

## **FOR MUSLIMS, PILGRIMAGE IS A DUTY EID UL-ADHA A FESTIVAL TO CELEBRATE JOURNEY TO MECCA**

*Publication: CHARLESTON DAILY MAIL*

*Published: 02/08/2003*

*Byline: CHARLOTTE FERRELL SMITH, Daily Mail Staff*

Muslims across America will celebrate Eid ul-Adha, or Festival of the Sacrifice, on Tuesday.

The largest gathering in West Virginia will be hosted at the Islamic Center in South Charleston, corner of Kanawha Turnpike and Valley Drive. Eid prayers begin 10 a.m. followed by a sermon delivered by Imam (spiritual leader) Mohammad Jamal Daoudi. A luncheon will follow.

Daoudi stressed the importance of the event in his faith community.

The celebration follows the season of pilgrimage for the world's more than 1 billion Muslims.

The pilgrimage to Mecca in Saudi Arabia this year is estimated to include more than 2 million Muslims, including thousands from the United States.

Performed once in a lifetime, the pilgrimage is made in response to God's command to the prophet Abraham, Daoudi said.

He added the journey boosts faith and uplifts spirit as those who make the pilgrimage are called to perform it properly by avoiding all sins, arguments, gossip and other violations of the sacred ritual.

The pilgrimage, called Hajj in Arabic, includes Muslims from around the world as they gather to worship Allah, the name of God in Arabic.

In the Islam religion, all are equal, Daoudi said.

"Differences in wealth, language and nationality are irrelevant," he said. "All are Muslims, brothers and sisters to each other.

On Hajj, they meet and discuss their own affairs, plans, economies, business and problems, as to come up with solutions for their concerns."

Participants in the pilgrimage dress in plain white cloth as a statement of equality and a way of remembering the judgment day to come, he said. Through words and rituals, they promise to follow God's word.

In Islam, followers honor the prophet Muhammad but do not worship him. It is believed the word of God was revealed to Muhammad by angel Gabriel 1,400 years ago.

Muhammad relayed the message to scribes who recorded the book of Quran (also known as Koran). This holy book includes laws for serving God as well as rules for living and conducting business.

The month of Ramadan, the holiest in the Islamic lunar calendar, is when the Quran was to have been revealed to Muhammad.

At the end of Hajj, Muslims worldwide hold the second-largest celebration of the Islamic calendar, Eid al-Adha.

"Eid al-Adha is a time of prayer and supplication, when all Muslims put aside disagreements and enmities," Daoudi said.

"It is when Allah accepts the worship of the hajjis (pilgrims), their prayers and sacrifices."

Muslims everywhere spend four days remembering Allah and his mercy, visiting each other, congratulating each other and praying for one another.

"It is a time when Muslims pray to Allah that he provide relief, comfort and assistance for Muslims and non-Muslims alike all over the world."

Copyright © 1985-2004 Charleston Daily Mail