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The Sacrificial Offering

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The sacrificial offering is one of the great ritual acts of Islam, in which we remember the greatness of God, His blessings upon us, and the obedience of the Messenger Abraham to his Lord. God commanded Abraham to sacrifice his son Ishmael. Abraham submitted to God's command. As he readied himself to sacrifice his son, God exchanged Ishmael with a ram. This sacrificial offering became an act of worship from that time.




On the day of Eid, it is recommended that every financially able Muslim offers an animal sacrifice as an act of worship to God. The timing of this ritual begins after the Eid Salah which is on the 10th day of the 12th lunar Islamic month and lasts until sunset on the 13th day of the same month. The prescribed time is approximately four days in which to ensure the sacrifice is complete. Any sacrifice given before or after this time is not counted as the sacrifice for Eid, but just a normal sacrifice as one can do at any time of the year.





This act of worship is very rewarding. God says, "Say, 'My prayers and sacrifice, my life and death, are all for God, Lord of all the universe.'" [6:162] God shows us the importance of this sacrifice in the following passage, "It is neither their meat nor their blood that reaches God but your piety." [22:37] In some narrations, the Messenger Muhammad mentioned that there is a reward for every hair of the animal that is sacrificed. The disciple Abu Ayyub said, "At the time of the Messenger Muhammad, a man would sacrifice a sheep on behalf of himself and the members of his household, and they would eat from it and give some to others."


One animal sacrifice is sufficient for a person and their family. The animals that can be offered as sacrifices are sheep, goats, cows, and camels. A camel or cow is enough for seven people. This is due to the bigger size of cows and camels and therefore, the more meat that is available. The bigger and more expensive the animal, the better it is in dedicating it to God in sacrifice if one is able to do so.

There are certain conditions that have to be met in order for the aforementioned animals to be acceptable as a sacrifice. These are:







 The animal should have reached the required age, which is six months for a sheep, one year for a goat, two years for a cow and five years for a camel.

 It should be free of any obvious physical faults. Examples are a one-eyed animal, a sick animal, a lame animal with a limp, and an emaciated animal. The Messenger Muhammad said: "There are four that will not do for sacrifice: a one-eyed animal whose defect is obvious, a sick animal whose sickness is obvious, a lame animal whose limp is obvious and an emaciated animal that has no marrow in its bones."

 Animals that have slight defects but not as severe as mentioned in the previous points, are disliked to offer but still valid. The healthier the animal, the better.

 It is forbidden to sell a sacrificial animal. If an animal has been selected for sacrifice, it is not permissible to sell it or give it away, except in exchange for one that is better.

Sacrifice is an act of worship first and foremost, even though we can benefit from the meat. There are therefore several etiquettes to remember when it comes to the slaughter:

-  It is better for a person to slaughter the sacrifice himself when possible. If one does not, it is recommended for him to be present when it is slaughtered. Otherwise, one can solicit the service of a person who can do so on his behalf.
-  The animal should not be agitated or shown the death of other animals.
-  The blade used should be sharp.
-  The animal should be at ease as much as possible.
-  The animal should be slaughtered facing the direction of Mecca if possible.
-  The name of God is said when sacrificing.

The slaughter should be conducted swiftly with as little infliction of pain as possible.

Once the slaughter is complete, it is recommended to divide the meat into three portions: one third to be eaten by the family offering the sacrifice, one third to be given as gifts to family and friends and one third to be given in charity to the poor and needy. The butcher should not be given anything of the sacrifice by way of reward or payment, but should be paid separately.



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