



## Eid-ul Qurban: Celebration of the Sacrifice

by Harry Morin

Living in a Muslim country, in a Muslim neighborhood, and in an upstairs flat of a building owned by a Muslim landlord who lived with his family of twelve downstairs — was a great way to learn about Muslims and their religion. This Muslim family adopted us as their own and were extremely kind to include us in their festive holidays. One of the highlights of the calendar year was *Eid-ul Qurban*, Celebration of the Sacrifice (also known as *Eid-ul Adha*). I remember the first time we were introduced to this holiday. We had just moved to our new location from the capital city after two years of language study. Our children were six and two years of age.

About two weeks before the holiday, there was a loud commotion filled with excitement down in the long driveway that led to the back of the house. The young men of the family downstairs were parading a large cow into the backyard. The animal was brightly decorated with a flower wreath around its neck, and quickly became the object of admiration for the growing crowd of curious onlookers; this was the prized animal that would be sacrificed in just a couple of weeks. The men had gone to the market earlier that morning, and spent the whole day looking and negotiating for the perfect animal. It had to be without blemish. It

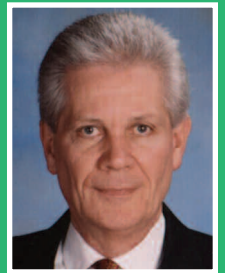
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# Until All Have Heard

*How then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? –Romans 10:14*

**Jim Bennett, Director**  
**Center for**  
**Ministry to Muslims**

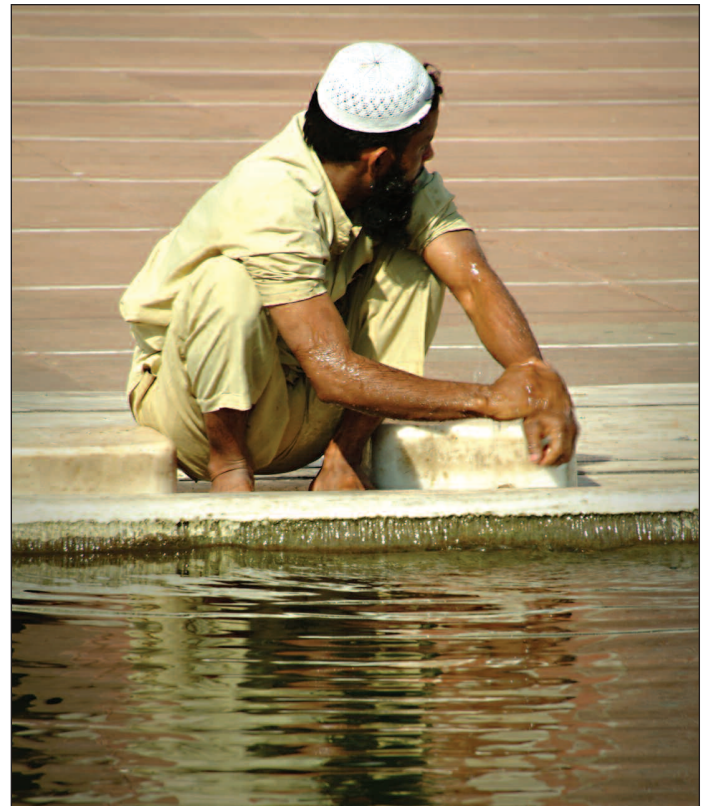


The lead article of this issue will give you a penetrating look at one of the most significant events of the annual Muslim calendar — the Feast of Sacrifice. Commonly transliterated from Arabic to English as *Eid-ul Qurban* or *Eid-ul Adha*, it occurs on the tenth day of the month of pilgrimage or *Hajj*. The month of pilgrimage is the twelfth month of the lunar Islamic calendar. In the West, the equivalent date this year for the Feast of Sacrifice will be Dec. 9.

Muslims who can afford to do so sacrifice their best domestic animals (usually sheep, but also camels, cows, and goats) as a symbol of Abraham's sacrifice of his eldest son — Ishmael, not Isaac! A potential sacrificial animal must meet certain age and quality standards, or else the animal is considered an unacceptable sacrifice.

While living for many years in a Middle Eastern Muslim context, I quickly noticed that most rural Muslims tended to possess small animals; thus most of them were prepared to offer an animal during the Feast of Sacrifice, almost always a lamb. Since most urban Muslims did not own animals, it was an annual ritual for those who could afford it, to secure a sacrificial animal. A day or two before the Feast of Sacrifice, city dwellers made their way to “penning sites” in locations throughout the city. When an acceptable sacrificial lamb was chosen, a bargaining session ensued in order to determine the price.

No Muslim is left untouched by the Feast of Sacrifice. Those who can afford it offer a sacrifice, and those who cannot afford a sacrifice are eligible recipients of the shared meat. The meat is divided into three shares, one share for the poor, one share for the relatives and neighbors, and the last to keep to oneself. In most Muslim extended families someone knows how to ritually slay and prepare the sacrificial animal. If necessary, a friend, a religious leader, or a hired outsider will assist.



To understand the powerful community impact of this feast, remember two things: First, this memorial occurs during the month of pilgrimage, when tens of thousands of pilgrims from around the world are in Mecca. Each pilgrim must have access to an animal sacrifice, at least on a shared basis. Second, at the same time that pilgrims in Mecca are offering the memorial animal sacrifice, the international Muslim community of 1.2 billion is doing the same.

The writer of our lead article has suggested that during the Feast of Sacrifice “ask your Muslim friends if they would mind if you share with them the reason this story is especially meaningful for you,” and I offer a resounding second to his suggestion! Muslims believe in sacrifice as a charitable and religious act, but they do not believe in the essential sacrifice — without which pardon of sin cannot come; that of our Lord Jesus Christ.





# Muslim World News

## Iran

### *JAILED CHRISTIAN IN CRITICAL CONDITION*

A diabetic Iranian Christian jailed for two months is in critical condition due to lack of medical treatment, even as new reports of arrests against Christians surfaced. Mahmood Matin and Arash Bandari have become frail from more than two months in prison, but the condition of Bandari, who suffers from diabetes, is critical. After two months of solitary confinement at a secret police detention center known by its address, Sepah Street 100, located in the center of Shiraz, Matin and Bandari were placed in a cell together. Iran's Christians have reported that another wave of arrests hit four cities. Christians in attendance at house churches in Bandar Abbas on the southern coast — in Isfahan, 207 miles south of Tehran, and in Sanandaj and Kermanshah on the Iraqi border, were arrested. — *Compass*

## Eritrea

### *CHRISTIAN STUDENTS SHUT INTO SHIPPING CONTAINERS*

On Aug. 5, Eritrean authorities locked up eight high school students at a military training school in metal shipping containers for objecting to the burning of hundreds of Bibles. The eight male students from the Sawa Defense Training Centre in Sawa were incarcerated after military authorities confiscated more than 1,500 personal Bibles from new students arriving for the academic year. "During the time that the Bibles were set on fire, the chief commander of Sawa, Col. Debesai Ghide, gave a warning to all the students by telling them that Sawa is a place of patriotism, not a place for 'Pentes' [Pentecostals]," said one source. Reading the Bible privately, discussing the Christian faith with other students and praying before or after meals alone or in groups is forbidden at the center, the source said. — *Compass*

## Malaysia

### *COURT DENIES WOMAN'S APPEAL TO LEAVE ISLAM*

A civil court denied a woman's appeal to renounce Islam in favor of Christianity, highlighting the jurisdictional disputes in Malaysia's dual legal system. Lim Yoke Khoo had filed a suit in her original ethnic Chinese name to renounce Islam and embrace Christianity. In a 2-1 majority ruling, the Shah Alam Court of Appeal denied her case on a technicality: According to judges, Lim had ceased to exist under her original name when she converted to Islam and assumed a new name, Noorashikin Lim binti Abdullah. The 35-year-old Lim is reportedly expected to appeal to the country's top civil court. A public forum to discuss such disputes, in this case the dual court system's effect on families of people who convert to Islam, was scheduled, but Muslim protesters succeeded in halting it after only one hour. — *Compass*

# Eid-ul Qurban: Celebr

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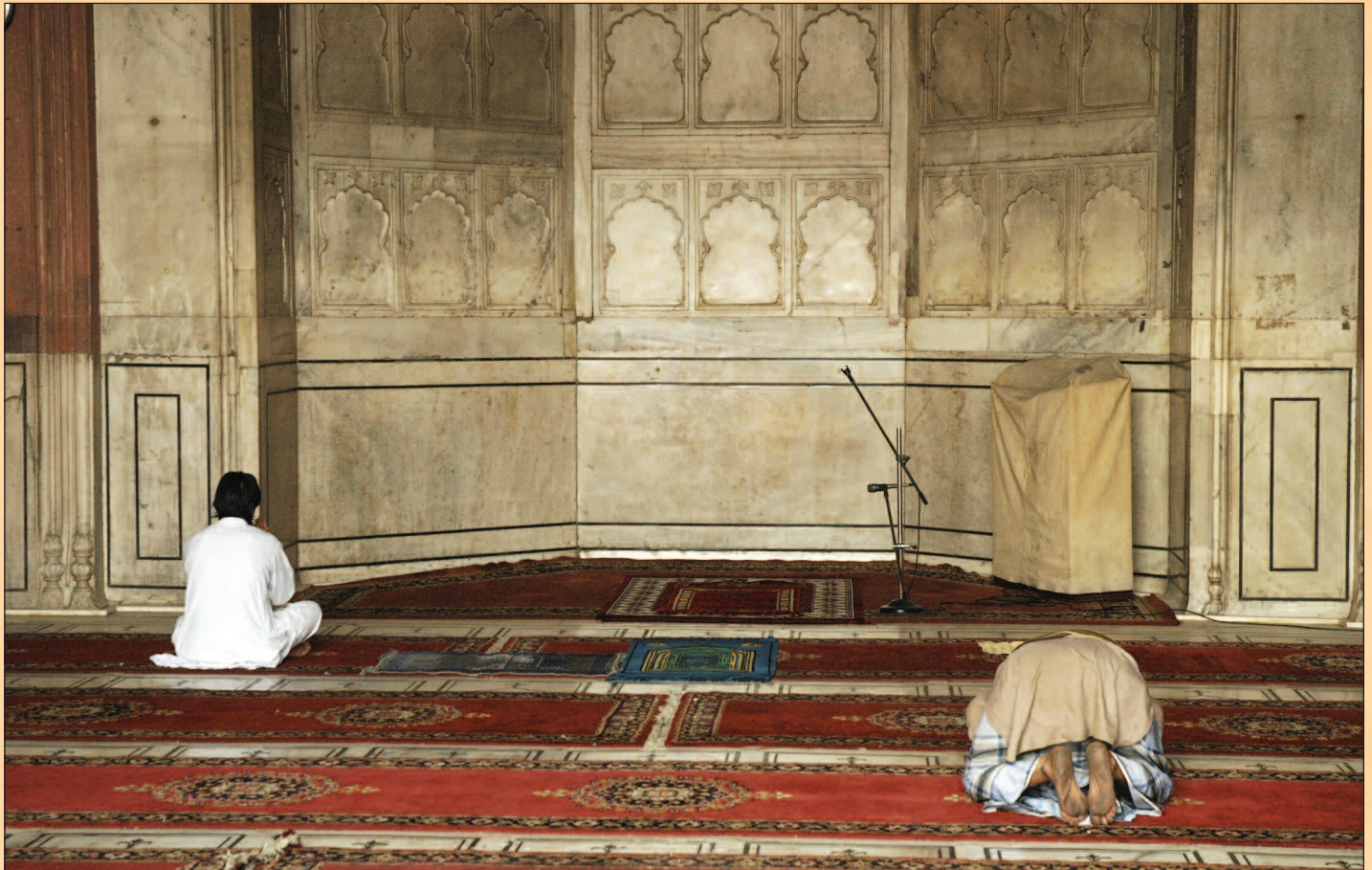
could not be blind, lame, thin, or disfigured in any way. The proud owners rinsed the animal down and led it to its new grazing ground in the backyard, hoping to fatten it even more by the time of the holiday.

Two weeks finally passed. It was the tenth day of the twelfth month, *Dhu'l Hijja*. Early in the morning, after the dawn prayer, there was a great stir downstairs. The women were up and already busy at work grinding spices with their rolling stones. The firewood had been previously gathered and dried, but now everything had to be set in its place in preparation for a whole day of cooking. The kitchen, which was really the cooking room, was a space no larger than 8 feet by 6 feet, bounded by walls scorched and grimy from years of accumulated smoke and soot. It would be a long, hot and exhausting day for the ladies who were in charge of cooking duties. Every item of meat would have to be cooked in a large caul-

dron and simmered in spices to keep from spoiling.

Later in the morning, around 9:00 a.m., I was invited to join the male members in attending a special prayer assembly at a nearby open field. As I stood by the side to observe, a Muslim priest (*imam*) preached a sermon on the significance of *Eid-ul Qurban*. Afterward, the *imam* led the whole assembly in a special *Eid* prayer. I was deeply impacted by the sight of over 1,000 white-clad Muslims bowing and prostrating in precise unison as an act of submission to the God of Abraham. The service ended with joyful embraces and holiday greetings. Then everyone rushed back home to prepare for the most important event of all, the animal sacrifice.

The local *imam* made his rounds from house to house to personally perform the sacrifice. His arrival in our driveway brought cheers of excitement from the



# ration of the Sacrifice

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downstairs kitchen. As the butcher and his assistants positioned the animal to the ground so that its head faced the direction of Mecca, the *imam* placed his long blade on the cow's throat. As the animal struggled and bellowed, the men held it steady to the ground. The *imam* loudly invoked God's name with the words, "*bismillah allahu akbar*" (in the name of God, God is most great), and then proceeded to carefully slit the cow's jugular vein. The shedding of blood was clearly evident and led to the animal's last gasping breath. Then the work of butchering began. It took two hours to skin the animal, dress it, and cut up the meat for distribution and cooking. The large quantity of meat was divided into three portions. One third for the family; another third for neighbors and friends; and the remaining third for the poor such as beggars, widows, and orphans. Already there was a long line of beggars outside the driveway gate waiting for their share. Each had a burlap bag to collect the day's goodies. The scene was reminiscent of Halloween — crowds streaming from house to house hoping to fill their bags full. The male members of the downstairs family then struck off in different

directions to deliver meat to neighbors and friends, while trays of the family portion were carried straight into the kitchen to be cooked.

The women worked the hardest that day: grinding spices, arranging firewood, tending the fire, stirring the pots, and making chapattis (flat bread). My wife and six-year old daughter were right there in the thick of things, inside that smoky sweltering kitchen, sitting on their haunches, joining in the work and excited chatter. By late afternoon, we were all feasting on savory meat and fresh chapattis — ladies on their side of the house, and men on the other. The next two days I was invited to visit a number of Muslim homes to continue in the eating phase of the celebration. There was a lot of meat to be consumed. This was a wonderful way to make new Muslim friends, be blessed by gracious hospitality, and join in the discussion about the importance of the holiday. That leads to the question, why is this holiday so special to Muslim people?

Though there is no mention of this holiday in

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connection with Abraham in the Qur'an, Muslims associate the holiday with the Qur'anic account of Abraham and the sacrifice. According to the Qur'an, God answered Abraham's prayer for the birth of a righteous son, but then God told Abraham to sacrifice him. As Abraham was about to comply with knife in hand, God intervened, and according to the Qur'an, redeemed Abraham's son with an extraordinary sacrifice. Muslims the world over are adamant that the son mentioned is Ishmael. But the Qur'an really doesn't identify the boy except to say that he was the boy of whose birth the good news was given. Elsewhere in the Qur'an, this description fits Isaac, not Ishmael.

Many Christians are unsure what to do when their Muslim friends or neighbors invite them to join in the celebration of Eid-ul Qurban. Should they eat the meat of the sacrifice or not? Except for animistic-background Muslims who may be steeped in witchcraft, this sacrifice is not offered to demons or to any god. It is not even an atonement sacrifice in the sense of remission of sins by the blood. Rather it is a commemorative sacrifice to urge Muslims to emulate Abraham's complete submission to God's will. It is also a reminder of God's faithfulness to those who surrender to Him. Because the Qur'an offers very little detail as to exactly how God provided the substitute sacrifice, there are a variety of traditions that fill in the missing pieces. One common tradition is that the sacrifice God provided was a ram without blemish that descended from heaven and took the place of Abraham's child. It redeemed him. What better opportunity for us to talk about the Lamb of God who came from above, was sinless, and redeemed the Children of Adam?

There are two significant observations about this holiday. First, this story in the Qur'an about Abraham is the only account in the Qur'an that links an animal

sacrifice to the theme of redemption (Qur'an 37:107). Second, this holiday is also known as *Eid-ul Kabir*, the Great Celebration, which for many Muslims means the most important holiday on the Muslim calendar. While Muslims worldwide celebrate the holiday in their local towns and villages, Muslims in Mecca, observing the *Hajj* pilgrimage at this time, likewise sacrifice an animal. In fact, this is the most important ritual of all the *Hajj* ceremonies. Surely, these are not coincidences. God has already set the stage for revealing to Muslims the identity of the greatest redeeming sacrifice ever, the Lamb of God who came "to give his life as a ransom for many" (Ma. 20:28).



After our first experience with *Eid-ul Qurban*, we always looked forward to the return of this holiday. Perhaps God will give you similar opportunities as you venture into the lives of Muslim people who may be your neighbors, fellow workers, or fellow students. This

year, the Eid-ul Qurban holiday falls on Dec. 9 — and so be prepared.

If you receive an invitation from Muslims to join in *Eid-ul Qurban*, be prayerfully open to the idea of joining in the feasting aspect of the celebration, but be careful not to get bogged down in an argument about the identity of Abraham's son, Isaac vs. Ishmael. Simply speak of the son of Abraham without using any name. There is something far more critical that you don't want to lose in all of this — the idea that God redeemed the boy with an extraordinary sacrifice. Rejoice with your Muslim friends over this truth, and ask them if they'd mind if you share with them the reason this story is especially meaningful to you. It may open the door to further discussion about the Lamb of God — the truly extraordinary sacrifice whom God sent down to redeem the world!





# JUMAA PRAYER FELLOWSHIP

**PRAYING FOR MUSLIMS  
AROUND THE WORLD!**



**Friday, November 7, 2008. Please pray**

*...for Afghani Muslims.* There is a small but growing body of MBBs (Muslim Background Believers), and the Bible is now available in the Afghani language.

*...for MBBs in Iran.* Persecution has reached an intense level in many parts of Iran, and receives scant coverage in the international media.

*...for radio and satellite broadcasts reaching Libya.* Pray for a genuine move of the Lord in this closed country.

**Friday, November 14, 2008. Please pray**

*...for Muslim Background Believers (MBBs)* whenever possible, to remain within their families and communities as witnesses of the love and grace of God.

*...for the Church in Turkey.* Many congregations continue to receive threats. Pray their faith in Jesus will remain strong during this difficult time.

*...that God will continue to raise up* expatriate Christian workers to reach Muslims across the Islamic world.

**Friday, November 21, 2008. Please pray**

*...for the Gospel of Jesus Christ* to reach Muslims in Senegal, as Christians deliver food in famine-stricken areas.

*...for government leaders in Qatar.* Pray that Qatar might be a small, but effective window for the Gospel of Jesus Christ to reach Muslims.

*...for Alawite Muslims in Syria.* Pray that through Christian witness, dreams, and visions, Alawites would receive a true revelation of Jesus Christ.

**Friday, November 28, 2008. Please pray**

*...for political rulers across the Muslim world.* Pray that through divine intervention, windows of opportunity would open, allowing millions of Muslims to truly have an opportunity to learn about Jesus Christ.

*...for Christians across Indonesia,* where the government often pays little notice to the destruction of churches and Christian schools.

*...for church-planting movements in Ghana,* among the mostly unreached Muslim tribes of the north.

**I URGE, THEN, FIRST OF ALL THAT REQUESTS, PRAYERS, INTERCESSION AND  
THANKSGIVING BE MADE FOR EVERYONE. –1 TIMOTHY 2:1, NIV**



# JUMAA PRAYER FELLOWSHIP

**PRAYING FOR MUSLIMS  
AROUND THE WORLD!**



**Friday, December 5, 2008. Please pray**

*...for Muslims in Jordan.* Pray that the Lord would continue to use MBBs to reach Muslims with the love of Christ.

*...for the Gospel of Jesus Christ to be heard by Muslims in Guinea Bissau.*

*...for Muslims in Senegal* to have the opportunity to read the Serere translation of the Bible. 1.2 million Sengalese speak Serere. The translation (which has been ongoing for 30 years) is now complete.

**Friday, December 12, 2008. Please pray**

*...for MBBs living under tremendous physical danger in Saudi Arabia.*

*...for the tense situation in Algeria.* The government appears to be continuing with a hardline approach to Christian evangelistic efforts.

*...for the Muslims of Zanzibar.* Muslims make up 97 percent of the population, and tension is consistently high between the Islamic community and the Christian minority.

**Friday, December 19, 2008. Please pray**

*...for indigenous Christian pastors across the Muslim world.* Many toil under a heavy burden of danger, meager pay, and neglect. Pray that God would embolden these invaluable laborers.

*...for the Hui people of China.* Pray that the love of Jesus would reach this Muslim minority.

*...for Christians in Indonesia.* Villagers and churches continue to be attacked at an alarming rate.

**Friday, December 26, 2008. Please pray**

*...for increased Christian witness to Muslims* in the United States. May opportunities for the Gospel of Jesus Christ to be heard by Muslims abound.

*...for the millions of Muslims attending mosques today.* Pray the Lord would reveal his love to them in miraculous ways.

*...for MBBs in Great Britain.* Despite living in Europe, they often face persecution and danger.