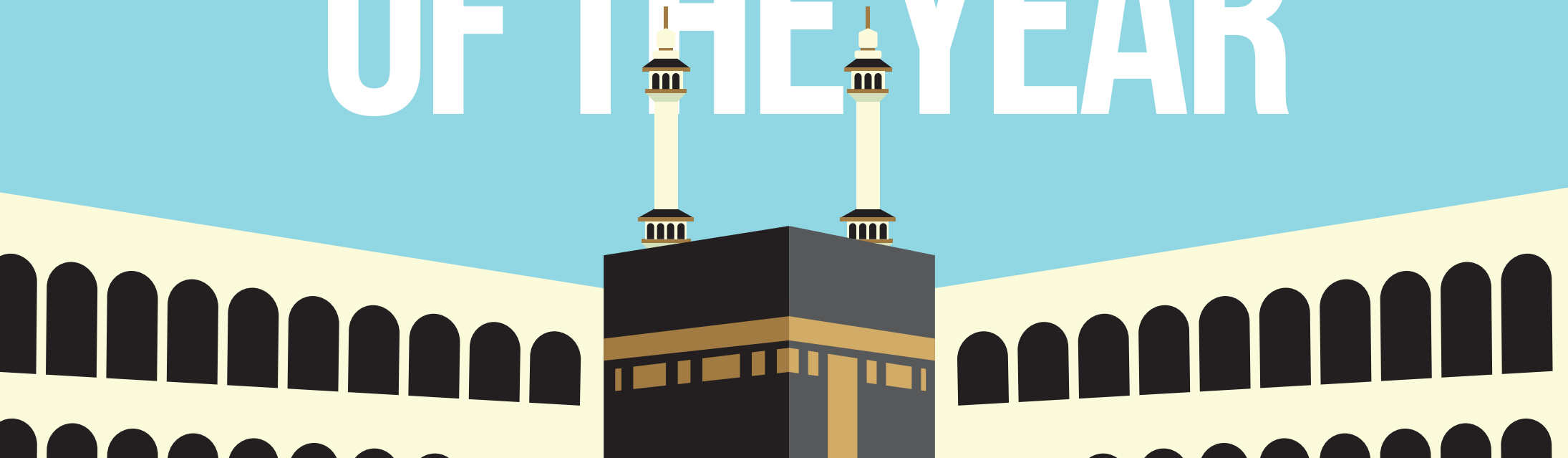




BEST DAYS OF THE YEAR



1 WHY THUL HIJJAH DAYS ARE BLESSED

God created things and gave preference to some of them over others. He created people and gave preference to some over others. He created gardens of paradise and gave preference to its highest level. He created angels and gave preference to Gabriel, Michael, and Raphael. He gave preference to prophets and messengers from amongst the believers. From amongst the messengers He gave preference to those of strong will (Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad). From amongst the messengers of strong will He gave preference to two, Abraham and Muhammad. And from these two He chose Muhammad as the final and last one.



He created the earth and gave preference to Mecca. He created time and chose from its months Ramadan, from its days Friday, and from its nights the Night of Special Status. He also chose from its hours the last hour of Friday. Four of the twelve months of the calendar He declared sacred and designated that the best ten best days of the whole year be the Ten Days of Thul Hijjah.

WHY ARE THESE TEN DAYS SO IMPORTANT?

- 1) The month in which they occur is the twelfth and final month of the Islamic lunar calendar, the month of Pilgrimage (Thul Hijjah) which is a sacred month with special regulations.
- 2) God swears an oath by them when He says, “By the dawn; by the ten nights” 89:1-2 which scholars say refer to the first ten days of Thul Hijjah.

3) God completed the regulations of the religion of Islam on these days in the final year of Muhammad's mission. He says, "Today I have perfected your religion for you, completed My blessing upon you, and chose for your religion Islam."

5:3

4) All the major acts of worship and devotion in Islam can be performed within them: ritual devotion, charity, fasting, and performing the Hajj pilgrimage.

5) They are the ten best days of the year in the most absolute sense. The Messenger of God Muhammad said, "The best days of this worldly life are the ten days of Thul Hijjah." He also said, "There is no deed more precious in the sight of God nor greater in reward than a good deed done during these ten days."

- 6) They contain the Day of Arafah about which the Messenger of God said, “The best supplication is the supplication on the Day of Arafah.” He also said, “The most important rite of the pilgrimage is the day of Arafah.”
- 7) The Messenger of God was asked about fasting on the Day of Arafah. He said, “It expiates for the sins of the previous year and of the coming year.” He also said, “There is no day on which God frees more people from the Fire than the Day of Arafah.”

- 8) Its tenth day is the Day of Sacrifice about which the Messenger of God said: “The best of days with God is the Day of Sacrifice.” On this day many acts of the Hajj pilgrimage are performed, and Muslims not performing the pilgrimage gather to celebrate Eid.



2 ABRAHAM'S STORY

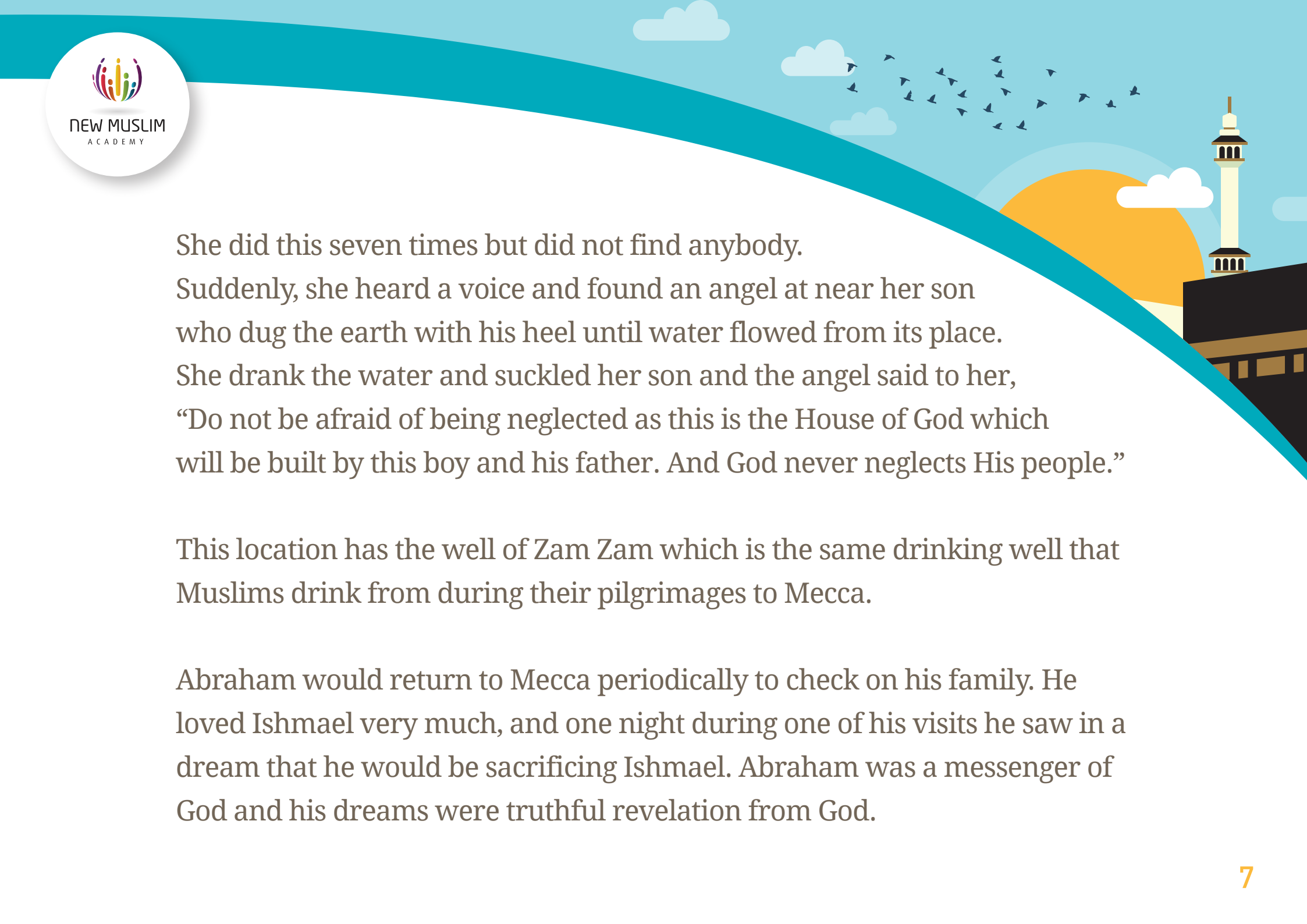
God commanded Abraham to come to Mecca with his wife Hagar and infant son Ishmael. Mecca was uninhabited at the time. He left them there with some water and dates and then set out homeward. Hagar followed him saying, “O Abraham! Where are you going, leaving us in this valley in which there is no person whose company we can enjoy, or nothing to enjoy whatsoever. Has God ordered you to do so?” He replied, “Yes.” She then replied, “Then He will not neglect or forsake us.”



Abraham proceeded forth and when he was some distance away, he supplicated, “Our Lord, I have settled some of my offspring in an uncultivated valley, close to Your sacred House, Lord, so that they may keep up devotion and prayer.

Make people’s hearts incline toward them and provide for them with produce, that that they may be grateful.”14:37.

Hagar continued to breastfeed Ishmael until the water supply finished, and both became thirsty. He began to toss in agony and she could not bear looking at him in such a condition, so she found the near mountain of Safa and climbed it looking to see if she could find somebody to help. She then descended and ran between the valley to the mountain of Marwa where she did the same.

The background of the slide features a stylized illustration. A large, bright orange sun is partially obscured by a thick, curved teal band that sweeps across the upper half of the image. In the sky, there are white clouds and a flock of small black birds flying towards the right. On the right side, a portion of a mosque is visible, including a minaret with a yellow dome and a black roof.

She did this seven times but did not find anybody.
Suddenly, she heard a voice and found an angel at near her son
who dug the earth with his heel until water flowed from its place.
She drank the water and suckled her son and the angel said to her,
“Do not be afraid of being neglected as this is the House of God which
will be built by this boy and his father. And God never neglects His people.”

This location has the well of Zam Zam which is the same drinking well that
Muslims drink from during their pilgrimages to Mecca.

Abraham would return to Mecca periodically to check on his family. He
loved Ishmael very much, and one night during one of his visits he saw in a
dream that he would be sacrificing Ishmael. Abraham was a messenger of
God and his dreams were truthful revelation from God.



Abraham said, “My son, I have seen myself sacrificing you in a dream. What you think.” Ishmael responded, “Father, do as you are commanded. God willing, you will find me steadfast.”37:102

Abraham then took his son with him and brought a knife. When they reached Mina (a valley outside of Mecca), he prepared to sacrifice his son. Ishmael laid down on his side and Abraham placed the knife upon his throat. “When they had both submitted to God, and he had laid his son down on the side of his face, We called out to him, ‘Abraham, you have fulfilled the dream.’” 37:103 God had wanted to see if His chosen messenger would carry out His commands and if he loved God more than his own son. Abraham passed the test, and God sent Gabriel with a ransom ram from heaven 37:107. Abraham was told to sacrifice the ram instead of his son.



Later in life, Abraham and his son Ishmael were commanded to construct a temple and a house of worship dedicated exclusively to the One True God. They completed building the Ka'bah together and prayed for acceptance. God then ordered Abraham to call out for people to perform pilgrimage to it. God says, "Proclaim the Pilgrimage to all people. They will come to you on foot and on every kind of lean camel; emerging from every distant pass."22:28

Abraham asked, "My Lord, how can the message reach the people when my call would not reach them?"

God said, "Call them, and I will relay the message."

Abraham then stood near the Ka'bah and proclaimed, "People! Your Lord has taken this as His House so perform a pilgrimage to it!" And to this day, any pilgrim who visits Mecca is answering his call.



3 GLIMPSE OF HAJJ

Hajj (Pilgrimage) is the fifth pillar of Islam. It is obligatory once upon every Muslim who is financially and physically able to perform it.

Muslims from across the world gather each year in the month of Thul Hijjah and begin their pilgrimage in state of ritual devotion. On the eighth day of Thul Hijjah a pilgrim responds to the call of Abraham through what is known as Talbiyah: “My Lord, here I am answering your call and at Your service, here I am. There is no partner with You, here I am. Truly, all praise and the provisions are Yours and so is the dominion and sovereignty. There is no partner with You.”



Pilgrims head to the valley of Mina and spend the night.

On the ninth day of Thul Hijjah, pilgrims set out from Mina to the plain of Arafah where they camp while continuing to declare their response to Abraham's call with Talbiyah. They listen to a sermon delivered in the camp, perform ritual worship, and then spend the rest of their time until sunset in supplication and remembrance of God. After sunset, pilgrims then calmly head to an area known as Muzdalifah where they spend the night outdoors under the stars.

On the tenth day of Thul Hijjah, pilgrims perform the dawn prescribed ritual, collect pebbles, and then head back to Mina where they will ritualistically throw the pebbles at three walls while declaring the greatness of God, exemplifying the pilgrimage of Abraham where he threw-

pebbles at the devil as he was tempting him not to follow God's commands. This was relived in the pilgrimage example of the messenger Muhammad.

Some pilgrims include in their ritual vow, to sacrifice an animal in following Abraham's example, they do so after the stoning ritual. Pilgrims then head back to nearby Mecca and circle the Ka'bah seven times, and for those who did not already do so, they run between the mountains of Safa and Marwa seven times, exemplifying Hagar's plight from millennia ago. Pilgrims then return to their tent camps in Mina and spend the night there.

On the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth days of Thul Hijjah, pilgrims exalt God by saying "God is greater" and continue the ritual act of stoning the three pillars in Mina after noon.

After doing so, pilgrims then visit Mecca one last time to bid farewell to the House of God.



4 EID AL-ADHA (THE FESTIVAL OF SACRIFICE)

Eid al-Adha, the tenth day of Thul Hijjah, is the second Islamic holiday of the year. Muslims around the world celebrate just as they did a few months ago after the completion of Ramadan. For those not able to perform the Hajj pilgrimage, they are still encouraged – if they can afford to do so – to sacrifice an animal to emulate the acts of Abraham. The meat of sacrifice is then divided into three parts: one for one's family; one for friends, relatives, and neighbors; and one for those less fortunate and needy.



Muslims worldwide throughout the days of Eid exalt God, like the pilgrims, by saying “God is greater”.

Muslims are encouraged to wear their best clothing, offer greetings and visit one another, and enjoy these three days that were made for eating and drinking. These are days of responsible enjoyment and devotion to God.