

# INTERCEDE

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## Blessings of the True Sacrifice



By Harry Morin

On Oct. 4, the North American community of Muslims will celebrate the most important holiday of the Islamic calendar, The Feast of Sacrifice. As more and more Christians begin to reach out to Muslims, they will meet up with this holiday. A conversation with a Muslim acquaintance about this holiday could sound like the following conversation between Peter and his Muslim friend, Azim.

[Peter] Hey Azim. I saw on the Internet that Muslims all over the world are getting ready to sacrifice animals. What's that all about?

[Azim] It's just something that Muslims do.

[Peter] Well, tell me more. Please. I really want to know.

[Azim] It has to do with one of our special holidays, the Feast of Sacrifice. We call it *Eid-ul Adha* or *Eid-ul Kabir*, the Great Celebration.

[Peter] So why do you sacrifice animals?

[Azim] It is our tradition. We do this to remember the story of Prophet Abraham and the sacrifice. According to our teachings, God commanded Prophet Abraham to sacrifice his son Ismail as a test of faith and submission. Prophet Abraham was ready to fully obey and just as he was about to slay his son, God stopped him and provided an animal sacrifice instead. We believe God sent down from heaven a pure white ram, and Prophet Abraham sacrificed the ram instead of his son. And so every year, we perform a sacrifice to remember Prophet Abraham's surrender and God's provision.

[Peter] Hey! That's like the story of Abraham in the Bible, except that according to the Bible, it was Isaac, not Ishmael. And for us, this story of the sacrifice is extremely important. Do you mind if I tell you why?

[Azim] No, go ahead.

*continued on page 4*



# Until All Have Heard

*How then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? – Romans 10:14*

Mark Hausfeld  
International Director  
Global Initiative:  
Reaching Muslim Peoples



Often after speaking at a church or university someone will come to me and in the course of conversation say, “You and your family have sacrificed so much to do your work.” I look at them and remember these words, “The sacrifice would have been NOT to go.” I first heard my mother-in-law say these words. She served with her family in Spanish speaking countries for over forty years. My wife and brother-in-law grew up as “Anglo minorities.” At a young age both acquired the Spanish language and the culture of the nation where they lived. Their skin was white, but their souls were brown. Both will tell you they would not change their years of growing up in the Dominican Republic. For them it wasn't sacrifice. What makes the difference is how sacrifice is perceived!


Our family served the peoples of Pakistan in country for seven years. We came to know the international and Pakistani communities quite well. The majority of expatriates came to Pakistan for work and stayed for extended periods. It was always interesting to observe the levels of appreciation, or lack thereof, that expatriates had for the local peoples and cultures.

An observation I made was that expatriates who decided to identify solely with their own people, culture and language were inevitably resistant to the majority host peoples in numerous ways. They would often speak of the local people with anger, disgust, and an air of superiority. Disparaging remarks about the clothing, hygiene, driving behaviors, language and religion of the “local people” became high water marks in negative conversation. On the other hand, these frustrated expatriates often perceived “the sacrifice of leaving their own countries” as a negative challenge — and it usually left them angry, sad and even bitter.

Fortunately, most of our international friends were not in this camp. When we would gather for visits, meals or worship we often shared the joys, learning events, and even funny situations we had experienced with our national hosts. Of course, it was not all wonderful! Anytime you actually live in another nation with peoples whose customs, language, and religion are much different than your

own — there are challenges. The key is to accept the challenges, try to understand them — and then transform them into opportunities. Change, by and large, needed to be with my attitude, understanding and perspective. Our perceived sacrifice was really an opportunity to maximize, enjoy, learn and make enduring friendships.



Have you noticed Muslims in your community? Many of them have “sacrificed” heart language, cultural comfort and being with extended family to be in the United States. Perhaps they have been pulled here by opportunity — or pushed here by war or famine. They, too, can be in one of the two camps of perceived sacrifice. As you and I meet, befriend, and love them, they are more likely to embrace the “healthy” perspective of sacrifice. And in our relationships with them we can share from our experience the greatest sacrifice of all: “For God so loved the world that He gave...” 

# Muslim World News



## Convert appeals 5-year misdemeanor sentence

*Egypt*

An Egyptian man who captured video of clashes between Muslims and Christians has been sentenced to five years in prison. Mohamed Hegazy was convicted for failing to obtain permission to film demonstrations in the Minya governate, a volatile region in central Egypt that erupted in anti-Christian violence following the July 2013 ouster of former President Mohamed Morsi.

The crime is a misdemeanor, and Hegazy already has spent more than six months in custody — the maximum for misdemeanors — since his arrest Dec. 4, 2013. His lawyer said he plans to appeal the verdict. "Hegazy is accused of filming a demonstration without permission, so according to the law this is a misdemeanor," the attorney, Karam Ghobrial, told *World Watch Monitor*. "So this verdict is contradictory to the law because it didn't include paying the bail to release the accused until the appeal, as in all misdemeanor crimes."

Hegazy, 31, goes by a different name, Bishoy Armeya, a name he took after he converted from Islam to Christianity in 1999, at age 17. In 2007, he petitioned the government to officially recognize his conversion — an unprecedented request in a country where Islam is the official religion, and where the constitution declares Islamic sharia law to be "the main source of legislation." Death threats forced Hegazy into hiding. And that, his lawyer says, is the real reason he's going to prison.

"The real reason for keeping Armeya in custody is being a convert," Ghobrial told *Mideast Christian News* in April. He said police questioned Hegazy about his religion following his arrest — a subject that he said ought to be irrelevant under Egyptian law. In Egypt, government-issued identity cards include the person's religion. While the law permits citizens to change their faith, Muslims who convert to Christianity often face intense pressure.

— *World Watch Monitor*

## Church refused right to appeal ban on use of 'Allah'

*Malaysia*

Almost eight years after the Malaysian Catholic newspaper the *Herald* first sought to overthrow a government ban on it using the word "Allah" for "God" in its publication the judicial appeal process appears to have ended in failure. A federal court in Kuala Lumpur ruled it would not grant the Catholic church permission to appeal the decision.

The court decided in October 2013 that only Malay Muslims had an exclusive right to use the word "Allah" even though the word precedes the birth of Islam.

The government's order allowing only Muslims to use the word "Allah" is particularly frustrating to Christians in multiracial Malaysia, a nation once tolerant of all creeds.

The indigenous Sabah and Sarawak people, who constitute 70 percent of the country's Christian population, have been using the word in their theological vocabulary both in worship in the Malay language, or in written form in the Malay Bible, the *Alkitab* — for more than 100 years.

The church stands to defend its legitimate right to freedom of worship have over the years led to punitive arson attacks against churches, threats to both burn and seize the Bible by the state's Islamic authorities — amid other acts of provocation.

The Christian Federation of Malaysia voiced its disappointment at the federal court's decision. It said: "Simple justice would have mandated an appeal to rectify the many incorrect and inaccurate statements and observations of the Court of Appeal."

Rev. Dr. Hermen Shastri, secretary general of the Council of Churches, described the decision of the highest court of the land. He told *World Watch Monitor* that while there was little legal recourse left to the Catholic church, it would probably take the extraordinary step of asking the federal court to review its own judgment so as to uphold constitutional guarantees of religious freedom.

— *World Watch Monitor*

# Blessings of the

Continued

[Peter] Well, according to our beliefs, while Abraham was preparing for the sacrifice, his son asked, “Where’s the animal for the sacrifice?” Then Abraham told him that God would provide it. All the time, Abraham was planning to sacrifice his son as God commanded. But then, just as Abraham was about to carry out his intention, God called out to him to stop, and when Abraham looked up, he saw a ram caught in the bushes. True enough, God had provided a sacrifice, and clearly it was a substitute sacrifice. However, the Bible reveals that this animal sacrifice was only a symbol or a picture of the one truly great sacrifice which God would later provide to ransom or to redeem the whole world.

[Azim] Peter, you lost me. What do you mean by a sacrifice to redeem the whole world?

[Peter] Azim, think for a moment. If the only thing God wanted to do in this story was test Abraham’s faith, then why didn’t God simply tell him to go home after he proved his faithfulness? Why did God still require him to perform a sacrifice?

[Azim] I don’t know. I never thought of that before.

[Peter] Well, here’s what we believe. God is reminding us through this story that because of universal sin, every one of us, every single human being, deserves to pay the penalty of unbearable death. But because God is merciful, He chose to redeem us. He chose to free us from having to make the payment. Azim, do you know what it means to ransom or to redeem something?

[Azim] No, not really.

[Peter] Well, it means to free it, but only by giving something in exchange as sufficient payment. God decided to free us from the payment of penalty for sin by providing in exchange the life of a substitute sacrifice. But because humankind is the most valuable of all God’s creation, there is nothing within earthly creation of sufficient value to redeem us. Certainly, no four-footed beast would qualify, not even a pure ram! No, nothing from Earth would do. The provision of the redeeming sacrifice would have to come down from God above. For us, that means that this animal God provided for Abraham for sacrifice was only a symbol of a far greater sacrifice that God Himself would one day send down from heaven — and

that sacrifice would become known as the “Lamb of God.” It turns out that this Lamb of God was not any animal, but a holy person who was sent down to earth to redeem the world.

We believe that this special person was Jesus the Messiah, miraculously born of the virgin Mary. That’s why in the Bible, he is introduced as the one who came from above, and as the “Lamb of God who takes away the



sin of the world.” And that’s why Jesus said he did not come to earth to be served, but rather to serve and give his life as a ransom for many.

[Azim] But Peter, in Islam, the sacrifice must be slaughtered. The jugular vein must be slit to ensure the flow of blood and eventual death. And the slitting of the throat must be done carefully so the animal doesn’t suffer.

[Peter] Azim, we also speak about the blood of the sacrifice. In fact, the Bible says that without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sins (Hebrews 9:22). The Bible says, “it was not with perishable things such as

# e True Sacrifice

from Page 1

silver and gold that you were redeemed ... but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect” (1 Peter 1:18-19).

You see, it was Jesus who was the real sacrifice, not the ram. Maybe that's why you have to slay the animal so that it doesn't suffer. Anyway, the knife that brought about the bloodshed for Jesus was the death penalty of the crucifixion. Just as God sent the innocent ram to die in the



place of Abraham's son, so did God send Jesus the Lamb of God to die in the place of the human race. And so, that's why, for us, Jesus and the cross are a special sign of God's mercy. And wherever there's God's mercy, there's God's forgiveness of sins.

This brings us to the best part of the story — the part about blessings. When Abraham proved his faithfulness, God made a promise. God promised Abraham that he would bless the people of the world through one of his descendants — a descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And now we know who that is. He is Jesus the Messiah, and the blessings come through him, the substi-

tute sacrifice. He pays the penalty for sin and opens the door to the forgiveness of sins which is the greatest blessing one could ever ask for because it leads to eternal life with God!

Thank you, Azim, for letting me share all of this with you. I hope you and your family get to enjoy your holiday. But most of all, I pray that someday you too will accept God's ultimate provision of ransom and that you get to experience the blessings of the heavenly sacrifice, the pure sacrifice — Jesus, the Lamb of God.

## Application

You can see from this Christian-Muslim dialogue, Peter used this Muslim holiday as a bridge to speak about the greatest sacrifice of all, the Lamb of God. As Christians mingle with Muslims, they may find a similar opportunity. Unfortunately, when we engage in this conversation, we often get bogged down over the identity of Abraham's son, Isaac vs. Ishmael. It is not uncommon for such a discussion to lead to a heated argument and a broken relationship, which is unfortunate because there is something far more significant in this story that we don't want to lose — it's the idea of divine redemption or ransom by means of a sacrifice. This idea is even embedded in the account of Abraham and the sacrifice in the Quran.

There is only one passage in the Quran that relates this story, but it is a critical one. Here it is from chapter 37, verses 101 to 108:

101. So We [God] gave him [Abraham] the good news of a boy ready to suffer and forbear. 102. Then, when (the son) reached (the age of) (serious) work with him, he said, “O my son! I see in vision that I offer thee in sacrifice. Now see what is thy view!” (The son) said, “O my father! Do as thou art commanded; thou will find me, if Allah so wills, one practicing patience and constancy!” 103. So when they had both submitted their wills (to Allah) and he had laid him prostrate on his forehead (for sacrifice), 104. We called out to him, “O Abraham! 105. Thou hast already fulfilled the vision!” Thus indeed do We reward those who do right. For this was obviously a trial. 107. And We ransomed him with a momentous sacrifice. 108. And We left (this blessing) for him among generations (to come) in later times.

*continued on page 6*

# Blessings of the True Sacrifice

continued from page 5

Notice that the identity of the boy is not revealed. But this is not the time to raise the issue. Save it for another day. What we really want to focus on is verse 107 where God is quoted as saying, “We ransomed him with a momentous sacrifice.” Truly the sacrifice God provided was momentous because it pointed to the blood of the Lamb of God which speaks of the blessings of the sacrifice such as the following:

- **Atonement (payment of penalty for sin).** “God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood.” Romans 3:25

## Prayer Profile: *Tihami of Yemen*



The Tihama is the narrow western coastal region of Yemen on the Red Sea. It is made up of sand dunes and plains and is largely arid. Most of the Tihami people (pop. 4.5 million) are dependent on agriculture and the sea to provide daily needs. One out of every two people is illiterate. The predominant culture centers around Islam, but sometimes tradition or customs supersede Islamic law.

1. Pray those disillusioned by the problems in their country would search until they find the Truth that can set them free.
2. Pray that Tihamis forced out of their homes and living in camps would have both their physical and spiritual needs met.
3. Pray for laborers who would hear the call to take the gospel to the Tihamis.


\*For more information on the Tihamis, see [www.joshuaoproject.net](http://www.joshuaoproject.net).



- **Forgiveness (of sins).** “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.” Matthew 26:28

- **Purification (spiritually clean).** “...the blood of Jesus, His son, purifies us from all sin.” 1 John 1:7

- **Reconciliation (brought back into peaceful fellowship with God).** “But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ.” Ephesians 2:13

These blessings will lead to one of the greatest celebrations of all time — the assemblage of resurrected believers from every tongue and tribe, thronging around the throne of God rejoicing and crying out: “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb” (Rev. 5:13). What a spectacular celebration that will be! God has made everything ready; He has done His part. What remains is the personal invitation to our Muslim friends. That's our part. As we share with them the story of Abraham and the Sacrifice, let us pray that they too will accept God's provision of ransom and have their robes washed in the blood of the Lamb! May they truly embrace the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. 



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[Facebook.com/JumaaPrayer](https://www.facebook.com/JumaaPrayer)*



**Friday, September 5, 2014. Please pray**

...for workers who are being trained at the inaugural Institute of Islamic Studies during the first two weeks of September at Continental Theological Seminary in Brussels, Belgium.

...for mosque leaders who are giving sermons today — that their messages would ring empty and inadequate for hearers who are seeking the truth.

...for peace and justice for the people of Syria. Especially intercede on behalf of the suffering Christian minority, many of whom have fled the country.

**Friday, September 12, 2014. Please pray**

...for Turkish churches throughout Germany to grow in their desire to be a witness to their communities.

...for the strategically placed New Life Church in Melilla, Spain as they reach out to displaced refugees, most of whom are Muslims.

...for Global Initiative team members who are teaching during September at the Institute of Islamic Studies in Constanta, Romania.

**Friday, September 19, 2014. Please pray**

...for Christians in Zanzibar, where 98 percent of the population are Muslim. Several churches have been targeted by bombers already this year.

...for a Global Initiative team member who is conducting Muslim Awareness Seminars next week at two locations in South Africa.

...for profound healing through Jesus Christ in the Islamic world — where Muslim peoples continue to experience chaos, violence and injustice.

**Friday, September 26, 2014. Please pray**

...for the hundreds of workers around the world who have participated in Global Initiative equipping classes this year — as many of them seek to work in Muslim countries.

...for Internet churches, Facebook participants and other media ministries as they reach out to Muslims around the world.

...for Muslims who encounter dreams and visions, that they will seek out the truth about Jesus Christ and discover Him as Savior.

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**Friday, October 3, 2014. Please pray**

...for over **200,000 mullahs** who work in over 50,000 mosques and seminaries in Iran.  
...for **thousands of expatriate Christians** working in the United Arab Emirates.  
...for **Muslims the world over** as they celebrate *Eid ul-Adha* (the Feast of the Sacrifice) tomorrow, Oct. 4. Pray for a revelation of the true sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross.

**Friday, October 10, 2014. Please pray**

...for **Global Initiative team members** who are conducting Muslim Awareness Seminars today and tomorrow at a major U.S. university.  
...for the **country of Brunei**. 67 percent of its 416,000 people are Muslims. Sharia law prevails and life is difficult for the 10 percent Christian community.  
...for **more than 4 million** mostly unreached Muslims in southern Thailand.

**Friday, October 17, 2014. Please pray**

...for **Global Initiative team members** who are conducting Muslim Awareness Seminars at multiple locations in Cuba during Oct. 16-29.  
...for the **nation of Iran** whose disillusioned people (79 million) have become the most open to Christ in the region.  
...for the **Kho people** in the mountains of northern Pakistan. They number 320,000 and are 100 percent Muslim.

**Friday, October 24, 2014. Please pray**

...for a **Global Initiative team member** leading a seminary class in outreach ministry to Muslims in Chicago.  
...for the **leadership of the Live/Dead church planting initiative** focused on the Middle East and North Africa.  
...for the **40 million Fulanis of Africa**. 18.7 million reside in Nigeria, with many others in seven other countries.

**Friday, October 31. Please pray**

...for an **awakening in churches in America** to the need of developing ministries to Muslim immigrants who have recently come to the U.S.  
...for **protection for Muslim converts** throughout the world.  
...for **churches in Pakistan**. 98 percent of Pakistan's 187 million people are Muslim.

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P. O. Box 2730, Springfield, MO 65801-2730  
1-866-816-0824 (toll free)  
www.globalinitiativeinfo.com  
www.jumaaprayers.org