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(Injeel Matthew 5:17-18)

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(Eid al-Adha)

*Its meaning for today*



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This is the famous story of the time when God asked Abraham to sacrifice his son. It is also the story of a young man who was condemned to death by God and how God provided the means to save him. It took place 4000 years ago and is still celebrated all over the world. What is the meaning behind this strange event?

We hear many different descriptions about this sacrifice. Which one is correct? This booklet is written according to the original description which the prophet Moses recorded in the Torah. There are unique details in it which are not written in any other sacred book, and help us understand. You will find this event recorded in the Holy Bible in the section called Genesis, chapter 22. The sacrifice took place on a mountain in the region of Moriah, which is today the famous city of Jerusalem. It all began with an unusual test:



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Abraham's sacrifice reminds us that:

- ✍ Sacrifice is not done just to obey a command; it is for the forgiveness of sin.
- ✍ Animal sacrifice is incomplete and is only a reflection of the perfect sacrifice that is needed.
- ✍ God will provide the perfect sacrifice on that mountain.

Two thousand years later God fulfilled this prophecy. Many people who study the holy books and history are convinced that Jesus' death fulfilled Abraham's prophecy. Jesus' sacrifice is the fulfilment of Eid al-Adha. Nowadays people celebrate a new sacrificial eid, i.e. the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. They praise God for forgiveness, connection and peace. By turning from sin and trusting in the perfect sacrifice it is possible to be brought close to God.



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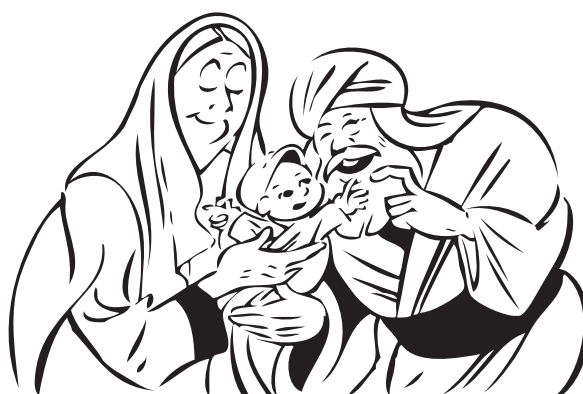
How can sinful people be able to come before a perfect God? Good deeds and religious duties can never wipe away our sin and guilt. We also can't get closeness to God through the death of an animal. God knows that it is impossible for us to get close to him. He has helped us, but the way is beyond our ability to reason. He sent Jesus from heaven to do that for us which no one else can do. Jesus Christ's "blood cleanses us from all our sin". "Jesus died in order to bring us to God." He took the punishment for our sin so that we could be forgiven. Now, because of the perfect sacrifice, we can come and get connected to God.



Abraham was a special man. He was called 'Khalil Ullah', the 'friend of God'. God had promised him and his wife, Sarah, a son. They waited many years. Finally when Abraham was 100 years old and Sarah was 90, the miracle birth happened. Their son was born! God promised many descendants through him. The boy grew and became a fine young man. That's when God tested Abraham. Whom did Abraham love more, his son or his God?



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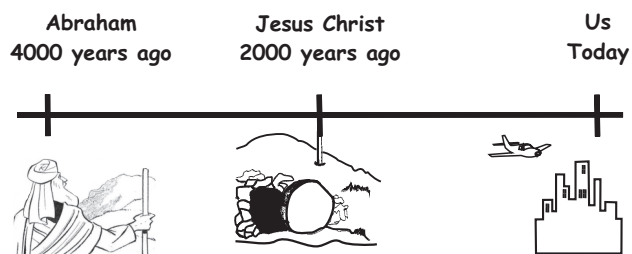


One day, God called his friend and said, "Abraham!"

Abraham knew and loved that voice. "Here I am," he said.

God's next words were like a sword through his heart, "Take your son, whom you love, to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there on the mountain I tell you."

Abraham may have thought, "Why not 10,000 sheep or even my own life? I would gladly give them." But God had clearly spoken. Why would he give such a hard command? He loves people and created them to live. He hates murder and human sacrifice. Why did God send him to that specific place?



2000 years after Abraham, Jesus died in that place. Before Jesus' death, the prophet John the Baptist said about Jesus, "Look, the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world". Jesus himself stated that he came to earth to sacrifice his life as a lamb for the sins of people. He foretold where he would die and that he would rise to life again on the third day. He knew this was the reason God had sent him to earth. God would put all the sin of the world onto him.

Things happened just as Jesus prophesied. He really did die. His mother, friends, enemies and soldiers all witnessed it. His close friends buried his body. According to his predictions, on the third day with great power he came alive again. God Almighty had accepted his perfect sacrifice.

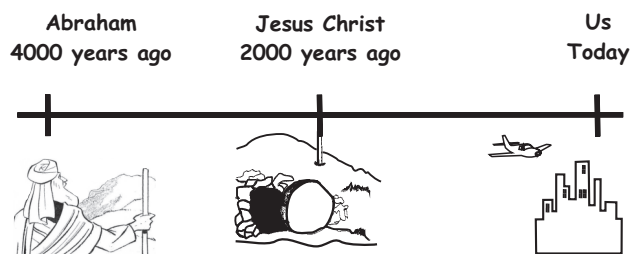


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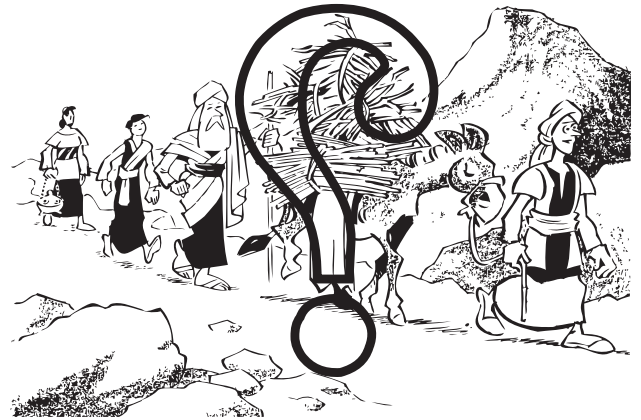
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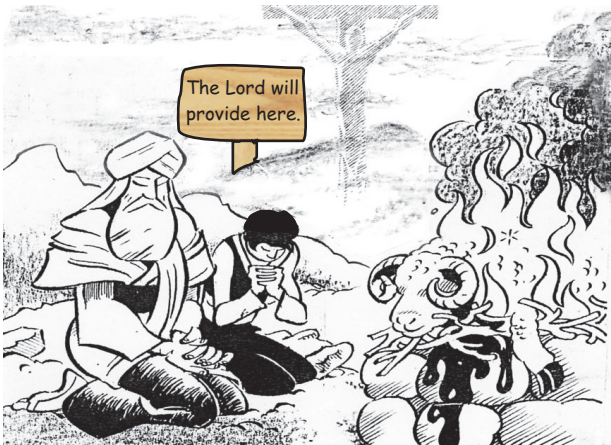
Abraham had passed a difficult test. But what is the meaning behind this event? To understand we need to hear Abraham's next words. He made a prophecy about that place for the future by giving it a new name, "The Lord **Will Provide**", even though the Lord **had** provided. Through his prophet, Abraham, Almighty God was revealing a special promise: in the future he would provide a perfect sacrifice in that place. "God himself will provide the lamb for the offering." People took this prophecy and it became a famous saying, "On the mountain of the Lord it will be provided".

Many centuries later God did provide a perfect sacrifice there. That too was a strange event which has become famous.



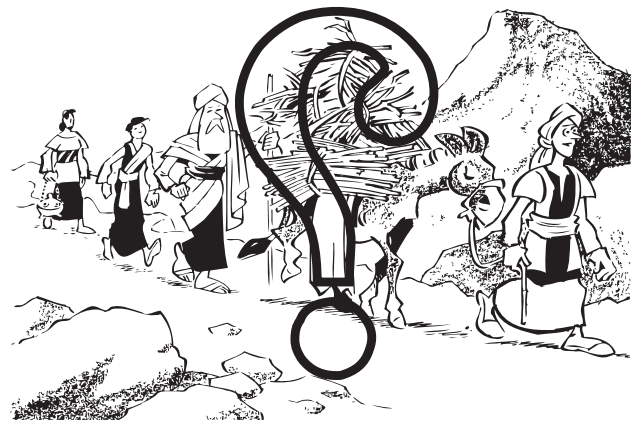
God gave special instructions to Abraham, but he didn't tell him why. Still, everything God does has a reason.

Remember, Abraham was a special prophet. He and his son would act out an important prophecy. This amazing drama would be for all people, everywhere. Through the symbol of sacrifice God would show what he would do in the future to save mankind. So, Abraham had to go to a mountain in Moriah, build an altar, place wood on it, then tie up his son, kill him and burn his body.



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Abraham didn't debate with God. He got up early in the morning, cut the wood and saddled the donkey. Taking his strong, young son and two servants they set off. The son left home very happy. He was unaware of his danger. He was going to spend time with his father. But God's judgment rested on him. He didn't know that God had condemned him to death. That boy was like people today. They are under the judgment of God, condemned to die, yet happily unaware of it.



Praise God! The boy was saved. But, sacrifice still needed to be made. A movement in the bushes caught Abraham's eye. A ram was entangled by his horns! In his mercy God had sent a substitute. With great joy Abraham set his son free. Abraham went to the ram, tied and placed him on the altar as the substitute for the boy. The sharp knife did its work on the ram. As the blood flowed the boy probably thought, "That should have been me! I am so glad he is dying in my place!" And the innocent ram quietly died.



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With a fixed heart, Abraham lifted the knife. The darling of the family, the heir of promise lay ready to bleed and die by his father's own hand. The young man quietly waited, terrified.

At that moment a voice from heaven cut through the air, "Abraham, Abraham!"

Abraham answered, "Here I am."

The angel of the LORD said, "Do not stretch out your hand against the lad. Do nothing to him. Now I know that you respect and obey God, since you have not withheld your only son from me."



With eyes down, Abraham started walking the 80 kilometres. On the third day he lifted up his eyes. Ahead of them in the distance, was the ridge of Moriah. He said to both of the servants, "Stay here. I and my son will go worship on the mountain and then we will return." Even then Abraham had faith they would both come back.

The father laid the wood on the son's back. He, himself, carried the coals and the knife. As the two of them walked on together, the son said, "Father?"

Abraham replied, "Yes son, I'm listening."

The son asked "Look, we have the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the sacrifice?"



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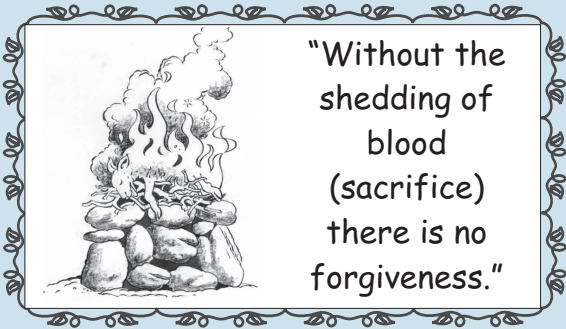


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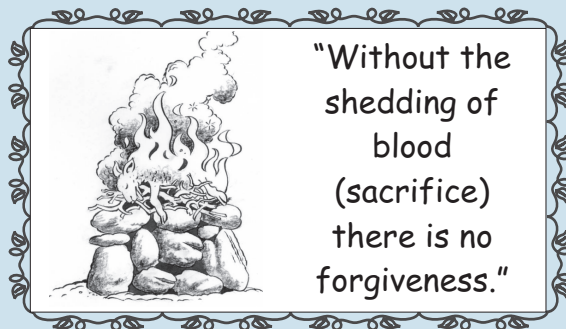
Before reading on, some background information will be helpful. The word sacrifice 'Qurbani' (in Arabic & Hebrew) is based on the root 'to bring close'. The original meaning of sacrifice was to bring sinful people back close to the holy God. The thing that separates us from God is our sin. In order to be brought to God, the sin in our hearts must be paid for.

Abraham knew that God requires blood for a sin offering. The punishment for sin is death, but an animal dies as a substitute for the person. Since the time people first sinned God commanded sacrifice. The earlier prophets knew and practiced sacrifice. The Torah, Psalms, Prophets and Injeel (Bible) are all in agreement that God Almighty never, ever forgives sin because of religious merit. His established principle is 'without the shedding of blood (sacrifice) there is no forgiveness'.



Abraham answered his son, "God himself will provide the lamb for the offering."

Step by step they climbed to the place God had commanded. Abraham had built many altars, but never one with such sadness. Yes, the beloved son was to be the sacrifice. The son did not try to escape. The God of Abraham was his God too. Both of them were bound in love and obedience. The strong hands that so often had embraced his son, now bound him and laid him on the altar.



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