**sanctity of human life,**’ Muslims should use the occasion of the *Hajj* gathering to collectively condemn such barbaric acts of violence especially those ‘Muslim on Muslim killings’ which can be summarily ended if all Muslims sacrifice their own bestial tendencies and heed the call of the Holy Quran:

‘And kill not your people’ – 4:29

‘Let not hatred of a people...incite you to transgress.

And help one another in righteousness and piety,

- and help not one another in sin and aggression.

And keep your duty to Allah. Surely Allah is severe in requiting (evil)’ - (5:2)

Let it thus be known that we loudly condemn all killings of innocent people regardless of what nationality they might be; especially all suicide bombings. The Founder of the Ahmadiyya Society in Islam, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, warned of the dire consequences that would befall the Muslims if they violated such commandments of the Holy Quran as read out above. It is thus indeed sad to note how young boys and girls are led to believe that acts of ‘suicide’ and ‘mass murder’ are sanctified as pious under the guise of ‘*jihad*’ and ‘martyrdom’. Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad pointed out that such acts were totally against the teachings of the Holy Quran. The sooner the perpetrators realise that these are blatant criminal acts and have nothing to do with Islam, the better. What these poor children

should be taught is that self-destruction or suicide is a very grave sin in Islam, and that the ‘preservation of human life’ is a duty of every Muslim, young or old. They should be taught that the true definition of a ‘martyr’ in Islam is one who is killed whilst fighting an aggressive enemy, or dies while being actively engaged in a struggle to ‘save and preserve lives’ including their own, and not one who sets out aggressively with the sole aim of destroying himself and others in the process. Thus we declare on top of our voices that it is the **‘abolition of human sacrifices and the preservation of the lives of humankind’ that we celebrate today.**

***Hajj* is an example of how diverse nations can co-exist in peace:**

The *Hajj* teaches us to live in harmony and at peace with each other regardless of differences in social status, language, colour, and differences of religious and political

points of view. The Holy Quran makes it quite clear:

The months of the pilgrimage are well known; so whoever determines to perform pilgrimage, therein there shall be **no immodest speech, nor abusing, nor altercation in the pilgrimage.** And whatever good you do, Allah knows it. And make provision for yourselves, the best provision being to keep one’s duty. And keep your duty to Me, O men of understanding – 2:197

Once again, emphasis is laid on our duty to Allah of which the upkeep of basic ethical and moral codes of conduct that underpin a spirit of brotherhood and create an atmosphere of peace and harmony, is a major part. That such harmony is achieved in a gathering of over two million devoted worshippers from different backgrounds and countries every year with limited policing and security; in stark contrast to the racial and religious

hatred and hostilities that plague communities across a large part of the rest of the world, is indeed a miracle. This is the standing miracle that the Prophet Abraham, his wife, Lady Hagar, his son, Prophet Ishmael, and his distant descendant, the ‘seal of the prophets’ Muhammad Mustapha (s) gave to the world. Moving together as one, millions of worshippers declare over and over:

*Labbaika Allahumma Labaik.
Labbaik La Sharika Laka Labbaik.
Innal Hamda, Wan Ni'mata, Laka
wal Mulk La Sharika la.*

Here I am at Thy service O Lord, here I am. Here I am at Thy service and Thou hast no partners. Thine alone is all Praise and all Bounty and Thine alone is the Sovereignty. Thou hast no partners.

This is an indication of the mindset of the pilgrim as he sets out to gain nearness to Allah, not like a hermit

cut off from the world, but together, in the company of fellow brothers and sisters in faith. Indeed! Almighty Allah does not live in Makkah, His presence is felt in our very hearts. The Holy Quran says:

‘We are nearer to him than his life-vein’ – (50:16)

Thus we say: ‘the human heart is our *ka’bah*’ which needs to be purified of all the idols that weaken our faith in the Almighty; our prejudices; our hatred; our greed; our lusts - everything low and sordid that harden our hearts and tear society apart.

Secular benefits of Hajj:

Although the primary focus of the Pilgrimage is on the strengthening of the spiritual attributes of the pilgrim, the occasion affords an ideal opportunity for seeking solutions to society’s temporal needs as well. The Holy Quran states:

‘It is no sin that you seek the bounty of your Lord’ -2:198

Viable trade relations can be sought and problematic matters confronting the Muslim nations and the world at large can be proactively addressed. Issues such as the injustices and oppression facing the Palestinians and the Rohingya community in Myanmar; as well as the lack of unity in the Muslim world; terror-driven ideologies; senseless rebellion; poverty; illiteracy; lack of jobs and job skills; drug and human trafficking; etc. should be given serious attention. We have yet to see wealthy Muslim nations joining hands and visibly addressing these issues on a global scale and showing proof of what successes they have achieved in this regard. What we do still see is large-scale wastage of wealth on the construction of high rise buildings that serve no useful purpose and funding *madrassas* that breed extremism. Nay it is time that these nations use their wealth for the benefit of society as a whole regardless of race, colour or creed and instead build schools, universities, hospitals, orphanages,

and above all 'proclaim' the lessons of the *Hajj* to all and sundry. And what better way to do this than to engage in the propagation of the peaceful message of the Holy Quran. This was the plea of our beloved Prophet (s) on the day of *Arafat* and this is what the Ahmadiyya Movement stands for.

Maulana Muhammad Ali and the English Translation of the Holy Quran:

This month (September), 100 years ago, the English translation of the Holy Quran by Maulana Muhammad Ali was first published. It was the first English translation by a Muslim scholar that was published and distributed on a large scale to Western countries. Scholars have praised its remarkable, comprehensive commentary that addresses most of the misconceptions and false allegations made against Islam by both errant Muslim scholars and Western critics. The Al Azhar University showed great interest in an Arabic

version of the commentary and thus our US Branch arranged for the necessary translation into Arabic. We pray that this work will bring about the much needed enlightenment of the Holy Book for our Arab communities. We appeal to you all to support us in the dissemination of this translation of the Holy Book to all and sundry by sacrificing regular donations for this effort. One way to do so is to sponsor a Quran and donate it to a deserving person and encourage others to do likewise. Do this as often as possible. Note that the transformation of people is not in our capacity and within the scope of our duty, that is the work of Almighty Allah for He alone knows the hearts of people, however, Maulana Muhammad Ali stated if you give someone a Quran, the Quran will do the work by itself. We wish you all a joyous and blessed day.



We strongly condemn all forms of human right violations; all forms of injustices, and the wanton abuse of the environment. We condemn all forms of aggression especially the ruthless killings of all innocent parties in the name of Religion or State!

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