



US President Barack Obama and his wife Michelle extended good wishes Monday to the world's more than 1.5 billion Muslims ahead of the Eid al-Adha religious holiday.

Statement by the President on Hajj and Eid-ul-Adha

Michelle and I extend our greetings for a happy Eid-ul-Adha to Muslims worldwide and wish safe travels to those performing Hajj. This year, nearly three million pilgrims from more than 160 countries - including the United States - have gathered in Mecca and neighboring sites to perform the Hajj rituals and stand together in prayer.

On Eid, Muslims around the world will commemorate Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son, and distribute food to those less fortunate - a reminder of the shared values and the common roots of three of the world's major religions.

On behalf of the American people, we extend our best wishes during this Hajj season – Eid Mubarak and Hajj Mabrouk.

President Obama's original message may be found on [White House official web site](#).

The Feast of Sacrifice (Eid al-Adha)

One of the two main festivals of the Muslim calendar is the Feast of Sacrifice (Eid al-Adha), which marks the end of the Hajj (the holy pilgrimage). It is a festival with many social aspects: the pilgrimage, the sacrifice of an animal, remembering and helping the poor, and the reunion of visiting relatives, friends, and neighbors.

In the tradition of Abraham's great act of faith many centuries ago, millions of Muslims prepare to demonstrate their own submission to God by sacrificing an animal. Muslims commemorate Prophet Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son after God's order, as well as God's mercy in sparing his son and replacing him with a ram.

Each wealthy Muslim is supposed to sacrifice an animal on this festival. The meat is then distributed to those in need all over the world. The feast is a time for thanking God for His blessings and for giving to the less fortunate, regardless of their religion, race and color.

The Qur'an describes Abraham (peace be upon him) as follows:

"Surely Abraham was an example, obedient to God, by nature upright, and he was not of the polytheists. He was grateful for Our bounties. We chose him and guided him unto a right path. We gave him good in this world, and in the next he will most surely be among the righteous." (Qur'an 16:120-121)

And "We made him (Abraham) pure in this world and in the hereafter; he is most surely among the righteous. When his Lord said to him: 'Submit,' he said: 'I submit myself to the Lord of the Worlds.'" (Qur'an 2:130-131)

It is very important to understand that the sacrifice itself, as practiced by Muslims, has nothing to do with atoning for our sins or using the blood to wash ourselves from sin. This is a misunderstanding by those of previous generations: "It is not their meat nor their blood that reaches God; it is your piety that reaches Him" (Qur'an 22:37).

The symbolism is in the attitude: a willingness to make sacrifices in our lives in order to stay on the Straight Path. Each of us makes small sacrifices by giving up things that are fun or important to us. A true Muslim, one who submits his or herself completely to the Lord, is willing to follow God's commands completely and obediently. It is this strength of heart, purity in faith, and willing obedience that our Lord desires from us.