

Hajj Information Sheet

HAJJ INFORMATION SHEET

Joining 1.5 billion Muslims around the world, Bay Area Muslims will celebrate Eid Al-Adha (Festival of the Sacrifice) on January 21, 2005

This event occurs on the third day of the Hajj.

What:

Many American Muslims are joining millions of Muslims from around the world in preparing to make a journey of a lifetime - the Hajj (Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca).

The basic rituals of Hajj last for 4 days during the 12th month of the lunar Islamic calendar called Zul-Hijjah.

From Northern California an estimated total of 1,500 Muslims will leave around January 10 for Mecca (in Saudi Arabia). The group will include Americans who have recently embraced Islam, young and old, men and women, from different nationalities & backgrounds. The pilgrims from America will be part of the world's largest religious gathering -- about 2 million people coming from every corner of the world. Muslims from Northern California will return the first week of February.

Eid ul-Adha (Festival of the Sacrifice)

is celebrated by Muslims world-wide on the last day of the Hajj. The Eid celebration begins with a special prayer in the morning, followed by a sermon. After the sermon, Muslims are recommended to sacrifice a lamb or goat, re-enacting the story of Ibrahim (Abraham) who was ready to sacrifice his son in obedience to God.

When:

Muslims from the San Francisco Bay Area will leave around January 10. Expected dates for Hajj are January 19th - January 22nd. The expected date for Eid ul-Adha is January 21st.

Where:

Eid prayers will be held across the Bay Area Muslim Community in San Francisco, San Jose, Santa Clara, Oakland and Fremont.

Contact:

(408) 296-7312

Note: Because the beginning of Islamic lunar months depend on the actual sighting of the new moon, the start date for the beginning of Hajj, & therefore Eid ul-Adha, may vary by one day.

Hajj and Eid Ul-Adha Information Sheet

Hajj

The Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca. It is the fifth pillar of Islam.

Purpose

(1) The ultimate goal of Hajj is the forgiveness of sin. The pilgrim journeys as a humble penitent, wearing only 2 simple, white pieces of cloth, seeking approach to God's grace. The prophet Muhammed said that a person who performs Hajj properly "will return as a newly born baby (free of all sins)." (2) The pilgrimage's great gathering of Muslims, representing every nationality in the world, wearing the same simple white garment, demonstrates and symbolizes the remarkable diversity and unity of Muslims. (3) The Hajj also re-enacts and commemorates the story of Ibrahim (Abraham), who journeyed from the land of idols, was ready to sacrifice his son in obedience to God's command, and who build the first house of worship to the one God.

When

The Hajj takes place in the month of Zul-Hijjah, the 12th month of the lunar Islamic calendar. The main rituals of the Hajj take place for three days, beginning on the 8th day of the month, climaxing on the 9th day, and ending on the 11th day. However, pilgrims usually arrive about 1-2 weeks

before the Hajj actually starts, and they usually stay a week afterwards in order to visit the Prophet Muhammed's mosque in Medina.

Who goes?

As the fifth pillar of Islam, every Muslim is obligated to make pilgrimage at least once in their life time as long as it is possible.

Terms To Be Familiar With Before Reading On

Ka'bah

A small, square (Ka'bah means cube) building that was constructed by Abraham and Isma'il (Ishmael), and described in the Qur'an (divine scripture, Final Testament, and Islam's holy book) as the first house of worship dedicated to the one God. Although the Ka'bah is the place of pilgrimage, it is not an object of worship. The Ka'bah is covered by an elaborate black covering with gold lettering. The precincts of the Ka'bah are a sanctuary where no living creature can be harmed.

Black Stone

Resting at the corner of the Ka'bah, the Black Stone was one of the original stones of the structure built by Abraham, and is said to have descended to earth from Paradise. The Black Stone is not an object of worship.

Tawaf

Tawaf refers to circling the Ka'bah. Upon arriving at the Ka'bah, the pilgrim circles the Ka'bah seven times in a counter clockwise direction.

Sa'i

Hurrying between the small hills of Safa and Marwah. After tawaf the pilgrim proceeds a short distance to the adjoining small hills of Safa and Marwah where the pilgrim makes seven circuits between the two hills, re-enacting the Biblical and Qur'anic story of Hagar's desperate search for life-giving water for her son Ismail.

The Hajj Experience

Leaving

Making Hajj is a great honor in the eyes of Muslims. Therefore, Muslims who intend to make Hajj are often made honored guests of special dinners and seen off at the airport by relatives, friends and Masjid members. Upon their return some mosques organize special dinners, allowing the pilgrims to recount their journey.

Ihram

The state of ritual consecration that the pilgrim enters when he removes his worldly clothes and dons the pilgrim's garb of 2 seamless, white sheets. Women pilgrims do not wear the white sheets. Instead they wear dresses that are simple and white. Pilgrims put on the Ihram before entering Mecca, at which time pilgrims begin the chant, "Here I am at your service. O God Here I am." The white garments of Ihram are symbolic of the death shrouds used in Islamic burials and also the garments of the brotherhood/sisterhood of all Muslims. While in Ihram, the pilgrim cannot harm any living thing, cut the hair or nails, wear perfume or have sexual intercourse with their spouse.

1st Day

8th day of month, or January 19th. On this day the pilgrims leave Mecca and camp at Mina, which is near Mecca.

2nd Day

9th day of month, or January 20th, called Day of Arafat. This day is the real climax of the Hajj. Pilgrims move at sunrise from Mina to the plain of Arafat where they spend the entire day in earnest supplication and devotion. It is a time of tears and forgiveness. At sunset the pilgrims move and camp at Muzdalifa, which is a site between Mina and Arafat. (It is highly recommended for Muslims around the world to fast on the day of Arafat in spiritual union with the pilgrims who are standing on the plain of Arafat seeking God's forgiveness).

3rd Day

10th day of month, or January 21st. The pilgrims return to Mina on this day, and first they throw 7

pebbles at a stone pillar representing the devil. Then the pilgrims sacrifice a sheep re-enacting the story of Ibrahim who slaughtered a sheep after he was prepared to sacrifice his son in obedience to God's command. In recent years the slaughtered meat is airlifted to poor Muslim countries. After the sacrifice, the pilgrim returns to Mecca to end the formal rituals of Hajj by making tawaf and sa'i.

The Hajj Experience

Most accounts of Hajj speak of the great spiritual exaltation, wonderment at the mind boggling diversity of Muslims, and the extreme hardship of the journey.

Eid ul-Adha

The Eid al-Adha (Festival of the Sacrifice) is a major religious event in the life of Muslims. Eid al-Adha occurs on the 10th day of Zul-Hijjah, or January 21st, which is the same day that pilgrims sacrifice an animal. The Eid celebration begins with a special prayer in the morning, followed by a sermon. The theme of the Eid is Ibrahim's example of unconditional surrender to God. Afterwards or on the following weekend, a community celebration takes place that involves food, games, and gifts for children.

Sacrifice

Each family is recommended to sacrifice a lamb on the Eid as a re-enactment of Ibrahim's sacrifice. The meat of the sacrifice is divided up between one's family, relatives, or the Masjid and the poor. In most instances today, the actual sacrifice is done by a trained butcher, although Muslims often assist in the sacrifice.