

From the desk of Dr. F. Shuayb
Jum'a message – 7/31/2020

Salam. I wish to situate the importance of *Eid al-Adhā* in historical context. Allah says,

“When his son went with him to their destination, Abraham (Ibrāhīm) said, ‘O beloved son, I dreamt that I am slaughtering you! What do you think?’ He said, ‘O beloved father, do as you’ve been commanded. You’ll find me patient, inshallah” (Q.37:102)

Because neither the Qur’an nor Ḥadīth of the Prophet (ﷺ) mentioned his name, Companions of the Prophet (ﷺ) and scholars differed on the identity of Prophet Ibrāhīm’s sacrificial son – Ishmael or Isaac? We don’t know for certain. Also, we also don’t know for certain the exact age of the sacrificial son. But these historical details are not as important as the greater spiritual and moral lessons to be learned from it.

Prophet Ibrāhīm had the same dream thrice, hesitating at first because of the enormous task that he was asked to do: sacrifice his son in obedience to Almighty Allah. Repetition of the dream confirmed to him that it was a true vision (*ru’ya*) from Allah and he complied, setting out with his son to sacrifice him based on the divine command.

The story continues in the Qur’an:

“When they both completely surrendered (to Allah’s Will), (Ibrahim) placed his son on the ground in the slaughter position” (Q.37:103)

His son said, ‘O beloved father, tie me, gather up your garment, hold me down properly, so when I move about, my blood will not splatter on your clothes, which will only make my mother sad and cry.’ Ibrahim then placed knife on son’s throat, but it refused to cut. This was at Mina, on the outskirts of Makkah. The Qur’an says,

“We called out, ‘O Ibrāhīm, you have fulfilled the vision (ru’ya). Thus, do We reward those who do good” (Q.37:104)

Satan tried many times to dissuade them (Ibrāhīm, his, wife, his son) from fulfilling the *ru’ya*. At Mina, Ibrāhīm stoned Iblis, the Devil, 7 times in 3 places. For this reason, Satan is called “the stoned one” (*ash-shayṭān ar-rajīm*). Today, Muslim pilgrims pelt 3 stone pillars (*jamrāt*), which symbolically represent Satan, with 7 pebbles for each pillar, as part of Hajj rituals. In sum, Allah rewards doers of good, forgives, and blesses them for their obedience, steadfastness, and sincerity. The Qur’an says,

“Indeed, this was a great test” (Q. 37:106)

After living until old age and not being blessed with a child, Prophet Ibrāhīm is finally given good news about it, which became a reality—only to be asked by Almighty Allah to sacrifice your son and to watch yourself do it, albeit in a vision or *ru’ya*—a tremendous trial indeed! The Qur’an says,

“And We ‘ransomed’ him (Ibrāhīm’s son) with a great slaughter” (Q. 37:107)

The commentary (*tafsīr*) on it informs us that Allah sent Angel Gabriel down from the heavens with a huge ram, which Ibrāhīm sacrificed in lieu of his son Ismael or Isaac.

According to Ibn ‘Abbas, the horns of heavenly sacrificial ram remained suspended in Ka’bah since days of *Ibrāhīm* until Prophet’s time and through the period of Rightly-Guided Caliphs, until it was eventually destroyed when Yazid’s forces, during the Umayyad period, attacked Makka to overthrow the caliph Ibn Zubayr, destroying the Ka’ba and with it the horns of the heavenly ram. The Qur’an says,

“We left (the memory of Ibrahim and his sacrificial son) for the (following) generations. Peace be on Ibrahim!” (Q. 37:108)

In commemoration of Prophet Ibrahim’s sacrifice, we sacrifice animals (as I mentioned in my last *khutba* or sermon) on *Eid al-Adhā* as well as during *ayyām at-tashrīq* (11th, 12th, and 13th of Dhu-l Hijjah, the last month of the Islamic calendar. About the animal sacrifice, Allah says,

“The meat and blood of the (sacrificial animals) never reach Allah, but what reaches him is your piety (tagwā)” (Q.22:37)

Almighty Allah does not look at our outward appearances or bodies, but He considers what is in our hearts—piety, sincerity, and love for Him and Him alone above all else. To celebrate *Eid al-Adhā* is to acknowledge the story of Prophet Ibrāhīm—a story of unstinting love for Almighty Allah, sincerity, steadfastness, devotion, submission to Divine Will, and the great lessons of sacrifice. *Allahu Akbar, Allahu Akbar. Lā ilāha illa Allah. Allahu Akbar, Allahu Akbar. Wa il Allah al-ḥamd!*