Eid Al-Adhha Sermon

Once again we have all been blessed by Allah (SWT) to witness and celebrate this great day of Eid al-Adh-ha.

Eid al-Adh-ha basically means, 'the festival of sacrifice'.

On this day, Muslims are reminded about that great trial, which Prophet Ibrahim (as) was put to, of sacrificing his young son Prophet Ismail (as). He (as) complied to the command of Allah (SWT) and fully succeeded in it. Prophet Ibrahim (as) is regarded as the champion of Monotheism. He (as) is one of the most favourite prophets of Allah (SWT) who is held in very high esteem.

The Holy Quran speaks extensively about Prophet Ibrahim (as). Infact the name of Ibrahim has appeared in the Holy Quran 69 times. He has been given many beautiful names and titles such as:

Khaleelullah (Friend of Allah)

Siddiq (The Truthful)

Nabi (The Prophet)

Imam (The leader)

Muslim (One who submits to One God)

Haneef (A non-deviant Monotheist)

Ummah (A Nation)

THE GREAT TRIAL:

The story about the great trial of Prophet Ibrahim (as) is an interesting one and there are many lessons that can be derived from it by those who believe in Ibrahim (as) and claim to follow his creed. To summarise what had transpired:

{Prophet Ibrahim (as) had prayed to Allah (SWT) to grant him a son. Allah (SWT) fulfilled his wish and gave him Ismail (as).

"O God! Grant me with a righteous son. So We gave him the glad tidings of a forbearing son."

When the child attained 13 years of age, Allah (SWT) commanded Ibrahim (as) to sacrifice him for His sake.

"When he was old enough to assist in his endeavour, he said: 'My son! I see in my dream that I am sacrificing you. See what you think?'"

Because it was the command from Allah (SWT), the righteous son encouraged his old father to

discharge his duty.

"He said: 'O Father! Do whatever you have been commanded. If Allah wishes, you will find me to be patient."

Ibrahim (as) set out with his son Ismail (as) to the sacrificing spot. It was certainly not an easy task!

On the way, Shaytan appeared in a form of an old advising man. He tried to stop Ibrahim (as) from offering the sacrifice, but because of the strong faith in Allah (SWT), Ibrahim (as)'s determination to comply with the command of his Creator could not be shaken. Shaytan then tried his luck with Ismail (as) and persuade him to escape from his ill- fate. As a result of his father's invocation, Ismail (as) was a righteous son and he too, could therefore not be influenced.

Both, the father and the son chased Shaytan away. They then arrived at the sacrificing spot. Ibrahim (as) tied the hands and the legs of his son so as not to be perturbed by his pain and restlessness. He blindfolded himself and carrying the knife enacted the command of Allah (SWT).

When Ibrahim (as) removed his fold, he saw Ismail (as) by his side and in his place; a ram lay slain before them. Ibrahim trembled lest Allah (SWT) rejected his sacrifice. Suddenly he heard a voice that was soothing:

"We called out to him: O Ibrahim! You have indeed fulfilled the vision! Thus indeed We reward the virtuous. This indeed was a manifest test. Then We ransomed him with a great sacrifice, and left for him a good name in posterity: Peace be to Ibrahim."

LESSON FROM SACRIFICE

One of the things that the Hujjaj (the pilgrims to the house of God) do on the 10th of Dhul-Hijjah, and so do many Muslims all over the world is to: Slaughter a lamb, or a sheep, or a goat or a camel in remembrance of this great sacrifice of Prophet Ibrahim (as).

This act is not mere a ritual but it has a meaning and a significance. Allah (SWT) has not commanded us to sacrifice animals because He (SWT) is bloodthirsty or meat hungry. In Suratul-Hajj, verses 36 & 37, He (SWT) has made it clear:

"Thus we have disposed them (animals) for your benefit so that you may give thanks." Then He (SWT) adds:

"It is not their flesh or their blood that reaches Allah. Rather it is your Godwariness that reaches Him. Thus has He disposed them for your benefit so that you may magnify Allah for His guiding you. And give good news to the virtuous."

So what is the significance of offering sacrifice of animals on this day of Adh-ha?? The answer to this question is simple.

Allah (SWT) wants to train us to follow the path of Prophet Ibrahim (as) who was willing to offer Allah (SWT) his dearest possession in form of his son Ismail (as).

Allah (SWT) did not want Ismail to be sacrificed BUT He (SWT) wanted Ibrahim (as) to show his willingness to sacrifice Ismail (as), which he (as) did bravely.

Dr. Ali Shari'ati in his book, 'Philosophy of Hajj' writes and I quote: "This is a story of man's perfection and his freedom from selfishness and animalistic desires. It is man's ascention to a higher spirit and love, to a strong will that frees him from any thing that may hinder his responsibility as a conscious man."

In other words, Allah (SWT) is telling us:

On this day of Eid, you should select your Ismail and bring him to Mina! Who is your Ismail? Anything that is causing an obstruction for you to reach your Lord and fulfil your duties towards Him. Your Ismail could be:

Your wealth

Your job

Your rank

Your power

Your lust

Your greed

Your spouse

Your children

It could be anything and make sure that it is as dear to you as Ismail (as) was to Ibrahim (as). As you are sacrificing an animal on this day, bear in mind that you are infact, sacrificing that dearest thing in your life and telling Allah (SWT):

"O My Lord! Henceforth, this thing, which has been dearest to me in life will not hinder me from reaching You and acquiring Your pleasure."

Imam 'Ali bin al-Husayn (as), talking about the significance of each and every ritual that is performed during Hajj, asked Shibli:

"As you slaughtered your sacrificial animal (during Hajj), did you intend to cut off the throat of greed (that is hidden in you) by clinging to the reality of Taqwa and to follow the exemplary tradition of Ibrahim (as) who intended to slaughter his dear son (so as to discharge the command of Allah)?"

Shibli said, "No!"

“In that case” said the Imam (as) “You have not sacrificed your animal.” Similarly, whilst giving instructions to the Hujjaj (the pilgrims proceeding for Hajj) Imam Ja’ffar as-Sadiq (as) said to them: “Cut the throat of carnal desires and greed by offering animal sacrifice.”

We pray to Allah (SWT) on this great day of Eid to grant us with tawfeeq to follow in the path of Prophet Ibrahim (as) and forgive all our past and future sins.