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Amina Ahmed, left, and Riffat Qureshi, both of Sayre, celebrate Eid al-Adha, the festival of sacrifice, Friday at the Finger Lakes Islamic Center in Big Flats.

Festival brings Muslims together

■ Eid al-Adha focuses on story of Abraham and Ishmael.

By MICHELE PEET
Star-Gazette

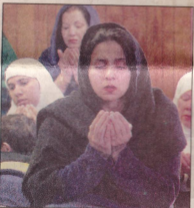
BIG FLATS — Members of the Finger Lakes Islamic Center gathered Friday morning to celebrate a time of sacrifice and prayer.

Eid al-Adha, the festival of sacrifice, and Hajj, the pilgrimage to Mecca, are celebrated during the last month of the Islamic calendar.

Dr. Najoeb Rehman, media spokesman for the Finger Lakes Islamic Center, said the celebration is a time for families to come together and be one.

On Friday morning, families from as far west as Hornell and as far east as Sayre came together at the mosque for a prayer service and a feast that included baklava, biryani and other pastries.

Between 40 and 50 Twin Tiers families regularly come to celebrations at the center on Main Street in Big Flats. Many parents take a



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Farah Naseeb prays with other women at the Finger Lakes Islamic Center. Eid al-Adha is a time for families to come together, according to a center spokesman.

day or a half-day off from work and children take off from school. The main celebrations are the end of Ramadan and Eid al-Adha.

The celebration of Eid al-

Adha centers on a story from the Qur'an. Abraham, a prophet and father, was asked to sacrifice his son Ishmael. As Abraham prepared to commit the sacrifice, Allah replaced

Ishmael with a sheep.

Muslims from around the world celebrate this act of faith by making a pilgrimage to Mecca or slaughtering an animal and feasting on halal, or the meat prepared for this ritual.

"The beauty is that you sacrifice the animal, and you eat it, too," said Zahid Asgher of Horseheads, a member of the Islamic Center who is from Pakistan.

In addition to celebrating the story of Abraham and Ishmael, the Islamic Center also had other things to celebrate Friday.

Akhtar Al-Sinjari, president of the Islamic Association of the Finger Lakes, announced that center members donated more than \$10,000 to the American Red Cross for tsunami relief efforts.

Al-Sinjari also announced that the center had acquired the adjacent lot for additional parking and a play facility for children.

Rehman said the center hopes to encourage children to take part in activities and worship at the mosque. Friday's celebration helps to emphasize family structure and coming together.

"It lets us focus on the similarities. It will be good for our children," he said.