

Introduction to Hajj for People of Other Faiths

In the Name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

All praise and thanks are due to Allah, and peace and blessings be upon His Messenger.

Islam has two major religious celebrations. The first occurs after the completion of Ramadan, the Islamic month during which Muslims fast daily from dawn to sunset as part of an effort towards self-purification and betterment. This celebration is known as `Eid Al-Fitr (Festival of Breaking the Fast).



The second major Islamic celebration takes place during the time of the Hajj, or annual pilgrimage to Makkah (Mecca). This week-long event occurs two months and ten days after Ramadan, during the Islamic month of Dhul-Hijjah, and its culmination is a feast known as `Eid Al-Adha (Festival of Sacrifice). The Hajj consists of several ceremonies meant to symbolize the essential concepts of the Islamic faith and to commemorate the trials of Prophet Abraham (Ibrahim) and his family. Over two million Muslims perform the pilgrimage annually, and the rest of the over one billion Muslims worldwide celebrate the `Eid in conjunction with the Hajj.

ABRAHAM

Abraham is a figure revered by Muslims, Jews, and Christians alike as a righteous person who lived over four thousand years ago. His story can be found in the Bible as well as the Qur'an. Abraham is considered to be the patriarch of monotheism, belief in the Oneness of God; he sought a personal relationship with his Creator. He left his native city of Ur in Mesopotamia after voicing opposition to his people's polytheistic practices and eventually settled in Egypt with his family. Later, he escorted one of his wives, Hagar (Hajar), and their infant son Ishmael (Isma'il), to a desolate valley in Arabia and left them there, putting trust in God Who had promised to care of them.

Hagar, overwhelmed with motherly tender care, began searching the surroundings for food and water for her baby. According to the Qur'an, in response to Hagar's prayers, a spring miraculously gushed forth at Ishmael's feet to quench their thirst. Hagar climbed nearby hills searching for food and looking for caravans on the horizon. Eventually, some passing traders stopped by in the valley, and asked Hagar's permission to water their camels. In no time, the surrounding atmosphere captivated the traders and they decided to settle in the little valley; eventually the city of Makkah grew into a large settlement.

Abraham paid regular visits to his family, and when Ishmael was about thirteen years old, he and Ishmael constructed the Ka'bah as a place dedicated to the worship of the One God. Eventually, Makkah became an important trading center by the time of Prophet Muhammad, twenty-five hundred years later.

THE HAJJ

In commemoration of the trials of Abraham and his family in Makkah, which included Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son Ishmael in response to God's Command, Muslims make a pilgrimage to the sacred city at least once in their lifetime. The Hajj is one of the "five pillars" of Islam, and thus an essential part of Muslims' faith and practice.

Muslims from all over the world, including the United States, travel to Makkah. Before arriving in the holy city, Muslims assume a state of consecration (ihram), by removing their worldly clothes and donning the humble attire of pilgrims' two seamless white sheets for men, and simple white dresses and scarves for women. The white garments symbolize human equality and unity before God, since all the pilgrims are dressed similarly. Money and status are no longer a factor for the pilgrims: the equality of each person in the eyes of God becomes paramount.

Upon arriving in Makkah, pilgrims perform what is known as Arrival Tawaf (Tawaf Al-Qudoom) or circumambulation of the Ka`bah. All the while, they chant "Labbayka, Allahumma, labbayk," which means "Here I am at Your service, O God, Here I am!" The Tawaf is meant to awaken each Muslim's consciousness that God is the center of their reality and the source of all meaning in life, and that each person's higher self-identity derives from being part of the community of Muslim believers, known as the Ummah. Pilgrims also perform the Sa`i, which is going seven times between the small hills named Safa and Marwah, re-enacting the Qur'anic story of Hagar's desperate search for water and food.

Next, on the first official day of Hajj (8 Dhul-Hijjah), the two million pilgrims travel a few miles to the plain of Mina and encamp there. From Mina, pilgrims travel the following morning to the plain of `Arafat where they spend the entire day in earnest supplication and devotion. That evening, the pilgrims move and encamp at Muzdalifah, which is a site between Mina and `Arafat. Muslims stay overnight and offer various prayers there.

Then the pilgrims return to Mina on the 10th and throw seven pebbles at a stone pillar that represents the devil. This symbolizes Abraham's throwing stones at Satan when the latter tried to dissuade him from sacrificing his son. Then the pilgrims sacrifice a sheep, in reminiscence of the story of Abraham, who, in place of his son, sacrificed a sheep that God had provided as a substitute. The meat from the slaughtered sheep is distributed for consumption to family, friends, and poor and needy people in the community. After the sacrifice, the pilgrims return to Makkah to end the formal rites of Hajj by performing a final Tawaf and Sa`i.

Muslims believe the rites of the Hajj were designed by God and taught through Prophet Muhammad. Muslims believe that since the time of Adam, there have been thousands of prophets, including such well-known figures as Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, and Jesus, and that Muhammad was the final Prophet of God.

The Hajj is designed to develop God-consciousness and a sense of spiritual uplifting. It is also believed to be an opportunity to seek forgiveness of sins accumulated throughout life. Prophet Muhammad said that a person who performs Hajj properly "will return as a newly born baby [free of all sins]." The pilgrimage also enables Muslims from all around the world, of different colors, languages, races, and ethnicities, to come together in a spirit of universal brotherhood and sisterhood to worship the One God together.

`Eid Al-Adha

Although only the pilgrims in Makkah can participate in the Hajj fully, all the other Muslims in the world join them by celebrating `Eid Al-Adha, or Festival of Sacrifice. On 10 Dhul-Hijjah, Muslims around the world wear their nicest clothes and attend a special Prayer gathering in the morning. This is followed by a short sermon, after which everyone stands up to hug and greet one another. The traditional `Eid greeting is "`Eid Mubarak," which means "Holiday Blessings." Next, people visit each other's homes and partake in festive meals with special dishes, beverages, and desserts. Children receive gifts and sweets on this joyous occasion.

In addition, like the pilgrims in Makkah, those Muslims who can afford to do so offer domestic animals, usually sheep, as a symbol of Abraham's sacrifice. The meat is distributed to family, friends, and to the poor and needy.

`Eid Al-Adha is a major religious event in the lives of Muslims. Usually, communities celebrate this occasion over a period of several days.

Excerpted with slight modifications from the Council of Islamic Education.

Various Aspects of Hajj

Hajj literally means to travel (towards God) and it also means an effort to dominate something (the self, in this connection). Conventionally this term is translated as "pilgrimage," although this far from gives the exact significance of the word Hajj. This is the third of the religious duties of a Muslim. It is obligatory on every adult, man or woman, to go once in his or her lifetime to Makkah in order to perform there the great effort to train himself or herself to comply with the commands of Allah and submit



willingly to His Will. Those who do not possess the material means of travel are exempted from it. But which Muslim would not collect, little by little, the necessary amount for being able one day to visit the center of his or her religion, the Ka`bah, the House of Allah? The Qur'an (3:96) does not exaggerate when it says that this is the oldest house in the world dedicated by mankind to Allah and to the cult of monotheism. If one were to think only of Ibrahim (Abraham-peace and blessings be upon him)-who, according to the Islamic tradition, was but the restorer of the edifice erected originally by Adam-it would still be older than the temple of Jerusalem constructed by Sulayman (Solomon). No other place of worship older than the Ka`bah of Makkah is known to be still functioning.

The Rites of Hajj

At the borders of the sacred territory around Makkah, the pilgrim puts off the ordinary dress and puts on by way of a religious uniform two sheets of cloth-a waist cloth and a shoulder cover-a dress required only of men, not of women. The male pilgrim is bare-headed. The pilgrim tries to forget him- or herself during the several days of the Hajj. He or she goes to `Arafat in the suburbs of Makkah to pass there the day in meditation. Towards evening, the pilgrim returns, passes the night at Muzdalifah, and early next morning arrives in Mina, which is on the outskirts of Makkah. There the pilgrim passes three days, during which he or she symbolically stones Satan every morning, sacrifices a goat or other animal, and pays a short visit to the Ka`bah to perform the ritual sevenfold circumambulation and running between the hills of Safa and Marwah in front of the Ka`bah.

The Symbolic Background

When coming down from Paradise, Adam and Eve were separated and lost. They searched for each other, and by the grace of Allah met together at `Arafat. In gratitude to Allah, the descendants of Adam and Eve turn to Him, and make an effort to devote themselves wholly to Him with a view to entreat His pardon for their shortcomings in the past and His help for the future.

The Stoning of Satan

When Ibrahim claimed to love Allah above everything else, Allah demanded of him as a proof the immolation of his beloved son. To add to this trial, Satan went first to Ibrahim to dissuade him from his resolution-and they say that this happened at Mina-but Ibrahim chased Satan away by pelting stones at him. Then Satan went to Hajar and, lastly, to Isma`il himself, and each of them did the same. So the pilgrim repeats the acts symbolically and resolves to fight diabolic temptation.

Circumambulation (Tawaf)

The visit of the House of Allah is self-explanatory. To give evidence of obedience, the pilgrim goes there with respect and in humility. It is a very old custom to circumambulate a thing to show one's readiness to sacrifice one's self for the object of devotion, care, and love. It is like mounting the guard.

The Black Stone

The Black Stone (Al-Hajar Al-Aswad) requires a particular mention on account of the many misunderstandings on its score. It is not a meteorite, but a black stone. Its practical importance

is to show the starting point of the circumambulation, and by its color it is conspicuous in the building. Secondly, this stone is not worshiped, nor do Muslims even prostrate in the direction of this stone, prostration being done towards any and every part of the building of the Ka`bah. It may be recalled that when the Qaramitah ravaged Makkah in 318 a.h./930 c.e., they carried the Black Stone to their country as booty and it remained there for 21 long years. In the course of this absence of the Black Stone, no Muslim turned to the place where it was kept (in `Uman), but continued to turn towards the Ka`bah in Makkah. Even the building of the Ka`bah is not essential: if it is demolished, for instance for repairs and new construction, Muslims turn to the same spot, whether the Ka`bah with its Black Stone is there or not. As said, the practical importance of the Black Stone is that it indicates the point from which the circumambulation begins and at which it ends; but it has a symbolical significance, too. In the Hadith, the Prophet has named it the "right hand of Allah" (*yamin Allah*) and for a purpose. In fact one poses there one's hand to conclude the pact, and Allah obtains there our pact of allegiance and submission. In the Qur'anic terminology, Allah is the king, and He has not only His treasures and His armies, but also His realm; in the realm there is a metropolis (Umm Al-Qura, i.e., Makkah), and in the metropolis there is, naturally, a palace (Bayt Allah, House of Allah). If a subject wants to testify to his or her loyalty, he or she has to go to the royal palace and personally conclude the pact of allegiance. The right hand of the invisible Allah must be visible symbolically. And that is the Al-Hajar Al-Aswad, the Black Stone in the Ka`bah.

Running between Safa and Marwah

As to the act of covering the ground between Safa and Marwah seven times, it is related that when Ibrahim left his wife Hajar and the suckling Isma`il in the desolate and uninhabited site of Makkah, the provision of water was soon exhausted. So Hajar ran hither and thither, driven by maternal affection, to search for some water for the thirst-stricken baby. Then the spring Zamzam gushed forth. So the pilgrim repeats this act in the same place where Hajar did it, to pay homage to maternal love and to give thanks for the mercy of Allah.

Social Aspects

The social aspect is not less striking. The world brotherhood of Muslims manifests itself there in the most vivid manner. The believers, without distinction of race, language, birthplace or even class, feel the obligation to go there and to mix with one another in a spirit of fraternal equality. They camp together in the desert and perform their religious duties in common. For several days, at fixed hours, they march, make a halt, pass the night under tents or in bivouac—all this, to a greater extent than the five daily Prayers—trains the soldier of Allah for a life of discipline.

The Last Sermon

When the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) performed his own Hajj, a few months before his demise, he then uttered from above the Mount of Mercy (Jabal Ar-Rahmah) a sermon which constitutes the Charter of Humanity in Islam. Some 140,000 Muslims came that year from all parts of Arabia to listen to this testament of their Prophet, the main points of which are as follows:

- (1) the basic elements of Islam, viz., belief in the One God, Allah, with no icons or other material representation;
- (ii) equality of all Muslims without discrimination on account of race or class, and there being no superiority to one over any other except by the individual excellence in the matter of piety and fear of Allah;
- (iii) sacrosanct character of the three fundamental rights of each and every human being concerning his or her person, property, and honor;
- (iv) prohibition of transactions involving interest, large or small;
- (v) prohibition of vendetta and private justice; obligation of treating the womenfolk well;
- (vi) constant redistribution and circulation of the private wealth to avoid accumulation in the hands of a few (by means of the law of obligatory inheritance, restrictions on wills and prohibition of interest, etc.);

(vii) emphatic restatement that the Divine Revelation alone should be the source of law for our conduct in all walks of life.

The pilgrims are made to hear this same sermon every year [on the Day of `Arafat, 9 Dhul-Hijjah] as it is recited from the top of this same sacred Mount of Mercy, at `Arafat.

Spiritual and Temporal Aspects

There is a reason to believe that a pre-Islamic practice was continued, at least in the early generations of Muslims, during the Hajj festivities: Profiting by the occasion provided by such a vast assembly, an annual literary congress was organized in which poets "published" their new compositions, orators made harangues before the spell-struck masses to demonstrate their talents, professional wrestlers fascinated the spectators, and traders brought merchandise of all sorts. That happened in the near-by `Ukaz. Caliph `Umar gave it a most salutary administrative character by holding the sessions of an appeal court against his governors and commanders, as also of public consultation on important projects in view. Let us recall once again that, in Islam, the sacred and the profane, the spiritual and the temporal co-exist in harmonious collaboration.

Ibrahim (Abraham)

Description of Abraham and his Family

Some of the People of the Book stated that his name was Abraham Ibn Tarikh, Ibn Nahur, Ibn Sarough, Ibn Raghu, Ibn Phaligh, Ibn Aher, Ibn Shalih, Ibn Arfghshand, Ibn Sam, Ibn Noah. They said that when Tarikh was seventy five years old, he had Abraham, Nahor (Nohour) and Haran. Haran had a son named Lot (Lut). They also said that Abraham was the middle child and that Haran died in the lifetime of his father in the land where he was born, the land of the Chaldeans (Al-Kaldanieen), also known as Babylonia. At that time some people worshipped idols of stone and wood; others worshipped the planets, stars, sun and moon; still others worshipped their kings and rulers.

Abraham was born into that atmosphere, into a typical family of that ancient time. The head of the family was not even an ordinary idolater, but was one who totally rejected Allah and who used to make the idols with his own hands. Some traditions claimed that Abraham's father died before his birth and that he was raised by an uncle whom Abraham called father. Other traditions said that his father was alive and was named Azer.

Into that family Abraham was born, destined to stand against his own family, against the entire system of his community. In brief, he stood against all kinds of polytheism.

Abraham's Childhood

He was endowed with spiritual understanding from an early age. Allah enlightened his heart and mind and gave him wisdom from childhood. Allah the Almighty stated: And indeed We bestowed aforetime on Abraham his (portion of) guidance, and We were Well-Acquainted with him (as to his Belief in the Oneness of Allah, etc.). Surah 21: 51

During his early childhood Abraham realized that his father made strange statues. One day, he asked him about what it was he made. His father replied that he made statues of gods. Abraham was astonished and he spontaneously rejected the idea. Being a child, he played with such statues, sitting on their backs as people sit on the backs of donkeys and mules.

One day, his father saw him riding the statue of Mardukh and he became furious. He ordered his son not to play with it again.

Abraham asked: "What is this statue, father? It has big ears, bigger than ours."

His father answered: "It is Mardukh, the god of gods, son! These big ears show his deep knowledge."

This made Abraham laugh. He was only seven years old at that time.

Abraham's Hatred for Idols

Years passed and Abraham grew. Since his childhood his heart had been full of hatred for these idols. He could not understand how a sane person could make a statue and then worship what he had made. He noticed that these idols did not eat, drink, or talk, and that they could not even turn themselves right-side-up if someone turned them up-side down. How, then, could people believe that such statues could harm or benefit them?

Abraham's people had a big temple full of idols, in the middle of which was a niche accommodating the biggest gods which were of different kinds, qualities, and shapes. Abraham, who used to go to the temple with his father when he was a child, greatly despised all that wood and stone. What surprised him was the way his people behaved when they entered the temple: they bowed and started to cry, begging and imploring their gods for help as if the idols could hear or understand these requests!

At first, such a sight seemed funny to Abraham, but later he began to feel angry. Was it not astonishing that all those people could be deceived? What added to the problem was that his father wanted him to be a priest when he was grown. He wanted nothing more from his son than that he revere those statues, yet Abraham never stopped displaying his hatred and disdain of them.

Abraham Discovers Allah

One night Abraham left his house to go to a mountain. He walked alone in the dark until he chose a cave in the mountain, where he sat resting his back against its wall. He looked at the sky. He had hardly seen it when he remembered that he was looking at planets and stars which were worshipped by some people on earth. His young heart was filled with tremendous pain. He

considered what was beyond the moon, the stars and the planets (i.e. Allah) and was astonished that these celestial bodies were worshipped by men when they had been created to worship and obey their Creator, appearing and disappearing at His command.

Therefore, Abraham addressed his people who worshipped celestial bodies, as Almighty Allah revealed: Thus did We show Abraham the kingdom of the heavens and the earth that he be one of those who have Faith with certainty. When the night covered him over with darkness he saw a star. He said: "This is my lord." But when it set, he said: "I like not those that set." When he saw the moon rising up he said: "This is my lord." But when it set he said: "Unless my Lord guides me, I shall surely be among the erring people." When he saw the sun rising up, he said: "This is my lord. This is greater." But when it set, he said: "O my people! I am indeed free from all that you join as partners in worship with Allah. Verily, I have turned my face towards Him Who has created the heavens and the earth Hanifan (Islamic Monotheism, i.e., worshipping none but Allah Alone) and I am not of Al-Mushrikeen (those who worship others besides Allah)." Surah 6: 75-79

Abraham Reasons with Celestial Worshipper

His people disputed with him. He said: "Do you dispute with me concerning Allah while He has guided me and I fear not those whom you associate with Allah in worship. (Nothing can happen to me) except when my Lord (Allah) wills something. My Lord comprehends in His Knowledge all things. Will you not then remember?"

"And how should I fear those whom you associate in worship with Allah (though they can neither benefit nor harm), while you fear not that you have joined in worship with Allah things for which He has not sent down to you any authority. (So) which of the two parties has more right to be in security? If you but know."

It is those who believe (in the Oneness of Allah and worship none but Him Alone) and confuse not their belief with Zulm (wrong, i.e., by worshipping others besides Allah), for them (only) there is security and they are the guided. And that was Our Proof which We gave Abraham against his people. We raise whom We will in degrees. Certainly your Lord is All-Wise, All-Knowing. Surah 7: 80-83

In that debate, Abraham clarified to his people that these celestial bodies do not serve as deities and cannot be worshipped as partners with Allah the Almighty. Indeed, these bodies are created things, fashioned, controlled, managed and made to serve. They appear sometimes and disappear at others, going out of sight from our world. However, Allah the Almighty does not lose sight of anything, and nothing can be hidden from Him. He is without end, everlasting without disappearance. There is no other deity but Allah.

Abraham made clear to them, first, that the celestial bodies are unworthy of worship and, second, that they are among the signs of Allah. Almighty Allah commanded: And from among His Signs are the night and the day, and the sun and the moon. Prostrate not to the sun nor to the moon, but prostrate to Allah Who created them, if you (really) worship Him. Surah 41: 37

The Celestial Worshipper's Arguments

Abraham's reasoning helped to reveal the truth, and then the conflict between him and his people began, for the worshipers of the stars and planets did not stand mute. They began arguing and threatening Abraham.

Abraham replied: "Do you dispute with me concerning Allah while He has guided me, and I fear not those whom you associate with Allah in worship. (Nothing can happen to me) except when my Lord (Allah) wills something. My Lord comprehends in His Knowledge all things. Will you not then remember? And how should I fear those whom you associate in worship with Allah (though they can neither benefit nor harm), while you fear not that you have joined in worship with Allah things for which He has not sent down to you any authority. (So) which of the two parties has more right to be in security? . . . if you but know! It is those who believe (in the oneness of Allah and worship none but Him Alone) and confuse not their belief with Zulm (wrong i.e. by worshipping others besides Allah), for them (only) there is security and they are the guided." Surah 6: 80-82

The curtains are drawn on the first category of people, those who were worshipping celestial bodies. The next situation reveals the second group, those who were practicing idolatry.

Abraham Reasons with the Idolaters - Surah 21

Allah gave Abraham the reasoning he needed the first time and every time he argued with his people. Almighty Allah declared: And that was Our Proof which We gave Abraham against his

people. We raise whom We will in degrees. Certainly your Lord is All-Wise, All-Knowing. Surah 6: 83

Abraham did his best to make his people heedful to the belief in the oneness of Almighty Allah and to the worship of Him alone. He bade them to firmly renounce the worship of idols. He said to his father and his people: "What are these images, to which you are devoted?" They said "We found our fathers worshipping them." He said: "Indeed you and your fathers have been in manifest error." They said: "Have you brought us the truth, or are you one of those who play about?" He said: "Nay, your Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth, Who created them and of that I am one of the witnesses." Surah 21: 52-56

Abraham reasons with his Father

All was finished between Abraham and his people and the struggle began. The most amazed and furious was his father (or his uncle who had raised him), for, as it is well known, he not only worshipped idols but sculptured and sold them as well. Abraham felt that it was his duty as a good son to advise his father against this evil so that he could be saved from Allah's punishment. Being a wise son, he did not make his father feel foolish, nor did he openly laugh at his conduct. He told him that he loved him, thereby hoping to generate fatherly love. Then he gently asked him why he worshipped lifeless idols who could not hear, see, or protect him. Before his father could become angry he hastily added: "O my father! Verily! There has come to me of knowledge that which came not unto you. So follow me. I will guide you to a Straight Path. O my father! Worship not Satan. Verily! Satan has been a rebel against the Most Beneficent (Allah). O my father! Verily! I fear lest a torment from the Most Beneficent (Allah) overtake you, so that you become a companion of Satan (in the Hell-Fire)."

He (the father) said: "Do you reject my gods, O Abraham? If you stop not (this), I will indeed stone you. So get away from me safely before I punish you." Abraham said: "Peace be on you! I will ask Forgiveness of my Lord for you. Verily! He is unto me, Ever Most Gracious. And I shall turn away from you and from those whom you invoke besides Allah. Surah 19: 43-48

Abraham debates with the Idolaters

His father's harsh treatment did not stop Abraham from delivering the message of truth. Angry and sad to see people prostrate before idols, he was determined to stamp out these practices and went to the town to debate with the people, knowing full well that he might suffer harm.

Like a wise doctor searching for the cause of a sickness so as to prescribe the proper cure, or like a judge who questions the accused sharply so that he might detect the truth, Abraham asked them: "Do the idols see you when you prostrate before them? Do they benefit you in any way?" They quickly tried to defend their beliefs. They argued that they knew their idols were lifeless but that their forefathers had worshipped them; to them this was proof enough for their belief.

Abraham explained that their forefathers had been wrong. This angered them and they retorted: "Are you condemning our gods and our forefathers? Or are you just joking?"

Abraham showed no fear as he replied: "I am serious. I come to you with a true religion. I have been sent with guidance from our Lord Who alone is worthy of worship, Who is the Creator of the heavens and the earth, and Who regulates all affairs of life, unlike the dumb idols which are just stone and wood."

To convince them that the idols could not harm him, he challenged: "I have already condemned them; if they had any power they would have harmed me by now!"

Abraham reasons with the Idolaters, Second Time

Almighty Allah recounted: And recite to them the story of Abraham. When he said to his father and his people: "What do you worship?" They said: "We worship idols, and to them we are ever devoted." He said: "Do they hear you, when you call (on them)? Or do they benefit you or do they harm (you)?" They said: "Nay, but we found our fathers doing so."

He said: "Do you observe that which you been worshipping, - You and your ancient fathers? - Verily! They are enemies to me, save the Lord of the Alamin (mankind, jinn, and all that exists); Who has created me, and it is He Who guides me; and it is He Who feeds me and gives me to drink. And when I am ill, it is He who cures me; and Who will cause me to die and then will bring me to life (again); and Who, I hope will forgive me my faults on the Day of Recompense, (the Day of Resurrection)." Surah 26: 69-82

In another surah The Almighty revealed: And (remember) Abraham when he said to his people: "Worship Allah (Alone), and fear Him, that is better for you if you did but know. You worship besides Allah only idols, and you only invent falsehood. Verily, those whom you worship besides Allah have no power to give you provision, so seek your provision from Allah (Alone), and worship Him (Alone), and be grateful to Him. To Him (Alone) you will be brought back. And if you deny, then nations before you have denied (their Messengers). And the duty of the Messenger is only to convey (the Message) plainly."

Say: "Travel in the land and see how (Allah) originated creation, and then Allah will bring forth (resurrect) the creation of the Hereafter (i.e., resurrection after death). Verily, Allah is Able to do all things."

He punishes whom He wills, and shows mercy to whom He wills, and to Him you will be returned. And you cannot escape in the earth or in the heaven. And besides Allah you have neither any Wali (Protector or Guardian) nor any Helper. And those who disbelieve in the Ayat (proofs, evidences, verses, lessons, signs, revelations, etc.) of Allah and the Meeting with Him, - it is they who have no hope of My Mercy, and it is they who will have a painful torment.

Abraham Breaks the Idols

He explained to them the beauty of Allah's creation, His power and wisdom. Idol worship is detested by Allah, for Allah is the Lord of the universe Who created mankind, guided him, provided him with food and drink, and cured him when he was sick, and Who will cause him to die and be raised up again. It was He to Whom Abraham prayed and Who would forgive his sins on the Day of Judgment. However, they would not give up but clung fast to idolatry.

Abraham left his father's house and abandoned his people and what they worshipped. He decided to do something about their state of disbelief, but did not reveal it. He knew that there was going to be a great celebration on the other bank of the river which would be attended by all the people. Abraham waited until the city was empty, then came out cautiously, directing his steps towards the temple. The streets leading to it were empty and the temple itself was deserted, for the priests had also gone to the festival outside the city.

Abraham went there carrying a sharp ax. He looked at the stone and wood statues of the gods and at the food laid in front of them as offerings. He approached one of the statues and asked: The food in front of you is getting cold. Why don't you eat?" The statue kept silent and rigid.

Abraham asked the other statues around him: "Will you not eat (of the offering before you)?"

Surah 37: 91

He was mocking them for he knew they would not eat. He once again asked then: "What is the matter with you that you do speak not?" Surah 37: 92

He then raised his ax and started smashing the false gods worshipped by the people. He destroyed them all except one, on whose neck he hung the ax. After this his anger subsided and he felt at peace. He left the temple. He had fulfilled his vow to show his people a practical proof of their foolishness in worshipping something other than Allah.

The Idolaters Questions Abraham

When the people returned, they were shocked to see their gods smashed to pieces, lying scattered all over the temple. They began to guess who had done that to their idols, and Abraham's name came to their minds.

Allah the Almighty said: They said: "Who has done this to our aliah (gods)? He must indeed be one of the wrongdoers." They said: "We heard a young man talking (against) them who is called Abraham." They said: "Then bring him before the eyes of the people, that they may testify."

They said: "Are you the one who has done this to our gods, O Abraham?" (Abraham) said: "Nay, this one, the biggest of them (idols) did it. Ask them, if they can speak!"

So they turned to themselves and said: "Verily, you are the Zalimun (polytheists and wrongdoers)." Then they turned to themselves (their first thought and said). "Indeed you (Abraham) know well that these (idols) speak not!" (Abraham) said: "Do you then worship besides Allah, things that can neither profit you, nor harm you? Fie upon you, and upon that which you worship besides Allah! Have you then no sense?" Surah 21: 59-67

Furious, they demanded that Abraham be arrested and tried. Abraham did not resist. This was precisely what he had been aiming for, so that he could show them up in public for their foolish beliefs.

At the trial they asked him if he was responsible for breaking the idols. Smiling, he told them to ask the biggest idol, which was still whole. He told them that he must be the culprit! They replied

that he knew well that the idol could not speak or move, which gave Abraham the chance to prove the foolishness of worshipping these lifeless objects.

They then realized the senselessness of their beliefs; however, their arrogance would not allow them to admit their foolishness. All they could do was use their power of authority - as tyrants usually do - to punish Abraham. They kept him in chains and planned their revenge.

The Idolaters Try to burn Abraham

Anger was burning in their hearts. They decided to throw Abraham into the biggest fire they could build. All the citizens were ordered to gather wood as a service to their gods. Ignorant, sick women vowed that if they were cured they would donate so much wood to burn Abraham. For several days they collected fuel.

They dug a deep pit, filled it with firewood and ignited it. They brought a catapult with which to cast Abraham into the fire. Abraham was put on the catapult, his hands and feet tied. The fire was ready with its flames reaching the sky. The people stood away from the pit because of the great heat. Then the chief priest gave his order to cast Abraham into the fire.

The angel Gabriel came near Abraham's head and asked him: "O Abraham, do you wish for anything?" Abraham replied: "Nothing from you."

The catapult was shot, and Abraham was cast into the fire, but his descent into the blaze was as a descent on steps in a cool garden. The flames were still there, but they did not burn, for Allah the Almighty had issued His command: "O fire! Be you coolness and safety for Abraham." Surah 21: 69

The fire submitted to the will of Allah, becoming cool and safe for Abraham. It only burned his bonds, and he sat in the midst of the fire as if he were sitting in a garden. He glorified and praised Allah the Almighty, with a heart that contained only his love for Allah. There was not any vacant space therein for fear, awe, or worry. It was filled with love only.

Fear and awe were dead, and the fire was turned into coolness, making the air pleasant. Those who love Allah as Abraham did do not fear.

The Faith of the Believers

Almighty Allah declared: Those (i.e., believers) unto whom the people (hypocrites) said: "Verily, the people (pagans) have gathered against you (a great army), therefore, fear them." But it (only) increased them in Faith, and they said: 'Allah (Alone) is Sufficient for us, and He is the Best Disposer of affairs (for us)."

So they returned with Grace and Bounty from Allah. No harm touched them; and they followed the good Pleasure of Allah. And Allah is the Owner of Great Bounty. It is only Satan that suggests to you the fear of his Auliya supporters and friends (polytheists, disbelievers in the Oneness of Allah and in His Messenger Muhammad), so fear them not, but fear Me, if you are (true) believers." Surah 3: 173-175

The People's reaction to the Fire

The throng, the chiefs, and the priests sat watching the fire from a distance. It was burning their faces and nearly suffocating them. It kept burning for such a long time that the disbelievers thought it would never be extinguished.

When it did burn out, they were greatly amazed to find Abraham coming out of the pit untouched by the fire. Their faces were black from the smoke, but his was bright with the light and grace of Allah. The raging fire had become cool for Abraham and had only charred the ropes which held him. He walked out of the fire as if he were walking out of a garden. Cries of astonishment were heard from the heathens. They wanted to harm him, but We made them the worst losers. Surah 21:70

This miracle shamed the tyrants, but it did not cool the flame of anger in their hearts. However, after this event many of the people followed Abraham, although some kept their belief a secret for fear of harm or death at the hands of the rulers.

Abraham's Dialogue with Namrud

Abraham had established a definite reasoning against idolaters. Nothing was left for him except to reason against the people who proclaimed themselves gods.

When the king, Namrud, heard of Abraham's safe exit from the fire he became very angry. He feared that the status of godhead he had proclaimed for himself was now challenged by an ordinary human being. He summoned Abraham to the palace and held a dialogue with him, which

Allah the Almighty recounted: Have you not thought about him who disputed with Abraham about his Lord (Allah), because Allah had given him the kingdom? When Abraham said (to him). 'My Lord (Allah) is He Who gives life and causes death.' He said: "I give life and cause death." Abraham said: "Verily! Allah causes the sun to rise from the east; then cause it you to rise from the west." So the disbeliever was utterly defeated. And Allah guides not the people who are Zalimeen (wrongdoers, etc.). Surah 2: 258

Abraham Emigrates

Abraham's fame spread throughout the entire kingdom. People talked about how he had been saved from the blazing fire and how he had debated with the king and left him speechless. In the meantime, Abraham continued calling people to believe in Allah, exerting a great effort to guide his people to the right path.

He tried every means to convince them. However, in spite of his love and care for his people, they felt angry and deserted him. Only one woman and one man of his people shared his belief in Allah. The woman's name was Sarah and she became his wife. The man's name was Lot (Lut), and he became a prophet.

When Abraham realized that no one else was going to believe in his call, he decided to emigrate. He left his people and traveled with his wife and Lot to a city called Ur, then to another called Haran, and then to Palestine.

Allah the Almighty told us: So Lot believed in him (Abraham's message of Islamic Monotheism). He (Abraham) said: "I will emigrate for the sake of my Lord. Verily. He is the All-Mighty, the All-Wise. Surah 29: 26

After Palestine, Abraham traveled to Egypt, calling people to believe in Allah wherever he traveled, judging fairly between people, and guiding them to truth and righteousness.

Hadith about Abraham, Sarah, and Hajar

Abu Hurairah narrated that Abraham did not tell a lie except on three occasions, twice for the sake of Allah (Exalted and Almighty) when he said: "I am sick," (when his people were holding a festival in honor of their gods, Abraham excused himself by saying he was sick; see Surah 37: 89), and when he said: "(I have not done this but) the big idol has done it." The (third was) that while Abraham and Sarah (his wife) were going (on a journey), they passed by (the territory of) a tyrant. Someone said to the tyrant: 'This man (i.e., Abraham) is accompanied by a very charming lady.' So, he sent for Abraham and asked him about Sarah saying: "Who is this lady?" Abraham said: "She is my sister."

Abraham went to Sarah and said: "O Sarah! There are no believers on the surface of the earth except you and me. This man asked me about you and I have told him that you are my sister, do not contradict my statement." The tyrant then called Sarah, and when she went to him, he tried to take hold of her with his hand, but (his hand got stiff and) he was confounded. He asked Sarah: "Pray to Allah for me, and I shall not harm you." So Sarah asked Allah to cure him and he got cured. He tried to take hold of her for the second time, but (his hand got as stiff as or stiffer than before and) he was more confounded. He again requested Sarah: "Pray to Allah for me, and I will not harm you." Sarah asked Allah again, and he became all right. He then called one of his guards (who had brought her) and said: 'You have not brought me a human being but have brought me a devil.'

The tyrant then gave Hajar as a maid servant to Sarah. Sarah came back (to Abraham) while he was praying. Abraham, gesturing with his hand, asked: "What has happened?" She replied: "Allah has spoiled the evil plot of the infidel (or immoral person) and gave me Hajar for service." Abu Hurairah then addressed his listeners saying: 'That (Hajar) was your mother, O Bani Ma-is-Sama (i.e., the Arab, the descendants of Ishmael, Hajar's son).'

Hajar and Sarah

Abraham's wife Sarah was sterile. She had been given an Egyptian woman, Hajar, as a servant. Abraham had aged, and his hair was gray after many years spent in calling people to Allah. Sarah thought that she and Abraham were lonely because she could not have a child. Therefore, she offered her husband her servant Hajar in marriage. Hajar gave birth to her first son Ishmael (Ismail) when Abraham was an old man.

Abraham Questions Resurrection

Abraham lived on earth worshipping Allah and calling people to monotheism, but he was journeying to Allah, knowing that his days on earth were limited and that they would be followed by death, and finally, resurrection. The knowledge of life after death filled Abraham with peace, love, and certitude.

One day, he begged Allah to show him how He brought the dead back to life. Allah commanded Abraham to take four birds, cut them up, mingle their body parts, divide them into four portions, and place them on top of four different hills, then call back the birds in Allah's name. Abraham did as he was told. Immediately the mingled parts of the birds separated to join their original bodies in different places, and the birds flew back to Abraham.

Almighty Allah revealed: And (remember) when Abraham said: 'My Lord! Show me how You give life to the dead.' Allah said: "Do you not believe?" Abraham said: "Yes (I believe), but to be stronger in Faith." He said: "Take four birds, then cause them to incline towards you (then slaughter them, cut them into pieces), and then put a portion of them on every hill, and call them, they will come to you in haste. And know that Allah is All-Mighty, All-Wise." Surah 2: 260

The Call of Ibrahim



By Muhammad Ash-Shareef

When Ibrahim (peace and blessings be upon him) completed the structure of the Ka`bah, Allah (Glorified be He) commanded him to call the people to Hajj. Ibrahim (peace and blessings be upon him) pleaded, "O Allah! How shall my voice reach all of those people?" Allah (Glorified be He) told him that his duty was only to give the call and it was up to Allah to make it reach the people.

Ibrahim (peace and blessings be upon him) then climbed Mount `Arafat and called out in his loudest voice, "O People! Verily Allah has prescribed upon you Hajj, so perform Hajj."

Allah (Glorified be He) revealed in the Qur'an: [And proclaim the Hajj among mankind. They will come to thee on foot and (mounted) on every camel, lean on account of journeys through deep and distant mountain highways] (Al-Hajj 22: 28)

To this very day, millions upon millions of Muslims continue to answer the call of Prophet Ibrahim (peace and blessings be upon him). Perhaps this year you will be among those who answer the call.

`Amr ibn Al-`Aas narrated: When Islam entered my heart, I went to the Messenger of Allah and said, "Give me your hand so that I may pledge allegiance to you." The Prophet spread his hand, but I withdrew mine. He said, "What is wrong `Amr?" I said, "I want to make a condition." "And what is that?" he said. I said, "That Allah will forgive me." Then the Messenger of Allah said, "Did you not know that Islam wipes out what came before it, and that *hijrah* wipes out what came before it and that Hajj wipes out what came before it!" (Reported by Muslim)

Hajj is the fifth pillar upon which Islam stands. Allah (Glorified be He) made it compulsory upon every able Muslim, male and female, to perform it at least once in a lifetime. Allah revealed: [Hajj thereto is a duty mankind owes to Allah, those who can afford the journey, but if any deny faith, Allah stands not in need of any of His creatures] (Al `Imran 3:97)

Performance of the Hajj washes away all sins. Abu Hurayrah narrated: I heard the Prophet say, "Whoever performs Hajj and does not commit any *rafath* (obscenity) or *fusooq* (transgression), he returns (free from sin) as the day his mother bore him." (Reported by Al-Bukhari)

Hajj is one of the greatest deeds a person can accomplish in his or her lifetime. Abu Hurayrah narrated: The Prophet was asked, "What deed is the best?" He said, "Faith in Allah and His Messenger." "Then what?" "Jihad for the sake of Allah." "Then what?" "Hajj mabroor, a Hajj accepted by Allah (Glorified be He)."

Abu Sha`tha' said, "I contemplated the good deeds that a person does. I found that *salah* (ritual Prayer) as well as fasting are a jihad of the body. And that *sadaqah* (charity) is a jihad of someone's wealth. But Hajj is a jihad of both body and wealth."

Hajj is the greatest jihad. `A'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) asked the Prophet (peace and blessing be upon him), "We find that jihad is the best deed; shouldn't we (women) do jihad?" The Prophet replied, "Rather the best jihad is a *Hajj mabroor*!" `A'ishah later said, "I'll never cease performing Hajj after I heard that from the Messenger of Allah." (Agreed Upon)

The *du`aa'* (supplication) of the one in Hajj will be accepted. The Prophet (peace and blessing be upon him) said, "The soldier in the path of Allah and the one who performs Hajj and the one who performs `Umrah, all are the delegation of Allah! He called them and they answered. And they asked Him, and He shall grant them (what they ask for)!" (Authentic, narrated by Ibn Majah and Ibn Hibban)

In the Islamic history books it was narrated that on the Day of `Arafat, a man from Turkmenistan stood on the plains of `Arafat in Hajj. To his left all he could see was Muslims crying and praying to Allah (Glorified be He). To his right all he could see was Muslims crying and praying to Allah (Glorified be He). Because of his native tongue, he could not imitate the lengthy prayers of the others. At this realization everything blurred in front of him. His face reddened, his eyes poured tears as he raised his hands, "O Allah! Grant me everything that they are asking for! Grant me everything that they are asking for!" And Allah (Glorified be He) accepted his *du`aa'*.

There is not a single day that the sun has risen on more beloved to Allah (Glorified be He) than the Day of `Arafat. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said, "There is no day on which Allah frees more of His slaves from Fire than the Day of `Arafat, and He verily draws near, then boasts of them before the angels, saying: 'What do they seek?'" (Reported by Muslim) And in another hadith: "Verily Allah boasts of the people of `Arafat before the people of Heaven (angels) saying: 'Look to My servants who have come to Me disheveled and dusty.'"

`Abdullah ibn Al-Mubarak narrated: I went to Sufyan ibn `Uyaynah as the Day of `Arafat was setting. He sat on his knees, his hands raised to the heavens, and tears moistened his cheeks and beard. He turned and looked at me, so I asked him, "Among the people who have gathered here for Hajj, who is in the worst state?" Sufyan ibn `Uyaynah said, "He who thinks that Allah will not forgive him."

`A'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) would see the Prophet (peace and blessing be upon him) standing in Prayer at night so much so that his feet would swell. She would ask him, "Why do you do this when Allah has forgiven all your sins, the past and anything you may do in the future?" And he would reply, "Shouldn't I be a thankful slave?"

With this example of the Prophet (peace and blessing be upon him), what should our attitude be when we hear of Paradise and forgiveness of sin for those who perform Hajj? Does it mean that after Hajj we fall back into all the disobedience that we went to Hajj with? Does it mean that we are promised Jannah no matter what sin we do after Hajj? Many people think this to be the case and it is a very dangerous presumption.

You will find in many of the hadith regarding the virtue of Hajj the term Hajj *mabroor*. Do you know what *mabroor* means? It means an accepted Hajj. A *mabroor* Hajj is one in which Allah (Glorified be He) is not disobeyed during or after. Others have said that a Hajj *mabroor* is one that is accepted, and the sign of its acceptance is that a person will go back in a better state than when he came, and that he will discontinue the sins that were between him and Allah (Glorified be He).

I once saw a group of Hajjis with all of their paraphernalia. Plastered on their t-shirts and hats was "Hajj Mabroor 1997!" I remembered then when Ibn `Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) was on his deathbed and his son reminded him of all the good deeds that he did with the Prophet (peace and blessing be upon him) and the Companions. He told him, "Quiet! Don't you know whom Allah accepts from? Verily Allah only accepts from the God-Fearing (*al-muttaqun*)."

When `Ali ibn Al-Husayn (may Allah be pleased with him) wore his ihram and sat upright on his camel in preparation for the journey to Makkah, his face changed color, his skin shivered, and

he cried, unable to say the Talbiyyah, "Labbayk, Allahumma, labbayk..." Someone asked him, "What's wrong?" And he replied, "I'm afraid that when I say it, it will be replied, 'Laa labbayka wa laa sa`dayk' (May you never have come and may you not have happiness)."

With that spirit, let us march forward in the search of the mercy of Allah (Glorified be He) and His forgiveness, to the first house of Allah (Glorified be He) on earth, to Hajj.

You may have heard of the Jamarat crowd in which 600 people died in the Hajj of 1996. It was Zhuhr time that it happened and I had been sitting there from the early morning waiting for noon to throw my pebbles. About 30 minutes before Zhuhr, a wave of people like dominoes toppled over us. I had said to myself earlier that if I were ever in an emergency situation I would jump up on a bus or anything high to escape the crowd. Now, I saw people doing just that and I knew this was the situation that I had feared. My friend said, "What shall we do?" With a glance over the sea of people I knew there was no way we could walk opposite of the crowd and so I replied, "Go and throw our Jamarat."

People died that day. Ambulance sirens were blaring and helicopters were thundering above. In the pain and exhaustion, losing my friend, I sat leaning, my back on a sister and her back on me. We did not even realize what we were doing. I tasted what the Prophet (peace and blessing be upon him) meant when he said that on the Day of Judgment people would be naked and `A'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) asked him, "Won't the men and women look at each other?" And he replied, "`A'ishah, the issue is more severe than that."

I saw three men looking anxiously for their friend and I just sat staring at them. All of a sudden their faces exploded in happiness, "Ahmad! Ahmad!" they called, and one of them could not handle the happiness and he cried and cried.

Limping back to the Ka`bah, I found a place with shady trees and a carpeted patio leading to a villa. The owner, an older man, stood watching as all the people walked by. And I sat watching him.

People would come up to him and beg for a glass of water. He would jump and bring them the coldest water he had. They would pray from the bottom of their hearts for him. I knew what kind of du`aa' that was because I was feeling the same thirst that they all felt. Whenever he saw someone sick, he would spring out to the road and invite him in, giving him a bed and food to relax him.

I was shy at first, but the thirst overcame me and I asked him for water. I had been on that patio for some time and when I asked him, he realized he had not offered me anything. He ran inside, and in addition to the water, he brought me packets of fruit juice. I thought about this man as I made my way back to the Ka`bah. If a human was so merciful to these people who had come for Hajj, these people who had come for no other reason than to say "Laa ilaha illa Allah," how merciful was Allah (Glorified be He) going to be to these Hajjis?

Indeed, the Prophet said, "And there is no reward for an accepted Hajj...except Jannah!"

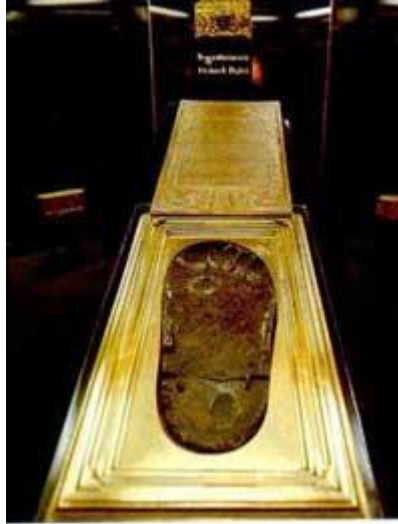
The Story of Ibrahim's Sacrifice*

Brothers and Sisters, all of us know the story of Ibrahim's sacrifice and we say that it was a test by Allah (Glorified be He). But do we really understand what Ibrahim went through? Do we appreciate what it was like to be thought what happened? Why is he father of faith? What was it that

Ibrahim (peace and blessings be the Qur'an with the title of friend of Allah). In the Qur'an Ibrahim for (an intimate) friend]

He is also described in the was indeed a model. Devoutly faith, and he joined not gods

Ibrahim was born among the of Chaldea, in the home of Azar, tribe. Ibrahim was among the them, like a spring of *tawheed* swamp of *shirk* (polytheism). said to his father Azar: Do you and your people in manifest error?] (Al-An'am 6:74).



Ibrahim? Can we grasp in it that we regard Ibrahim as the he achieved?

upon him) is distinguished in Khaleel Allah (the intimate Allah says: [For Allah did take (An-Nisa' 4:125).

Qur'an as a model: [Ibrahim obedient to Allah, and true in with Allah] (An-Nahl 16: 120).

star- and idol-worshiping people his father, the idol-maker of the *kuffar* (unbelievers), but not of (monotheism) arising out of the The Qur'an tells us [Lo! Ibrahim take idols for God? For I see you

From the revolt in the house of Azar, his father, Ibrahim went on to challenge the polytheism of his people. Indeed Ibrahim is known as history's great idol-smasher, as the founder of monotheism, and as the crusher of ignorance.

There are numerous verses in the Qur'an that describe how Ibrahim argued against idol worshipers, his rational arguments against skeptics and those who worshiped celestial bodies, how he dealt with unbelievers, how he preached to his people. For instance, Allah says: [Hast thou not turned thy vision to one who disputed with Abraham about his Lord, because God granted him power? Abraham said: "My Lord is He who giveth life and death." He said: "I give life and death." Said Abraham: "But it is God that causeth the sun to rise from the East: Do then cause it to rise from the West." Thus was he confounded who (in arrogance) rejected Faith. Nor doth God give guidance to a people unjust." (Al-Baqarah 2: 258)

In another example: [We bestowed aforetime on Ibrahim his rectitude of conduct, and well were We acquainted with him. Behold! he said to his father and his people, "What are these images to which ye are (so assiduously) devoted?" They said, "We found our fathers worshiping them." He said, "Indeed ye have been in manifest error-ye and your fathers." They said, "Have you brought us the Truth, or are you one of those who jest?" He said, "Nay, your Lord is the Lord of heavens and the earth, He who created them (from nothing): I am a witness to this (truth). And by God, I have a plan for your idols-after ye go away and turn your backs." So he broke them to pieces, (all) but the biggest of them, that they might turn (and address themselves) to it. They said, "Who has done this to our gods? He must indeed be some man of impiety!" They said, "We heard a youth talk of them: he is called Ibrahim." They said, "Then bring him before the eyes of the people, that they may bear witness." They said, "Art thou the one that did this with our gods, O Ibrahim?" He said, "Nay, this was done by-This is their biggest one! Ask them, if they speak intelligently!" So they turned to themselves and said, "Surely ye are the ones in the wrong!" Then were they confounded with shame; (they said:) "Thou knowest full well that these idols do not speak!" (Ibrahim) said, "Do ye then worship, besides God, things that can neither be of any good to you nor do you harm? Fie upon you, and upon the things that ye worship besides God! Have ye no sense?" They said, "Burn him and protect your gods, if ye do (anything at all)!" (Al-Anbiya' 21: 51-68)

As usual, when falsehood is defeated on intellectual grounds, it resorts to plotting and oppression. The response of his people to his *da'wah* is given in Surat Al-Ankabut: [So

naught was the answer of (Ibrahim's) people except that they said: Slay him or burn him] (Al-`Ankabut 29: 24). Ibrahim could have given up his message and his beliefs to save himself from the fire of Nimrod. But he chose martyrdom. He chose to die for Allah's message to live. He chose to step into the fire of ignorance and tyranny in order to save humanity from the fire of ignorance and tyranny. So he was cast into the fire.

But Allah had a different plan for Ibrahim and he was unhurt, by the grace of Allah (Glorified be He): [But Allah did save him from the fire. Verily in this are signs for people who believe] (Al-`Ankabut 29: 24). Allah also says: [We said, "O fire! Be cool and a means of safety for Ibrahim" (al-Anbiya' 21: 69). His miracle did not refrain the idol worshipers from continuing for very long years their plots, persecution, abuse, cruelty, and isolation against Ibrahim; but he remained uncompromising, unshakable in his beliefs, patient in his suffering, gentle in his manners until he made his *hijrah* (immigration) to the lands of Aram and Canaan.

He left the land of his fathers to become a stranger in the land of promise.

Brothers and sisters, it was indeed a land of promise. A land where Ibrahim continued a lifetime of struggle, *da`wah*, movement, bearing alone the heavy responsibility of the mission of *tawheed* in an age of darkness, oppression, prejudice and ignorance. Ibrahim did not have children. And through-out his century of prophethood and service of Allah, as Ibrahim grew older, his desire to have a son grew stronger. The now old Prophet Ibrahim desperately longed for a son but his wife Sarah was barren.

["O my Lord! Grant me a righteous son!"] (As-Saffat 37: 100) was his call to Allah.

Against every expectation, Allah fulfilled His promise of making Ibrahim the seed of a great line of prophets, the root of the great universal religions. [So we gave him the good news of a forbearing boy] (As-Saffat 37: 101).

Allah brought mercy to the agedness, loneliness, hopelessness, and anguish of his trustworthy Messenger. For Ibrahim, Isma`il was not just a son for a sonless father; he was the end of a life of waiting, the reward of a century of suffering, the fruit of his life, the hope after despair, and the young boy of an old father.

Isma`il being the promise of future generations was in some sense the whole world for Ibrahim.

So there was joy and rejoicing in Ibrahim's house as Isma`il was quickly growing under the sun of his father's love.

But Allah decided that it was not to remain so.

Brothers and sisters, Ibrahim was to be tried once more. Ibrahim had a vision in which he was commanded by Allah to slaughter his only son.

Brothers and sisters, why should Ibrahim, whose entire life was devoted to prophethood, to jihad, to removing ignorance, to laying the foundations of *tawheed*, be tried once again?

Is it because man should not rest?

Is it because man should not be deceived by 100 years of jihad and victories?

Is it because he should not think of himself without weakness?

Is it for the fact that whatever we fix our eyes upon in this world will blind us?

And finally, is it because the higher the spiritual height we reach, the greater is the danger of falling?

Brothers and sisters, it is not possible to convey in words what it must have meant for Ibrahim to be commanded by Allah (Glorified be He) to sacrifice his only son Isma`il. The magnitude of the pain does not allow the imagination to enclose it. It inspires fear and trembling.

How could Ibrahim take his beloved son, the fruit of his life, the joy of his heart, the meaning of his living and staying, his Isma`il, and hold him on the ground, put a knife to his throat and kill him?

If it were only the slaughter of Ibrahim at the hand of Isma`il, how easy! But no! The young Isma`il must die and the old and aged Ibrahim must remain!

Ibrahim, the steel-like idol-smasher must have felt torn apart!

Within him, there must have been a war, the greatest jihad. Which war? The war between Allah and Isma`il! The difficulty of choice!

Which should Ibrahim choose?

Love of Allah or love of self?

Prophethood or fatherhood?

Loyalty to Allah or loyalty to family?

Faith or emotion?

Truth or falsehood?

Conscience or instinct?

Responsibility or pleasure?

Duty or right?

Tawheed or *shirk*?

Advancing or remaining?

To become or to be?

And finally, Allah or Isma`il?

What should Ibrahim choose?

Brothers and sisters, Ibrahim did not choose immediately. He doubted and wavered under the crushing force of pain and anguish. Only after the third vision did he finally decide to carry out Allah's command. This is reflected in the Hajj ritual of stoning the three idols representing Iblis, who tempted Ibrahim to disobey Allah.

When a truth enhances one's earthly life, most people become seekers of truth. But when a truth opposes life and leads to problems, loss, and dangers, the seekers of truth are few in number.

Iblis works wherever he finds traces of fear, weakness, doubt, despair, envy, selfishness, and even great affection towards someone or something. Iblis sometimes blows logical reasons, intellectual and religious justifications to achieve his ends.

For instance, we may imagine that, under the powerful crush of his pain and distress, Ibrahim could have used many justifications. Perhaps the meaning of *dhabh* (slaughter) is just metaphorical and means kill your ego. Perhaps Isma`il might be a general noun and not Ibrahim's son. Perhaps "slaughter Isma`il" actually means "slaughter the love of Isma`il." Ibrahim could have also tried many interpretations of his vision.

But Ibrahim Khaleel Allah, the intimate friend of Allah, had faith in Allah and he knew that Allah (Glorified be He) demanded the sacrifice. Ibrahim's conscience would make a mockery of all these logical justifications and reasons.

Ibrahim chose the love of Allah over the love of self, prophethood over fatherhood, loyalty to Allah over loyalty to family, truth over falsehood, conscience over instinct, responsibility over pleasure, duty over right, *tawheed* over *shirk*. He preferred advancing to remaining.

Ibrahim chose Allah and gave up Isma`il.

Brothers and sisters, in Mina, an amazing and frightening conversation between a father and a son took place.

Ibrahim said to Isma`il: ["O my son, I see in a vision that I offer you in sacrifice. Now see what is your view?"] (As-Saffat 37: 102)

What frightening words for a child to hear!

Isma`il could have kept silent. He could have asked Ibrahim to refrain.

But Isma`il also had faith. He submitted to Allah's will. Realizing his father's distress, Isma`il gave him these comforting words: ["O my father! Do as you are commanded. You will find me, if Allah so wills, patient and constant." (As-Saffat 37: 102)

Allahu Akbar! Allahu Akbar! Allahu Akbar!

Ibrahim consulted his son, who willingly offered himself to Allah's command. The choice of Ibrahim was sacrifice. That of Isma`il was self-sacrifice, martyrdom.

This gave Ibrahim strength. Ibrahim tied his heart to Allah, he took the Isma`il of his life in one hand and the knife of his faith in the other and he walked until he reached the place of sacrifice. Ibrahim was suffering while believing and at every moment it was possible for him to retract and turn back. Yet he laid Isma`il on the ground, putting his face away from him to give strength to his crushed soul and paralyzed hand. And so he slaughtered Isma`il. But, by Allah's grace, the knife did not cut.

Ibrahim received a sheep and was called by Allah: ["O Ibrahim! You have confirmed the Vision; thus indeed do We reward those who do right; this is indeed the manifest trial!"] (As-Saffat 37: 104-105)

Allahu Akbar! Allahu Akbar! Allahu Akbar!

Brothers and sisters, Ibrahim gained everything and kept Isma`il. This means that the God of Ibrahim is not thirsty for blood like the Aztec gods or Hindu gods were thirsty for blood.

It is the people, the servants of Allah, who are hungry, and hungry of sheep meat.

Brothers and sisters, this means that from the very beginning Allah did not want Isma`il to be slaughtered. He wanted Ibrahim to be the slaughterer of Isma`il. When he became so, the slaughter became useless.

Allah, from the beginning, wanted Isma`il to be the slaughter of Allah. And when it happened, his sacrifice became useless.

Mankind has needs but Allah has no needs. He is Self-Sufficient. Allah (Glorified be He) in His wisdom raised Ibrahim to the highest peak of sacrificing his Isma`il without sacrificing Isma`il. Allah (Glorified be He) promoted Isma`il to the highest peak of being the great sacrifice of Allah without bringing any harm to him.

This event is not about the torment and torture of mankind but about the perfection of humanity, the freedom from the prison of instinct and selfishness and about the elevation of spirit.

This momentous event also teaches us, through Ibrahim, that human life- Isma`il's, Ibrahim's, everyone's-acquires its meaning and value from Allah, the Source of Creation, and not from nature. It signifies that the good things in life, represented by Isma`il, derive their value not from the mere fact that they exist and can be valued, enjoyed, and delighted in, but from Allah, the Source of Creation Himself. Ibrahim was, in some sense, giving back Isma`il to receive him again on the proper basis.

Brothers and sisters, different people prioritize differently their loyalty to Allah, to the family, and to the nation or state. A secular mind owes absolute duty to the nation (and the family); whereas a religious conscience owes absolute duty to Allah. For a secular mind, Ibrahim was

willing to MURDER Isma`il, but for a religious conscience he was willing to SACRIFICE Isma`il. Ibrahim therefore instructs that we should owe absolute duty only to Allah and it is our relationship to Allah that ought to transcend and determine our relation to family and nation and not vice-versa.

Brothers and sisters, there still is a lot to understand and discover about this momentous event. These are only a few possible meanings. Only a few, and just possible, because as Ibrahim taught us to be less complacent and more critical about having attained faith. We should be less complacent and more critical about having attained understanding.

Brothers and sisters, the Isma`il of Ibrahim was his son. But for you, who is your Isma`il? What is it? Your degree? Your reputation? Your position? Your money? Your home? Your car? Your beloved? Your family? Your knowledge? Your title? Your dress? Your fame? Your soul? Your spirituality? Your beauty? Your strength? Your career?

How does one know?

Well, you know this yourself. One can only give its signs to you.

Whatever is in your eyes that holds the place of Isma`il in the eyes of Ibrahim!

Whatever weakens you on the way of faith!

Whatever stops you in your movement!

Whatever brings doubt to your responsibility!

Whatever has enchained your freedom!

Whatever leads you to compromise and justification!

That very thing that deafens your ears before the Message of Truth!

Whatever calls you to remain with yourself!

Whatever causes you to flee from your duty!

Whoever or whatever keeps you behind in order to remain with her, him, or it!

Brothers and sisters, these are the signs of our Isma`ils. Let us search for them in ourselves and let us slaughter them to move towards Allah (Glorified be He) and to remove the real knife from the throat of oppressed Muslims all over the world particularly in Palestine, Chechnya, Iraq and Kashmir.

Brothers and sisters, let us revolt against the heartless worshipers that we have become.

Remember our `eid is not a `eid of victory. It is the `Eid of Sacrifice (Adha).

- Excerpted with slight modifications from www.Islaam.com]

Ibrahim and Isma`il: Model for Sacrifice

* By Dr. Munir El-Kassem** Dec. 26, 2005



Hajj and `Eid Al-Adha take us back in history to the time of a 97-year-old man being asked to take the life of a 13-year-old boy. Who is that man? And who is that boy? And who is the one who is making this request? If we know who the three points in this equation are, we would have a better perspective on life and on what life is all about.

The man who was asked at 97 years of age to take the life of a 13-year-old boy is none other than the close friend of Allah, the Prophet Ibrahim (peace be upon him), the father of the prophets and messengers. And the 13-year-old boy whose life Ibrahim was asked to take is none other than his own son. Ibrahim had waited for 83 years to see him walk around him, touch him, and give him the pleasure of being a father. All of us know what that means; all of us know what it really means for your son or daughter to come and show his or her love that he or she possesses for you.

But when the boy reached the age when he was able to run and play around his father, Ibrahim went to him and said, "My darling son, I saw in my dream that I was sacrificing you." We all know that the dreams of prophets and messengers are forms of revelation from Allah Almighty. So it was the truth.

Now, who was the one who made that request? It was none other than Allah. The One Who created life had asked Ibrahim to take the life of his son away. And we know that His decree was that Isma`il's life would not be taken away, but it was a lesson for humanity to understand what life is all about.

Allah wanted Ibrahim to teach humanity a lesson. Thus, brothers and sisters, we have to understand this lesson and reflect upon it. There are two things in life that Allah Almighty made beautiful in this life. These two things are mentioned in the Qur'an more than once:

(Wealth and children are an ornament of the life of the world.) (Al-Kahf 18:46)

That is it! Wealth and children make life beautiful. Look what happened! Allah Almighty chose one individual to sacrifice one of these two things, and He did not ask any other human being to do the same. One individual was enough to sacrifice one of these two things, and that is his child, and He asked all of us to sacrifice the second one, wealth, so that by seeing how one man was able to do something which we cannot, we are able to sacrifice the second of the ornaments of life. Because Ibrahim passed the test, Allah Almighty called him an ummah (one man equal to a whole nation, a whole ummah).

One individual became an ummah. Why? Because Ibrahim passed the test of a whole ummah. He was asked to sacrifice one of the two things that are ornaments of life, and all of us have been asked to sacrifice the second. So because of that, he indeed, is an ummah in the same way that we are an ummah. He truly deserves that title:

(Lo! Abraham was an ummah, obedient to Allah.) (An-Nahl 16:120)

This is the spirit of `Eid Al-Adha. We have to sacrifice, brothers and sisters, when we are called upon to sacrifice what we really like to keep:

(Ye will not attain unto *Birr* (piety and perfect goodness) until ye spend of that which ye love.) (Aal `Imran 3:92)

If you have a lot of money and you take a thousand dollars and give it, this would not be *birr*. *Birr* is to have two dollars and to give one of the dollars away although you need the two dollars and would like to keep them for essentials. This is a sacrifice. Sacrifice is to do something that is difficult to do. This is sacrifice. It is not a sacrifice to do an easy thing and then to appear at the surface as if you did a lot. No, only Allah Almighty knows what sacrifice is all about. So, brothers and sisters, after we finish this *salah*, let's go and consider what we really need to sacrifice. Each one of us has an Isma`il in his or her life that needs to be sacrificed—each one of us!

** Based on a [Friday sermon](#) delivered by Dr. Munir El-Kassem on January 21, 2005 at the Islamic Centre of Southwest Ontario, Ontario, Canada.*

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Read Also:

- **The Great Maqam**
 - **The Well of Zamzam**
 - **The Enclosure of Isma`il**
 - **The Black Stone: In The Gospel, The Torah and The Psalms**
 - **Al-Hatim: The Most Honored Shade on Earth**
 - **Manifestations of Remorse & Repentance at Al-Multazam**
 - **Al-Baqi` : The Madinah Cemetery**
 - **The Cave of Hira`**
 - **Uhud: A Mount that the Prophet Loved**
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- **Qur'anic References to Hajj**
 - **The Blessed Days of the Year**
 - **The Making of Kiswah**
 - **A Historical Look at the Kiswah**
 - **Selection from the Book "Features of Makkah and Al-Madinah Between the Past and Present"**
 - **Zamzam Water - A Miracle**
 - **Superior Days For Righteous Deeds**

Hajj Through History

The largest gathering of humanity in any one time or place is the culminating spiritual experience for a Muslim, as well as a logistical challenge for the government of Saudi Arabia.

The Hajj has been performed by Muslims every year for the past 14 centuries. In earlier times, the Hajj was literally the journey of a lifetime, a dream for which a person spent an entire lifetime saving up the funds. The trip itself was an arduous and difficult one, often taking months or even years on horseback or on foot, through mountain terrain and desert. Gangs of bandits often attacked the routes to Makkah to extort money from the pilgrims. [And proclaim the Pilgrimage among men. They will come to thee on foot and (mounted) on every kind of camel, lean on account of journeys through deep and distant mountain highways...] (Al-Hajj 22: 27)



According to the Saudi Press Agency, as recently as 1950 the number of pilgrims during Hajj was less than 100,000. That number doubled by 1955, and in 1972 it had reached 645,000.

In 1983, the number of pilgrims coming from abroad exceeded one million for the first time. Due to the rapidly increasing numbers, in 1988 the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) passed a resolution to specify a quota of pilgrims for each country according to its population.

Today, pilgrims come from all corners of the earth. Many of their organized groups are met by air-conditioned buses, travel with experienced guides, and stay in the many 5-star hotels around Makkah. Even the rites of the pilgrimage are more comfortable, with courtyards sheltered from the sun, air-conditioned walkways, escalators to the roof of the mosque, and cool marble floors on which to pray.

The Saudi government has spent nearly \$25 billion on renovating and expanding the facilities for pilgrims. The worshipers fill all three levels of the mosque, including the roof, and still spill onto the terraces, plazas, and streets in the surrounding area.

One might wonder if all the modernity has changed the Hajj experience and made it less spiritual. Of course, those who travel today do not have the benefit of knowing what things were like before. Perhaps one type of hardship (traveling by foot in the desert heat) has been replaced by another (keeping safe and patient in the mass of people). But to a one, those who have gone for Hajj come back speechless, unable to find the words to describe their experience. "You just have to be there to understand" is the common response to questions. While the facilities and terrain may have changed in modern times, the rites of pilgrimage and the bonds of brotherhood among the pilgrims have remained the same throughout history. Where else on earth can you find millions of people, different in language, race, color, culture, but united in faith and purpose, acting with complete goodwill, discipline, generosity, and brotherhood? That is the unique Hajj experience.

Short History of the Ka`bah

Most surely the first house appointed for men is the one at Bakkah, blessed and a guidance for the worlds. In it are clear signs, the standing place of Ibrahim; and whoever enters it shall be secure; and for the sake of Allah, pilgrimage to the House is incumbent upon men, (upon) every one who can afford the journey to it, and whoever disbelieves, then surely Allah is Self-sufficient (independent) of the worlds. (Qur'an 3:96-97)



* **A Short History of the Ka`bah**

* **The Shape of the Ka`bah**

* **The Covering of the Ka`bah**

* **Prestige of the Ka`bah**

* **Trusteeship of the Ka`bah**

A Short History of the Ka`bah

It is definitely known that it was Ibrahim al-Khalil, peace and blessings be upon him, who built the Ka`bah. The residents around it at that time were his son, Isma`il, and the tribe of Jurhum (originally from Yemen). It is an almost square building whose sides face the cardinal points of the compass; the winds, no matter how strong, lose their force when they strike it - without doing it any harm.

The construction of Ibrahim stood intact, until it was rebuilt by al-'Amaliqah, and later by the tribe of Jurhum (or vice versa).

When the management of the Ka`bah came into the hands of Qusayy Ibn Kilab - an ancestor of the Prophet - in the second century before Hijrah, he demolished and rebuilt it on firm foundation, putting a roof of doom palm timber and date-palm trunk on it. He also built 'Daru 'n-Nadwah' (Council House) on one side. It was the place from where he ruled and where he held counsel with his colleagues. Then he divided various sides of the Ka`bah. Among different clans of the Quraysh and each clan built their houses at the side allotted to them; and they opened their doors towards the Ka`bah.

Five years before the start of the Prophet's mission, there came a flood which destroyed the Ka`bah's building. The Quraysh divided among themselves the various responsibilities connected with its reconstruction. They hired a Roman builder to build it and an Egyptian carpenter to help him with the woodwork. When the time came to fix the Black Stone, a dispute erupted as to which clan should be accorded the honor of putting the Black Stone in its place. Then they agreed to leave the decision to Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, who at that time was thirty-five years old, because they had full faith in his deep wisdom and sound judgment. He got his robe, and putting the Stone on it, told all the clans to hold the sides of the robe and raise it together. When the Stone reached the required height (on the eastern corner), he took it in his hands and fixed it in its proper place.

But the Quraysh found their funds exhausted. So they reduced the size on one side - as it is today; thus a part of the original foundation was left out, and that is the portion known as 'Hijr Isma`il' (the Enclosure of Isma`il).

The building remained in that condition until `Abdullah Ibn Az-Zubair established his rule over Hijaz during the reign of Yazid Ibn Mu`awiyah. Husain Ibn Numair, the commander of Yazid's army, besieged him at Makkah and struck the Ka`bah with catapult. The Ka`bah was demolished, the 'Al-Kiswah' (covering of the Ka`bah) and some roof timbers were burnt down. The siege was lifted when news came of Yazid's death. Ibn Az-Zubair decided to demolish the Ka`bah completely and rebuild it on its original foundation. He got good mortar from Yemen and constructed the new building. Hijr Isma`il was re-included in the Ka`bah; the door was

fixed at the level of the ground; another door was fixed on the opposite side, so that people might enter from one door and go out from the other. He fixed the height of the House at twenty-seven arms. When the building was ready, he covered the whole building with musk and perfume inside out, and put silken Kiswah on it. The construction was completed on 17th Rajab, 64 A.H.

When `Abdul-Malik Ibn Marwan came to power in Damascus, he sent his commander, Hajjaj Ibn Yusuf, who defeated Ibn Az-Zubair and killed him. Entering the Sacred Mosque, he saw what Ibn Az-Zubair had done regarding the Ka`bah. He wrote to `Abdul-Malik about it who ordered him to return it to its previous shape. Hajjaj, therefore, demolished six and a half arms from the northern side and rebuilt it according to the plan of the Quraysh; he raised the eastern door and closed the western one; he also filled the inside with the stones that could not be re-used (thus raising the inside floor to the new level of the door).

When the Ottoman Sultan Sulaiman ascended the throne in 960 A.H., he changed the roof of the Ka`bah. Sultan Ahmad (who came to power in 1021 A.H.) made some other repairs and alterations. Then came the great flood of 1039 A.H. which demolished parts of its northern, eastern and western walls. Therefore, the Ottoman Sultan Murad IV got it repaired. And the same building continues till this day and it is the year 1375 by lunar Hijri calendar, and 1338 according to the solar one.

The Shape of the Ka`bah

The Ka`bah is nearly square in shape, built with hard dark bluish-grey stones. It now rises to sixteen meters; but was much lower at the time of the Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him, as may be inferred from the fact that, on the day of conquest of Makkah, the Prophet raised `Ali Ibn Abu Talib on his shoulders so that `Ali could remove and break the idols that were placed on the roof of the Ka`bah.

The wall [the northern one that faces the Enclosure of Isma`il and] over which is placed the water trough and the one on its opposite side [the southern one] are ten meters and ten centimeters long; while the [eastern] wall which has the door and the one opposite to it are twelve meters long. The door is placed at a height of two meters from the ground level.

The Black Stone is fixed in the [east-south] corner, so that if one wants to enter the door, the Stone would be on his left. This Stone is one and a half meters above the ground level, that is, above the level of the circumambulation area. The Black Stone is a hard rock of irregular oval shape, black with some reddish tint; it has red dots and yellow wavy lines which appeared when some broken pieces were soldered and joined. It has a diameter of about thirty centimeters.

The Ka`bah's corners, since ancient days, are called "Al-Arkan (pl. of "Ar-Rukn" pillar); the northern one is called, the Iraqi Rukn; the western, the Syrian; the southern, the Yemenite; and the eastern (wherein the Black Stone is fixed), is named the Black. The area between the door and the Black Stone is called "al-Multazam" (lit.: the place where one clings to) because when one circumambulates one adheres to it for invocation and prayer.

The trough fixed over the northern wall, which is called the Trough of Mercy, was an innovation of Al-Hajjaj Ibn Yusuf; in 954 A.H. Sultan Sulaiman changed that with a silver one; that too was replaced by Sultan Ahmad in 1021 A.H. with another one of enameled silver with golden designs. In 1273 A.H. Sultan `Abdul-Majid replaced it with another one made of gold, and it is the present one.

Facing the northern wall is a wall-half circle in shape. It is called, Al-Hatim. It is like a bow whose two ends face the northern [Iraqi] and the western [Syrian] Rukns; there is a gap of two meters and three centimeters between the ends of the bow and the said Rukns. The wall, Al-Hatim, is one meter high and one and a half meters wide. It is paneled with carved marble. The distance between the center of Al-Hatim and the center of the northern wall of the Ka`bah is eight meters and forty-four centimeters. The area covered by al-Hatim and the northern wall is known as Hijr Isma`il [Enclosure of Isma`il]. About three meters of this space was included in the Ka`bah built by Ibrahim, peace and blessings be upon him

The changes and alterations that were done inside the Ka`bah, and the rituals and Sunnah rites connected with the House are not so necessary to be described here.

The Covering of the Ka`bah

As for the covering of the House itself, it is said that the first to cover it was the Tubba [Tubba' - was the title of the Kings of Yemen.] Abu Bakr As'ad, who hang on it the sheets embroidered with silver threads. His successors followed this custom. Then people started covering it with sheets of various kinds - putting one upon the other. Whenever a covering looked old, a new one was put over it. This continued until Qusayy came on the scene. He imposed a tax on the Arabs for putting a new covering every year. This system continued in his descendants. Abu Rabi`ah Ibn Al-Mughirah used to put a covering one year and all the clans of Quraysh did so the next year.

The Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him, covered the House with Yemenite sheets. This custom continued. When the `Abbaside caliph Al-Mahi went for pilgrimage, the attendants of the House complained to him about the coverings that had accumulated on the roof of the Ka`bah. They said there was a danger of the roof collapsing down because of that load. The King ordered that all the old coverings should be removed and that every year a new covering should replace the old one - and that custom is followed up till now.

The Ka`bah is draped from inside too. The first to do so was the mother of `Abbas, son of `Abdul-Muttalib - she had done so because of a vow she had taken regarding her son- `Abbas.

Prestige of the Ka`bah

The Ka`bah was held in high esteem by various nations. The Hindus respected it, believing that the spirit of Siva, the third person of their Trimurty, entered into the Black Stone, when he was accompanied by his wife visiting Hijjaz.

The Sabaeans of Persia and Chaledonia counted it as one of their seven holy sanctuaries [The seven sanctuaries were: (1) The Ka`bah; (2) Mars - on the summit of a mountain in Isfahan; (3) "Mandusan"? in India; (4) Naw Bahar in Balkh; (5) House of Ghamdan in San`a; (6) Kawsan in Farghana, Khurasan; and (7) a House in Upper China. Many of them said that it was the House of the Saturn - because it was the most ancient, and the longest in existence.

The Persians too respected the Ka`bah, believing that the spirit of Hormoz was present therein; they sometimes went for its pilgrimage.

The Jews honored it and worshipped God there according to the religion of Ibrahim. There were many pictures and images in the Ka`bah, including those of Ibrahim and Isma`il which had divining arrows in their hands. Also there were pictures of the virgin Mary and Christ - which indicates that the Christians too respected the Ka`bah like the Jews.

The Arabs held it in the highest esteem; they believed that it was the House of Allah, and came to its pilgrimage from every place. They believed the Ka`bah to be built by Ibrahim and the hail to be a part of his religion which had come to them as his legacy.

Trusteeship of the Ka`bah

The trusteeship was in the hands of Isma`il; and after him it remained in his descendants. Then the Jurhumites became more powerful and took over the trusteeship. They in their turn were vanquished - after several wars - by the `Amaliqah, who were a part of Banu Karkar. The `Amaliqah resided at the lower section of Makkah while the Jurhumites had settled in its upper section. They had their own kings.

Later on, the Jurhumites defeated the `Amaliqah and regained the trusteeship, which remained with them for about three hundred years. They extended the area of the House and increased its height.

Gradually the Isma`ilites grew in number and gained power and they found the place too congested and over-populated. Then they fought the Jurhumites, defeated and expelled them from Makkah. The leader of the Isma`ilites at that time was `Amr Ibn Lahiy, the chief of the clan of Khuza`ah. He became over-lord of Makkah and took over the trusteeship of the Ka`bah.

It was he who put idols in the Ka`bah and called people to worship them. The first idol he put there was Hubal which he had brought from Syria; then he brought others. Gradually there were a lot of idols, and idol-worship spread among the Arabs; the upright religion of Ibrahim was discarded.

Shahnah Ibn Khalaf Al-Jurhumi refers to this episode, when he addresses `Amr Ibn Lahiyy in the following ode:

O `Amr! You have invented various gods; At Makkah - idols around the House.

And there was for the House One Lord from ever; But you have made for it several lords (which are now worshipped) by the people.

Surely you should know that soon He will choose for (His) House stewards other than you.

The trusteeship remained in the clan of Khuza`ah up to the time of Halil Al-Khuza`i. He nominated his daughter (who was married to Qusayy Ibn Kilab) to succeed him, and gave the right of opening and closing the door to a man from his clan, Abu Ghabshan Al-Khuza`i by name. Abu Ghabshan sold his right to Qusayy Ibn Kilab for a camel and a skinful of liquor. The proverb, "More loss incurring than the deal of Abu Ghabshan", alludes to this sale.

The trusteeship was thus transferred to the Quraysh. Qusayy rebuilt the House, as we have mentioned above. The things continued as they were, until the Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him, conquered Makkah, and entering the Ka`bah ordered the pictures to be effaced, and the idols to be thrown down and broken.

The Standing Place of Ibrahim - the stone with the imprints of Ibrahim's feet - was at first put in a kneading trough near the Ka`bah; then it was buried in the place where it is at present. It has a dome on four pillars where the people offer their prayers after the circumambulation.

There are a lot of details of various aspects of the Ka`bah and other religious buildings attached to it. We have described here only the things which are necessary for understanding the verses of Hajj and the Ka`bah.

One of the specialties of this House - which Allah has blessed and made a guidance - is that no Muslim group has ever disagreed about it or its prestige, honor and respect.

Read Also:

- **The Great Maqam**
- **The Well of Zamzam**
- **The Enclosure of Isma`il**
- **The Black Stone: In The Gospel, The Torah and The Psalms**
- **Al-Hatim: The Most Honored Shade on Earth**
- **Manifestations of Remorse & Repentance at Al-Multazam**
- **Al-Baqi` : The Madinah Cemetery**
- **The Cave of Hira`**

Uhud: A Mount that the Prophet Loved

The Kaba: Its Size and History

The small, cubed building known as the Kaba may not rival skyscrapers in height or mansions in width, but its impact on history and human beings is unmatched.

The Kaba is the building towards which Muslims face five times a day, everyday, in prayer. This has been the case since the time of Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) over 1400 years ago.

The Size of the Kaba:

The current height of the Kaba is 39 feet, 6 inches and total size comes to 627 square feet.

The inside room of the Kaba is 13X9 meters. The Kaba's walls are one meter wide. The floor inside is 2.2 meters higher than the place where people perform Tawaf.

The ceiling and roof are two levels made out of wood. They were reconstructed with teak which is capped with stainless steel.

The walls are all made of stone. The stones inside are unpolished, while the ones outside are polished.

This small building has been constructed and reconstructed by Prophets Adam, Ibrahim, Ismail and Muhammad (peace be upon them all). No other building has had this honor.

Yet, not very much is known about the details of this small but significant building.

Did you know the Kaba was reconstructed as recently as close to four years ago?

Did you know that the Kaba has been subjected to danger by natural disasters like flooding, as well as human attacks?

If you didn't keep reading. You'll find some rarely heard of information discussed below and discover facts about the Kaba many are unaware of.

The other names of the Kaba

Literally, Kaba in Arabic means a high place with respect and prestige. The word Kaba may also be derivative of a word meaning a cube.

Some of these other names include:

Bait ul Ateeq-which means, according to one meaning, the earliest and ancient. According to the second meaning, it means independent and liberating. Both meanings could be taken

Bait ul Haram-the honorable house

The Kaba has been reconstructed up to 12 times

Scholars and historians say that the Kaba has been reconstructed between five to 12 times.

The very first construction of the Kaba was done by Prophet Adam (peace be upon him). Allah says in the Quran that this was the first house that was built for humanity to worship Allah.

After this, Prophet Ibrahim and Ismail (peace be upon them) rebuilt the Kaba. The measurements of the Kaba's Ibrahimic foundation are as follows:

- the eastern wall was 48 feet and 6 inches
- the Hateem side wall was 33 feet
- the side between the black stone and the Yemeni corner was 30 feet
- the Western side was 46.5 feet

Following this, there were several constructions before the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) 's time.

Reconstruction of Kaba by Quraish

Prophet Muhammad participated in one of its reconstructions before he became a Prophet.

After a flash flood, the Kaba was damaged and its walls cracked. It needed rebuilding.

This responsibility was divided among the Quraish's four tribes. Prophet Muhammad helped with this reconstruction.

Once the walls were erected, it was time to place the Black Stone, (the Hajar ul Aswad) on the eastern wall of the Kaba.

Arguments erupted about who would have the honor of putting the Black Stone in its place. A fight was about to break out over the issue, when Abu Umayyah, Makkah's oldest man, proposed that the first man to enter the gate of the mosque the following morning would decide the matter. That man was the Prophet. The Makkans were ecstatic. "This is the trustworthy one (Al-Ameen)," they shouted in a chorus. "This is Muhammad".

He came to them and they asked him to decide on the matter. He agreed.

Prophet Muhammad proposed a solution that all agreed to-putting the Black Stone on a cloak, the elders of each of the clans held on to one edge of the cloak and carried the stone to its place. The Prophet then picked up the stone and placed it on the wall of the Kaba.

Since the tribe of Quraish did not have sufficient funds, this reconstruction did not include the entire foundation of the Kaba as built by Prophet Ibrahim. This is the first time the Kaba acquired the cubical shape it has now unlike the rectangle shape which it had earlier. The portion of the Kaba left out is called Hateem now.

Construction After the Prophet's Time-Abdullah ibn az-Zubayr

The Syrian army destroyed the Kaba in Muharram 64 (Hijri date) and before the next Hajj Abdullah ibn az-Zubayr, may Allah be pleased with him, reconstructed the Kaba from the ground up.

Ibn az-Zubayr wanted to make the Kaba how the Prophet Muhammad wanted it, on the foundation of the Prophet Ibrahim.

Ibn az-Zubayr said, "I heard Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) say, 'The Prophet said: "If your people had not quite recently abandoned the Ignorance (Unbelief), and if I had sufficient provisions to rebuild it [the Kaba], I would have added five cubits to it from the Hijr. Also, I would make two doors; one for people to enter therein and the other to exit.'" (Bukhari). Ibn az-Zubayr said, "Today, I can afford to do it and I do not fear the people.

Ibn az-Zubayr built the Kaba on Prophet Ibrahim's foundation. He put the roof on three pillars with the wood of Aoud (a perfumed wood with aroma which is traditionally burned to get a good smell out of it in Arabia).

In his construction he put two doors, one facing the east the other facing the west, as the Prophet wanted but did not do in his lifetime.

He rebuilt the Kaba on the Prophet Ibrahim's foundation, which meant that the Hateem area was included. The Hateem is the area adjacent to the Kaba enclosed by a low semi-circular wall.

Abdullah ibn az-Zubayr also made the following additions and modifications:

- put a small window close to the roof of the Kaba to allow for light.
- moved the door of the Kaba to ground level and added a second door to the Kaba.
- added nine cubits to the height of the Kaba, making it twenty cubits high.
- its walls were two cubits wide.
- reduced the pillars inside the House to three instead of six as were earlier built by Quraish.

For reconstruction, ibn az-Zubayr put up four pillars around Kaba and hung cloth over them until the building was completed. People began to do Tawaf around these pillars at all times, so Tawaf of the Kaba was never abandoned, even during reconstruction.

During Abdul Malik bin Marwan's time

In 74 Hijri (or 693 according to the Gregorian calendar), Al-Hajjaj bin Yusuf al-Thaqafi, the known tyrant of that time, with the approval of Umayyad Khalifa Abdul Malik bin Marwan, demolished what Ibn az-Zubayr had added to it from the older foundation of Prophet Ibrahim, restore its old structure as the Quraish had had it.

Some of the changes he made were the following:

- he rebuilt it in the smaller shape which is found today
- took out the Hateem
- walled up the western door (whose signs are still visible today) and left the rest as it was

- pulled down the wall in the Hateem area.
- removed the wooden ladder Ibn az-Zubayr had put inside the Kaba.
- reduced the door's height by five cubits

When Abdul Malik bin Marwan came for Umra and heard the Hadith that it was wish of Prophet for the Kaba to be constructed the way Abdullah ibn az-Zubayr had built it, he regretted his actions.

Imam Malik's advice to the Khalifa Harun al Rasheed

Abbasi Khalifa Harun al Rasheed wanted to rebuild the Kaba the way the Prophet Muhammad wanted and the way Abdullah ibn az-Zubayr built it.

But when he consulted Imam Malik, the Imam asked the Khalifa to change his mind because constant demolition and rebuilding is not respectful and would become a toy in the hands of kings. Each one would want to demolish and rebuild the Kaba.

Based on this advice, Harun al Rasheed did not reconstruct the Kaba. The structure remained in the same construction for 966 years, with minor repairs here and there.

Reconstruction during Sultan Murad Khan's time

In the year 1039 Hijri, because of heavy rain, flood and hail, two of the Kaba's walls fell down.

The flood during which this occurred took place on the 19th of Shaban 1039 Hijri which continued constantly, so the water in the Kaba became almost close to half of its walls, about 10 feet from the ground level.

On Thursday the 20th of Shaban 1039 Hijri, the eastern and western walls fell down.

When flood receded on Friday the 21st of Shaban, the cleanup started.

Again, a curtain, the way Abdullah ibn az-Zubayr established on 4 pillars, was put up, and the reconstruction started on the 26th of Ramadan. The rest of the walls except for the one near the Black Stone, were demolished.

By the 2nd of Zul-Hijjah 1040 the construction was taking place under the guidance of Sultan Murad Khan, the Ottoman Khalifa. From the point of the Black stone and below, the current construction is the same as that done by Abdullah ibn az-Zubayr.

The construction which was done under the auspices of Murad Khan was exactly the one done at the time of Abdul Malik ibn Marwan which is the way the Quraysh had built it before Prophethood.

On Rajab 28 1377, One historian counted the total stones of the Kaba and they were 1,614. These stones are of different shapes. But the stones which are inside the outer wall which is visible are not counted in there.

Reconstruction of the Kaba In 1996

A major reconstruction of the Kaba took place between May 1996 and October 1996.

This was after a period of about 400 years (since Sultan Murad Khan's time).

During this reconstruction the only original thing left from the Kaba are the stones. All other material has been replaced including the ceiling and the roof and its wood.

What is inside the Kaba?

Dr. Muzammil Siddiqi is the president of the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA). He had the opportunity to go inside the Kaba in October 1998. In an interview with Sound Vision, he described the following features:

- there are two pillars inside (others report 3 pillars)
- there is a table on the side to put items like perfume
- there are two lantern-type lamps hanging from the ceiling
- the space can accommodate about 50 people
- there are no electric lights inside
- the walls and floors are of marble
- there are no windows inside
- there is only one door
- the upper inside walls of the Kaba were covered with some kind of curtain with the Kalima written on it.



The Essence of Hajj

By Ayub A. Hamid

The significance of Hajj as a pillar of Islam is quite evident from the reward this act of worship brings to its performer. As has been reported from the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him), the person performing the Hajj is forgiven and purified as if he/she is a newborn baby. Although its importance and formalities are generally known and talked about, its essence, spirit, and impact on a performer's behavior and personality are not generally understood or remembered.

The point we should ponder over is why Allah and His Messenger granted Hajj so much importance. What is the most significant aspect of this worship? Is it performance of certain rites and rituals, the special dress worn, and visitation of certain places that make it the most rewarding act of worship? Or, like other acts of worship in Islam, is it the changes that Hajj makes in the performer's personality, attitude, and outlook that are the essence of Hajj?

The other point to reflect upon is, what is so special about the Hajj that it is expected to produce some significant changes in the personality, attitude, and outlook of a person? Is there anything magical in the rites and rituals of the Hajj that produces the changes, or is it the constant conscious effort on the part of the performer to inculcate in himself/herself the spirit of those rites and rituals which brings about the desired changes? The reality is that unless a person performs every step of the Hajj immersed in and imbued with the spirit that each action represents, he/she will not fully realize the promised benefits of Hajj.

This process of consciously soaking in the spirit of Hajj starts with the intention. As soon as you make an intention to perform Hajj, you should start reflecting on the lifestyle of Ibrahim, Isma'il, and Hajar. Allah has presented them as a model Muslim family. Hajj is, in fact, an intensive training in full, holistic, wholehearted, willing, and enthusiastic obedience and submission to Allah. This training is provided by making the believer simulate acts of love, dedication, and obedience performed by Ibrahim and his family. Hajj, in reality, is walking in the footsteps of that family, simulating the extraordinary acts of devotion they performed for the love of Allah. This provides a Muslim proper perspective as to how devoted and submissive to Allah a Muslim should be. So as soon as you decide to perform Hajj, you should start reviewing your lifestyle vis-à-vis the life style of Ibrahim and his family and see if you submit to Allah without reservation or hesitation as they did. Are you willing to sacrifice your most precious and cherished possessions, habits, preferences, and desires for the sake of Allah as Ibrahim did? Can you obey Allah without asking questions or without understanding why Allah wants us to do certain things? Can you jump into dangers and difficulties willingly and enthusiastically for the sake of Islam as Ibrahim did? Is pleasure of Allah and supremacy of Islam the most important goals in your life? Do the commands of Allah, the needs of the Ummah, and the call of Islam take precedence in your life over all your interests, needs, and aspirations? If the answer to any of these questions is not a resounding yes, you should start identifying where you need improvement and how you are going to get there.

When you start for Hajj from your home, think of it as the beginning of a transformation process and not just a trip to sacred places. Start with a sincere repentance with a firm intention to change yourself to the desired level of commitment to Islam. Form specific mental images about how your attitude, personality, and outlook will be changing from your current state towards the Ibrahimic style and level as you proceed from home towards Al-Haram (Makkah). As you move through various stages in your journey, see your paradigm shifting with each step. When you remove your clothes and take a shower to put ihram on, visualize ridding yourself of all the old habits and behavior patterns that are not the best from the Islamic point of view and cleansing yourself from intentions and attitudes that are un-Islamic in nature and practice. When you put your ihram on, think of a new birth and a new beginning, start of a new life more like that of Ibrahim and Isma'il.

While performing each rite of Hajj, keep in your mind the spirit of the rite and the act of Ibrahim that it simulates and feel the transformation of your attitude and personality accordingly. For example, when you arrive in Makkah and cool your eyes with the sight of the

Holy Ka`bah and pray to Allah to increase its status and its sanctity, remember the purpose for which it was built. Remind yourself of how it was going to be the center of the Islamic movement to bring the whole of humanity to the worship of Allah and obedience to Allah through Islam and to make Allah's law and Islamic way of life the dominant and supreme way of life in this world. Dedicate yourself to that cause as Ibrahim and his family did.

When performing Tawaf (circumambulation), feel the passionate, ardent love of Allah making you go round in humility in front of His greatness, also thinking at the same time that all your life in this world will be Allah-centered, revolving around Him, His love and His pleasure. When running between Safa and Marwah, see yourself running and striving throughout your life for the religion of Allah to establish it as the supreme, dominant way of life, while hoping that Allah accepts your efforts and rewards you with the success of the Islamic mission in this world and with His pleasure in the Hereafter, while at the same time being concerned that you may not be doing enough to achieve your goals or to earn Allah's pleasure and mercy.

Standing in `Arafat, you should feel the majestic presence of Allah in Whose audience you are standing as a humble slave. Preserve that feeling of Allah's presence in your consciousness throughout your remaining life. Your sacrifice should indicate your readiness, willingness, and enthusiasm to sacrifice your most cherished possessions for the sake of Allah. And throwing pebbles (rami) at Jamarat should signify that whatever little means you have, you are going to devote all you have in opposing and rejecting all the un-Islamic theories and sins and secular lifestyle that the devils of the world try to preach among Muslims or impose on them.

It is this kind of Hajj that makes you pure and sin-free as if you are a newborn baby. If Hajj is not performed with that kind of spirit, its intended benefits will not be realized. An example from our elders will illustrate this point.

A person who had just come back from Hajj came to visit Junaid Baghdaadi. After Junaid asked him where was he coming from, here is the dialogue that occurred between them:

Hajji: I have just come back from Hajj to the House of Allah.

Junaid: Have you been to Hajj?

Hajji: Yes, I have just performed it.

Junaid: When you proceeded from your home with the intention of Hajj, did you repent from all your sins?

Hajji: I did not think about it.

Junaid: In that case, you did not even depart for Hajj. What about your journey, rest breaks, and stopovers? When covering distances, did you move mentally and spiritually closer to Allah, and at stopovers, did you feel dwelling in His remembrance?

Hajji: It did not occur to me.

Junaid: You have not, then, really travelled to the House of Allah. How about putting on the ihram and replacing your usual clothes? When doing that act, did you abandon your undesirable habits and attitudes that had been part of your daily routines?

Hajji: It did not cross my mind.

Junaid: Alas! You did not even put on ihram. But did you experience the presence of Allah while you were standing in `Arafat?

Hajji: What do you mean?

Junaid: When you were praying to Allah in `Arafat, did you feel as if He was right in front of you and you are watching Him?

Hajji: No, that was not how I felt.

Junaid: That means you did not even reach `Arafat. I hope you left your worldly desires and aspirations in Muzdalifah.

Hajji: I did not think about it.

Junaid: So, you have not even been to Muzdalifah. How was your Tawaf? Did you feel overwhelmed by an ardent attraction towards the perfect majesty of Allah Most High during Tawaf?

Hajji: I do not think so.

Junaid: It is, then, as if you have not even performed Tawaf. Perhaps you understood the spirit, wisdom, and objective of running between Mounts Safa and Marwah.

Hajji: Not really.

Junaid: In other words, you have not performed Sa' i (running between Safa and Marwah). Tell me about your sacrificial rites. While slaughtering the animal, did you sacrifice for the love of Allah Most High your own lusts and desires?

Hajji: That did not come to my mind.

Junaid: In that case, you have not even offered sacrifice. What about throwing stones at the pillars? When performing that ritual, did you cast away your bad company, evil friends, and dirty plans?

Hajji: This did not happen either.

Junaid: Unfortunately, you have not performed rami (stoning rites) either. You must go back next year and re-perform the Hajj with the sentiments, spirit, and attitude mentioned above so that it can be a simulation of Ibrahim's experiences, about whom the Qur'an says: [And Ibrahim who was truly loyal to Allah] (An-Najm: 37).

- **Source:** http://www.muslimtents.com/aminahsworld/The_essence.html

Hajj: Renewal of Self

By Sayyid Abul A'la Mawdudi

Brothers and sisters in Islam! What are the blessings of Hajj? One may describe them in great detail. But, in the Qur'an, where Allah instructs Ibrahim to invite people to come to Hajj, it is said: [So that they may witness things that are of benefit to them] (Al-Hajj 22: 28).

Hence, the real blessings of Hajj can only be experienced by those who actually perform it. Imam Abu Hanifah, it is narrated, was unsure which act of worship was more excellent among the various ones laid down by Islam. But once he had performed Hajj, he had no hesitation in declaring that Hajj was the most excellent of all.

Still, I shall now try to give you, briefly, some idea of its blessings.

The Journey

We usually think of journeys as of two kinds: those made for business and those made for pleasure. In both cases, it is to fulfill your worldly desires and benefit yourselves that you leave your homes, separate from families, spend money-all is done for your own sake. No question arises of sacrifice for any higher, sublime purpose.

But the journey that is the Hajj is quite different in nature. This is not meant for any personal end. It is undertaken solely for Allah and the fulfillment of the duty prescribed by Allah. Nobody can be prepared to undertake this journey until and unless he has love of Allah in his heart, as well as fear of Him, and is convinced that Allah wants him to do what he is doing. That you are willing to bear the privations arising from separation from your family, to incur great expenses on a journey that will bring no material rewards, and to suffer any loss of business or job, all are signs of certain inner qualities: that you love and fear Allah more than anything, that you have a strong sense of duty to Him, that you are willing to respond to His summons and ready to sacrifice your material comforts in His cause.

Virtue and Piety

You will find that your love of Allah heightens as you start preparing for your pilgrimage journey with the sole intention of pleasing Allah. With your heart longing to reach your goal, you become purer in thought and deed. You repent for past sins, seek forgiveness from people whom you might have wronged, and try to render your due to others where necessary so as not to go to Allah's court burdened with injustices that you may have done to your fellow beings. In general, the inclination to do good intensifies and abhorrence of doing evil increases.

After leaving home, the closer you get to the House of Allah, the more intense becomes your desire to do good. You become careful so that you harm nobody while you try to render whatever service or help you can to others. You avoid abuse, indecency, dishonesty, squabbles, and bickering because you are proceeding on the path of Allah. Thus your entire journey constitutes an act of worship. How, then, can you do wrong? This journey, in contrast to every other, is a continuing course through which a Muslim attains a progressive purification of the self. On this journey, then, you are pilgrims to Allah.

The Impact of Hajj

It is now easy to see that for two or three months¹, from the time of deciding and preparing for Hajj to the time of returning home, a tremendous impact is made on the hearts and minds of pilgrims. This process entails sacrifice of time, sacrifice of money, sacrifice of comfort, and sacrifice of many physical desires and pleasures- and all this simply for the sake of Allah, with no worldly or selfish motive.

Together with a life of sustained piety and virtuousness, the constant remembrance of Allah and the longing and love for Him in the pilgrim leave a mark on his heart which lasts for years. The pilgrim witnesses at every step the imprints left by those who sacrificed everything of theirs in submission and obedience to Allah. They fought against the whole world, suffered

hardships and tortures, were condemned to banishment, but ultimately did make the word of Allah supreme and did subdue the false powers that wanted man to submit to entities other than Allah.

The lesson in courage and determination, the impetus to strive in the way of Allah, which a devotee of Allah can draw from these clear signs and inspiring examples, can hardly be available from any other source. The attachment developed with the focal point of his *deen* by walking round the Ka`bah (Tawaf), and the training received to live a *mujahid's* life through the rites of Hajj (such as running from place to place and repeated departures and halts) are great blessings indeed.

Combined with the Prayer, fasting and almsgiving (zakah), and looked at as a whole, you will see that Hajj constitutes a preparation for the great task, which Islam wants Muslims to do. This is why it has been made compulsory for all who have the money and the physical fitness for the journey to the Ka`bah. This ensures that, in every age, there are Muslims who have passed through this training.

Hajj: A Collective Worship

The great blessings of spiritual and moral regeneration, which Hajj imparts to each person, are before you. But you cannot fully appreciate the blessings of Hajj unless you keep in view the fact that Muslims do not perform it individually: hundreds of thousands perform it communally during the time fixed for it. At one stroke Islam achieves not one or two but a thousand purposes.

The advantages of performing the Prayer singly are by no means small, but by making it conditional with congregation and by laying down the rule of Imamah (leadership in the Prayer) and by gathering huge congregations for the Friday and `Eid Prayers, its benefits have been increased many times. The observance of the fasting individually is no doubt a major source of moral and spiritual training, but by prescribing that all Muslims must fast in the month of Ramadan those benefits have been greatly increased. The almsgiving, too, has many advantages even if dispensed individually, but with the establishment of a centralized *bayt al-mal* (exchequer of the Islamic state) for its collection and disbursement, its usefulness is increased beyond measure.

The same is true of Hajj. If everyone were to perform it singly, the effect on individual lives would still be great. But making it a collective act enhances its effectiveness to a point, which gives it a new dimension altogether.

Excerpted with minor corrections from [Let Us Be Muslims](#), by Sayyid Abul A'la Mawdudi

1- This was the average duration of time required to perform Hajj in 1938, when this address was delivered. In this jet age it may take as few as seven days.



Hajj & Rebirth of My Soul

By Jeewan Chanicka

I have returned home and I sit now to put the rest of this journal together. Physically I am here, but my heart is very far away. I look for the simple beauty that surrounds us that is sometimes drowned out by the noise, the pollution, anger, the hatred, by war and those who would have us believe that they are acting with the goodwill of humanity in mind.

How far away have we come, when we forget the lives of those who we do not see on TV each day, when the lives of some are of more importance than others, when we are so consumed by materialism and materialistic needs that the universal truths of justice, peace, love, respect are ignored. As those with military might show their will, Hajj has been a good reminder of the power of prayer and the power of the masses of humanity, when we leave our capitalistic trappings, our chauvinistic claims to power and might, our feelings of superiority and pride.

Perhaps the next superpower will not be that of military might and power, but of the masses who stand for truth, justice, love, dignity, respect, and tolerance. It has already been happening, millions of people around the world, standing up and speaking out against the atrocities of occupation and war.

When we feel no one is listening, or feel that there is no hope, we must never allow ourselves to forget that the One Who listens, the Divine Presence is ever near and always ready to answer the calls of those who ask. With this, there is always hope and we will never allow our spirits to be broken.

- **` Umrah – Before Hajj**
- **7th Dhul-Hijjah**
- **8th Dhul-Hijjah**
- **9th Dhul-Hijjah**
- **Muzdalifah**
- **10th Dhul-Hijjah**
- **Mina**
- **11th Dhul-Hijjah**
- **12th Dhul-Hijjah**

` Umrah – Before Hajj

I arrived at the airport in Jeddah, it was surreal. You look outside and it feels like you are in a star trek movie. It seems like something of the future, tents almost conical and about a hundred feet high, (sorry forgot the metres) with holes in the middle for ventilation. After a couple hours of waiting, the Canadian delegation leaves to Mecca. We are guests of the king (oops did I forget to mention that to you all) so we have transportation arranged for us. The cool thing with hajj is that it does not matter if you are guest of the king or not you are not treated too differently (at least this was my experience) from the other pilgrims. Here status is not an issue. I would later find out that we are staying in the same building with the former

president of Gambia. He blends in with the rest of us. Unless I read an article, I would not have known who he was.

We are on our way to the K'aba, the holiest site for Muslims around the world. All Muslims face the direction of the k'aba when they pray. We wade through thousands of people sitting in the streets, content and waiting to pray to their Lord. As we wade through, the call to prayer is made:

God is Greatest

God is the Greatest

God is the Greatest

God is the Greatest

There is no God but God

There is no God but God

Muhammad is the messenger of God

Muhammad is the messenger of God

Come to prayer, come to prayer

Come to success, come to success

God is the greatest, God is the greatest

There is no god but God

The crowd comes to a standstill, we cannot move, the doors to enter into the sacred precincts are so close but so far away. We must pray in the street. The crowd stands to pray- men and women all together obeying the call to remembrance. There are so many people that there is no room to bow in prostration so we literally have to pray on each other backs, there is no problem because of this we consider it to be a privilege..

I walk into the precincts, my heart swells inside, the questions that have pushed me through life are at the forefront, who am I? What is the purpose of my life? Will I be ready to die knowing that I did my best in life ? I see the k'aba, no words can describe, the sense of awe, there it was, the first house of worship, built by Adam and later by Abraham and his son Ishmael.

Tears well in my eyes, Thank You God for bringing me as your guest; Thank You for Your invitation. I came here to seek Your bounty and favor. As the tears pour forth, I pray Lord, "answer all my prayers that I make here".

Our group, is in the crowd, circling the k'aba, like the orbit of planets around the sun. I am amazed at how people are careful of each other, and trying hard to protect each other. I had heard stories of pushing etc but it is not about people being violent, it is a natural consequence of the thousands of people there at the same time. Some try to stay in their groups and move around, others may be trying to leave as they have completed their requirements and are moving to the next steps.

As I walk, in awe, overwhelmed, praying for myself, family, friends and peace in the world. I feel an arm latch on to me. As I look it is an older man, walking in his group, in need of support. I don't know him, he does not know me, but he knows that he can count on his "son" to support him. I am happy that he knows this and I continue with my prayer and he continues with his..

We have completed the seven circuits and must now move to the Maqam Ibrahim (station of Abraham) and pray there after which we go to the well of Zam Zam. It is believed to have been a miracle of God, given to Hagar the wife of Abraham and Ishmael as they were in the desert and she was searching for water for her baby. An angel came and struck the ground at the

baby's (Ishmael) foot and the spring gushed forth. That spring has fed the pilgrims for the past 1423 years and each year millions come and are fed from it. We next move to do the last component II Sai II which is where we walk between two hills Safa and Marwa seven times to imitate Hagar's search for water for her baby. We then proceed to get our hair trimmed. I cannot help but to cry, in gratitude for this amazing opportunity, being here, the holiest place for me is like coming home. I feel at peace, despite the hundreds of thousands of people, the United Nations here, the hum of pilgrims in continuous worship, I am at home here.

We have completed the first part of hajj and must now wait for the 8th of the lunar month when we will again get dressed in two pieces of unsewn cloth and slippers. During that time we will not be able to cut our hair and nails until we have completed the final rituals. I am drained emotionally but feel charged all at once. I could not believe that all this has happened, out of the blue, no plans and it all came together just like that. I am thankful, after the past six months of my life I feel that I really need it. I think of my beautiful wife and sons and pray some more. Other than being here, they are the next people on my mind.

[Up](#)

7th Dhul-Hijjah (Month of Islamic Lunar calendar in which hajj is celebrated)

We must begin to prepare ourselves as Hajj begins tomorrow. I have been asked to be interviewed for several radio, TV and print media. This morning, I go walking with my friends from Montreal and one who attends McMaster. We go for a walk near to a one of the king's palaces. We come to a restricted road and I advise my friends not to proceed. But one of us decides to ask the guards if it is ok. He asks in English, I translate. At first they say No it is prohibited, then they allow us to walk through, as long as we go straight through and not hang around. It turns out that it is a public road from the other side. We walk through, I notice that my throat is starting to feel strange. I have to go to the doctors, I think. When I get throat infections they can get quite bad. I don't even care if I have to take antibiotics. I never want them at home. I wish I had my Apple Cider vinegar with me. I don't want to get sick, not now, not before hajj. Allah (God) knows best. We return to the building, I head to the doctor. He tells me, to stop using the air condition and no cold beverages. He gives me some antihistamines/decongestants and some vitamin C. I take it right away. I would spend the rest of the day doing television and radio interviews. I did one for radio and print the night before. Many people are interested in knowing why I became Muslim and why when we live in North America, we choose to give up certain aspects of life here to conform to Islamic codes of living. The Canadian group, as well as the American group I would imagine is of particular interest to people. We are all Canadian, but there are many of us who became Muslim with all kinds of backgrounds Polish, Greek, Scottish/ French, Canadian etc.

The drugs are strong and as we leave Mecca on the way to Jeddah, I go to sleep. We return home later that night after a couple of interviews. I get home in time to meet one of my Canadian friends in Mecca to film the hajj for National Geographic. I am happy to see him. I am starting to feel worse. I need to wear an extra top, to keep warm. I pray that I will be well. We have our group meeting, to let us know what is going to happen tomorrow as hajj begins.

It has been decided by our hosts that we will not go to Mina tomorrow. It is usually the first place that the pilgrims go to as hajj begins. Because we are quite a large group of people (several hundred people invited from all over Europe and North America) they feel that it will be difficult to get us all to Mina and then leave for Arafat on time, the next day. I think they may have had some problems before but I am not sure. And the most important part of Hajj is going to Arafat. If you miss that you have missed hajj altogether. Going to Mina is considered to be a practice of the prophet Muhammad peace be on him. It is something that should 'be done but there is no penalty for missing it. I am sad about this. I want to do the hajj in the way it was done and the way it should be done. But we are guests and we have to respect that they are concerned about our safety. I tell myself that maybe I can use the time to pray and rest since I am not feeling that great and it may help me to get my strength for Arafat when I will need it even more.

[Up](#)

8th Dhul-Hijjah

I get up this morning for Fajr (prayer at the time of dawn before sunrise), the Canadian delegation will be meeting after to iron out all the details. When we all meet, we are told that our bus # is 6 and that we have been assigned seating partners. We will be responsible for knowing their whereabouts and keeping tabs on them. I have been seated with someone who is one of the Ontario Human Rights Commissioners. I am not feeling that great. I had a difficult time sleeping last night. We should get dressed in our ihram by mid morning and declare our intention to perform the hajj .

I get ready after breakfast. I have my shower, I pray in my heart that as the water washes my body, that this hajj will wash my spirit of any sins and misdeeds. I put on my two pieces of unstitched white cloth. Funny, how simple it is. I think of all that I have left behind, the expensive clothes, the trends and fashions that we are often called to. As I think about it, as I put this on, I hope that I am leaving behind the arrogance, pride, chauvinism and the other ills that plague us around the world. The realisation and reminder that life is too important than to be belittled to material items that increase the wealth of a few and leave many others in their state of social distress. How many times we eat and waste food, while there are those on the streets sleeping hungry .We try to justify this, there is no way that this can be right. To realise that God is the only One, truly wealthy and that I am impoverished before Him. That I am in need of God, yet God does not need me. My life can be as significant or insignificant as I attempt, in the end, success is only by God's infinite mercy. After dressing, I proceed downstairs with one of my roommates, he is from Mississauga.

I knew him from before. I had not known he was coming with the same group until I went to the travel clinic for my meningitis shot. As I walked out the clinic, he walked in.. I was so excited.

We go down to the basement level to the prayer level and pray our two units of prayer and declare our intention for Hajj. My throat is hurting even more now and I am coughing now as well. We are now officially in the state of Ihram. We cannot comb/cut our hair or nails or wear or use anything that is scented. In this way, I will approach my Lord in the most humble of states, coming to him in a way I would not approach anyone else and to remind myself of my relationship with Him and my need of Him. Anyone who has been deceived by their wealth or the wealth that surrounds them, this is the reminder of what life is truly about. It is also a reminder that there will be justice on a Final day when no wrongs will go without justice.

Later on I visit the doctor, he tells me that to continue taking the medicine that I was and he added a cough syrup to it. I am thankful that I don't have to take antibiotics but I am wondering if I may need them.

I end up resting through the day, I hardly have strength. I think the medication is strong and wreaking havoc on my system. In the evening when I get up, I walk out of my room and straight into an interview with BBC World. I have lost count of how many interviews I have done now. I do it and then proceed down to the prayer level to listen to a session by a religious scholar who has been famous for speaking out politically in Saudi Arabia with no fear of the repercussions. His speech is good. I leave and go upstairs after the talk, I am not feeling well. I seem to be getting worse. My chest is feeling a bit congested now. I am worried about that. I can't sleep lying down. The guys bring some cushions and I prop myself up a bit and try to go to sleep. At 2am we were all awakened when some of the workers came to our room to take the rug away. Apparently they will use it in our tent in Arafat.

During the night I get fever, my temperature keeps fluctuating and I go from feeling hot to feeling cold.

Up

9th Dhul-Hijjah

The day has arrived, we get up for the dawn prayer and rush to the prayer area. I go early to the prayer area so I can pray before dawn comes in. I am feeling worse than before, but I cannot contain my excitement, hope and prayer for a successful day ahead. I spend some time praying and then sit and talk to some guys who are disappointed we did not go to Mina on the

day before, but we understand that they did it with our interest in mind. Ahead of us is the most important day of Hajj. All of the hujjaj (who hajj -plural all the people making hajj) stand on this day on the plains of Arafat praying for forgiveness and that their prayers are answered. This is where Prophet Muhammad peace be on him stood and delivered his farewell sermon, before his death. It is the day Muslims are taught, that we are forgiven. So we stand on that day and seek forgiveness and beseech the Most Compassionate, Most Merciful Lord, to forgive our wrongdoing and to set our affairs aright.

I see hundreds of faces of those from places all over the world, places I know and don't know starting to trickle into the prayer area. We share the greeting of peace with each other and ask each other to include us in their prayer as well. As soon as we finished praying, we are told to proceed to our buses. I go up to my room and grab my bag that I packed the night before and the umbrella I got as a gift from Egypt Air when I left Cairo. I head down to my bus, as I get on, I see most of the Canadian group there. I shuffle around and find my seat and as I am about to sit realise that we were provided with another umbrella. I run back to my room and return my umbrella and return to the bus. There are about 8 or 9 buses I am feeling ill. Gosh, I did not want to get ill during hajj, I wanted to be well so I could exert as much effort as I could. Still, I tell myself that this is the will of Allah, as nothing happens except by His will.

We receive our packaged breakfast, small containers with bread, jam, cheese, juice and other small treats. I wish I could lie down. But I have to eat, I need as much energy as I can to be able to make the most of this blessed day. Just as the bus is about to leave, the leader of the group comes on board with a tray full of hot tea. I take my own without sugar, as I need my immune system to work. As the hot tea goes into my stomach, I begin to feel some ease but I can tell it is temporary. Still temporary is better than nothing.

I looked at the leader of our group and the other group leaders and marveled at their understanding of leadership. They would be the first to get up and do the work that needed to be done, first to help any of us out with anything, often would eat last and sleep the least. Leadership in Islam is very different to other leadership styles. It is based on serving others and remembering that it is a big responsibility for which God will hold you accountable. In Islam, no one should desire leadership. I try to busy myself with du`as but I feel very weak. I decide to use my puffers since it is getting a little more difficult to breathe. Whatever du`as I can get out of my lips I say. I lean my head onto the window and try to rest while the driver gives new meaning to the phrase "driving like an Arab"

He is furious and there is a lot of traffic as well. I wonder how he can drive the huge bus in the manner that he is, sometimes I cannot look out the front of the bus because I can swear that he will hit everything in sight. This was one morning I felt like we were "guests of the king". We had a police escort and because of this were able to bypass some of the traffic. After about one hour, we arrive at Arafat.

We descend from our bus and head to our tent. It is huge but thankfully very simple, though I am sure it must be better than others. It is literally a tent and the sand ground is covered with mats from our rooms. We lay on the ground with our pillows and try to get some rest before Zuhr prayer. I am feeling worst than before, I can feel my asthma becoming worse but I refuse to let it defeat me. I pray and ask Allah to give me the strength to make it through my hajj. I came so far and this was my one desire-to complete my hajj. I keep thinking about the circumstances under which I came and realise that it only happened because of Allah, He in His Glorious Compassion brought me here. It was only with His help that I came because on my own, I lacked the ability and resources to get here. I find comfort in these thoughts, as I know that I am the guest of Allah. And who is a better host than Allah?

After a small rest, many of us get up to pray, I go to the washroom to make ablution. Every step seems to become more difficult than before but I keep walking on. I get to the washroom and remove the lower piece of my ihram and hang it securely so that it does not get wet or dirty. I am used to the floor toilets by now. It was a fear of mine, being so used to our North American styled toilets. But I know that this way is healthier too. Anyway, I learned over the trip to just "suck it up" and do what had to be done. Many of them are much cleaner than what I experienced before so I am happy about that.

While I am in the bathroom, I throw up. I know I am getting more ill, but I cannot think about it. I know if I say anything that I may miss the rest of my hajj and I know that I am still strong enough to do what I have to do. I quietly use my puffer and try not to let anyone see in order not to make anyone worry.

In the mean time, I am worried about my friend Polish friend from Montreal, Ali, who has a tooth infection. It is very painful and I don't want his infection to get worse. He takes some painkillers and says that he is fine. I know that chances are it is worst than he is saying. But I also understand. Asif, on the other hand is also getting worse and whatever it is that I had (beside the asthma) he seems to be developing as well.

We pray nafl or extra prayers, then the noon prayer Zuhur and finally listen to a dars (lesson) by a respected scholar. He speaks in Arabic and it is translated to English. I try to follow in Arabic and occasionally refer to the translation for help.

After this, we eat collectively in huge trays rice and meat. I eat mainly the rice so that my body's digestive system will not be overworking to digest meat. I need all my body's resources to focus on my health and well being.

I spend some time talking to Br. Talha, our leader from Canada and the head of WAMY, who is worried about me, I tell him not to worry and that I would be just fine insha Allah. Just a little "under the weather".

It is time to begin praying, the most important time of Arafat, nothing should distract us at this time and we should be busy seeking God's blessing and bounty and asking for forgiveness for our human errors. Mistakes and transgressions are features of our humanity. No one is free from it, no one is perfect and so this opportunity reminds us to always be humble-never arrogant- and that perfection belongs to God only, and true peace and contentment comes from submission to God. A message that was brought to all people whether it was by Moses, Abraham, Jesus or Mohammed.

I spend some time praying inside our tent, because it is on the plains of Arafat and therefore, this is acceptable. But I am enticed to venture outside and see what it is like. We were told not to go out to pray. So I decide I will simply go and see what it is like. I have visions in my head from media images that I have seen, of a sea of pilgrims, the sandy brown landscape washed by an ocean of white clad pilgrims, standing, sitting and prostrating before their Lord.

I go outside and look around a little, I see people standing all around, and not exactly as I anticipated but still they are there. I want to stay and pray outdoors, despite the heat and dust but I don't want to break the rules so I return to the tent. As I enter, I hear the group leader talking about the option of praying outside. Many of us would like to because it feels more authentic. Nothing is wrong with staying inside but we would like to do as much as we can, similar to what was done by the prophet peace be on him and his companions.

A group of us leave the tent and find a quiet spot in the shade of a tree and begin to pray and make collective du`a'(prayer) for some time. As the brother making the du`a' prays out loud and the rest of us following, he begins to cry. A moment when the heart is truly connected to its purpose, focused on the reality of our existence and expressing its true desire to become a focused servant of God, and a source of kindness and mercy to all of His Creation. It is a moment of recognition of the faults and errors that we have made, the need for the never ending Mercy of the Most Merciful and an awareness that death is a reality and so too, the Day of Judgement.

We stand and pray, for some time after which most people leave except one other brother from Montreal and myself. He is half-French/half-Canadian and he continues praying. I stand and pray, tears streaming down my face, I pray for all those I love, all my brothers and sisters around the world, my friends and for my hajj to be accepted. I am at peace here despite the illness and inconvenience, and the lack of worldly items to assist me. I am at peace. I know that this is where I need to be.

Eventually my brother Salman (who was also praying outside) comes to tell me that there is a bus running nearby that is spewing out diesel fumes. That is not good for me right now, we should move because the smell is becoming very strong.

I move to another spot, but my walking has slowed down considerably and I decide to stop at another spot to pray. He tells me that he does not want to return to the tent without me- he could tell that I was not in the best of conditions. We begin walking and I stop to pray again. I pray for a small time but I do not want him to feel compelled to stay with me because I need to consider his feelings as well and I know he is worried about me. Brotherhood is an integral part of Islam. As much as he should be concerned about my well-being, and me I was concerned about him worrying too much and being inconvenienced. I knew what he was doing was out of love and an understanding of his duty as a brother, and I thought about the same thing. We return to the tent and continue to make du`a' there.

Soon we were asked to take our stuff and return to our buses. I grab my pillow and begin my slow walk to the bus concentrating on each step and trying not to inhale the diesel fumes from all the nearby buses. As soon as I get into the bus and sit down, I have to grab a cup and run off the bus because I had to throw up.

I stand across the street from the bus and try to catch my breath. But I cannot.

Everyone on the bus is worried about me but I keep telling myself that I will get better. I return to the bus and the concerns of brothers, many of whom were initially strangers but we shared the bond of Islam. Through this experience we are becoming closer and I suspect the bonds that are created here will never be replaced by anything else.

Our bus begins to move to the border of Arafat but there is still about 45 minutes before sunset – the appointed time of departure from Arafat. It is prohibited to leave Arafat before sunset otherwise your hajj will not be accepted. Even the police will not allow anyone to leave until the time of sunset. We sit in our bus and make du`a' until we get the time has come.

I hope and pray that all my supplications are answered and that I can be strong enough to complete the hajj. But I don't know what will happen, we are on our way to our next stop – Muzdalifah-and it is getting harder to breath. Only Allah knows what lies ahead.

Up

Muzdalifah

We arrive in Muzdalifah about 20 minutes later, of course the bus was driving as fast as a plane flies. I did not mind though, I knew I would need to rest, little did I know what would be next.

We got off our buses at the side of the road at the entrance into Muzdalifah and our hosts started laying out the carpets onto the side of the road. As our group started moving towards the area, we got split up as people were trying to find a space on the rugs to lie down. This would be our "home for the night", the rugs –our floor, the mountains – our walls and the night sky our ceiling. The night air feels cold, maybe because it is a desert and that is usually what the night is like, maybe because I am becoming more ill.

I make wudu and join the prayer, we are praying Maghrib. There are washrooms relatively close to where we are, that has its advantages and disadvantages as well. After prayer, I spot Asif and I make my way towards him so that I can re-join my group. As we start walking, looking for our delegation, I notice both the head of our group and Talha. They motion us towards them and we try to find a place to sleep. I wish I were not feeling as ill as I am right now, life is funny sometimes, the times when you really want to be healthy –you become ill. Well, there is a plan and our wisdom and understanding can never comprehend its divine wisdom.

We get some packages of food, similar to what we got in the bus earlier that morning. I don't want anything, I have the juice though. I sit and reflect on the day...

"How do you know that Allah has accepted your du`as, your prayers?" As the tears well up into my eyes, I notice our group leader and I ask him this question.

He reminded me that Allah is as we expect of Him. That we prayed and asked for forgiveness and we expect that Allah in His infinite Mercy will be merciful to us and forgive us. We should never doubt that, or never expect less. I sit there and reflect on that and think back to my intentions earlier that day, trying to review if I did my best to be sincere or not.

I find a place on the rug next to Asif. Later, though, I realise that Asif is over a small depression so I trade with him. Although he was fine with sleeping there or I should say trying to sleep there, I knew he would be uncomfortable. I knew he was also thinking of me and trying to make sure that I was ok. But I also knew that he was getting ill as well. I thought to myself that "I am smaller and I can fit there", so I convince him that the trade is fair and ok.

I literally have to try and curl up into it to try and fit so that I can try and sleep. But I do not mind because I know that I am small enough to contort my body and fit into the area. The other guys are much bigger and I know it will be a fruitless endeavour for them to try and sleep there. This gave new meaning to the phrase "packed like sardines in a can" there was not enough room to turn because someone was sleeping right next to you.

These little exercises only strengthen the brotherhood and feelings of connectedness and love that we feel towards each other. After all only brothers would tolerate to be this close to each other and try to each inconvenience themselves a little for the sake of the others.

As I lay down, I cover my face, we are sleeping on the side of the road and the buses are continuously pouring in, there is sand and diesel fumes every where. I am still in Ihram and cannot cover my head, I cannot wear anything more, so the cold feels as if it is penetrating through my ihram like a knife cutting cheese.

I sleep in spells, sporadic, the type of sleep you have when you are very ill and you can't find a comfortable way to get some rest. I fall asleep, wake up, try to move but realise that I can't and then just lay there until the tiredness of my body overcomes me and takes me into the quietness of sleep.

Up

10th Dhul-Hijjah – The Day of `EID-ul-ADHA

By 2 Am I can't sleep, I open my eyes to realise that Asif was not beside me anymore, he and some of our friends were getting ready to go somewhere. The flow of buses and cars has been constant and the smells of diesel fumes are repugnant. The bros. say that they are going to climb a nearby mountain. I figure, I am sick and can't rest, I might as well just go along for the "ride."

I get up, and I slowly make my way up. I follow the guys but for me each step is measured by not being able to breathe, as well as the pain I am feeling in my back and chest.

As I start making my way up the mountain, my mind flashes back to my ascent of Mount Sinai when I was in Egypt. That was some years ago, and ironically, I climbed that with some of my friends from Belgium at 8:30 PM with only the moonlight. It was over two hours long and nothing could prepare us for that adventure. But I bring my mind back to the present. I am here, I am making hajj – me, I am the guest of Allah. What an honour this is, to walk on this path.

I make my way through a Turkish delegation who are all asleep (gee I wonder why?) and finally make my way to the top with the rest of the guys. As I look over the top, down to the ground below, my heart races, I feel my eyes widening and my jaw drop in awe of the sight below. An amazing sea of white, pilgrims of every colour, nationality, everywhere. The two roads that run across each filled with bumper to bumper traffic punctuate this vast ocean of white. Some delegations from different countries have different colour ribbons to identify themselves, so they won't get lost. You can easily tell the Malaysian delegations, the women have ribbons tied to them to identify themselves. Some groups have flags and signs. We withhold our breaths in bewilderment, understanding right then and there that we were just one of millions. One individual who had the honour of being here in the largest gathering on earth, but still one brother of millions of brothers and sisters, despite all the differences, our hearts are united by faith.

My mind flashes to Malcolm X and his descriptions of what he saw at hajj of sitting with men the blackest of black and others with blond hair and blue eyes. It was the beginning of his transition and transformation. I understand it, I have shared similar experiences, I can feel it running in my veins.

We sit there and make du`a', sometimes collectively, sometimes individually. We also take the chance to pray some extra prayer. It is a beautiful time, of connectedness with each other and with Allah. To realise that material possessions, wealth, status, in the end they mean absolutely nothing. As overwhelming and invigorating as it was to think about this, there was another sobering feeling that overcame us. Hajj is the closest experience to the Day of Judgement, the gathering off all of humanity, the crowding, the fear and hope for forgiveness of our Lord.

We decide after some time to go back down. When we get down, the guys decide to pray tahajjud but my body cannot handle it anymore, I have to lie down. So I excuse myself and I lay down near enough to at least hear them praying. I know they are getting more concerned about me, I can see it in their eyes, even when I say not to worry. Our bodies are natural defence mechanisms; I will get over it, I tell myself.

Soon it is time for Fajr, I get up and make wudu. It is hard to make wudu in the cool air but it is not too bad, I have had to do worse in Egypt I remind myself.

As soon as we pray it is time to leave. Asif stays with me and we start walking towards the bus. As fate would have it, our bus was one of the furthest away. As we walk through the crowds, Asif falls. He gets up and dusts himself off and he is ok. We finally make it to the bus and I get on. We are off to Mina.

Up

Mina

The way to Mina is crowded and we have to contend with the traffic. It has been several hours sitting in the bus but we can do nothing. There is no point to being frustrated as there is nothing anyone can do. When you think about getting stuck in a traffic jam where there are millions of people, it can give you a clear idea of what it is like. I am happy because I can use the time to try and rest, curl up on my seat and lean my head on the side and try to rest.

Along the way we see a Canadian flag, we get excited as we all look to see if we can see anyone in the Canadian delegation that we know, but we do not. Seeing the flag evoked many thoughts and sentiments. This hajj, was a training place that spiritually mentally, emotionally and physically prepared me to return home and serve my society. Despite the ills, the harms, it reminded me of my connection with God, my higher purpose –to serve all of humanity. All the ills of the world, all over the world, some shared by the millions present now, others unique to Canada alone.

Hajj was teaching me to understand my role as a member of humanity for all of humanity- to recognise the distinct beauty of all and the exclusion of none. That superficial classifications in the end, were just that- superficial. I know when I return home I must be prepared to roll up my sleeves and help the dispossessed and to not only feel that they will benefit from my help, but truly, I am the one who will benefit. For it connects me to my identity as a Muslim and as a Canadian. It is who I am and when I am who I am, I will truly be happy and free.

The symbolism of hajj can help to transform the societies in which we live and make this experience of unity, love and spirit be shared by all peoples in all places. The bus driver is getting a little upset, I guess his focus is to get us to our tent as quickly as he can.

Finally, we make it to our tent. We get off on the road and walk in to our tent. It is nice, a huge tent, with the same rugs that we had on the floor in Arafat and Muzdalifah. The workers of our hosts keep picking them up and laying them out in each place that we go to. I am thankful for all their hard work.

Other than that there is nothing else that I can notice, at least not right now. Our group leader decides that we should immediately proceed and stone the jamarat and return to our rooms in Makkah to have our heads shaven and bathe and change into regular clothes. Once our heads are shaven, we are released from the obligations of Ihram. I can't wait to have a shower and put on some regular clothes.

Stoning the jamarat is a symbolic gesture that reminds us of the time that Satan tried to tempt Abraham from sacrificing his son Isma`il. When he appeared to Abraham to try and convince him not to follow Allah's command, Abraham was steadfast. Because of that, God commanded

him to sacrifice a sheep instead of his son. When we stone the jamarat, it is symbolic of stoning Satan and repelling his temptations away from the path of God.

Sometimes though some Muslims, ignorant of the symbolism, become quite emotional –as if they were really stoning Satan. The area where the stoning occurs is the place where we hear about people being trampled. The sheer amount of people and their movement can at times be quite dangerous.

But I tell myself that I will do what is required and place my trust in Allah. My mind travels back to my thoughts that I had disclosed to my friend Asif earlier – maybe this is where I will die. But Allah knows better than we do and I must do my best. In the end whatever is to happen will happen. I prepared myself before this journey. I wrote my mom and let her know of my wishes in the event that anything was to happen to me. For my wife who was away when I left caring for our son who was ill at the time, I left a long letter. In it I shared with her my thoughts and left her with some advices to keep with her. For my children, I left several neatly wrapped gifts on their beds. And I asked for the forgiveness of all my friends and colleagues. I had done my best to do whatever I could and my fate was placed completely in the safety of the will of my Lord.

My mind frequently flashes to the father of one of my friends who had gone to Hajj the year before. He went with my friend, his son, and one morning he was making ablution getting ready for the dawn prayer. He passed away while making ablution. He was an amazing man, wonderful and kind, I remember him in my prayers, him and his family. If this is where I am taken to my Lord then I remind myself-From God we have come and to Him is our eventual return.

Even though I was not feeling too well, I feel like I have some energy now, maybe it was the time on the bus. I want to go and stone the jamarat and return to get my hair shaven. We leave with a group from our contingent and start proceeding towards the jamarat. Each group of us has been assigned a leader, someone who has gone before and we are to follow their directions. Brother Talha gives us some general guidelines and we decide to enter in to the area in-groups of three.

If you could imagine it, it is like a two story parking deck. The ground level and the top level. The area where the stoning happens is at three distinct columns. What was done is at the top level, there are huge openings that were built directly over the columns and the columns were heightened so that they extended above the top level. All that has to be done is to gently throw seven pillars into the enclosed catchment area around the pillars. There is no need to throw too high or to even hit the pillars. It is a symbolic gesture. The pebbles however, must fall into the catchment area around the pillar.

I enter with the other two members of my group, but because of the sheer size of the crowd and the movement we are separated almost instantly. Almost like a huge ocean with a multitude of currents, we got caught in different currents. I make du`a' and pray for Allah's help and guidance.

I get close to the pillar, not too close because I don't want to have the pebbles hit my head. I say Bismillah (In the name of Allah) and start throwing each pebble one by one. Because I am vertically challenged I cannot see where the pebbles are landing. "I hope they are getting in," I say to myself. I am tired and trying to keep with the flow of the crowd so as not to fall. The most dangerous thing to do in this area is to fall. Because people will not see and that is how some people get trampled. I wade into the sea of pilgrims, walking over the lost slippers, ihram pieces and other articles that have fallen to the ground. If anything falls there-it stays there, no one dares to try to stop and take it up, it is as dangerous as walking in the middle of a busy highway.

I throw a few pebbles and try to stay focused, I get hit in my head by another pebble. I don't think about it, it was a mistake. All of a sudden there is a surge in the crowd, all the people around me start falling down to the ground and then without even realising I fall with them onto my back. "Is this my time?" I ask myself. I keep trying to say the kalima in my head and at the same time I keep trying to stand back up. As I try to stand up I can see the commotion and chaos of the crowd around me. "Keep saying the shahada" I tell myself.

The people who are standing immediately around us are holding out their arms trying to pull people up and to hold the people from behind from moving forward. The people from behind are oblivious to the fact that people ahead of them have fallen and so keep trying to move forward.

My mind is flashing on all things, getting up; saying the shahada; hoping that the people over me will not trample me; my family; knowing....that this could be the end. I keep fighting to get up but each time I make myself halfway up someone standing over me steps on my ihram and it pulls me down to the ground. I have lost my slippers and umbrella but I really don't care, I just want to get back up. The top of my ihram is long though and as I get up slowly someone over me who is trying not to move forward is moved forward due to the inertia from behind. It keeps getting caught under peoples' foot, I fight to try and get the top of my ihram off, it is the only way to try and save myself from being pulled down again. By Allah's mercy, I get it unwrapped and let it fall to the ground. At the same time I hold up the lower part of my ihram so that it does not get caught under anyone's feet again.

I stand up – alhamdulillah, it was a close call. This time is a bit blurry to me, I think I had one or two more pebbles left so I threw it and then made my way slowly out of there. I come out, disheveled, perhaps with some footprints on me, I only have one part of my ihram left- the lower part. It is dirty and I have lost everything else –slippers, sunglasses, identification badge saying that we were with WAMY and guests of the “keeper of the Haramain” and the ihram. But I am alive –alhamdulillah.

I realised that when these incidents happen, it is not always as portrayed on the media, a bunch of barbaric people just pushing and hitting each other that eventually leads to people being trampled. It is the sheer size of the crowd and the result of the current of movements of people. When we fell, the people around us were doing their best to try and get us up and to prevent us from getting hurt. I am sure that at times there is pushing, that goes without saying but no one is trying to hurt people, they are simply trying to get in and out of the area.

As soon as the other see me, they are concerned, I tell them what happened to me. They are relieved that I am out and safe. Br. Shabir rushes over and covers me with the top of his own Ihram, preferring me to himself. He then buys me a pair of slippers even though I am content to walk barefooted. Our group leaders ask us if we were able to do the stoning successfully. I tell them that I am worried that I did not get all my pebbles into the catchment area.

The leader offers for us to go back and do it so that I can have peace of mind. This time however, they are sending me in between two guys. Imtiaz was at the front and Br. Talha was behind me. Amazingly the crowd seems to open up and we get close to the pillars, I say “Bismillah, Allahu Akbar” and begin throwing my pebbles. Each one falls into the catchment area. Soon I am finished and we exit and return to our group who is patiently waiting on us.

We start walking back up to our tent. It is not too far, about 7-10 minutes long. I am tired and very exhausted. We return to the tent and I sit down. I am feeling ill again, not too much though. But I guess I did not have as much energy as I thought before I went to stone the jamarat. We sit and wait on the buses to come for us. We missed the first one, so we must wait for another one to come by. We are told to take any bus that comes and return to the building. There would be barbers waiting there for us to cut our hair or shave our heads.

I sit quietly, sometimes talking to my friends other times just focusing on my breathing. It is amazing how sometimes we take simple blessings for granted. The ability to breathe is one of them. Simple, we do it all the time without even noticing at times, yet it is essential to our very existence. Thank You Allah for helping me to reflect on this. Which of Your favors can I deny – definitely none of them.

Soon a suburban Truck comes by and can take some of us. Our group leader sends me because he is still worried about my health. I sit in the back with one of the brothers and I rest. We are on our way “home” to complete one of the last rites of hajj before we can remove our ihram.

I can feel myself becoming more ill or maybe I am not getting more ill, maybe the adrenaline is starting to recede. We get to the building to see some people with completely shaven heads, already showered and changed and others still in ihram. As we get inside, the workers greet us with greetings of an acceptable hajj and direct us to the basement to have our hair cut.

For our trip back to the building where we were staying, I start to feel the tiredness of the past few days setting in. I marvel at the fact that people come repeatedly for hajj, despite the hardships that are involved. I don't know if I could do it.

As we get to the building, I head inside following the directions of the workers who greet us with greetings of an acceptable hajj. Although our hajj is not yet complete, I know that they mean well. They direct us to the basement. As I get down, I see several lines, maybe about 50 people waiting to get their haircut. There are three barbers. Everyone is in straight lines and awaiting their turns. I look at the barbers and how quickly they shave peoples' heads. They are all Indo-Pak and they speak periodically in Urdu and other times in Arabic. Urdu was the language of recourse when they did not want people to understand. But both the English and our own Canadian delegation have Urdu speakers. I wonder about Asif and the others, where are they, are they safe and how long before they come back.

There are some guys who are not shaving their heads though, they are just having it cut. I have only shaved my head once before in my entire life, when I was blessed with going to umrah some years before. I had told myself then, that the only other time in my life I would shave my head would be at hajj.

I contemplate just cutting my hair because I am not feeling well and the nights are cool. In Medina (which is where we plan to go after hajj) it will be even colder. I know the preference is to shave your head. I tell myself that I can wear a hat. Especially now since we will be released from the conditions of ihram, I will be able to cover my head. That's it – I am going to take the plunge and shave my head. After all, our sins are said to drop from us as much as our hair falls from our heads. J (I need all the help I can get).

I look ahead in my line and notice that everyone leaving the seat of the barber, whom I'm headed for, looks like their head was a battle zone. There are knicks and cuts every where. I show this to some of the guys and the more I notice, I realise that I need to change lines. So I do. I sacrifice the place I was at and went into another line. The strangest thing happened, the barbers switched places and the same barber ended up shaving the heads of people in MY line. "Great" I tell myself...what should I do?

I change lines back to my original line. At this point the other guys are laughing at me because they realise what has happened to me. Soon after I move over, the barbers start talking and then they switch again ...AAHhhhhh. Forget it, I tell myself this is not working. You would almost think it was planned, that he wanted to shave my head, but he could not see me where I was. It was the will of Allah.

I decide that the lines are too long and I could not handle waiting anymore, I was starting to feel worse. So I tell the guys that I am going to leave and go out to get my hair cut outside.

As I am leaving the building, I bump into Talha. He was going to get a haircut outside as well. We both hoped that by doing this we would avert the line up in the basement. On our way, he decided to stop off at the adjacent grocery to buy a Kiffaya to cover his head after he has it trimmed. We looked through the entire section of the grocery superstore to no avail. He decided he would wait until later.

We walked to the barbers only to see a line up stretching down the street and as soon as we got there, I heard the adhan echoing through the air. Well so much for that. We decided to return to the building. We had our won mussalah there and so I could pray when I we got there.

I lined up in the line to have my hair cut and eventually it was my turn. Guess which barber I got, yup...exactly. But Alhamdulillah for me (not for the guys before), by the time he got to me, he had gotten the hang of it, so I got out with barely any knicks on my now baldhead.

Somewhere in the midst of all this, I manage to return to see the doctor in the building. I tell him that I am getting worst and I need antibiotics (I can hardly believe I am requesting it, but I don't want to get worst). He does not seem to think it is a big deal. He gives me some medicines, none of which I think will be useful but I resign myself to taking it because I have no choice. I wish I could get some medicine that will knock me out, I think to myself.

I went upstairs and showered and then started to layer up, I put on several layers of clothes, unsure of how I made it through the past days with only my ihram. I started to put on clothes and my sweater and then I went to bed. I remembered earlier at prayer, we were told that there would be an Eid party in the basement after the evening prayer Asr and that we should all attend. I drank some orange juice and took my pills. I don't want to eat anything right now, it is too much work to eat. I found comfort in my bed, a real bed and went off into an instant, deep sleep. I slept right through the party and awoke with just enough time to pray and to catch the bus to return to Mina for the night.

Sleeping at Mina is a part of the requirement of Hajj. Many people just stay there for the three days and nights but we were able to return to our place and then return at night.

Trying to get back into Mina was a lot harder than before. There was traffic everywhere and thousands of pilgrims in the streets. After numerous attempts to try and get to our tent, the leaders decide that we are going to have to drop out and walk to the tent. By now I am weak, it is getting harder to walk and the air is filled with dust and exhaust fumes which are only exacerbating my inability to breathe. I have a dust mask, which I put on and begin to walk. I start slowly walking, someone takes my bag for me and I begin the trek.

As I begin to feel worse I remind myself that sickness is purification and this is the best time to go through this process. I also remind myself that I rather face the trials of this life than the next. I need to be patient and by Allah's mercy things will change. I am doing my best, monitoring my diet and trying not to over-exert myself (ok, well...let's just say that I am not doing what I would ordinarily be doing if I were well J).

One of the guys offer to carry me, "no thanks" I say, as much as I am grateful for the offer, I can do this I tell myself. I continue walking, soon I can barely see anyone from my group except the one brother who stayed with me. I must make small steps because it is getting difficult to breathe and it hurts. I walk through hundreds of people, men-many of whom are bald, women and children. All of whom are here to seek the mercy of God. Many are sleeping in any spot they can get because all of the tents are filled.

The pilgrims are now out of their ihram and are moving around busily, minds still attached and drawn to their primary purpose of being conscious of God and seeking forgiveness for their sins.

Finally, I get to the tent. We make wudu and pray Isha prayer and then try to settle down for the night. I am still taking the meds from the doctor in my building. No antibiotics though, just some other stuff he says that will help me. I can feel my body convulsing with pain but I keep telling myself to be positive and know that I can get better. I know that it will be hard to sleep tonight, as I settle myself down some of the guys and I talk for a bit, then we go to sleep.

[Up](#)

11th Dhul-Hijjah

I sleep in spurts of one-two hours, but I can't handle the pain and difficulty of breathing. It was this night that I would see and understand the connectedness of hearts and understand brotherhood from a different dimension altogether. Hassan refused to leave my side, he even slept beside me incase I needed him at night for anything. He would wake up and check on me or when I would stir, check to see if I was ok.

Talha was very worried about me, he would keep asking about me or if I needed anything. He and I were sleeping in different sections of the tent. It was one huge tent that was open and we just set ourselves up in rows and went to sleep. He was in the far right corner, while I was in the middle, closer to the "door" of the tent.

Amazingly, every time I would wake up, Talha would wake up as well. I realised after a couple times. When I would wake up, I would have to sit up to assist my breathing and I would notice that he would wake up as well. I knew he was worried about me and he would often look over to see if I needed anything. One time, he followed me out of the tent as I was trying to quietly walk out, I was going to the bathroom and he came and asked me if I wanted to go to the hospital.

I did think about it, but I convinced him that I was fine and if I did need to go, I promised that I would tell him. By now everywhere was hurting, it hurt when I breathe, especially my back and stomach. I practiced some breathing exercises that I learnt in Egypt to help my asthma. I kept trying to sleep but would continue to sleep in short spells.

We got up for Fajr and prayed. Everyone was becoming more worried about me for some reason J. Soon we would be having some tea and other food that was pre-packaged and then get ourselves ready to go to stone the jamarat a second time.

This time, I would not go to stone the jamarat, I asked Hassan or 'Ala to stone on my behalf, something that is allowed in the case of illness. I got up and collected my pebbles and gave to them and I sat in the tent and prayed for Allah to accept this from me and for them to be safe. Soon, we were outside waiting on our buses, I got on and got back to the building.

We had to get ready to make tawaf and sai at the K'aba. I was very weak but I was happy because there is no feeling that can compare to being in the precincts of the K'aba. The buses take us to the haram to make tawaf. Two of the bigger guys in the group offer for me to come with them because they wanted to make sure that I would not be crushed because of my breathing. So Ali from Montreal walked in front of me and Muhammad from Ottawa walked behind me. Muhammad held onto Ali's arm and I was between them. The love and concern I felt from these brothers of mine really empowered me to make the best of this experience.

As we entered the haram and my gaze fell onto the K'aba, a flood of thoughts and emotions overcame me. I looked and I prayed while trying to keep count to ensure that we made the exact amount of circuits (7). As we continued to do so in the midst of the crowds and the people, I begin to feel more and more tired and weak. We finally stop and pray behind the station of Ibrahim, once again, they both look out for me to make sure I am not squeezed. As we finish we move towards Safa and Marwa, the two mountains that Hagar, the wife of Ibrahim ran between looking for sustenance for her child, Isma'il peace be on him. By the time we make it through the crowds and get there, I start to feel exhausted. Still, we make our du`as and we proceed to walk. I cannot jog when we get to the demarcated areas where pilgrims jog, so I walk as quickly as possible. Soon though, it becomes a bit too much, I have to hold on to the arm of Ali for support to continue walking. Near to the end, I needed the support of both of them to finish my sai.

Once we finished and made our du`as, we proceeded to exit, we exited through the wrong gate. That meant that we had to walk all the way around the kaba to get back in time to the buses. That was no easy task at this point. Still by the mercy of Allah, we were able to get back in time and catch our bus back to the building.

There was food prepared for us but I could not eat that much. I made my way up to my room and sat on my bed. I could no longer lie down as I would be unable to breathe. I set up some pillows and slept in an upright position. As per the doctor's advice, I closed the window and made sure the a/c was off.

As I settled down, I realised that the reason I was feeling cold was because I had started running a fever. My fever brought with it the accompanying pain. It seemed to be like a roller-coaster getting high at times and dropping. I tried to sleep through, but as usual my sleep was intermittent. During the afternoon, Hassan would keep coming to check on me, he would bring damp cloths and put it onto my head and bring me juice to keep me hydrated. I thank Allah for him, because I cant do this for myself right now. As he looks after me, I pray that Allah looks after him and his family in this life and the next. He is becoming worried, as am I, because I start suspecting that it is more than just my asthma. Finally when I become a bit more conscious, some brothers from the German delegation come to see me. They are physicians and I am not sure if it was Hassan or someone else who called them. They come and check my breathing, and listen to my chest.

As they ask me all the typical questions that doctors ask in Arabic, one of my friends translate for me. Even though I can understand them, I don't trust myself right now because of how I am feeling. I am scared that I may not understand and answer the wrong questions with wrong answers.

The doctors are convinced that I have pneumonia. When they say this, it all started to make sense, all the symptoms I was experiencing definitely should have clued me off to that. But I kept telling myself that it was the combined stress, dust, fumes and everything else. I had not had an attack for years, since I went to Egypt. The pollution and climate in Cairo had combined to re-ignite the asthma that had left me for some twelve years.

As a child I used to suffer from deathly attacks of asthma. I could recall at a very early age somewhere around 9-10 when I told my grandmother that I wanted to die, because it was so hard to live without breathing. Grandmothers never like to hear things like that. I used to be dependent on my doses of Ventolin and my puffer. Eventually, my mother took me to a homeopathic doctor who radically altered my diet and while I was not happy with my new diet, it was the last time I would remember having an asthma attack until that chilly night in Cairo.

Once that happened, I decided to keep puffers with me just incase, but I tried my best never to use them. I wanted to train myself to focus on my breathing and calm myself so that I did not panic when I could not breathe. So when I refused to go to the doctor before, I was trying to see if I could gain some control and eventually beat what I thought was an asthma attack. Still I was smart enough to keep my puffers and they did help me. The stresses of the environment along with my asthma had combined forces and I was not able to do much more on my own. I think about how many things we take for granted, the ability to see, hear, touch, feel, breath, think thoughts, see colour...so many blessings that we often take for granted. I thank God for all that I have been blessed with in my life. More than that, I am happy to be here, in the holiest of places – a guest of God.

The doctors decided to give me some antibiotics that they thought would help me but they are worried. They talk to the head of the Canadian delegation and suggest to him, without my knowing, that I be taken to the hospital.

Finally, Talha comes and tells me that I need to go to the hospital. I tell him that I don't want to go. In my head I am telling myself that I don't have long to complete my hajj, I want to do it. But Islamically, my body has a right over me as well and Allah knows my intention was to complete my hajj. I tell him, I think that the meds that the doctors gave me will help by Allah's will. He refuses to listen to my pleas. He has made up his mind and even if I disagree, he is the leader of the group, I must follow his instructions. Islamic etiquette is very clear on this.

He informs me that an ambulance is on its way for me. The attendants will come up soon with a tank of oxygen and a stretcher to take me down. I plead with him to let me go down on my own without the drama of a stretcher. He finally agrees. He says that I should wait until they bring me the tank of oxygen and then slowly make my way down. I am at least thankful about that. I go round to the room of the others, all the guys are there. As I stand at the door, they pause and look, I can see the concern in their eyes.

"I am going to the hospital now – please keep me in your du`as." Hassan is worried. He immediately says that he is coming with me. I am happy that he is coming, I need his support and I don't know what will happen. My thoughts that this could be the last trip of my life are still in my head. I know Asif is worried about this as well. He is the only one I have told my thoughts.

I get ready and wait in my room and soon someone comes up with a tank of oxygen and puts a mask on for me. The oxygen helps with my breathing, my lungs feel more calmed and I sit there thinking that it would have been great to have this a couple days ago. I start making the trek down the hall. Each of my steps is measured, but I feel slight relief with the oxygen. The man (I am not sure if he is a paramedic or not) who is helping to hold the oxygen tank is also helping me along. As I get down to the main floor, the other people who are there notice what is going on. I can feel their eyes trained on me and I am uncomfortable with the extra attention.

Ala, our group leader is there waiting. Masha Allah, he is a good group leader, looks out for all of us – I pray that he is rewarded in this life and the next. As I get to the ambulance, they open the doors, I tell them that I will get in on my own. As I climb up, just like in a movie, I bang my head. I am ok I tell myself...they ask me to lie on the stretcher. I have not seen Hassan yet, but

I really want him to come. I hope we don't leave without him. There is a sense of calmness that he gives me, something that you feel when you know someone cares.

He just manages to make it before we leave. Ala explains to him that he does not have to come and even if he does he will have to wait in the lobby because they will not let him come in with us. Ala needs to go because he will be translating from English to Arabic and vice versa. Neither Hassan nor I can speak Arabic fluently enough. Hassan still wants to come, he will wait in the lobby if he has to.

They both get into the back with me and the ambulance starts towards the hospital, sirens blaring. I am happy that they will both be there. This is strange...so this is what it is like. As I lay there, I am not crying, but tears are streaming down my face. I am lying in a crouching position, it is the only way I can feel some relief with my breathing and with the pain. The paramedic adjusted the oxygen levels just before we left. The driver uses the siren intermittently to get us through the traffic (I am guessing).

Through my mask, I ask Ala if I would be able to go back to Mina for the last day. I tell myself, I couldn't have made it this far to miss the last rites of hajj. Ala smiles and he says, "do not worry." For the duration of the ride, the driver asks Ala about me. He explains to him my story of accepting Islam at the age of 11. The driver shares some of his reflections on my story and some connections to stories of the sahabas. I say nothing, I just focus on breathing.

Soon we get to the hospital, I am on the stretcher and they take me out and wheel me into the ER. A doctor comes to talk, Ala speaks to him in Arabic. Hassan cannot come in with me and so he says that he will wait in the waiting room for me. I know he is making du`a' that everything goes well. The doctor speaks to me and asks me some questions. I answer him briefly, still trying to focus on my breathing. I notice that all the nurses seem to be other than Saudi – maybe from the Philippines, Malaysia or other places.

They send me to get an X-ray, Ala comes with me to the lab where it will be done. Some time after the doctor comes and says that my lungs look fine. The nurse comes and gives me, what I believe was a cortisone shot and gave me some nasty medicine. After this, Ala helps me walk out of the hospital and back into the ambulance. What did I have exactly – only Allah really knows. All I know was that after the shot, it was not as hard to breathe anymore, but I was still very weak. He recommended that I continue taking the antibiotic cipro that the German doctors gave me. Hassan was happy to hear that I would be ok by Allah's mercy.

The ambulance took me back to the building, where everyone was happy to see me. I pray and go to my bed to rest and sleep. I sleep for the rest of the evening and get up in time to have something to eat and then return to Mina for our final night. As I thought about going to Mina, I wanted to stay and rest, I felt so ill and drained, I did not know if I could make it. But I felt as if my hajj had already been different in so many ways and I wanted to complete my hajj badly. So I "sucked it in" and told myself that it was one more night for the sake of my Lord.

As we got back to Mina, we settled down in our rows and tried to sleep. Hassan checks up on me but Asif, decides he will stay with me this time to help if I needed it. Among the chorus of snores, I tried to ease my mind and get some rest. Alhamdulillah, tonight was a bit different, I was able to get some more rest and less interruptions in the night. When I get up before fajr, I can feel some difference. I tell myself that maybe I can stone the jamarat today. Well I won't make any decisions right now.

Up

12th Dhul-Hijjah

I walk and line up in the lines to make wudu, some of the others notice me and they allow me to go ahead of them so that I will not be standing too long. I eat something so I can take my medicine and then we pray fajr. I go back to rest and hope that I will have enough strength to get me to the jamarat later that day. It is decided by our group that we will go after dhur prayer. We would pray, then there would be a dars (lesson) and then we would go.

When it comes time, I decide that it would be better for me not to go. I realise I am not strong enough. I ask Ala to stone on my behalf and he agrees. I go and collect some pebbles and then

give them to him so that he can throw. There are some fears about the crowds today because it is the last day and we are all worried about possibly falling or getting hurt.

We all meet and everyone are assigned into teams. Because I will be staying back I offer to keep peoples things for them like \$\$ and watches etc. I often marvel at the beauty of Islam in the way that it affects the hearts of so many. People easily handed me (and Dawud who was also not well) many valuable items, identification, credit cards, cell phones, monies etc without even checking. Fully knowing that they would receive every cent when they returned. The fear here is not of the other person knowing that we did something wrong, the understanding is that God sees everything. And God will give all justice if not in this life, in the next. Before they leave, we make du`a`and then they disperse.

As I sit with Dawud, a former missionary who accepted Islam, we talk about life and Islam and not going today to stone the jamarat. We can only imagine what it is like now. I quietly pray for them and for their return.

When they return, we are told that we need to leave Mina before Maghrib or else we have to stay for another night. Everyone gets their stuff and starts walking out to the roads. We should take anyone of our buses to leave. There is a good chance with the amount of people that we may not be able to leave before Maghrib. I am hoping that we can because I am physically drained and I don't think I can last another night outside.

Everyone moves with speed, many others are starting to complain that their throats are hurting. That was how I started..I pray that they are not getting whatever I had. Finally, we hear a fatwa from one of the scholars that as long as we are on route with the intention of leaving Mina, we can leave even after sunset).

We go outside on to the street, it is crowded with buses, cars, people and more buses. The stifling hold of diesel overpowers your lungs. I hope I don't have to wait in this too long. While we are waiting, I ask the others how things were when they went to stone the jamarat. They said that it was the best day yet, there were clear spaces and they were able to go and come easily. In my heart I wished I went with them, but Allah knows best and is the best to plan.

Finally one of the buses comes and we are able to quickly get on. Many of the roads are closed for some reason and so we are stuck in traffic. Every time the driver tries an alternate route, it is blocked. Some of us think that he may be lost. As we continued along, we had to stop and pick up some guys from our group who were on another bus. Their bus shut down and so the only way for them to get back was to get on our bus. They climb on and fill up the aisles. Many of them tired and weary from hajj as well others are getting sick. I wished I could help some of them but I am too weak to help myself.

Soon I noticed one of the brothers who had a huge recording camera, he was recording some footage from hajj. I took the camera from him and put it on my lap so that he would not have to hold it the whole way back.

My mind was flooded with many emotions and concerns. I did not have to worry about the sacrifice because I paid for it to be done. Finally, we get back to the building, I want to go and call Sharon (my wife) but I am feeling so ill that I have no choice but to go and lay down. That night, by Allah's mercy I was able to get some rest.

Now all I had left was to complete the farewell tawaf. A bitter-sweet feeling....

[Up](#)

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Spiritual Ethics of Hajj

Thank you for your decent page and its effort. I believe there is so many things in Islam that help you elevate your spirit. Sometimes I think of this spiritual idea of monasticism and how it helps with that. I used to be Christian, but I am not any more... still thinking where to go...

Please tell me about Hajj and how it touches your spirit. I know Hajj must have inward ethics, more than just being a yearly ritual. Please give me a clear idea.

Thank you. [Aspects of Worship, Heart & Soul](#)
Salam, Marks.

Thank you for your question.

In fact, there might be no way of attaining to God, Most High, except by divesting oneself of desires, abstaining from pleasures, confining oneself to necessities and devoting oneself exclusively to Allah, Most High, in every moment and rest.

It was for this reason, dear Marks, that the ascetics of different religions used to isolate themselves from people. They retreated to mountain caves, preferring solitude to the company of others, in quest of intimacy with God. For the sake of God, Great and Glorious is He, they forsook worldly pleasures and applied themselves to strenuous exertions in pursuit of the Hereafter.

As for Islam, it is a religion that does not at all deny man his human nature, which is characterized by the ability and desire to socialize and mingle. Let alone Islam's regard to man as the only being who is responsible to fulfill God's will and implement it on earth.

It is a fact that members of earlier religious communities innovated the ways of monks and anchorites to get closer to their deity. Instead, God has favored Muslims by Hajj (pilgrimage), to be the Islamic form of monasticism and their ascetic act, where the pilgrim is recommended to free his mind from all businesses, except to pursue God's love and closeness.

Inner Status at Various Stages of Hajj

If the pilgrim understands where Hajj really stands in Islam, he/she will then find in him/herself an automatic process of specific subsequent steps. These are yearning for it; resolving upon it; severing the ties that keep one from it; acquiring the seamless garments to be worn during *ihram*.

These also include purchasing the necessary provisions; settling transportation; setting out from home crossing the desert; *ihram* at the assembly point, with the cry of '*labbayk*' (at Your service God!); entering Makkah, and then the completion of all rites of pilgrimage. Every step of these serves as a reminder to the mindful, a lesson to the heedful, an indication and an instructive tool to the sagacious, and as an exhortation to the faithful aspirant.

In my answer, dear Marks, I will try to signify the key points that reveal the mysteries of some of these steps. In fact, they should provide every pilgrim with tranquility of heart, inner purity and fullness of understanding. Every single step should recall the ideas of the Hereafter, for every aspect of Hajj reflects some aspect of the Hereafter.

Yearning for God

Yearning to meet God should create a longing for all that will lead to that meeting. That is because the lover craves everything in any way connected to his beloved. According to Islam, God is the goal of the human heart. Since God has attributed the Ka`bah to Himself, this connection is surely enough in itself to make one yearn for this sacred place.

The pilgrim should always be aware that by his/her resolve, he/she is purposing to leave his

family and homeland behind, forsaking pleasures and desires. He/she ought to hold in high esteem both the House and the Lord of the House. He/she needs to make sure his/her resolve is purely for the sake of God, untarnished by hypocrisy and or any desire for fame.

The pilgrim is supposed to be fully aware that only what is sincere in his/her intention and action will find acceptance. Also, that there is no offence more outrageous than to visit the House of God and the lands he chose to be sacred for ulterior motive.

Thus, the pilgrim needs to check with him/herself to verify his/her resolve. He/she needs to check the verification is his/her sincerity. In fact, his/her sincerity lies in shunning all taint of hypocrisy and desire for fame, as mentioned above.

Severing Ties

Actually, pilgrimage demands the rejection of all iniquities and sincere repentance to God for all acts of disobedience, for each iniquity is a tie, and every tie is like having a creditor, clinging to one's collar. If the pilgrim hopes his/her visit is to be accepted, he/she needs to carry out God's commandments, cast off iniquities, repent to Him for all acts of disobedience, and sever his/her heart's connection from all worldly concerns.

Only then, can the pilgrim turn his/her face towards God, as he/she turns his physical face in the direction of His House during prayers. Unless the pilgrim does so, he/she would gain nothing from his/her journey except trouble and hardship at the very end.

Leaving home, the pilgrim should know that he/she has now left hearth and home, bound for God on a journey unlike any worldly voyage. He/she should be conscious at heart of what he/she wishes; where he/she is heading and Whom he/she intends to reach.

In fact, the pilgrim needs to be aware that he/she is wending the way toward the King of kings. This is along with a host of visitors, who have been summoned and have answered the call. Those are, within whom a great longing has been awakened, who have been roused and have risen, who have severed connections and said farewell to all relations.

Even crossing the way, with all attendant hardships, the pilgrim should recall the crossing at death between this world and the assembly point on the Day of Resurrection. His/her separation from family and relatives should put the pilgrim in mind of the desolation of tomb and its solitude. This is where he/she will find nothing to relieve the agony except the hope in God's love and mercy.

Observing Ihram

In fact, purchasing the garments of *ihram* should recall to the pilgrim's mind the shroud in which he/she will be wrapped for burial. *Ihram* garments should remind the pilgrim that just as visiting the House of God in unusual garb and attire, so it would be after death. This is when this very same pilgrim will meet God Almighty dressed in a shroud, a different fashion from that of this world!

Then, at the appointed place of *ihram*, the pilgrim should put on the *ihram* attire saying: '*labbayk*' (at Your service Lord!), with the feeling of responding to the summons of God. He/she needs to recall that mankind would be summoned and gathered together at the site of resurrection, responding to God's call.

In fact, they will be divided into the favored and the abhorred, the accepted and the rejected. Exactly like the pilgrims at the assembly point, they will be oscillating initially between fear and hope. This is when they do not know whether or not they will be enabled to complete their pilgrimage and whether they have been accepted.

Reaching Makkah and the House

As the pilgrim reaches Makkah, he/she needs to remember that they have arrived safely at the

lands, chosen by God to be a sanctuary. God has chosen to attribute the Ka`bah to His own Self, because it was the first place established on earth, for the creed of *tawhid* (oneness) to be practiced in devotion.

Prophet Abraham and his son Ishmael (peace be upon them) have once shared in rebuilding it, long before the time of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon them). Entering this sacred place, the pilgrim ought naturally dread not being worthy to approach God. Yet his/her hope should be uppermost, for God is Generous and Compassionate in comprehension, the honor of the House is tremendous, the visitor's right is respected, and protection is secure for all who seek refuge...

This situation is to remind the pilgrim of how people will stream towards Paradise. This is on the Day of Resurrection, when all is hoping to enter. It is to remind them of how they will be divided into those who are admitted and those who are turned away, just as pilgrims are divided into the accepted and the rejected.

The pilgrim's heart should be filled with reverence, fear, hope and love, especially during *tawaf* (circumambulation around the Ka`bah). The purpose of it is not at all supposed to be the physical circumambulation of the House. It is not a body rotating around another body. The true purpose is the 'circling' of the heart in remembrance of the Lord of the House. The heart of the pilgrim needs to reach a point when consciousness begins with God alone and ends with Him alone. This is just as the circumambulation starts from the House and ends at the House.

Supplication at the Mount of `Arafah

Standing at `Arafah, pilgrims are gathered for supplication with their different tongues and various groups. This also recalls the site of Resurrection. The standing place is never devoid of an honest and sincere generation, or one that is righteous and magnanimous.

Here, their aspirations are joined. Their hearts are devoted exclusively to humble supplication and entreaty; their hands raised to God; their necks outstretched and their eyes turned heavenward, as they aspire of one accord in quest of mercy...

They should not at all suppose that God would disappoint their hopes, frustrate their endeavor or begrudge them an overwhelming mercy. That is why it is said that it is a most grievous sin for a Muslim to attend the standing on `Arafah, imagining that God has not forgiven him or her.

It seems that conjugation of aspirations and strength derived from contiguity, constitute the secret of pilgrimage and its ultimate purpose. There might even be no way to obtain God's mercy in such abundance, as by the conjugation of aspiration and the simultaneous mutual support of all hearts...

Visiting the City of God' Messenger

Muslims regard Prophet Muhammad to be the role model and chosen guide for mankind. Visiting his tomb at Madinah is not an essential obligation in making Hajj valid or complete. Yet, it is always advisable and strongly recommended that whoever can reach Madinah should visit the burial place of the beloved prophet. This is simply to pay respect to the greatest teacher humanity has ever known.

Aware that his precious steps have trodden in every place around Madinah, the pilgrim ought to walk with dignity and caution, recalling the messenger's humility and graceful gait. It is expected that the pilgrim has embarked this long journey in order to visit the homeland of Prophet Muhammad, where he strove against foes and proclaimed religion. The purpose should be pure love for the prophet and longing to behold his relics and burial place, not trade or any kind of worldly gain.

Visiting the tomb should be controlled by the most decent manners, for visiting him in death is as visiting him in life. The tomb should not be approached except as his noble person was to be approached if he was alive.

Touching and kissing tombs is a custom of non-Muslims. As for Muslims, they should never do such habits. Their respect and love is not for the walls or stones of any tomb, but it is for the great message and the noble person who strived to convey it throughout his whole life.

To conclude, dear Marks, the pilgrim should watch the duties of his heart at all stages of pilgrimage. He/she would realize if he/she has been accepted or not, by watching his heart and its conduct. If he/she finds his heart extremely adverse to this world of delusion and inclined to that of intimacy with God, then he/she may count on acceptance.

Throughout the performance of Hajj, the pilgrim can easily observe that it is a course of spiritual enrichment and moral rearmament. It is a course of intensified devotion and disciplinary experience, a course of humanitarian interests and inspiring knowledge, all put together in one single institution of Islam.

Thank you and I hope this answer is satisfactory. If you need to know more, please try to refer to these books, from which some of the above was taken:

- *Revitalization of the Sciences of Religion* – translated by Abdelsalam Haroun.
- *Mukhtasar Mihaj al-Qasidin* - by Ibn Qudamah al-Maqdisi.
- *Islam in Focus* - by Hammudah Abdulati..

Useful Links:

[Once in a Lifetime...](#)

[Ethics and Significance of Hajj](#)

[An American in Makkah](#)

[Islamic Hajj and Other Faiths](#)

[Excellence of the Day of `Arafah](#)

[Fasting on the Day of `Arafah](#)

[Significance of Performing Tawaf Seven Times](#)

[Du`aa' on Safa and Marwah](#)

Not Performing Hajj for Fear of Committing Sins*

Answer by Dr. `Abdullah Al-Faqih**



Question

I want to perform Hajj but I feel that even after performing it I might commit sins and make mistakes. Should I perform Hajj or postpone it?

Answer

Almighty Allah enjoined performing Hajj to His Sacred House upon every Muslim who is able to do it, and made it one of the fixed five pillars of Islam on which Islam is based.

Therefore, being a sinner does not justify one's postponing the performance of this great obligation, through which Muslims are greatly rewarded by Almighty Allah and their previous sins are expiated. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said, **"Whoever performs Hajj and does not approach his wife for sexual relations nor commits sins (while performing Hajj), he will come out as sinless as a newborn child"** (Al-Bukhari and Muslim). The Prophet also said, **"The (performance of) `Umrah is an expiation for the sins committed (between it and the previous one). And the reward of Hajj mabrur is nothing except Paradise"** (Al-Bukhari and Muslim).

Accordingly, we advise all Muslim sinners to repent as soon as possible and to perform this great obligation, whose performance will be a start of goodness for them. All Muslim sinners should know that Almighty Allah urges us to hurry to goodness and repentance, as He says **[so vie with one another in good works]** (Al-Baqarah 2:148). Almighty Allah also says **[Race one with another for forgiveness from your Lord]** (Al-Hadid 57:21). This is because Hajj is an obligation that must be immediately performed once one is able to perform it, according to the preponderant opinion of Muslim scholars. The reason is that the one who is able to perform it today might not be able to do it tomorrow; the one who is healthy today might not be healthy tomorrow; and the one who is strong today might be feeble tomorrow; no one can guarantee their own safety for as long as a heartbeat.

As for delaying repentance and postponing the performance of religious obligations, they are just satanic insinuations, heedlessness, and futile desires. May Allah safeguard us against them!

Furthermore, fearing to return to sinning does not contradict the performance of Hajj. Such fear is implanted by Satan in the hearts of those who want to turn to Almighty Allah in repentance and perform the duties He decreed. However, if Muslim sinners repent to Almighty Allah and perform the obligations

enjoined by Allah, He changes their previous sins into good deeds, as Almighty Allah says about the repentant: [**as for such, Allah will change their evil deeds to good deeds. Allah is ever Forgiving, Merciful**] (Al-Furqan 25:70).

* *Excerpted with some modifications from www.islamweb.net.*

** **Dr. `Abdullah Al-Faqih** is supervisor of Fatwa Centre at www.islamweb.net.

- ***Related Links***
- ***The Way to the Ka`bah and the Way to Allah***
- ***Going to Hajj With the Intention to Repent***
- ***Before You Regret***



After pilgrims properly finish all the prescribed rites — while cloaking themselves with the best of all manners, committing themselves to the Sunnah of the Prophet, and devoting all their movements and even their silence to Allah alone — they still have some things to observe after returning to family and property. This makes their Hajj a never-ending ritual, even if they never perform it again in their life. This can be explained as follows:

1. During Hajj, the pilgrims have attained a great dose of taqwa (piety), and hence, after their return they should be in constant fear of Allah and His mighty status. They should observe all their moves in order not to violate any of the rules set by Allah the Almighty to guide humanity to the right path.

2. Throughout Hajj, the pilgrims should have realized the reality of tawheed (oneness of Allah).

Thus after their return they should sincerely observe the following:

a. Invoke none but Allah

b. Seek refuge from none but Allah

c. Ask no one but Allah for everything

d. Make oaths in no one's name but Allah's

e. Dedicate vows only to Allah

f. Recognize that legislation is the right of Allah alone

On the contrary, if pilgrims return with any sort of lack or distortion in their creed, they have learned nothing from that magnificent journey.

3. It is the responsibility of each and every pilgrim to observe the moral code observed during Hajj. So if, before going on Hajj, any were reluctant to abide by the best of all manners, they should, after their return, be more committed and constant in observing the moral system of Islam, which is a unique and distinguished one.

At the end, there is one remaining question: What is the value of an accepted Hajj, a Hajj mabrur?

To answer this question, let's recall only three Prophetic hadiths.

Abu Hurairah narrated: Allah's Messenger was asked, "'What is the best deed?' He replied, 'To believe in Allah and His Messenger (Muhammad).'" The questioner then asked, "What is the next (in goodness)?" He replied, "To participate in jihad in Allah's cause." The questioner again asked, "What is the next (in goodness)?" He replied, "To perform Hajj mabrur" (Al-Bukhari).

Abu Hurairah narrated: Allah's Messenger said, 'Whoever performs Hajj to this House (Ka`bah) and does not approach his wife for sexual relations nor commits sins (while performing Hajj), he will come out as sinless as a newborn child' (Al-Bukhari).

`A'ishah narrated that she said, 'O Allah's Messenger! We consider jihad as the best deed. Should we not fight in Allah's cause?' He said, 'The best jihad (for women) is Hajj mabrur' (Al-Bukhari).

I do not think I need to add anything to this. What can anyone say after the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) says and teaches?

But what does all this mean? It means that pilgrims must spare no effort in adhering to these criteria and observances in order to render their Hajj valid and acceptable by Allah. If these criteria were not met while they are performing the rituals, their Hajj will be nothing more than one similar to the pilgrimage the polytheists used to perform in pre-Islamic times and it will bear no fruits whatsoever.

Would anyone like to go on Hajj — with all the difficulty and tremendous expenses of the journey — and come back empty-handed, without any reward from Allah? I doubt it.

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Related Links

- ***[Lifelong Hajj](#)***
- ***[After Hajj: A Continuous Supplication](#)***
- ***[Hajj - A model 4 Life](#)***

The Message of Pilgrimage

All About Ihram

By Muhammad Fathi **

IslamOnline.net Shari`ah Editor



After you have made the necessary preparations — paid your debts, repented, absolved yourself of any wrongdoing toward others, etc. — you are ready to take the first step in the blessed journey: ihram.

What is ihram?

The word ihram is used for three meanings:

- 1. The two pieces of cloth worn by male pilgrims.***
- 2. The very act of starting Hajj or `Umrah by making the intention that one is now starting Hajj or `Umrah and saying the Talbiyah.***
- 3. The state of consecration in which the pilgrims are during Hajj or `Umrah. After putting on ihram (first meaning) and making the intention of ihram (second meaning), the pilgrims enter automatically the state of ihram, which requires them to avoid certain things. Below are more details on ihram in its three senses.***

How do I put on ihram?

Cleanliness is recommended before putting on the clothing of ihram. It is recommended that you clip finger and toe nails, shave off armpit and pubic hair, comb the hair and beard, trim the moustache, bathe (perform ghusl) or at least make wudu'. Men, but not women, are also recommended to put on perfume.

For men, the clothing of ihram comprises two sheets of cloth. One is wrapped round the upper part of the body except the head. It is normally draped over both shoulders but in certain times it is to be draped over one shoulder. This will be discussed later. The other is wrapped round the lower part of the body. You can fix this piece by a belt, a money belt, or a pin.

For women, the ihram is ordinary loose-fitting clothes that cover all of the body except the face and hands. In some countries it is a tradition for women to wear special clothes, such as white dresses or black cloaks, for ihram, but this is not required.

There are no restrictions as for women's footwear. But for men, footwear should not cover the toes and ankles. Socks and shoes, therefore, should not be used by men.

Putting on ihram is the first step in Hajj and `Umrah. As mentioned above, you first put on ihram and then make the intention of starting Hajj or `Umrah (the second meaning of ihram). You can put on ihram in your home or wherever you want, provided that when you intend to start Hajj or `Umrah, you are dressed in the clothing of ihram.

As you will see later in this article, there are prescribed places that you should not pass before putting on ihram and making the intention of starting Hajj or `Umrah.

How, where, and when do I start pilgrimage?

Now after putting on the clothing of ihram, you are ready to start your pilgrimage by making the intention of starting Hajj or `Umrah. It is recommended to make the intention after performing one of the obligatory prayers or after praying two rak`ahs. You express this intention by saying, in the case of `Umrah, "Labbayka, Allahuma, `Umrah" (O Allah, I answer Your call by performing `Umrah). As for Hajj, the intention varies according to the mode of Hajj you choose:

- 1. In ifrad Hajj, you are going to perform only Hajj and therefore you make the intention of Hajj saying "Labbayka, Allahuma, Hajjan" (O Allah, I answer Your call by performing Hajj).**
- 2. In tamatu `Hajj, you are going to perform a full `Umrah followed by a break and then a full Hajj. Therefore, you make the intention of `Umrah saying "Labbayk, Allahuma, `Umrah" (O Allah, I answer Your call by performing `Umrah). On Dhul-Hijjah 8, you start Hajj so you make then the intention of Hajj saying "Labbayk, Allahuma, Hajjan" (O Allah, I answer Your call by performing Hajj).**
- 3. In qiran Hajj, you are going to combine `Umrah with Hajj, so you make the intention of both `Umrah and Hajj saying "Labbayk, Allahuma, `Umratan wa Hajjan" (O Allah, I answer Your call by performing `Umrah and Hajj).**

There are certain places at which you should make your intention. These places are called mawaqit (plural of miqat). You should not pass your fixed miqat without putting on the cloth of ihram and making the intention of ihram. These are five places:

- 1. Dhul-Hulaifah, a place southwest of Madinah and 18 km from its mosque. It is the miqat for the people coming from Madinah and beyond.**
- 2. Dhat-`Iraq, a place 94 km to the northeast of Makkah. It is the miqat for the people coming from Iraq and beyond.**
- 3. Al-Juhfah, a place 187 km to the northwest of Makkah. This was the miqat for the people coming from or passing through Syria and Egypt. It was on the eastern coast of the Red Sea, but it has completely disappeared and Rabigh (to the north of Al-Juhfah) is used as this miqat now.**
- 4. Qarn Al-Manazil, 94 km to the east of Makkah. It is the miqat for the people of Najd and the pilgrims who pass by it.**
- 5. Yalamlam, 54 km to the south of Makkah. It is the miqat for those coming from Yemen and the pilgrims who pass by it.**

If you are traveling by land, it is easy to stop at the miqat and make the intention. People traveling by air are usually notified when reaching the miqat or a short time before so that they can make the intention. In such a case you are supposed to be ready, having put on your ihram clothing in advance.

As mentioned in the article "[About Hajj and `Umrah](#)", there is a prescribed time for Hajj: the months of Shawwal, Dhul-Qi`dah and Dhul-Hijjah. So making the intention of Hajj should take place in the period from Shawwal 1 to Dhul-Hijjah 9. It is not possible to start Hajj on Dhul-Hijjah 10 or afterwards because this means missing the ritual of staying in `Arafah on the day or night of Dhul-Hijjah 9, which is one of the pillars of Hajj.

What are the prohibitions while in the state of ihram?

Having started Hajj or `Umrah, you are now in the state of ihram. From now until you finish the `Umrah or until you are done with the major tasks of Hajj, you are supposed to abandon certain things (called mahzurat al-ihram) or the don'ts of the state of ihram. They are the following:

- 1. Clipping nails and shaving hair from any part of the body.*
- 2. Using perfume in any way.*
- 3. Making foreplay, speaking lustful words, touching your spouse with desire, and having sexual intercourse.*
- 4. Contracting marriage.*
- 5. Hunting or eating from game meat. Pilgrims are forbidden to hunt, help in hunting, or eat of any land game prepared for their sake, at their suggestion, or with their help.*
- 6. For men, covering the head or wearing clothes sewn to fit the body's limbs. So wearing shirts, robes, trousers, turbans, hats, gloves, socks, etc. is prohibited.*
- 7. For women, wearing Niqab or gloves.*

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Related Links

- [About Hajj and `Umrah](#)
- [How to Make `Umrah](#)
- [How to Make Hajj](#)

The Prophet's Farewell Sermon

The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) delivered this sermon on the 9 Dhul-Hijjah 10 a.h. in the valley of Mount `Arafat, during his final Hajj, known as the Farewell Hajj. The contents of the message were collected from different narrations, and there are other parts of it that are not mentioned here. After praising, and thanking Allah, he said:

(O people, lend me an attentive ear, for I know not whether, after this year, I will ever be among you again. Therefore, listen to what I am saying to you very carefully and take these words to those who could not be present today.

O people, just as you regard this month, this day, this city as sacred, so regard the life and property of every Muslim as a sacred trust. Return the goods entrusted to you to their rightful owners. Hurt no one so that no one may hurt you. Remember that you will indeed meet your Lord, and that He will indeed reckon your deeds. Allah has forbidden you to take interest; therefore, all interest obligations shall henceforth be waived. Your capital, however, is yours to keep. You will neither inflict nor suffer inequity. Allah has judged that there shall be no interest and that all interest due to al-`Abbas ibn `Abdul-Muttalib shall henceforth be waived.

Every right arising out of homicide in pre-Islamic days is henceforth waived, and the first such right I waive is that arising from the murder of Rabi`ah ibn Al-Harith [a relative of the Prophet]. O mankind, the unbelievers indulge in tampering with the calendar in order to make permissible that which Allah forbade, and to forbid that which Allah has made permissible. With Allah the months are twelve; four of them are holy; three of these (holy months) are successive and one occurs singly between the months of Jumadah and Sha`ban.

O people, beware of Satan, for the safety of your religion. He has lost all hope that he will ever be able to lead you astray in big things, so beware of following him in small things.

O people, it is true that you have certain rights with regard to your women, but they also have rights over you. If they abide by your right then to them belongs the right to be fed and clothed in kindness. Treat your women well and be kind to them, for they are your partners and committed helpers. And it is your right that they do not make friends with anyone of whom you do not approve, as well as never commit adultery.

O people, listen to me in earnest. Worship Allah, say your five daily prayers, fast during the month of Ramadan, and give the share of Zakah in your wealth. Perform Hajj if you can afford to. All mankind is from Adam and Eve. An Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab, nor does a non-Arab have any superiority over an Arab; also a white has no superiority over a black, nor does a black have any superiority over a white except by piety and good action. Learn that every Muslim is the brother of another Muslim and that Muslims constitute one brotherhood. Nothing shall be legitimate to a Muslim that belongs to a fellow Muslim unless it was given freely and willingly. Do not, therefore, do injustice to yourselves.

Remember, one day you will appear before Allah and answer for your deeds. So beware, do not stray from the path of righteousness after I am gone.

O people, no prophet or messenger will come after me, and no new faith will be born. Reason well, therefore, O people, and understand my words that I convey to you. I leave behind me two things, the Qur'an and my example, the Sunnah, and if you follow these you will never go astray.

All those who listen to me shall pass on my words to others, and those to others again; and may the last ones understand my words better than those who listen to me directly. Be my witness, O Allah, that I have conveyed Your message to Your people.)

Wisdom behind hajj Rituals



The Excellence of the Sacred Mosque

The wisdom behind the excellence of the Sacred Mosque is its being the first mosque established for people to head to from high and low to exalt the rituals of their religion and glorify their Lord. Almighty Allah says: "Lo! The first Sanctuary appointed for mankind was that at Mecca, a blessed place, a guidance to the peoples. Wherein are plain memorials (of Allah's guidance); the place where Abraham stood up to pray; and whosoever entereth it is safe." (Al `Imran: 96) Even birds in their nests, are safe while being in that sacred place.



Some Arabs used to commit murder and then hurry to enter that Sacred Mosque and put some wool around their necks as a reminder to any avenger that they are in the Sacred Mosque, and thus were never harmed. Many were the tyrants who tried to demolish this Sacred Mosque but none of them succeeded; rather, they never had a safe returning. The Owners of the Elephant were the best example of this, for Allah sent against them swarms of flying birds. Which pelted them with stones of baked clay. And made them like green crops devoured (by cattle).

On Way to the Holy Lands

When a pilgrim leaves home, whole family and property and that differs from all other remember his aim, his goal and Allah, the Owner of the whole His Sacred House. This is a when he will see His Lord, and conceitedness or showing off in Allah and complete



he realizes that he has left his migrated to Allah in a journey journeys. He should always his purpose. He is migrating to Universe and visiting Him in step towards the Hereafter be accepted by Him. No should be there. It is just trust surrender to Him.

If it happens that he dies during the journey, how happy will he be in the Hereafter and how great will be his reward. Allah says: "Whoso migrateth for the cause of Allah will find much refuge and abundance in the earth, and whoso forsaketh his home, a fugitive unto Allah and His messenger, and death overtaketh him, his reward is then incumbent on Allah. Allah is ever Forgiving, Merciful." (An-Nisa': 100)



Hajj, why?



The advent of the Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, marked the end of severe wars, conflicts and relentless attacks that were spread like wild fire among Arabs of the Pre-Islamic Period. Malevolence, grudge and envy were the normal feelings that ruled the hearts at that period. Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, came and brought with him mercy, love, unity and affection. For more strengthening of the ties of Muslims with one another and for a better binding of their hearts together, the Divine Legislator established this obligation of Hajj in which all Muslims meet in a great conference, know one another and exchange benefits. Once this occurs, their sense of belonging to one religion will be realized and all barriers of time, distance, color, race will be cast aside.

In addition to this spiritual benefit, there are many worldly benefits such as knowing the wealth of one another's country and make industrial and agricultural projects together for the benefit of the whole Muslim Ummah. Furthermore, if there is any oppressed group of Muslims in any country, their Muslim brothers will be able to know their condition and help removing this oppression and saving this group.

A person may say that Hajj has existed before Islam and goes back to the days of the Prophet Ibrahim, then we say that Hajj that existed before Islam was totally different from that introduced by Islam. Moreover, pagan Arabs added things to the rituals of Hajj that had never been there during the days of Ibrahim. It is also noteworthy that Muslims are the real heirs of Ibrahim and Islam is the true religion of Ibrahim, peace and blessings be upon him. Allah the Almighty says: "A right religion, the community of Abraham, the upright, who was no idolater." (Al-An`am: 161)

Unfortunately, the Westerners grasped the wisdom behind this great Divine obligation while we, Muslims are still heedless of this greatest Islamic conference of Hajj. They comprehended that Hajj is somewhat a reinforcement for the Muslim Ummah or universal community and thus they were and still are cautious about it and put it in their consideration all the time. As for common Muslims, they perform that great ritual as if it is a religious obligation only, heedless of all the other benefits and gains they can get from such an annual and international conference. May Allah show all Muslims the right path and guide them to His upright track. Ameen!

Prescribing Hajj in This Time of the Year

One should know that Allah, the Almighty, has the full right to prescribe and assign any time for the revelation of His mercy this way, Allah (Glorified be of Divine Decree and other is to be answerable.



The Hajj comes during the

upon His faithful servants. In He) assigned Friday, the Night times when Du`a' (invocation)

sacred months of the lunar

calendar in which many blessings and sorts of mercy are being showered on the believers everywhere all over the globe. Thus, the possibility of obtaining these blessings and favors in Hajj during these months is duplicated. Indeed, Allah has never prescribed any hardship for His faithful believers. On the contrary, He made all and everything of great benefit for them.

Unsewn Clothes, Why?

The Divine Legislator has commanded us not to wear sewn clothes and not to cover our heads so that one shows utter humbleness and surrender to Allah. Wearing these two pieces of cloth, man says to his Lord: "I have no control over my own affairs nor over any other thing in this world. It is You Who has control over everything. Here I am, bare of everything save for two pieces of cloth that cover my `Awrah (private parts)."

It has another great significance that it makes the person like a newborn wrapped in a piece of cloth. This in fact is a sign of being in a dire need to Allah's help and His guidance in every matter.

A third secret is that wearing these two pieces, a pilgrim remembers the state of people on the Day of Judgment when all people will stand naked and barefooted to be reckoned by Allah and either punished or rewarded.



Ihram and Talbiyah from the Miqat



When a pilgrim reaches the Miqat and embarks on uttering Talbiyah, he feels himself answering the call of the Almighty and fulfilling His obligation. There is a mixed feeling of hope and fear in his heart. There is also a feeling of utter surrender and dependence on Allah. Sufyan Ibn `Uyaynah said: "Ali Ibn Al-Husain, may Allah be pleased with both of them, performed Hajj. When he made Ihram and then rode his mount, he became pale and shivered and could not make Talbiyah. When asked about this, he said: 'I fear that it is not accepted from me.'"



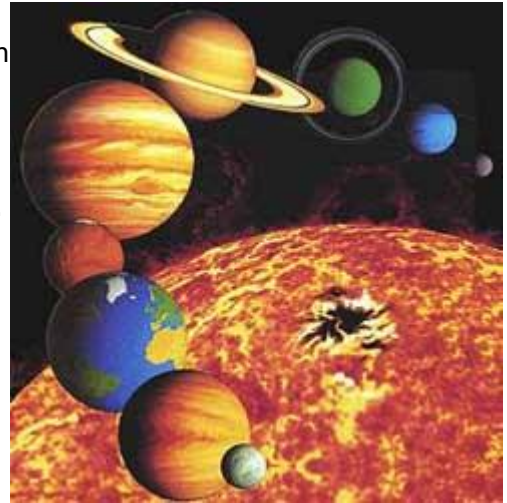
Raising his voice with Talbiyah, a pilgrim remembers that he answers the call of the Almighty and that there will be another call on the Last Day, when people will be either accepted or refused, punished or rewarded, elevated or debased.

Tawaf Is a Cosmic Law

Prof. Dr. Ahmad Fouad Pasha, Cairo University

Allah Almighty says: [And He it is Who created the night and the day, and the sun and the moon. They float, each in an orbit.] (Al-Anbiyaa': 33)

This glorious verse refers to a scientific fact concerning the system of the universe. Scientific discoveries have proved that we live in a huge universe that depends on revolution. The earth revolves round the sun once a year, the moon revolves around the earth once per lunar month, and the other planets of the solar system also revolve round the sun, each in its own orbit. Besides, most of these planets have moons that revolve around them, each, also, in its own orbit. Astronomers have discovered more than 60 of these moons so far.



The solar system, likewise, orbits a center of our galaxy, the Milky Way. This galaxy consists of more than 130 billion stars. Galaxies, in turn, revolve round a center that only Almighty Allah knows.

The law of revolution applies also to atoms, the smallest units of elements that cannot be seen even by microscopes. An atom is composed of a nucleus whose diameter is less than a millionth of a millimeter. An atom is surrounded by electrons that move round the atom in an orbit. Since all matter in the universe—whether solid, liquid, or gaseous—consists of atoms, this means that the law of revolution applies to everything: stars, planets, moons, animals, plants, sand, seas, air, and so on.

This includes cells as well. The cytoplasm in the cell moves around the nucleus.

There is a common factor between the orbital movements of all the objects referred to above, this is, their revolution is counterclockwise.

Contemplating the above lines, we come to realize that revolution is a cosmic law.

With a believer's meditation upon such a scientific fact, another image of revolution is brought to one's mind: the pilgrims' circumambulation of the Ka`bah, which is a basic ritual of Hajj in Islam.

Circumambulating the Ka`bah is a symbolic act of worship, whose wisdom may be hidden from some. It indicates the believers' utter submission to Almighty Allah alone. The pilgrims go to Hajj in response to the divine order that Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) conveyed to people. Allah Almighty says: [And (remember) when We prepared for Abraham the place of the (holy) House, saying: Ascribe thou no thing as partner unto Me, and purify My House for those who make the round (thereof) and those who stand and those who bow and make prostration. And proclaim unto mankind the pilgrimage. They will come unto thee on foot and on every lean camel; they will come from every deep ravine.] (Al-Hajj: 26-27)

This signifies that the Ka`bah is the spiritual center of the believers. It refers to the close bond that should be between a believer and his Lord. A believer turns toward the Ka`bah five times a day during the prescribed ritual Prayers.

A pilgrim circumambulates the Ka`bah as if he or she is a celestial body orbiting another greater body. Circumambulation of the Ka`bah is to be performed counterclockwise. This indicates that there is a joint factor between a pilgrim's expressing his ultimate faith in Almighty Allah by circumambulating the Ka`bah in that way and between the cosmic law of revolution discussed above. This indicates that there is consistency between the obligations of

worship in Islam and the natural laws that govern the universe, which indicates that they all belong to only one source, that is, Almighty Allah.

This proves the truthfulness of the call of Islam that there is no god but Almighty Allah. Thus, Islam is the true religion that provides humankind with a comprehensive view in conformity with the divine truth that is apparent in the natural laws of the universe.

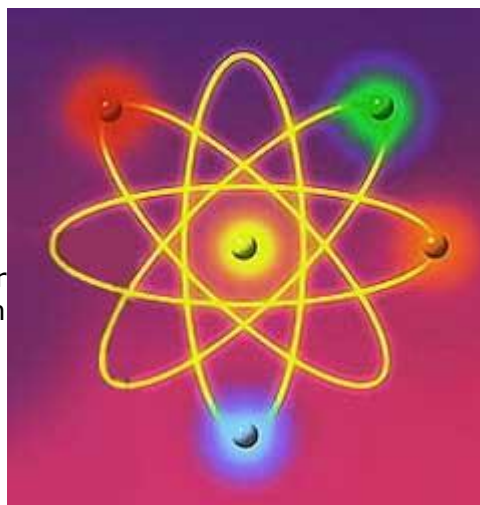
Tawaf Direction and the Movement of the Universe

By Prof. Dr. `Abd al-Hakam `Abd al-Latif As-Sa`idi,

Al-Azhar University

Allah Almighty says what means: [And go around the ancient House] (Al-Hajj: 29) and [And purify My House for those who make the round (thereof) and those who stand and those who bow and make prostration] (Al-Hajj: 26).

The Arabic word *tawaf* linguistically means going around a fixed core. The whole universe-from the smallest atoms up to the largest galaxies-are all obedient servants of Allah, Who has created and managed them. The worship of matter in general is a kind of movement; that is to say, every atom in the universe has a special system of movement and has its own orbit. The electrons in the atom go around a core called the nucleus, in a tiny planetary-like system. The planets also revolve around the sun, each in a separate orbit, with specific speed.



In the same way, the Holy Ka`bah, which Allah Almighty has made the first sanctuary appointed for mankind on earth, is located in the center of the earth, as proved by the modern astronomical research. It is like the heart in the body. Allah Almighty connected the Muslims' worship with that holy place; hence, He obligated them to go to the Ka`bah for Hajj, and Tawaf is, thus, one of the most important rituals of Hajj.

The direction in which Muslims go around the Ka`bah during Tawaf agrees with the prevailing movement in the universe around a fixed axis. A pilgrim starts Tawaf from the Black Stone; he makes the Ka`bah to his left and goes around it till he reaches the Black Stone again and starts another round and so on. This establishes a relation between a believer's heart and the Ka`bah, the heart of the earth, and, thus, he draws closer to Allah (the Creator of the Ka`bah), senses true love for Allah, and enjoys His company.

The Sun and the Moon Float in Space

**By Prof. Dr. `Abd al-Hakam `Abd al-Latif As-Sa`idi,
Al-Azhar University**

Allah Almighty says what means: [And a sign to them is the night: We draw forth from it the day, then lo! they are in the dark; And the sun runs on to a term appointed for it; that is the ordinance of the Mighty, the Knowing. And (as for) the moon, We have ordained for it stages till it becomes again as an old dry palm branch. It is not for the sun to overtake the moon, nor doth the night outstrip the day. They float each in an orbit.] (Ya-Sin: 37-40)



Night and day are closely related, yet they seem to carry antonymous indications in the sense that night indicates darkness and stillness, while day refers to light and movement. The moon and the sun are also closely related, though the moon appears in the night, while the sun rises during the day. The moon reflects light from the sun back to the earth.

Allah Almighty has created the universe in an accurate and marvelous system. The sun, the earth, the moon, and all other planets with the bodies and moons related to them float in space with a certain speed and in a certain direction. The sun with its solar system and many other stars are located in a huge galaxy, the Milky Way. The stars in the disk of the galaxy orbit around its center, each at a speed relevant to its distance from the center. The sun moves at a speed of more than 700 kilometers (435 miles) per second and takes about 200 million light years to complete one revolution around the center of the galaxy.

The sun cannot catch up with the moon, nor can the moon overtake the sun, for each moves in a separate orbit that makes their overtaking each other impossible. The Qur'anic reference to the movements of the sun and the moon as floating in spheres is in conformity with the scientific discoveries made in that respect, which shows the truthfulness of the Qur'an. Glory be to Allah Who created the universe in the best way.

The Water Cycle on Earth

**By Prof. Dr. `Abd al-Hakam `Abd al-Latif As-Sa`idi,
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Allah Almighty says what means: [And We send down from the sky water in measure, and We give it lodging in the earth, and lo! We are Able to withdraw it.] (Al-Mu'minun: 18)

Water has a certain organized cycle. It evaporates from the seas, lakes, reservoirs, rivers, and streams and rises into the atmosphere. Water vapor of water is not seen by the naked eye.

As wind hits a mountainside, the air is forced upwards, causing the water vapor to cool and condense, forming rain clouds.

When clouds become heavy with liquid droplets (or ice particles in cold climates), rain (or snow) falls, flowing over the land into rivers and streams.

Some of the water that falls onto the land seeps through the soil and forms another store of water: groundwater basins. Some geological movements may occur that cause groundwater basins to fracture and the water stored in them to move to other parts.

Each rain cloud carries a certain electric charge, negative or positive. The wind plays an important systematic role in the process of rain falling, which is referred to in the Qur'an as well.

According to the verse quoted above, Allah Almighty sends down water from the sky and controls where on the earth this water goes and settles. This proves that there is a systematic way for water movement or the water cycle on the earth. This all is done by Almighty Allah's will. He may also, if He wills, deprive us of water as He, Most High, says: [We are Able to withdraw it.] (Al-Mu'minun: 18)

But He Almighty is All-Generous; He keeps bestowing us with the great blessing of water.

Ar-Ramal: Walking Briskly in Dignity

Ar-Ramal is the ritual where male pilgrims are required to walk briskly with their chests thrust forward and with their shoulders rolling slightly during the first three circuits of *Tawaf ul-Qudum* (Arrival Tawaf). Ladies are not required to practice *Ramal*.

Ar-Ramal was prescribed for Muslims as when they carry out this ritual they look like a wide ocean or a huge army; the matter which makes Muslims appear very strong in the eyes of their enemies. Really, this scene is enough to frighten the enemies of Islam and to persuade them shun their harm and evil intended for Muslims. Also, may this great scene soften and penetrate the hearts of those infidels and polytheists and make them surrender to Allah's Will and thus find nothing better than embracing His True Religion, Islam.



Kissing the Black Stone

The Black Stone is one of the most important things related to the Sacred Mosque. Concerning it, the Prophet, peace and "The Black Stone is the Right which He shakes hands with His with his brothers." `Umar Ibn the Black Stone and say: "I that can neither harm nor saw the Messenger of Allah done so." Then, he shed tears.



Concerning blessings be upon him, said: Hand of Allah in the land with servants as a man shakes hands Al-Khattab is reported to kiss know that you are just a stone benefit. Had it not been that I kissing you, I would not have

Now, you have understood the wisdom behind kissing the Black Stone. Someone may say: "It is just a stone, where is the significance then?" We say: "Almighty Allah chooses some of His creatures to be the deposit of the secrets of His Wisdom and the sign of His Power."

The sun and the moon, though being mere inanimate things, represent many Divine secrets that the whole human life depends on them. This wisdom being represented by the sun and the moon is the same that exists in case of the Black Stone.

The Black Stone:

In The Gospel, The Torah and The Psalms

The Black Stone, the corner by Ibrahim, peace and blessings symbol of being the corner This is referred to in the read: "The stone refused by stone."

The sons of Isma`il were seen that the Covenant was made is the view of Jews. Though as clarified by Prophet David,



stone of the Ka`bah, was put be upon him, as a sign or stone in the Kingdom of Allah. Psalms. In the Psalm 118, we builder hath become the corner

as being outcast by Allah and with the sons of Isaac only. This being refused by the builders, this stone would be the corner

stone.

Jesus later clarified to his followers that the orchard of grapes (the Kingdom of God) will be given to other farmers. In the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 21, we read: "Jesus said unto them: 'Have not thou read in books: The stone all builders refused hath been made the corner stone by God. This occurred though we think of as surprising. Thus I say unto you, the Kingdom of God is taken from you and given to a nation who will grow it.'"

This rejected stone refers to the nation refused, the sons of Isma`il and this Black Stone is the sole and only stone cut without human hands. This Black Stone will preserve the House of Abraham and the nation is that of the true religion, Islam, the heirs of Abraham. Allah the Almighty says in His Glorious Qur'an: {Abraham was not a Jew, nor yet a Christian; but he was an upright man who had surrendered (to Allah), and he was not of the idolaters}. (Al `Imran: 67)

Description of the Black Stone

The Black Stone is fixed in the eastern-south corner of the Ka`bah. It is one and half a meter above the ground level. It has a diameter of about thirty centimeters. The Stone is a hard rock of irregular oval shape, black with reddish tint; it has red dots and yellow wavy lines which appeared when some broken pieces were soldered and joined.

The Stone was removed from its original place many times by the tribes of Gurhum, Iyad, the `Amaliqah (i.e. the Giants), and Khuza`ah. Finally, it was taken by Al-Qaramitah who kept it from 317 A.H to 339 A.H when the Abbaside Caliph, Al-Muti` Lillah send it back to Makkah and covered it with a belt of silver and fixed it in its original place.

In 363 A.H a man entered the Mosque and tried to smash the stone but a man from Yemen stabbed him with a dagger and killed him. Also, in 414 A.H some Batini Shiite men tried to break the Stone but were killed on the spot. In Muharram 1351 A.H an Afghani man stole a piece of the Stone and another piece of the drape of the Ka`bah and two pieces of the silver belt and consequently he was sentenced to death. Later in Rabi` Ath-Thani, late King `Abdul-`Aziz Al Sa`ud put the stolen pieces back in their original places.

During the reign of the Sultan `Abdul Majid II, he sent a golden belt to be used for fixing the Black Stone. This occurred in 1268 A.H and was the first time the Black Stone is placed in a golden belt. In 1281 A.H Sultan `Abdul `Aziz the Ottoman sent another silver belt. In 1331 A.H the silver cover was replaced with another and in 1290 A.H a silver cover with a hole in the middle was made so as to enable people to see the Stone and kiss it.

The First One Who Fixed It With Silver:

It was Ibn Az-Zubair who used silver in fixing the Black Stone when it caught fire. Later, as the silver became unstable, Caliph Harun Ar-Rashid ordered for fixing the corner of the Ka`bah and the Black Stone by diamonds and covering it with silver.

Why Do Pilgrims Cling to the Ka`bah Curtains?

The part of the Ka`bah between its door and *Hajar ul Aswad* (the Black Stone) is called Al-Mulatazam. This is a specially sacred part of the Ka`bah. It is recommended that, if possible, the pilgrim should touch the Ka`bah at Multazam and offer supplications to Allah. However, this is not a part of the official rites of Hajj. It is the habit of pilgrims to cling to the Ka`bah curtains and attach themselves to the Multazam in a way that show passion and love for the Sacred House and its Lord, Allah the Almighty. Through doing this, they seek Allah's Blessing and Protection against Hell-fire that it might approach any part of their bodies.

Thus, when anyone is honored with visiting the Ka`bah, he should cling to its curtains, seek Allah's forgiveness and safety from Hell-fire and he should show complete submission to the Will of Allah the Almighty, the only One Who can give protection, safety, provision and forgiveness.

Safa and Marwah: An Old History

Safa and Marwah are the names of two mountain-hills where one of the most important rituals of Hajj is performed. A pilgrim goes between both of them as if searching for something that he lost. In the past, when she ran out of water, Hajar, wife of the Prophet Ibrahim, peace and blessings be upon him, went here and there between the two mountain-hills searching for water.

She was supplicating to Almighty Allah to help her in finding some water in that barren place. A miracle occurred when this barren land oozed water from beneath the feet of her baby. Up till now, millions and millions of people drink from this blessed water.



When a pilgrim goes between Safa and Marwah, he implores Allah to save him from want and to shower His mercy upon him as He showered His mercy upon Hajar. This going also marks a reminder lest we forget this great miracle and Divine Favor.

Almighty Allah says: "Lo! (the mountains) Al-Safa and Al-Marwah are among the indications of Allah. It is therefore no sin for him who is on pilgrimage to the House (of God) or visiteth it, to go around them (as the pagan custom is). And he who doeth good of his own accord (for him), Lo! Allah is Responsive, Aware." (Al-Baqara: 158)

Also, the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, says: "Go between Safa and Marwah, for Allah has obliged you to do so."

Running to Remember a Mother and Her Trust in Allah

Muslims who perform the Hajj or Umra must run in the middle portion of the distance between Safa and Marwa seven times. Safa and Marwa are two hills close to the Kaba. This is a commemoration of one mother's sacrifice for her son.

That mother was Hajira (may Allah be pleased with her). Her son was the Prophet Ismail (peace be upon him). Prophet Ibrahim (peace be upon him) was Hajira's husband, and Ismail's father.

Hajira's example of sacrifice took place when she and her baby was left in the valley of Makkah by Allah's order as pioneers to start a civilization.

Here was the wife of a Prophet, the princess of the king of Egypt, left with her child in the desert. All for the sake of pleasing our Creator.

As Prophet Ibrahim headed for his next responsibility from Allah, he reached an area where Hajira and Ismail could not see him. At that point, he turned back, raising his hands in Dua and said,

"O Our Lord! I have made of my offspring to dwell in a valley without cultivation by Your Sacred House; in order Our Lord, that they may establish regular Prayer: so fill the hearts of some among men with love towards them, and feed them with fruits, so that they may give thanks." (Quran 14:37).

Hajira returned to her place and started drinking water from the water-skin, and her milk increased for her child.

But when she had used up all of the water, she ascended the Safa hill and looked, hoping to see somebody.

The area was empty.

She came down and then ran up to Marwa hill. She ran to and fro (between the two hills) many times, then went to check on her baby Ismail.

He was dying. And she could find no water for him or herself.

She could not watch her son perish. How could any mother?

'If I go and look, I may find somebody,' she told herself. Then she went and ascended the Safa hill and looked for a long while but could not find anybody.

In all, Hajira ran seven rounds between Safa and Marwa, in the hot, waterless valley, where her thirsty baby lay.

She told herself to go back and check on Ismail. But suddenly she heard a voice: it was the Angel Jibreel.

'Help us if you can offer any help,' she said to him.

The angel hit the earth with his heel and water gushed out. Hajira was astonished and started digging. Allah, as she had rightly proclaimed, had not abandoned them.

Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him), in the Hadith in Bukhari in which much of this incident is narrated, said, "If she (Hajira) had left the water, (flow naturally without her intervention), it would have been flowing on the surface of the earth."

Today we are bearing the fruits of this mother's struggle and sacrifice. Many of us drink and have drunk from the well of Zamzam. And those of us who have made Hajj run in a much more comfortable way than Hajira ever did, between Safa and Marwa.

Her commitment to her son, her sense of urgency and her unshakable faith in Allah in such harsh circumstances are all examples of not only what an excellent mother she was, but also what a strong believer in Allah she was.

If you're going to Hajj this year, Insha Allah, remember this incident and think of that great mother, in whose memory Muslims today run between Safa and Marwa. Also think about your own mother, and how she too, would probably have done the same for you.

Complete Shaving of the Head

Halq means the complete shaving of the head by the male pilgrim on the 10th of *Zul Hijjah*. This is the last thing he does before dissolving or getting out of the state of *Ihram*. For female pilgrims, the requirements of *Halq* and *Taqseer* (shortening one's hair) are satisfied if they trim their hair by approximately half an inch.



The rationale behind shaving the head is that before leaving the sacred places, the pilgrim should pay farewell for the Sacred House. Because of the solemnity of the Sacred House and its unlimited honor, one should pay it farewell while he is totally clean and completely far from filth and impurity. When a servant intends to pay farewell to his master, he is asked to do this while he is in the best of all forms. So, what about the one who intends to pay farewell to Allah the Almighty!.

Arafah and the Day of Resurrection

One should know that this place was always trodden by Allah's Prophets, peace and blessing be upon them all, who used to adorn and worship Allah there. This act of worship was inherited by all Muslims all over the world in a way to follow the Sunnah of Allah's Prophets, peace and blessing be upon them all, which is so essential in the religion of Islam.



Also, the standing of Muslims on this mount chanting "*Labbayka Allahumma Labbayk*," which means "Here I am at Your service, O God, Here I am!" and asking Him for forgiveness is liable to make their *Du`a'* (invocation) answerable in these times when they left their families and properties heading for answering Allah's Call that was raised by Ibrahim, peace and blessings be upon him.

Standing in Al-Mash`ar Al-Haram

Al-Mash`ar Al-Haram is the Valley between Muzdalifah and Mina, where pilgrims should make a *Du`a`* after they have slept in Muzdalifah while they are going to Makkah to throw *Jamrat Al-Aqabah* on the morning of the 10th of Dhul-Hijjah.

The rationale behind this is that the Arabs during the Pre-Islamic period used to gather together in that arena to carry out literary competitions and discussions regarding lineage and dignity and other material values of this present life. However, with the advent of Islam, Allah the Almighty prescribed for Muslims standing in the same place but to do something better. That's to stand in that very place to remember and glorify Allah the Almighty, the only and One Creator. In this way, they show their dignity and elevated status over the polytheists and to send them a clear message indicating that there is neither honor, nor dignity, nor glory save in Islam; in fact, this is a great piece of wisdom.



Spending the Night in Muzdalifah

The pilgrim spends the whole day walking towards Mina. In order for him to have some rest and to relieve himself, the Divine Legislator (Allah the Almighty) prescribed for him spend the night in Muzdalifah as a sign of mercy and pity for his labor all day long. It is a fact that Islam is the religion of mercy and easiness; Allah the Almighty never burdens a person with that which it cannot endure or carry out.



Throwing the Pebbles

Throwing the pebbles is meant for stoning Satan, may Allah curse him.

The pilgrims return to Mina on the 10th, and throw seven pebbles at a stone pillar that represents the devil. This symbolizes Ibrahim's (Abraham) throwing stones at Satan when he tried to dissuade him from sacrificing his son, Isma`il. Then the pilgrims sacrifice a sheep, reminiscing the story of Ibrahim, who, in place of his son, sacrificed a sheep that Allah had provided as a substitute.

The devil is a real malicious enemy to mankind in general and Muslims in particular; he wants to fetter and chain them with sins and disobedience and to do what may invalidate their pilgrimage through whispering to them as he tried to whisper to Prophet Abraham (Ibrahim), peace and blessing be upon him. Satan does this only out of his anger and dissatisfaction of the mercies being showered on the pilgrims on that solemn occasion.

For this, throwing the pebbles to stone Satan is a sign of following the act of Prophet Abraham, peace and blessing be upon him, and a way to degrade and humiliate Satan and show him that he is unable to misguide the pilgrim or drag him into the hole of sinning.

No doubt, all these are great pieces of wisdom meant for people who have sound understanding.



The Prophet's Farewell Sermon

The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) delivered this sermon on the 9 Dhul-Hijjah 10 a.h. in the valley of Mount `Arafat, during his final Hajj, known as the Farewell Hajj. The contents of the message were collected from different narrations, and there are other parts of it that are not mentioned here. After praising, and thanking Allah, he said:

(O people, lend me an attentive ear, for I know not whether, after this year, I will ever be among you again. Therefore, listen to what I am saying to you very carefully and take these words to those who could not be present today.

O people, just as you regard this month, this day, this city as sacred, so regard the life and property of every Muslim as a sacred trust. Return the goods entrusted to you to their rightful owners. Hurt no one so that no one may hurt you. Remember that you will indeed meet your Lord, and that He will indeed reckon your deeds. Allah has forbidden you to take interest; therefore, all interest obligations shall henceforth be waived. Your capital, however, is yours to keep. You will neither inflict nor suffer inequity. Allah has judged that there shall be no interest and that all interest due to al-`Abbas ibn `Abdul-Muttalib shall henceforth be waived.

Every right arising out of homicide in pre-Islamic days is henceforth waived, and the first such right I waive is that arising from the murder of Rabi`ah ibn Al-Harith [a relative of the Prophet]. O mankind, the unbelievers indulge in tampering with the calendar in order to make permissible that which Allah forbade, and to forbid that which Allah has made permissible. With Allah the months are twelve; four of them are holy; three of these (holy months) are successive and one occurs singly between the months of Jumadah and Sha`ban.

O people, beware of Satan, for the safety of your religion. He has lost all hope that he will ever be able to lead you astray in big things, so beware of following him in small things.

O people, it is true that you have certain rights with regard to your women, but they also have rights over you. If they abide by your right then to them belongs the right to be fed and clothed in kindness. Treat your women well and be kind to them, for they are your partners and committed helpers. And it is your right that they do not make friends with anyone of whom you do not approve, as well as never commit adultery.

O people, listen to me in earnest. Worship Allah, say your five daily prayers, fast during the month of Ramadan, and give the share of Zakah in your wealth. Perform Hajj if you can afford to. All mankind is from Adam and Eve. An Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab, nor does a non-Arab have any superiority over an Arab; also a white has no superiority over a black, nor does a black have any superiority over a white except by piety and good action. Learn that every Muslim is the brother of another Muslim and that Muslims constitute one brotherhood. Nothing shall be legitimate to a Muslim that belongs to a fellow Muslim unless it was given freely and willingly. Do not, therefore, do injustice to yourselves.

Remember, one day you will appear before Allah and answer for your deeds. So beware, do not stray from the path of righteousness after I am gone.

O people, no prophet or messenger will come after me, and no new faith will be born. Reason well, therefore, O people, and understand my words that I convey to you. I leave behind me two things, the Qur'an and my example, the Sunnah, and if you follow these you will never go astray.

All those who listen to me shall pass on my words to others, and those to others again; and may the last ones understand my words better than those who listen to me directly. Be my witness, O Allah, that I have conveyed Your message to Your people.) ***

The Blessed Days of Dhul Hijjah

In what follows, we will highlight some of the Sunnah regarding these days, hoping by this to provide an incentive to make the best out of them and gain Allaah's reward, in shaa' Allaah.

The First Ten Days of Dhul-Hijjah

"The best days in the world are the Ten days." [Ibn Hibbaan, al-Bazaar, authenticated in Saheeh Jaami` us-Sagheer #1133]

"There are no days during which good deeds are more beloved by Allaah than these (ten) days." [al-Bukhaaree, at-Tirmidhee and others] The Prophet, sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam, was then asked: "Not even Jihaad in Allaah's way?" He replied: "Not even Jihaad in Allaah's way; except for a person who went out (for Jihaad) with his self and wealth and came back with none (i.e. lost all for Allaah)." [at-Tirmidhee, authenticated in al-Albaanee's Irwaa' ul-Ghaleel, #953]

All good deeds can be done during these days and the early generations of Muslims used to exert themselves excessively in worshipping Allaah. In particular, fasting and dhikr (mentioning and remembering Allaah) are to be done in plenty on these days.

Dhikr

Ibn `Abbaas commented on the verse <<...and to mention Allaah's name [plentifully] on Known days>> [22:28] by saying: <...these known days are the ten days [of Dhul Hijjah].> [Tafseer ibn Katheer]

Fasting

One of the wives of the Prophet, sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam, said: "Allaah's Messenger used to fast the (first) nine days of Dhul Hijjah, the day of `Ashooraa', and three days of each month. [Saheeh Sunan Abee Daawood #2129]

Fasting on all these days, however, is not a waajib (compulsory), nor is it a constant sunnah that the Messenger, sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam, never dropped. `Aa'ishah said: "I never saw the Messenger, sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam, fast the ten days." [Muslim]

The Day of `Arafah - The Best Day of the Whole Year

The day of `Arafah is the day when the pilgrims stand in worship on the Mountain of `Arafah.

"Fasting the day of `Arafah expiates the [minor] sins of two years: a past one and a coming one. And fasting the day of `Ashooraa' expiates the sins of the past year." [Muslim]

"There is no day on which Allaah `azza wa jall frees people from the Fire as He does on the day of `Arafah. He comes close (to those standing on `Arafah) and then revels before His angels, saying: "What are these people seeking?" [Muslim]

The Day of al-`Ad-haa

The tenth of Dhul-Hijjah is `Eed ul- Ad-haa or the day of an-Nahr (slaughtering). It marks the conclusion of the major rites of Hajj, and commemorates Allaah's bounty on His Messenger Ibraaheem, when He gave him a ram to sacrifice as ransom for his son Ismaa'eel, `alayhimassalaam.

"The day of al-Fitr [i.e. `Eed ul-Fitr], the day of an-Nahr, and the days of Tashreeq are `Eed days for us Muslims. They are days of eating and drinking." [Ahmad, an-Nasaa'ee, Saheeh ul-Jaami` #8192]

The Three Days Following `Eed ul-`Ad-haa

On these days, the pilgrims complete their rites, Muslims continue with their `Eed celebrations, and are prohibited to fast. "The days of tashreeq are days of eating, drinking and mentioning Allaah." [Muslim]

The Sacrifice

Allaah `azza wa jall mentioned the sacrifice together with the first and foremost worship in Islaam: prayer. This is a clear indication of its great importance. Thus He ordered His Messenger, sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam, to slaughter sacrifices by saying: <<...Pray unto your Lord and slaughter [your sacrifice]..." [109:2]

Ruling

The general concensus of the Muslim scholars is that the sacrifice is an important sunnah, and a worship called for in the Law of Allaah. However, they differ as to whether it is nafl (voluntary) or waajib (mandatory) for those who can afford it. Some scholars have explained the different ahaadeeth on the subject by stating that the sacrifice is obligatory on those who can afford it and not obligatory on those who cannot.

Abu Hurayrah reported that the Messenger, sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam, said: "He who has the capacity, and does not sacrifice, may not approach our musallaa (place of prayer - on the `Eed)." [Ibn Maajah, Ahmad and others, authenticated by Al-Albaanee in Saheeh Sunan Ibn Maajah, #2533]

Regarding this hadeeth, Imaam ash-Shaukaanee said: "Prohibiting the one who could afford to sacrifice, but did not do so, from approaching the musallaa indicates that he must have left off a waajib, as it becomes useless to offer the salaah without this waajib [obligation]." [Nayl ul-Awtaar]

Avoid Cutting Hair or Nails

The one who plans to sacrifice (normally, the head of household) is prohibited to cut his hair or nails from the first Dhul Hijjah until he offers the sacrifice. "For the one who has a slaughtering to perform (on `Eed then, once the hilaal (crescent) of Dhul Hijjah is observed, let him not cut any of his hair or nails until he sacrifices." And in another narration: "Once the ten days start, for those of you who have the intention to sacrifice, let them not cut any of their hair or nails (until they sacrifice)." [Muslim] This prohibition is the opinion of the majority of the scholars of the early generations of Muslims.

Allaahu A`lam

Our last call is all praise is to Allaah and may His salaah and salaam be upon our Prophet Muhammad and his family.

The Best Days in the World

Based on "Al-A`yaad fil Islaam" [by Muhammad. al-Jibaly]
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The Universal Lessons of Haj

Faisal Kutty, Arab News —

Millions of pilgrims from all over the world will be converging on Makkah in the coming days. They will retrace the footsteps of millions who have made the spiritual journey to the valley of Makkah since the time of Adam.

Haj literally means, “to continuously strive to reach one’s goal.” It is the last of the five pillars of Islam (the others include a declaration of faith in one God, five daily prayers, offering regular charity, and fasting during the month of Ramadan). Pilgrimage is a once-in-a-lifetime obligation for those who have the physical and financial ability to undertake the journey.

The Haj is essentially a re-enactment of the rituals of the great prophets and teachers of faith. Pilgrims symbolically relive the experience of exile and atonement undergone by Adam and Eve after they were expelled from Heaven, wandered the earth, met again and sought forgiveness in the valley of Makkah. They also retrace the frantic footsteps of the wife of Abraham, Hagar, as she ran between the hills of Safa and Marwa searching for water for her thirsty baby (which according to Muslim tradition, God answered with the well of Zam Zam). Lastly, the pilgrims also commemorate the willingness of Abraham to sacrifice his son for the sake of God. God later substituted a ram in place of his son.

Yet, the Haj is more than these elaborate rituals. The faithful hope that it will bring about a deep spiritual transformation, one that will make him or her a better person. If such a change within does not occur, then the Haj was merely a physical and material exercise devoid of any spiritual significance.

As all great religions teach, we are more than mere physical creatures in that we possess an essence beyond the material world. Indeed, this is why all great religions have a tradition of pilgrimage. In the Islamic tradition, Haj encapsulates this spiritual journey toward this essence. The current state of affairs — both within and outside the Muslim world — greatly increases the relevance of some of the spiritual and universal messages inherent in the Haj.

As Islamic scholar, Ebrahim Moosa, asks rhetorically: “After paying homage to the two women Eve and Hagar in the rites of pilgrimage, how can some Muslims still violate the rights and dignity of women in the name of Islam? Is this not a contradiction?”

Indeed, the Qur’an teaches: “I shall not lose sight of the labor of any of you who labors in my way, be it man or woman; each of you is equal to the other.” (3:195)

Clearly, the white sea of men and women side by side performing tawaf (circling) around the Kaaba (the stone building Muslims believe was originally built by Adam and rebuilt by Abraham and his son Ishmael) should lay to rest any claim that Islam — as opposed to some Muslims — degrades women. The fact that millions of Muslims transcending geographical, linguistic, level of practice, cultural, ethnic, color, economic and social barriers converge in unison on Makkah, attests to the universality of the Haj. It plants the seed to celebrate the diversity of our common humanity. Pilgrims return home enriched by this more pluralistic and holistic outlook and with a new appreciation for their own origins.

The most celebrated North American Haji (one who has completed the Haj) is none other than African-American civil rights leader El-Hajj Malik El Shabbaz, more commonly known as Malcolm X. The man who was renowned for preaching that whites were “devils” — especially the blond, blue-eyed ones — profoundly reassessed these views during the Haj. This transformation, of course, sealed

his break with the African-American nationalist movement of the Nation of Islam.

Contrary to the teachings of the Nation, he concluded that Islam encompassed all of humanity and transcended race and culture. Malcolm X later said, “In my 39 years on this Earth, the holy city of Makkah had been the first time I had ever stood before the Creator of all and felt like a complete human.”

In Makkah, he discovered himself mixing with, “fellow Muslims, whose eyes were the bluest of blue, whose hair was the blondest of blond, and whose skin was whitest of white.” Malcolm X was so inspired by what he witnessed, that, in letters to friends and relatives, he wrote, “America needs to understand Islam, because this is the one religion that erases from its society the race problem.”

Upon returning to America, he embarked on a mission to enlighten both blacks and whites with his new views. Malcolm X understood that in order to truly learn from the Haj, its inherent spiritual lessons must extend beyond the fraternal ties of Muslims to forging a common humanity with others.

In fact, as part of the spiritual experience, the pilgrimage links people across religions through a past shared by several Abrahamic traditions. This combined with the Islamic teaching of the common origin of humanity holds out much hope. Indeed, the Qur’an teaches: “We created you from a single pair of a male and female (Adam and Eve), and made you into nations and tribes that ye may know each other and not that you might despise each other. The most honored of you in the sight of God is the most righteous of you” (Al Hujurat: 13). This is a great celebration of the differences and at the same time unity of all of humanity.

Another essential spiritual message of the Haj is one of humility to God and His supremacy and control over all that we know. The multitude of people and their inner beliefs and practices are all to be judged by God and God alone in His infinite wisdom and full knowledge. Indeed, as the Qur’an insists, “Let there be no compulsion in matters of faith, truth stands out clear from error.” (2: 256)

The result of a successful Haj is a rich inner peace, which is manifested outwardly in the values of justice, honesty, respect, generosity, kindness, forgiveness, mercy and empathy. And it is these values — all attributes of God Almighty — that are indispensable to us all if we are just to get along in this world.

— Faisal Kutty is a lawyer, writer and doctoral candidate at Osgoode Hall Law School of York University. He is also vice chair of the Canadian Council on American Islamic Relations.



Days of Dhul-Hijjah: Ethics & Morals

One must understand that these days are a great blessing from Allah to His servants, which is appreciated properly by the actively righteous. It is the Muslim's duty to appreciate this blessing and make the most of the opportunity

Dear scholars, as-salamu `alaykum. Kindly enlighten us on things that should be avoided as well as good acts that are recommended for Muslims during the first ten days of Dhul-Hijjah. Jazakum Allah khayran!

Wa `alaykum as-Salamu wa Rahmatullahi wa Barakatuh.

In the Name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

All praise and thanks are due to Allah, and peace and blessings be upon His Messenger.

Dear brother, we would like to thank you for your interesting question! May Allah help all of us adhere to the teachings of Islam and keep our feet firm on the right path, ameen.

A Muslim has to seize every opportunity that could bring him closer to Allah. Among the special seasons of worship are the first ten days of Dhul-Hijjah, which Allah has preferred over all the other days of the year. Ibn `Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him and his father) reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said: **"There are no days in which righteous deeds are more beloved to Allah than these ten days."** The people asked, "Not even Jihad for the sake of Allah?" He said, **"Not even Jihad for the sake of Allah, except in the case of a man who went out, giving himself and his wealth up for the cause (of Allah), and came back with nothing."** (Reported by Al-Bukhari)

Regarding your question, **Sheikh M. S. Al-Munajjid**, a prominent Saudi Muslim lecturer and author, states:

The Sunnah indicates that the one who wants to offer a sacrifice must stop cutting his hair and nails and removing anything from his skin, from the beginning of the ten days until after he has offered his sacrifice, because the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said: **"When you see the new moon of Dhul-Hijjah, if any one of you wants to offer a sacrifice, then he should stop cutting his hair and nails until he has offered his sacrifice."**

However, if a person does any of these things deliberately, he must seek Allah's forgiveness but is not required to offer (an extra) sacrifice in expiation. Whoever needs to remove some hair, nails, etc., because it harms him, such as having a broken nail or a wound in a site where there is hair, should do so, and there is nothing wrong with that. Though the state of *ihram* is so important, it is permitted to cut one's hair if leaving it will cause harm. There is nothing wrong with men or women washing their heads during the first ten days of Dhul-Hijjah, because the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) only forbade cutting the hair, not washing it.

If a person, having no previous plan to offer a sacrifice, cuts his hair or nails during the first ten days of Dhul-Hijjah, then decides later, during the ten days, to offer a sacrifice, then he must refrain from cutting his hair and nails from the moment he makes this decision.

Some women are in the habit of delegating their brothers or sons to make the sacrifice on their behalf, thinking that this gives them permission to cut their hair during these ten days. This is not correct, because the ruling applies to the one who is offering the sacrifice, whether or not he (or she) delegates someone else to carry out the actual deed. The prohibition does not apply to the person delegated, only to the person who is making the sacrifice, as is indicated in the hadith. The person who is sacrificing on behalf of someone else, for whatever reason, does not have to adhere to this prohibition.

This prohibition appears to apply only to the one who is offering the sacrifice, not to his wife and children, unless any of them is offering a sacrifice in his or her own right, because the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) used to sacrifice "on behalf of the family of Muhammad," but there are no reports that indicate that he forbade them from cutting their hair or nails at that time.

Concerning the types of worship to be performed during these ten days: one must understand that these days are a great blessing from Allah to His servants, which is appreciated properly by the righteous persons. It is the Muslim's duty to appreciate this blessing and seize the opportunity, by devoting these ten days to paying more attention to striving hard in worship. Among His blessings to His servants, Allah has given us many ways in which to do good and worship Him, so that the Muslim may be constantly active and consistent in his worship of his Lord. Among the good deeds which the Muslim should strive to do during the first ten days of Dhul-Hijjah are:

1- Fasting: It is Sunnah to fast on the ninth day of Dhul-Hijjah, because the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) urged us to do good deeds during this time, and fasting is one of the best of deeds. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) used to fast on the ninth of Dhul-Hijjah. Hunaydah ibn Khalid quoted some of the wives of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) as saying: "The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) used to fast on the ninth of Dhul-Hijjah, on the day of `Ashurah, on three days of each month, and on the first two Mondays and Thursdays of each month." (Reported by An-Nisa'i, 4/205)

2- Takbir: It is Sunnah to say *takbir*, *tahmid*, *tahlil*, and *tasbih* during the first ten days of Dhul-Hijjah, and to say it loudly in the mosque, the home, the street and every place where it is permitted to remember Allah and mention His name out loud, as an act of worship and as a proclamation of the greatness of Allah, may He be exalted. Men should recite these phrases out loud, and women should recite them quietly. Allah says: **(That they might witness things that are of benefit to them (i.e., reward of Hajj in the Hereafter, and also some worldly gain from trade, etc.), and mention the name of Allah on appointed days, over the beast of cattle that He has provided for them (for sacrifice)...)** (Al-Hajj 22: 28) The majority of scholars agree that the "appointed days" are the first ten days of Dhul-Hijjah, because of the words of ibn `Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him and his father): "The 'appointed days' are the first ten days (of Dhul-Hijjah)."

Takbir at this time is an aspect of the Sunnah that has been forgotten, especially during the early part of this period, so much so that one hardly ever hears *takbir*, except from a few people. This *takbir* should be pronounced loudly, in order to revive the Sunnah and as a reminder to the negligent. There is sound evidence that ibn `Umar and Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with them both) used to go out in the marketplace during the first ten days of Dhul-Hijjah, reciting *takbir*, and the people would recite it after him. The idea behind reminding the people to recite this is that each one should recite it individually, not in unison, as there is no basis in Shari`ah for doing this.

3- Performing Hajj and `Umrah: One of the best deeds that one can do during these ten days is to perform Hajj to the Sacred House of Allah. The one whom Allah helps to offer Hajj to His House and to perform all the rituals properly is included in the words of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him): **"An accepted Hajj brings no less a reward than Paradise."**

4- Doing more good deeds in general: This is because good deeds are beloved by Allah and earn one a great reward. Whoever is not able to offer Hajj should occupy himself at this blessed time with acts of worship, offering Prayers, reading the Qur'an, remembering Allah, making supplications, giving in charity, showing dutifulness to parents, maintaining the ties of kinship, enjoining what is good and forbidding what is evil, and other good deeds and acts of worship.

5- Sacrifice: One of the good deeds that will bring a person closer to Allah during these ten days is offering a sacrifice.

6- Sincere repentance: One of the most important things to do during these ten days is to repent sincerely to Allah and to give up all kinds of disobedience and sin.

Excerpted, with slight modifications, from: www.islam-qa.com

I wonder all the time about Hajj...

How can such a journey be a manner of worship? What makes it a lifetime journey?

Why did God order Muslims to perform Hajj? And, how do you know that you have been accepted?

Thank you. Aspects of Worship

Salam, Ben.

Thank you for your question.

I appreciate your question, for many people do wonder about Hajj (pilgrimage). What exactly is it? What is the pilgrimage of Muslims, to the Ka`bah in Makkah?

Is it a religious rite, a trade fair, a political gathering or... all in one? How can such journey, known as one of the five pillars of Islam, be a manner of worship?

The Islamic Concept of Worship

Worship, according to Islam, is a means for purifying both man's soul and practical life. The basis of worship is the fact that human beings are creatures and thus bondservants of God, their Creator and their Lord, to Whom they are destined to return.

Thus, man's turning towards God, in intimate communion and reverence - in the spirit of devotion and humble submission - is termed worship.

Actually, worship is an indispensable part of all religions, including the idolatrous ones. It is motivated, however, in each religion by different objectives. It assumes different forms and is performed under a different set of rules.

In some religions, worship is a means to develop in man the attitude of asceticism and isolation from life. In these religions, worship seeks to develop a mentality, which eliminates the enjoyment of the pleasures of this world.

Instead, in Islam, the concept of worship is related primarily to its fundamental view. It is that the true foundations of a good [enjoyable] life are soundness of belief and thinking, purity of soul and righteousness of action.

The real purpose of Islam in declaring that worship embraces the totality of the life of Man, is to make the religious faith play a practical and effective role in shaping the human life. It should also develop in man an attitude of dignified patience and fortitude in the face of hardships and difficulties.

It should create in him/her the urge to strive for the prevalence of good and removal of evil. Accordingly, there are principal means in Islam that strengthen the person's connection with God, one of which is Hajj.

Once during his/her lifetime, every Muslim who is physically and financially in a position to do so, is expected to journey to Makkah. This is where God's final revelation to mankind was first disclosed.

You are not obliged to go if you are not of sound mind, if you do not possess the necessary financial resources, or are under a certain age. Also, if you are a woman who has no male relative to go with - as a chaperone and protector.

A basic purpose of pilgrimage is to heighten the pilgrim's devotion to God and his revealed will, but the practice has other benefits as well. It is, for example, a reminder of human equality.

Before reaching Makkah, pilgrims remove their normal attire, which carries the marks of social status, and put on two simple sheet-like garments. Thus everyone, on approaching Islam's earthly focus, wear the same thing. Distinction of rank and hierarchy is removed, and prince and pauper stand before God in their equal humanity.

Pilgrimage also provides a useful service for enhancing international relations. It brings together people from many countries, demonstrating thereby that they share a loyalty that transcends their loyalty to their own nationalities and ethnic origins. Pilgrims pick up information about other lands and peoples, and return home with a better understanding of one another.

The purposes for which God has enjoined Hajj are many, among which are the following:

1. It is the largest annual convention of faith, where Muslims meet to know one another, study their common affairs and promote their general welfare.
2. It is also the greatest regular peace conference known in the history of mankind. In the course of Hajj, peace is the dominant theme. It is peace with God, with one's soul and with one another. It is even peace with animals, birds and insects. To disturb the peace of anyone or any creature, in any way or form, is strictly prohibited.
3. It is a wholesome demonstration of the universality of Islam, where brotherhood and equality of Muslims are fulfilled. From every corner of the globe, Muslims begin the journey, from all paths of life, trades and classes, to assemble at Makkah in response to the divine call.

They dress in the same simple way, observe the same regulations and utter the same supplications at the same time, in the same way, for the very same end. There is no royalty, but loyalty - of all - to God. There is no aristocracy, but humility and devotion.

4. Hajj confirms the commitment of Muslims towards God and their readiness to abandon their material interests, for the sake of His service.
5. It is also to commemorate the divine rituals, observed by Abraham and Ishmael (peace be upon them), whom are known to have built the Ka`bah for the practicing of monotheism and worshiping of God - the One and Only - on earth.
6. It is a reminder of the grand assembly on the Day of Judgment, when people will stand equal before God, waiting for their final destiny, when no superiority of race or wealth can be claimed.

A Self-discipline Program

A major purpose of Hajj, is to achieve self-discipline and maintain strong morals. Every single step and rite during the journey should direct the pilgrim towards such goals. The following examples can clarify how such simple steps can assist in the process of elevating the soul and purifying it.

Purity of Intention and Means

The pilgrim should meet his expenses by lawful means, for God would never accept otherwise. He/she should have his/her hands free of any worrisome and distracting business concerns.

His/her attention should be devoted exclusively to God, while his/her heart is directed in tranquility to the remembrance of God. In fact, devoting ones heart, can never be a hundred percent pure except if it is no longer occupied by material concerns, especially money.

This would definitely be more applicable when the person gets rid of any unlawful money, no matter how he/she needs it, for the sake of God. This is where sincere devotion shows.

Forsaking Evil Conduct

The pilgrim should renounce indecency, immorality and wrangling, as spoken of in the Qur'an. Indecency is a general term, covering all nonsense and foul behavior.

In fact, wrangling, excessive quarreling and argument, causing ill will, distract from the noble purpose of Hajj are incompatible with good Muslim character. One should, therefore, refrain from complaining about each other and even about animals as well.

One should take things gently; sheltering others and taking care of them along the way to the

holy sanctuary. Good conduct is essential in Hajj. It goes - sometimes - as far as putting up with painful things, rather than trying to repel them.

Being Accepted

One indication that a pilgrimage has been accepted, it is said, is when a pilgrim abandons his/her sinful ways, exchanges his/her idle companions for righteous company and friends, then forsakes frivolity and heedlessness in favor of seriousness and vigilance.

In fact, his/her heart might be the person's true indicator. If it is no longer attached, unduly to worldly matters and has enjoyed the agonies of the journey without longing for material pleasures, then the pilgrim might have achieved his/her goal. He/she - then - has attained a heart longing for God and renouncing fake materialism of this world.

Worth mentioning also is that Hajj is, in many ways, the central event of the year, perhaps of a whole lifetime. It is the act in which the unity of Muslims is most fully expressed.

This is in the sense that it is an example of all kinds of travel. It is also a market for exchanging news and ideas, brought from all over the Muslim world. Last, but not least, it symbolizes the unity of so many hearts seeking the pleasure of God.

Well then, I hope the above gives you a satisfactory answer. Please keep in touch.

Salam

Useful Link:

[More and More About Hajj](#)

[Hajj... a Journey of Spiritual Healing](#)

[What You Should Know about Hajj](#)

[Spiritual Ethics of Hajj](#)

[Honor the House, Kiss the Stone?](#)

[Q & A on Hajj](#)

[Significance of Performing Tawaf Seven Times](#)

Alaykum. What is the significance of doing Tawaf around the Ka`bah seven times?

[Tawaf \(Circumambulating the Ka`bah\)](#)

Wa`alaykum As-Salaamu Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh.

In The Name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

All praise and thanks are due to Allah, and peace and blessings be upon His Messenger.

Dear questioner, thank you very much for your interesting question.

In Islam, there are symbolic acts that represent the Divine Wisdom. We are not required to search for this hidden wisdom. Acts like Tawaf or circumambulating around the Ka`bah are *ta`budi* in the sense that we must fulfill them regardless whether their immediate benefits are clear to us or not.

In response to the question, **Sheikh Ahmad Kutty**, a Senior Lecturer and an Islamic Scholar at the Islamic Institute of Toronto, Ontario, Canada, states the following:

Acts like Tawaf, Sa'i, and others, which are related to the category of *'Ibadaat*, are orders of Allah the Almighty.

We believe they have infinite wisdom, for Almighty Allah is the All-Wise. He does not order anything unwise, and yet in order for us not to disrespect Allah the Almighty the scholars have classified them as *ta'budi* acts, which means that we cannot pinpoint one particular reason in the sense that if that reason is not there, we can dispense with the act. This cannot be done in case of *ta'budi*; they are rituals that we must fulfill regardless whether their immediate benefits are clear or not.

Having said this, however, the purpose of Tawaf is to symbolically represent the idea that our life should revolve around thinking and remembering Allah Almighty. The believer is the one who subsumes all his thoughts in one big thought, that is, Allah the Almighty.

The Ka'bah is the center and the focus that we are directed to turn in our prayers. By making Tawaf we are re-enforcing the centrality of this spiritual focus in our life. It also connects us with the tradition of Prophet Ibrahim (peace and blessings be upon him) who was perfect monotheist. By performing this rite consciously we are re-enforcing such ideals as Prophet Ibrahim, Isma'eel and Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon them all) manifested in their lives.

Wisdom Behind Jogging in Tawaf

as-salamu `alaykum. What is the wisdom behind *Ar-Ramal* (walking quickly) in Tawaf? Jazakum Allah khayran. **Tawaf (Circumambulating the Ka'bah)**



Wa `alaykum As-Salamu wa Rahmatullahi wa Barakatuh.

In the Name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

All praise and thanks are due to Allah, and peace and blessings be upon His Messenger.

Dear questioner, we would like to thank you for the great confidence you place in us, and we implore Allah, the Almighty to help us serve His cause and render our work for His Sake alone.

Ar-Ramal means walking quickly and vigorously moving one's shoulders and taking small steps, with a sense of strength and energy. Ibn `Umar reported that Allah's Messenger (peace and blessings be upon him) jogged from the Black Stone around the Ka'bah and back to the Black Stone three times, and walked the remaining four rounds.

Elaborating more on the wisdom behind *Ar-Ramal* in Tawaf, we cite what **Sheikh Sayyed Sabiq** states in his well-known book *Fiqh As-Sunnah*:

It is reported by Ibn `Abbas that when the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) and his companions came to Makkah, they were weakened by the fever in Yathrib. Thereupon the idolaters said, "A people weakened with fever have come to you and they have been affected by evil." Allah, the Almighty, informed His Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) about what they had said. So he commanded them to jog throughout the first three rounds of Tawaf around the Ka'bah, and to walk between its two corners. When the idolaters saw the Muslims jogging, they said: "Are they the people you said are weak because of fever? They are stronger and sturdier than us!" Ibn `Abbas added: "The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) did not command them to jog throughout all seven rounds so as not to overexert themselves." (Al-Bukhari, Muslim, and Abu Dawud)

`Umar was of the opinion that jogging should be stopped as there was no longer any need for it after the Muslims had become strong and powerful. However, he decided to leave it (in its original form) so that the future generations of Muslims could share a form and feeling similar to that observed and felt by the early Muslims. Muhibbuddin At-Tabari said: "Sometimes certain instructions have been prescribed in the religion for a specific reason, and later even though that specific reason no longer exists, yet the instructions still remain valid."

Zaid ibn Aslam reported from his father that he said: "I heard `Umar ibn Al-Khattab saying: 'Why jog around the Ka'bah these days? Why uncover our shoulders (during Tawaf)? Allah has made Islam strong and powerful, and banished disbelief and the disbelievers, yet we shall never abandon what we used to do during the time of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him).'"

The Concept of Animal Sacrifice in Islam

there are many misconceptions filling the mind of many non-Muslims, who fail to perceive the significance and wisdom behind acts of worship in Islam. That is why addressing those misconceptions becomes obligatory in order to erase distortions about Islam

Dear scholars, As-Salam `Alaykum. `Eid Mubarak to you all! When “`Eid Al-Adha” is at the doorstep, many rams, cows, camels, of course, are tied to be slaughtered for feast. This brings to my mind the following question: What is the concept of sacrifice in Islam? By the way, my non-Muslim friends try to pick fault in Islam, saying that Muslims are no different to idol worshippers, who also offer sacrifices to their gods. Please clarify this point. Jazakum Allah khayran.

Wa `alaykum As-Salamu wa Rahmatullahi wa Barakatuh.

In the Name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

All praise and thanks are due to Allah, and peace and blessings be upon His Messenger.

`Eid Mubarak to you brother, and to all Muslims all over the world! Thanks for forwarding your question to us, may Allah help us make our humble efforts come up to your expectations.

Actually, there are many misconceptions filling the mind of many non-Muslims, who fail to perceive the significance and wisdom behind acts of worship in Islam. That is why addressing those misconceptions becomes obligatory in order to erase distortions about Islam. Thus, on the case in point, we find it relevant to cite for you the following:

Sacrifice is not a pillar of Islam. We must look at the occurrences in a contextual manner, understanding not only the pre-Islamic institution of sacrifice, the Qur'anic reforms concerning this practice, and the continuance of sacrifice in the Muslim world, but also the context in which the Qur'anic revelations occurred. For it seems that with many people, both non-Muslims and Muslims alike, context is the key that they are missing.

With this in mind, let us start with the situation as it was in pre-Islamic Arabia with regard to animal sacrifice. Not only did the pagan Arabs sacrifice to a variety of gods in hopes of attaining protection or some favor or material gain, but so, too, did the Jews of that day seek to appease the One True God by blood sacrifice and burnt offerings. Even the Christian community felt Jesus to be the last sacrifice, the final lamb, so to speak, in an otherwise valid tradition of animal sacrifice (where one's sins are absolved by the blood of another).

Islam, however, broke away from this longstanding tradition of appeasing an "angry God" and instead demanded personal sacrifice and submission as the only way to die before death and reach "*fana*" or "extinction in Allah." The notion of "vicarious atonement of sin" (absolving one's sins through the blood of another) is nowhere to be found in the Qur'an. Neither is the idea of gaining favor by offering the life of another to Allah. In Islam, all that is demanded as a sacrifice is one's personal willingness to submit one's ego and individual will to Allah.

One only has to look at how the Qur'an treats this subject, to see a marked difference regarding sacrifice and whether or not Allah is appeased by blood. The Qur'anic account of the sacrifice of Isma`il ultimately speaks against blood atonement. Allah says: **(Then when (the son) reached (the age of) (serious) work with him, he said: "Oh my son! I see in vision that I offer thee in sacrifice: Now see what is thy view!" (The son) said: "Oh my father! Do As thou art commanded: Thou wilt find me, if Allah so wills one practicing patience and constancy!" So when they had both submitted their wills (to Allah), and he had laid him prostrate on his forehead (for sacrifice), We called out to him, "Oh Abraham! Thou hast already fulfilled the vision!" Thus indeed do We reward those who do right. For this was obviously a trial and We ransomed him with a momentous sacrifice.)** (As-Safat 37: 102-107)

Notice that the Qur'an never says that Allah told Abraham to kill (sacrifice) his son. Though subtle, this is very important, for the moral lesson is very different from that which appears in the Bible. Here, it teaches us that Abraham had a dream in which he saw himself slaughtering his son. Abraham believed the dream and thought that the dream was from Allah, but the Qur'an never says that the dream was from Allah. However, in Abraham and Isma`il's willingness to make the ultimate sacrifice—Abraham of his son, Isma`il of his own life—they are able to transcend notions of self and false attachment to the material realm, thus removing a veil between themselves and Allah, enabling Allah's mercy to descend upon them as the Spirit of Truth and illuminate them with divine wisdom (thus preventing a miscarriage of justice and once and for all correcting the false notion of vicarious atonement of sin).

For, certainly, Allah, the Ever Merciful, Most Compassionate, would never ask a father to go against His command of "thou shall not kill" and kill his own son in order to be accepted by Him. For the Qur'an teaches us that Allah never advocates evil (see 7:28 and 16:90) and that only Satan advocates evil and vice (24:21). The notion that Allah would want us to do an immoral act runs counter to Allah's justice.

As far as the yearly tradition that has followed this event (that is, the sacrificing of a ram to commemorate Abraham and Isma`il's great self sacrifice), we must understand it and the Qur'anic versus that pertain to animal sacrifice, in relation to the time and place circumstances under which these revelations were received and how people were trying to make a personal sacrifice by sharing their limited means of survival with the poorer members of their community.

That is to say, the underlying implication of Islam's attitude toward ritual slaughter is not that of blood atonement, or seeking favor with Allah through another's death, but rather, the act of thanking Allah for one's sustenance and the personal sacrifice of sharing one's possessions and valuable food with one's fellow humans. The ritual itself is NOT the

sacrifice. It is merely a method of killing where the individuals kill as quickly as possible and acknowledge that only Allah has the right to take a life and that they do so as a humble member of Allah's creation in need of sustenance just like every other species in Allah's creation.

So let us examine some of the appropriate verses in the Qur'an to see what it has to say about sacrifice and how it related to life in 500 C.E. Arabia. (Also included is commentary by Yusuf Ali to show that even someone who was pro-sacrifice with an understanding of animals as subject to humans, did not champion wanton cruelty or notions of blood atonement.) Allah says: **(In them ye have benefits for a term appointed: In the end their place of sacrifice is near the Ancient House.)** (Al-Hajj 22: 33)

"The word 'In them' refers to cattle or animals offered for sacrifice. It is quite true that they are useful in many ways to humans, e.g., camels in desert countries are useful as mounts or for carrying burdens or for giving milk, and so, for horses and oxen; and camels and oxen are also good for meat, and camel's hair can be woven into cloth; goats and sheep also yield milk and meat, and hair or wool. But if they are used for sacrifice, they become symbols by which people show that they are willing to give up some of their own benefits for the sake of satisfying the needs of their poorer brethren." (Yusuf Ali commentary)

Allah also says: **(To every people did We appoint rites (of sacrifice) that they might celebrate the name of Allah over the sustenance He gave them from animals (fit for food). But your God is One God: Submit then your wills to Him (In Islam): and give thou the good news to those who humble themselves.)** (Al-Hajj 22: 34)

"This is the true end of sacrifice, not propitiation of higher powers, for Allah is One, and He does not delight in flesh and blood, but a symbol of thanksgiving to Allah by sharing meat with fellow humans. The solemn pronouncement of Allah's name over the sacrifice is an essential part of the rite." (Yusuf Ali commentary)

Allah says further: **(It is not their meat nor their blood, that reaches Allah: it is your piety that reaches Him: He has thus made them subject to you, that ye may glorify Allah for His guidance to you: And proclaim the Good News to all who do right.)** (Al-Hajj 22: 37)

"No one should suppose that meat or blood is acceptable to the One True God. It was a pagan fancy that Allah could be appeased by blood sacrifice. But Allah does accept the offering of our hearts, and as a symbol of such offer, some visible institution is necessary. He has given us power over the brute creation, and permitted us to eat meat, but only if we pronounce His name at the solemn act of taking life, for without this solemn invocation, we are apt to forget the sacredness of life. By this invocation we are reminded that wanton cruelty is not in our thoughts, but only the need for food ..." (Yusuf Ali commentary)

It is quite clear from the Qur'anic passages above that the issue of animal sacrifice is in relation to the role animals played in Arabian society at that place and time (as well as other societies with similar climates and culture), in that humans are commanded to give thanks to Allah and praise Allah for the sustenance He has given them and that they should sacrifice something of value to themselves to demonstrate their appreciation for what they have been given (which in their case was the very animals on which their survival was based).

Excerpted, with slight modifications, from <http://www.islamveg.com/sacri.html>

You can also read:

[Udhiyah: Rules and Significance](#)

[Conditions of Udhiyah & What Should Be Done With the Sacrifice?](#)

[What Should be Done on the Day of Sacrifice?](#)

[For How Many People is the Sacrifice Sufficient?](#)

[Offering Sacrifice: Any Restrictions on the Family?](#)

[Offering One Sacrifice on Behalf of Entire Family](#) **Allah Almighty knows best.**

What Does *`Eid* Mean for Muslims?

Kindly enlighten us on the real meaning of *`eid* to Muslims. What does *`eid* mean for Muslims? Jazakum Allah Khayran! Wa `alaykum As-Salamu wa Rahmatullahi wa Barakatuh.

In the Name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

All praise and thanks are due to Allah, and peace and blessings be upon His Messenger.

Dear brother, it's also our pleasure to say to you "*`Eid Mubarak!*"

May Allah shower us with His blessings and bounties!

As regards your question, we'd like to cite for you the following:

Islam teaches Muslims how to celebrate the *`eids*. On these days, the Muslims take a bath and wear their best clothes. Even though fasting is not permitted on the *`eid* days, yet, the major part of the celebration is not eating or drinking; rather, it is a prayer that brings Muslims together to remember Allah's bounties and celebrate His glory and greatness.

The *`eids* and their celebration in Islam carry a distinctive meaning and spirit. They are totally different from the celebrations in other nations and cultures. For other nations, a holiday is a chance to immerse in worldly pleasures, or to involve oneself in prohibited acts to the utmost. Not so for Muslims! For Muslims, the *`eid* is an occasion to increase in good deeds. Each *`eid* marks the conclusion of an important worship, and the determination to continue in obedience and submission to Allah (Glorified be He).

In moments of extreme pleasure or sadness, a Muslim never forgets his Lord's greatness, might, glory, and watchfulness (Glorified be He). A Muslim's actions are always controlled by this continued remembrance and awareness.

Thus the *`eid* is not an occasion to take a vacation from Islamic responsibilities and commitments, nor to waste time and money in extravagance. It is not "fun for the sake of fun". Rather, it is controlled and directed rejoicing that is of ultimate and definite benefit for the Muslim.

The *`eid* is a chance to multiply good deeds by bringing happiness and pleasure to the hearts of other Muslims, by helping and supporting the poor and needy, and by getting involved in pastimes that emphasize the strong and serious Islamic character.

Excerpted with slight modifications from: www.islaam.com

Eid Al-Fitr: A Day of Joy and Thanksgiving

As-Salamu `alaykum wa Rahmatullah wa Barakatuh. May you have a happy and blessed `Eid Al-Fitr! My question is: What is the significance of `Eid Al-Fitr in Islam? Wa`alaykum As-Salamu wa Rahmatullahi wa Barakatuh.

In the Name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

All praise and thanks are due to Allah, and peace and blessings be upon His Messenger.

Dear brother in Islam, may you have a happy and blessed `Eid Al-Fitr! We implore Allah, Most High, to make `Eid Al-Fitr a moment of blessing for every Muslim. Moreover, we look forward to the `Eid in which Islam regains its long-awaited victory and Muslims spread peace and prosperity all over the world.

Brother, `Eid Al-Fitr is the day of boons and blessings for all fasting Muslims, as they are promised great reward by Almighty Allah for good observance of Fasting. By the end of Ramadan, Muslims express their gratitude to Allah Who has enabled them to observe Fasting and, at the same time, granted them abundant provision during this blessed month. `Eid Al-Fitr, therefore, is a day of joy, acts of worship, thanksgiving to Allah, cooperation, solidarity, brotherhood, unity, and spiritual provision.

Shedding more light on this issue, we'd like to cite for you the following fatwa issued by the late Sheikh Sayyed Ad-Darsh, former Chairman of the UK Shari`ah Council:

The joy is our `Eid, it is our feast. During the month of Ramadan, Allah has put us to test. At the end of the month there is a great sense of achievement, of coming closer to the Almighty. It is the joy of spiritual fulfillment. It is a time for celebration, not to indulge in insulting or abusing others or detracting from the achievements of the month of Ramadan; it's a day of real happiness and joy.

When Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him) entered the house of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) on the day of `Eid, he found two young girls playing music and singing. Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him) asked them: "Doing this in the house of the Prophet, how come?" But the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) told Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him) to leave them, for `Eid is a day of merriment and joy.

It is important for us to let our young and neighbors understand that our religion is not boring and just a matter of don'ts. We must show that Islam is the way of moderation, of tolerance, of beauty, sharing and laughter in the appropriate occasion.

However, *`Eid* is not simply a matter of celebration and joy. It is also a chance to share the feelings of those around us. That is why the sacrifice is offered and shared with friends, even with non-Muslims. We are not stopped from sharing with those of our neighbors who are non-Muslim. Charity is very important and meritorious on the two *`Eids*. It is an affirmation of our responsibility to the community in which we are living.

For more elaboration on this, we'd like to cite for you the following fatwa issued by Dr. Muzammil H. Siddiqi, President of the Fiqh Council of North America:

At the conclusion of the month of Ramadan, on the first day of the 10th month of Islamic lunar calendar occurs *`Eid Al-Fitr*. This is one of two main festivals of Islam and is celebrated by all Muslims throughout the world.

The ceremony of *`Eid Al-Fitr* starts early morning with a worship service. This service is generally held in a large open place and is attended by thousands of Muslims. After the Prayer the leader of the Prayer (Imam) delivers a short sermon and then people greet each other. The rest of the ceremonies are held generally privately with families and friends.

The significance of *`Eid Al-Fitr* is that it is a day of thanksgiving to Allah that He gave the opportunity to Muslims to benefit from and enjoy the blessings of the month of Ramadan.

&&&&&

EID MUBARAK

◆Send an Eid e-Card

Eid-ul-Adha is one of the two major yearly holidays of Islam. Eid-ul-Adha falls on the 10th day of the Islamic month of Zul Hijjah. It commemorates the willingness of Prophet Abraham to sacrifice his son Ishmael for the sake of God. May Allah's peace be upon these two great Prophets.

EID MUBARAK. Those who follow crescent observation in North America most likely start of Zul-Hijja will be on Thursday, December 22nd and therefore Eid al Adha will be on Sunday December 31, 2006.

For Muslims living in North America, it is a challenge to maintain Islamic holidays and traditions in a predominantly non-Muslim environment. It is particularly difficult for children, who see their friends and classmates celebrating Christmas with lots of hoopla, gifts and excitement, while Eid is not celebrated in the same way.

It is with this in mind that Sound Vision has put together the articles below. They feature practical and creative tips and ideas that can help Muslim individuals and families make the most of the Eid celebration.

Eid-ul-Adha

`Eid

Adopted from The Friday Report (now AlJumuah Magazine), Jan-Feb 1995

Eid

- Playing, recreation, and eating on the day of Eid:

These are permissible as long as they stay within the acceptable bounds of Islam. Anas said: When the Prophet, *sallaallahu `alayhe wa sallam*, came to Madinah, they had two days for amusement. The Prophet, *sallaallahu `alayhe wa sallam*, has exchanged these days for two better days: the day of breaking the fast and the day of sacrifice. (Related by An-Nasa'i and Ibn Hibban)

- Taking women and children to the prayer area:

The Prophet *sallaallahu `alayhe wa sallam*, used to take his wives and daughters to the two Eids. Umm Atiyah said: "We were ordered to go out with the single and menstruating women to the two Eids in order to witness the good and the supplications of the Muslims. The menstruating women though would stay away from the prayer area." (Related by al-Bukhari and Muslim)

- Going to the prayer area:

The Prophet, *sallaallahu `alayhe wa sallam*, used to go to the prayer area by walking. Jaber narrated: "On the days of Eid, the Prophet, *sallaallahu `alayhe wa sallam*, would go to the prayer area by one route and come back by another route." (Related by al-Bukhari)

- Eating before going to the prayer area:

Since Eid al-Fitr is the day on which Muslims break their Ramadhan fast, it is preferable to eat before going to the Eid prayer. It is a Sunnah of the Prophet, *sallaallahu `alayhe wa sallam*, to eat an odd number of dates

before going to pray Salat al-Eid. Anas reported: "The Prophet, sallaallahu `alayhe wa sallam, would not go out on the day of Eid al-Fitr without eating an odd number of dates." (Related by al-Bukhari.)

- Preparation for Eid prayer:

It is preferred to make Ghusl (take a bath), wear one's best clothes and, for men, to put perfume before going to Salat al-Eid. Ibn Al-Qayyim said: "The Prophet, sallaallahu `alayhe wa sallam, used to wear his best clothes for the Eid prayers and he had clothes that he reserved for the two Eids and Jumu'ah."

- Making Takbeer:

Takbeer starts from the night of Eid's eve until the Imam comes out to start the prayer. Allah says (S2 A185): "You should complete the prescribed period and then you should glorify Allah (i.e., say Takbeer) for having guided you so that you may be grateful to Him." The form of takbeer is related by `Umar and Ibn Mas`ud: "Allahu Akbar, Allahu Akbar, La illaha illallah. Allahu Akbar. Allahu Akbar wa lillahil-hamd."

- Congratulating each other:

It has been narrated that when the Prophet's companions met each other on the Eid day, they would say to each other: "May Allah accept from us and from you." (Related by Ahmad.)

Eed - Islamic Celebration

From "Al-A`yaad fil Islaam" by M. al-Jibaly
© QSS
<http://islaam.com//Article.aspx?id=187>

DEFINITION OF `IID

A `iid is any day of gathering. It is derived from `aada (meaning returned), because people return to it periodically. Some scholars say that it derives from `aadah (custom or practice) because people are accustomed to celebrating it. Its plural is a`yaad.

Ibn ul `Arabee said:

"It is called `Iid because it returns every year with renewed happiness." [Lisaan ul-`Arab]

Ibn `Aabidayn said:

"The `Iid days are thus named because Allaah (swt) renews His bounties in them; and He distributes His blessings to His worshippers. Thus on `Iid ul-Fitr, He permits them to eat after having been restrained from food; and He requires paying sadaqat ul-fitr (the charity of breaking the fast) to the needy. And on `Iid ul-Adha, He permits the completion of Hajj (pilgrimage) with the final Tawaaf (circulating around al-Ka`bah); and He requires offering sacrifices and distributing their meat, etc. Also, it is customary for people to be joyful, happy, and rejoicing during the `Iid days." [Haasheeyatu ibn `Aabidayn]

THE TWO `IIDS ARE A MERCY FROM ALLAAH

Anas (radhiallaahu `anhu) reported that upon arriving in al-Madeenah, the Prophet (sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam) found its people celebrating two days whose significance was held over the Jaahiliyyah. The Prophet (sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam) said: "When I came upon you, you had two days that you continued to celebrate from the Jaahiliyyah; indeed Allaah has substituted them for you with what is better: the day of Sacrifice and the day of Fitr (breaking the fast). [Ahmad, Abu Dawud and others; authentic]

Shaykh Ahmad `Abdurrahmaan al-Banna said: "(They are better because,) they day of Sacrifice and that of Fitr are legislated by Allaah (subhaanahu wa ta`aala), and are His choice for His creatures. They follow the completion of two of the greatest pillars of Islaam, Hajj and fasting. On these days, Allaah (swt) forgives those who performed Hajj and who fasted, and He sheds mercy on all of His obedient creatures. On the other hand, the days of Nayrooz and Mihrajaan were devised by the people of those times, because of good weather or other passing qualities. The difference between the two cases is apparent for whomever ponders upon this." [Al-Fath ur-Rabbani]

THE ISLAMIC CONCEPT OF CELEBRATING

Islaam teaches Muslims how to celebrate the `Iids. On these days, the Muslims take a bath and wear their best clothes. Even though fasting is not permitted on the day of `Iids, yet, the major part of the celebration is not eating or drinking - rather, it is a prayer that brings Muslims together to remember Allaah's bounties and celebrate His glory and greatness. The `Iids and their celebration in Islaam carry a distinctive meaning and spirit. They are totally different

from the celebrations in other nations and cultures. For other nations, a holiday is a chance to immerse in worldly pleasures, or to involve oneself in prohibited acts to the utmost. Not so for Muslims! For Muslims, the `Eid is an occasion to increase in good deeds. Each `Eid marks the conclusion of an important worship, and the determination to continue in obedience and submission to Allaah (swt). In moments of extreme pleasure or sadness, a Muslim never forgets his Lord's greatness, might, glory, and watchfulness. A Muslim's actions are always controlled by this continued remembrance and awareness. Thus the `Eid is not an occasion to take a vacation from Islamic responsibilities and commitments, nor to waste time and money in extravagance. It is not "fun for the sake of fun". Rather, it is controlled and directed rejoicing that is of ultimate and definite benefit for the Muslim. The `Eid is a chance to multiply good deeds by bringing happiness and pleasure to the hearts of other Muslims, by helping and supporting the poor and needy, and by getting involved in pastimes that emphasize the strong and serious Islamic character.

...

Singing on `Eid

Singing accompanied by the beating of duff is an approved type of lahwa (vanity) for women during the `Eid. `Aa'isha (R) said: "Allah's Messenger, sallallaahu `alaihi wa sallam, entered (my house) when I had two little girls singing the songs of Bu`aath (pre-Islamic war lore) and beating on a duff; so he lay down on the bed and turned his face away. Then Abu Bakr came in and scolded me saying, 'The flutes of Shaytaan played in the presence of Allah's Messenger?' So Allah's Messenger (saws), turned toward him and said, 'Leave them alone, O Abu Bakr! Every people have a `Eid, and this is our `Eid.' [Saheeh al-Bukhari, Muslim, Ahmad and ibn Maajah]

Al-Baghawi commented on this hadith by saying:

"Bu`aath is a famous battle of the Arabs, in which there was a great victory for the Aws over the Khazraj. The war between the two tribes went on for one hundred and twenty years - until Islam came. The two girls were singing poetry that described fighting and courage, the mention of which is supportive to the Deen. But as for songs that involve mentioning sins, announcing prohibited matters, and displaying evil deeds - it is all prohibited. And it is impossible that anything like that would ever take place in the Prophet's (saws) presence without him objecting adamantly to it. And as for his saying 'this is our `Eid', it provides the reason for displaying joy in the two `Eids as being a symbol of the Deen, because they are different from other days." [Sharh us Sunnah 4:322]

From this hadith, and other subsequent evidence, it is important to note the following:

A) The Prophet (saws) did not object to Abu Bakr's statement that the duff, being a musical instrument, is a flute of Shaytan. This is taken as an approval from him (saws) of this general rule, which conforms with other authentic evidence prohibiting the use of musical instruments.

B) He (saws) modified Abu Bakr's understanding by indicating that there is an exception to this general rule on specific occasions.

C) The occasions in which Islam permits women to beat on the duff are the following:

1. The two `Eids

2. weddings, and
3. to celebrate the arrival from travel of a respected individual.

D) On these occasions, hearing the beating of duff is permissible for men, for Allah's Messenger (saws) did so and approved of it as is seen in the above hadith. However, it is not permissible for men to listen to women's singing, because this is a unjustifiable source of great fitnah. The Prophet's (saws) listening to two little girls does not constitute an evidence in this regard.

E) Because of the general texts prohibiting the use of musical instruments in general, the only musical instrument that the women are permitted to use is the duff; deriving any analogy from this to other instruments, and is in clear violation of simple principles of fiqh and reason.

F) This privilege of using the duff is not granted to men on any occasion - as will be discussed below.

G) The permission given to sing during the `Eids applies only to acceptable poetry that encourages good deeds and behavior. It cannot be extended to the songs calling to sins and disobedience, as is common in many cultures (see the earlier citation from al-Baghawi).

As indicated above, there are no reports that the male companions beat on the duff. Thus, beating the duff is allowed for women because it is typical of them, and Allah's Messenger (saws) permitted them to do it, but he (saws) forbade men's imitation of women and vice-versa. This view is upheld by the majority of the scholars; for instance Shaykh ul-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah (r) said:

"The Prophet (saws) permitted some types of rejoicing on the occasion of weddings and their like. He permitted the women, as well, to beat the duff during weddings and festivities. As for the men, during his time, not one of them would beat the duff nor clap their hands. Rather it is confirmed in the Two Sahihs that he (saws) said: "Clapping the hands is for women; and raising the voice with tasbeeh is for men." And "Allah curses those men who imitate women, and those women who imitate men." And singing and beating the duff are of the acts typical of women. Because of this, the righteous Salaf labeled the man who did that, effeminate." [Majmoo` ul-Fatawa 11:565]

And Ibn Qudamah (r) said:

"As for beating it (the duff) for men, it is makrooh (despised act) in all situations. It was only done by women; and if men do it, they would be imitating the women; and the Prophet (saws) has cursed those men who imitate the women." [Al-Mughni 9:174]

Ibn Hajar al-Haythami, commenting on Ibn Qudamah's words, said: "It is obvious that his words mean its prohibition (for men)." [Kaff ur-Ru`aa 35]

And al Hafidh Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, the author of the great commentary of Saheeh al-Bukhaaree, said: "The hadith that says, 'Announce (masculine plural command) the weddings and beat (masculine plural command) the duff for it,' is used by some people as evidence that beating the duff is not specific to women. However, this hadith is unauthentic; and the authentic hadiths (in this regard) give that permission to do that for women. Men cannot be

included in that because of the general prohibition for men to imitate them." [Fath ul-Bari 9:226]

Al-Mubarakpuri agreed with this statement of Ibn Hajar, and he added: "The fuqaha (scholars) have said that the duff is that which has no bells, as ibn al-Hammaam mentioned... Likewise, the permissible singing during weddings is specific for women; it is not allowed for men." [Tuhfat ul-Ahwathi 4:210]

And the great commentator of the Qur'an, Ibn Kathir (r) said: "...Nothing is excluded from that prohibition of musical instruments, except beating the duff for the young girls - during `Eid days, at the arrival of a respected individual from travel, and during weddings - as has been indicated in the hadiths, and as has been established in various places. And permitting that in some situations does not lead to permitting it in all situations.

Common in our times are the ugly scenes prophesized by Allah's Messenger (saws) in which men and women gather to entertain themselves with musical instruments and other prohibited acts. [al-Bukhari, Abu Dawud, al-Bayhaqi and others] May Allah guide the Muslims to what is good for them in both lives.

SINNING ON `EIDS

There are many sins and acts of disobedience practiced by some Muslims more frequently during the `Eid days than at other times of the year. To them, the `Eid is an occasion to give up some of the Islamic principles. They are usually encouraged to do so by the state of joy that they experience during the `Eids.

Mingling of Sexes

One of the frequently practiced acts of disobedience is for men and women who are not mahrams (those prohibited to marry each other) to mingle and do things prohibited in Islam, such as:

- Touching and shaking hands.
- Men and women chatting, laughing, and sometimes flirting with each other.
- Men and women looking intently at each other.

Playing Music and Drinking Alcohol

It is very common for people to play music and listen to it during the `Eid. they often associate this with drinking, or with national or belly dancing, all in the name of Islam! All of this is prohibited by consensus among the early scholars including the Four Imams. The Prophet (saws) said:

"There will be among my Ummah those who would indulge in hir (unlawful sex), wearing silk (for men), Khamr (any alcoholic beverage), and musical instruments. Some of those people would camp beside a mountain. A poor shepherd tending their animals would come to them in the evening asking for a need of his. They would say, "Come back tomorrow." So Allah would destroy (most of) them during the night, bringing the mountain down over them, and would transform others to apes and pigs until the day of Resurrection." [al-Bukhari #5590, Abu Dawud. Authenticated by Ibn Hajar through nine chains]

Improper Appearance

Muslims are supposed to dress up for the `Eid. In doing so, however, both men and women commit many violations in Islam, among which are the following:

- Men wearing natural silk or gold.
- Men wearing tight pants
- Men shaving their beards.
- Women exposing their hair and other parts of their bodies that Islamically are obligatory to cover
- Women wearing perfumes, makeup, decorated and alluring clothing, and some national costumes (Sari for example) that contradict Islamic teachings.

Extravagance

People often spend extravagantly during the `Eid. They waste money on things that are useless and of no benefit for the Muslims. Allah ta`aala says: "Do not waste your wealth senselessly. Those who spend wastefully are the brothers of the Shaytans; and the Shaytan is ever ungrateful to his Lord." [Qur'an 17:26-7]

And Allah's Messenger (saws) said: "A son of Adam will not depart from his position (of reckoning) before his Lord on the day of Resurrection until he is questioned about four things:

- His lifetime - how did he pass it,
- his body - how did he utilize it,
- his wealth - where did he earn it, and how did he spend it
- and his knowledge - what did he do with it."

[authentic hadith related by At-Tirmidhi]

Merits & Virtues of These Blessed Days:



Mina, A Witness of Victory over Satan

Mina is the place where pilgrims spend certain nights of Dhul-Hijjah to throw pebbles at the three Stone-Built Pillars (*Jamarat*). Allah Almighty says: "*Do celebrate the praise of Allah during the appointed days.*" These are the days of Mina, `Eid and the three Post-`Eid Days of Tashreeq. Mina is a small suburb cut by a road alongside of which are two rows of houses. That road begins from Makkah and reaches `Arafah. The houses of Mina are built with hard solid rocks. Most of these houses are of two levels and are not used only in the period of Hajj "Pilgrimage". This suburb extends between Jamarah Al-`Aqabah from the direction of Makkah and by Muhassir Valley from the direction of Al-Muzdalifah.

The Name "Mina" Why?

There are many reasons behind giving this suburb such name:

- 1- Due to the sacrifices being slaughtered in pilgrimage for the sake of Allah. This is the most famous reason behind the name.
- 2- Because Adam wished for Paradise therein.
- 3- And because people used to come together therein, as Arabs call the place where people come together and meet one another as "Mina".

The Borders of Mina

Ibn Juraij said: "I asked `Ata': 'Where is Mina?' He (`Ata') replied: It extends from Al-`Aqabah to Muhassir Valley.'" Al-Fasi also said that Mina's border is straightly from Al-`Aqabah to Muhassir. While Imam Ash-Shafi'i said: "The borders of Mina are between the villages of Muhassir Valley and the nearest *Jamarah* to Makkah, i.e. Al-`Aqabah *Jamarah* at which Allah's Messenger, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, took the pledge of allegiance from Al-Ansar. Neither Muhassir nor Al-`Aqabah nor any of their plains nor mountains nor their inhabited or uninhabited areas is considered a part of Mina. However, the surrounding mountains facing Mina are considered of Mina, while the mountains facing the other side are not considered of Mina.

The Distance Between Mina and Makkah

The distance between Mina and Makkah is, according to Ar-Rafi'i, six miles. But An-Nawawi confirms in many of his books that it is three miles. In his book "*Al-Qura*", Al-Muhib Al-Tabari states that the distance between Mina and Makkah is four miles.

The Dwellings of the Prophet and his Companions in Mina

The Prophet's residence in Mina used to be on the left of the Imam's *Musalla* (Place of Prayer). He used to let his wives dwell in the House of Imarah, while he used to make his Companions dwell behind that House. Also the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, made gesture to the people to stay and dwell in certain places. In another narration, "He (the Prophet) used to make Al-Muhajirin settle down in their Mountain Paths "*Shi`b Al-Muhajirin*" and make Al-Ansar settle down in their Mountain Paths "*Shi`b Al-Ansar*". However, Mina's mountain paths are behind the House of Imarah.

When `Umar Ibn Al-Kattab, may Allah be pleased with him, asked Zaid Ibn Sujan: "Where is your residence at Mina?" He replied: "At the left-hand side of Mina." Then `Umar said: "This is the residence place of the merchants, so don't reside therein." On the authority of Sufyan, `Umar added: "My residence is at the merchants'." The Messenger of Allah settled down in Al-Kheif Mosque. `Abdullah Ibn Abu Bakr reported the Messenger of Allah as saying: "When we reach Makkah, Allah willing, we will stay in Al-Kheif. Al-Kheif is a mosque in Mina in which the

Confederates-"Al-Ahzab) allied against us". I (` Abdullah Ibn Abu Bakr) then asked ` Uthman: "What ally? He (` Uthman) replied: "The Confederates."

The buildings of Mina have special merits and are of great importance. Isma`il Ibn Umaiyah reported that `A'ishah, Mother of the Believers, may Allah be pleased with her, asked the Messenger of Allah for permission to build a water closet in Mina but he refused. That is why `Umar Ibn `Abdul `Aziz, used to forbid hiring the houses of Makkah. He also used to command for the leveling of Mina. However, the people used to pay for lease and abide therein secretly.

The Wells of Mina

There are fifteen wells in Mina, including Al-Hijamiya near *Jamarat* Al-`Aqabah, Kiddanah, `Ammarah, Al-Kulaibiyyah, Al-Sha`abaniyah, Umm Al-Humam renewed by the wife of Al-Mansour, the governor of Yemen; in addition to some other wells.

Mina in the Pre-Islamic Era

`Amr Ibn Luhay was the first one to bring idols to Mina as he placed seven idols therein. He placed an idol on the road between the mosque of Mina and the first Jamarah, another on the First Jamarah, and a third one called `Adim in a nearby place. On the Middle Jamrah, there was a fourth idol while on the brink of the valley a fifth one was placed and another idol on the Greatest Jamarah. The last one is also near the Greatest Jamrah. He then divided the pebbles to twenty one using them each three pebbles for an idol to be thrown accompanied by saying: "You (the idol being thrown by the pebbles) are greater than that one (the next).

Throwing the Pebbles "Jimar"

Throwing the Pebbles is one of the rituals and obligatory acts of Pilgrimage, as explained by Allah's Messenger, peace and blessings be upon him, in his well-known Farewell Pilgrimage. Throwing the Pebbles is a symbol of the unity of all Muslims on one goal. If Muslims realize this unity and work for it, their victory over their enemy will easily be achieved.

The Meaning of Throwing the Pebbles

The word "Jimar" refers to two things: 1- the small pebbles. 2- the Stone-Built Pillars (*Jamarat*) at which pilgrims throw these small stones in the Day of Sacrifice and the three Post-`Eid Days of Tashreeq. The Stone-Built Pillars "Jimar" are three; the Greatest *Jamarah* of Al-`Aqabah; the Middle *Jamarah* and the Smallest *Jamarah*. All these *Jamarat* are in Mina from the direction of Makkah. The distance between one *Jamarah* and the other is one hundred and twenty meters. However, throwing the pebbles means hurling the small stones at the stone-built pillars in a specific way and order.

The First One to Throw Pebbles

It was Prophet Ibrahim, peace and blessings be upon him, the first one who threw pebbles. It has been reported that when Gabriel took Ibrahim to show him the rituals of Pilgrimage, he passed by the *Jamarah* of Al-`Aqabah, while Satan was there blocking their way. At that moment, Gabriel asked Ibrahim to pronounce "*Allahu Akbar*" Allah is Most Great and to throw pebbles at him (Satan). That was repeated twice again at the second and the third *Jamarah*. The time of Throwing the Pebbles is due to be in the period between staying in Muzdalifah and standing for worship there. The first *Jamarah* of Al-`Aqabah is to be thrown after sunrise on the 10th day of Dhul-Hijjah. On each day of the Days of Tashreeq, there are three *Jamarat* to be thrown by twenty one pebbles; with seven pebbles at each one of the three *Jamarat*.

However, it is permissible for a pilgrim to do the throwing in two days instead of three and to leave on the third day as Allah Almighty says: "*But if any one hastens to leave in two days there is no blame on him, and if anyone stays on there is no blame on him, if his aim is to do right.*"

Pebbles are to be picked from Al-Muzdalifah, but, according to Ahmad, one may pick pebbles from anywhere one wants.



1. **The Road to `Arafah: A South African Pilgrim Remember**
2. **An American in Makkah** Michael Wolfe
3. **I Was in Awe at the Scale of the Place** Fatiha Arhbal
4. **The Pilgrimage to Makkah** Malcolm X
5. **I Remember My First Hajj** Umm Nuha
6. **Chanting Labbaik.. What a Pleasure!** M. Assadullah
7. **Performing Hajj Early in Life** Mateen Khaja

- **Qur'anic References to Hajj**
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- **The Making of Kiswah**
- **A Historical Look at the Kiswah**
- **Selection from the Book "Features of Makkah and Al-Madinah Between the Past and Present"**
- **Zamzam Water - A Miracle**
- **Superior Days For Righteous Deeds**

Islam 'does not mean killing', says cleric

Staff and agencies

Thursday January 20, 2005

[Guardian Unlimited](#)

A leading Saudi cleric issued a plea today for Muslims not to heed calls to wage terror attacks in the name of Islam.

Sheikh Abdulrahman al-Sudeis, the state-appointed preacher at the Grand Mosque in Mecca, told pilgrims in a sermon marking the feast of Eid al-Adha that scholars must preach moderation to confront militants, who were using "misguided and void" interpretations to justify violence.

His sermon, dedicated to the 2.5 million Muslims performing the hajj pilgrimage in Mecca, echoed comments made yesterday by Sheikh Abdul-Aziz al Sheik. The kingdom's grand mufti said the greatest test to the nation of Islam came from its sons who were "lured by the devil" to carry out acts of violence.

Sheikh al-Sudeis said militancy was not a valid interpretation of Islam. "Because Muslims have strayed from moderation, we are now suffering from this dangerous phenomenon of branding people infidels and inciting Muslims to rise against their leaders to cause instability," he said.

"The reason for this is a delinquent and void interpretation of Islam based on ignorance ... faith does not mean killing Muslims or non-Muslims who live among us, it does not mean shedding blood, terrorising or sending body parts flying."

The preacher warned that extremism would ruin the Muslim nation: "This phenomenon has expanded so much that scholars must confront it with concrete proof from Islam to protect our youth from its stench and putridity."

The kingdom is battling a campaign of violence by Saudi-born Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida network, which is trying to topple the pro-US Saudi rulers it has declared apostates.

King Fahd and Crown Prince Abdullah, the country's de facto ruler, issued a joint statement for Eid al-Adha. "Muslims should unite and embark on a course that disavows terrorism, which spreads mayhem and is forbidden by Islam," they said. "Muslims ... should avoid excess and extremism."

Many holiday sermons across the world focused on Iraq. At a mosque in the Lebanese capital of Beirut, Shia Muslim cleric Sheikh Ahmed Kourani blasted the US occupation of Iraq and its "invasion of our lands ... seeking to humiliate us".

In Baghdad, Iraqi cleric Mohammed al-Sumeidi lamented what had happened to the capital. "Baghdad is the city of science, city of kings, city of believers. It has now become the city of explosions and hideout of criminals," he said. Back in Mina, outside Mecca, pilgrims began stoning the "jamarat" - three pillars symbolising the devil - in the final ritual of the hajj. Unlike in previous years, pilgrims began the ritual just after midnight, taking advantage of a religious edict permitting the stoning before dawn prayers. Saudi authorities issued the edict in a bid to avoid stampedes such as those that killed 1,426 pilgrims in 1990 and 244 last year.

"We were worried about the crowds and we had heard some real horror stories so we feel much better that we made it here early," said Ahmed Sodikin, 56, from Bandung, Indonesia, who came well before dawn. Egyptian teacher Ahmed Mohei el-Din, 30, who also performed hajj last year, praised the new arrangements, saying "I could walk and throw my pebbles ...This year was much easier."

Nonetheless, the vast majority of pilgrims were expected later in the day. Around 10,000 security forces were patrolling the area to ensure the smooth flow of the ritual. Interior ministry spokesman Brigadier General Mansour al-Turki said all was going well as the day wore on: "Thanks be to God, no incidents so far."

Eid al-Adha, or the feast of the sacrifice, is the most important holiday in the Islamic calendar, and marks Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son for God. Around 1 million animals were expected to be slaughtered by hajj pilgrims, with much of the meat going to the poor. Many will pay 450 riyals (£65) for an animal to be slaughtered and its meat shipped to needy nations.

After the devil-stoning ritual, pilgrims shave their heads or clip a lock of hair, before returning to Mecca for Tawaf, the circling of the holy stone known as the Ka'aba. On finishing hajj rites, many pilgrims will remain in Saudi Arabia to visit Medina, another holy city where the prophet Muhammad lived.<http://www.guardian.co.uk/saudi/story/0,11599,1394920,00.html>

The Islamic and Christian views of Jesus: a comparison

The person of Jesus or Isa in Arabic (peace be upon him) is of great significance in both Islam and Christianity. However, there are differences in terms of beliefs about the nature and life occurrences of this noble Messenger.

Source of information about Jesus in Islam

Most of the Islamic information about Jesus is actually found in the Quran.

The Quran was revealed by God to Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him), and memorized and written down in his lifetime. Today, anyone who calls him or herself a Muslim believes in the complete authenticity of the Quran as the original revealed guidance from God.

Source of information about Jesus in Christianity

Christians take their information about Jesus from the Bible, which includes the Old and New Testaments.

These contain four biblical narratives covering the life and death of Jesus. They have been written, according to tradition, respectively by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. They are placed at the beginning of the New Testament and comprise close to half of it.

Encyclopedia Britannica notes that none of the sources of his life and work can be traced to Jesus himself; he did not leave a single known written word. Also, there are no contemporary accounts written of his life and death. What can be established about the historical Jesus depends almost without exception on Christian traditions, especially on the material used in the composition of the Gospels of Mark, Matthew, and Luke, which reflect the outlook of the later church and its faith in Jesus.

Below are the views of Islam and Christianity based on primary source texts and core beliefs.

ISLAM

1. Do Muslims believe he was a Messenger of One God? YES

Belief in all of the Prophets and Messengers of God is a fundamental article of faith in Islam. Thus, believing in Prophets Adam, Jesus, Moses, and Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon them) is a requirement for anyone who calls him or herself a Muslim. A person claiming to be a Muslim who, for instance, denies the Messengership of Jesus, is not considered a Muslim.

The Quran says in reference to the status of Jesus as a Messenger:

"The Messiah (Jesus), son of Mary, was no more than a Messenger before whom many Messengers have passed away; and his mother adhered wholly to truthfulness, and they both ate food (as other mortals do). See how We make Our signs clear to them; and see where they are turning away!" (Quran 5:75).

2. Do Muslims believe he was born of a Virgin Mother? YES

Like Christians, Muslims believe Mary, Maria in Spanish, or Maryam as she is called in Arabic, was a chaste, virgin woman, who miraculously gave birth to Jesus.

"Relate in the Book the story of Mary, when she withdrew from her family, to a place in the East. She screened herself from them; then We sent to her Our spirit (angel Gabriel) and he appeared before her as a man in all respects. She said: I seek refuge from you in God Most Gracious (come not near) if you do fear God. He said: Nay, I am only a Messenger from your Lord, to announce to you the gift of a pure son. She said: How shall I have a son, when no man has ever touched me, and I am not unchaste? He said: So it will be, your Lord says: 'That is easy for Me; and We wish to appoint him as a sign unto men and a Mercy from Us': It was a matter so decreed" (Quran 19:16-21).

3. Do Muslims believe Jesus had a miraculous birth? YES

The Quran says:

"She (Mary) said: 'O my Lord! How shall I have a son when no man has touched me.' He (God) said: 'So (it will be) for God creates what He wills. When He has decreed something, He says to it only: 'Be!' - and it is" (3:47).

It should also be noted about his birth that:

"Verily, the likeness of Jesus in God's Sight is the likeness of Adam. He (God) created him from dust, then (He) said to him: 'Be!' - and he was" (Quran 3:59).

4. Do Muslims believe Jesus spoke in the cradle? YES

"Then she (Mary) pointed to him. They said: 'How can we talk to one who is a child in the cradle?' He (Jesus) said: 'Verily! I am a slave of God, He has given me the Scripture and made me a Prophet; " (19:29-30).

5. Do Muslims believe he performed miracles? YES

Muslims, like Christians believe Jesus performed miracles. But these were performed by the will and permission of God, Who has power and control over all things.

"Then will God say: 'O Jesus the son of Mary! recount My favor to you and to your mother. Behold! I strengthened you with the Holy Spirit (the angel Gabriel) so that you did speak to the people in childhood and in maturity. Behold! I taught you the Book and Wisdom, the Law and the Gospel. And behold: you make out of clay, as it were, the figure of a bird, by My leave, and you breathe into it, and it becomes a bird by My leave, and you heal those born blind, and the lepers by My leave. And behold! you bring forth the dead by My leave. And behold! I did restrain the children of Israel from (violence to you) when you did show them the Clear Signs, and the unbelievers among them said: 'This is nothing but evident magic' (5:110).

6. Do Muslims believe in the Trinity? NO

Muslims believe in the Absolute Oneness of God, Who is a Supreme Being free of human limitations, needs and wants. He has no partners in His Divinity. He is the Creator of everything and is completely separate from His creation.

God says in the Quran regarding the Trinity:

"People of the Book (Jews and Christians)! Do not exceed the limits in your religion, and attribute to God nothing except the truth. The Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, was only a Messenger of God, and His command that He conveyed unto Mary, and a spirit from Him. So believe in God and in His Messengers, and do not say: 'God is a Trinity.' Give up this assertion; it would be better for you. God is indeed just One God. Far be it from His glory that He should have a son. To Him belongs all that is in the heavens and in the earth. God is sufficient for a guardian" (Quran 4:171).

7. Do Muslims believe that Jesus was the son of God? NO

"Say: "God is Unique! God, the Source [of everything]. He has not fathered anyone nor was He fathered, and there is nothing comparable to Him!" (Quran 112:1-4).

The Quran also states:

"Such was Jesus, the son of Mary; it is a statement of truth, about which they vainly dispute. It is not befitting to the majesty of God, that He should beget a son. Glory be to Him! When He determines a matter, He only says to it, 'Be' and it is" (Quran 19:34-35).

8. Do Muslims believe Jesus was killed on the cross then resurrected? NO

"“They did not kill him, nor did they crucify him, but they thought they did.” (Quran 4:156) “God lifted him up to His presence. God is Almighty, All-Wise” (Quran 4:157) .

CHRISTIANITY

1. Do Christians believe Jesus was a human being and Messenger of God? YES & NO

With the exception of Unitarian Christians, who like all the early followers of Jesus, still do not believe in the Trinity, most Christians now believe in the Divinity of Jesus, which is connected to the belief in Trinity. They say he is the second member of the Triune God, the Son of the first part of the Triune God, and at the same time "fully" God in every respect.

2. Do Christians believe he was born of a Virgin Mother? YES

A chaste and pious human woman who gave birth to Jesus Christ, the second member of the Trinity, the Son of God, and at the same time "fully" God Almighty in every respect.

Christians believe however, that while she was a virgin, she was married to a man named Joseph (Bible: Matthew:1:18). According to Matthew 1:25, Joseph "kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son; and he called His name Jesus".

3. Do Christians believe he had a miraculous birth? YES

"Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows. When His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit" (Bible: Matthew 1:18)

4. Do Christians believe he performed miracles? YES

"And now, Lord, look upon their threats, and grant to thy servants to speak thy word with all boldness, while thou stretches out thy hand to heal, and sign and wonders are performed through the name of thy holy servant Jesus (Bible: Acts 4:30).

Christians believe that Jesus performed these miracles because he was the Son of God as well as the incarnation of God.

5. Do Christians believe in the Trinity? YES

With the exception of the Unitarian Christians, who do not believe in the Divinity of Christ, the Trinity, according to the Catholic encyclopedia, is the term used for the central doctrine of the Christian religion. The belief is that in the unity of the Godhead there are Three Persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. These three Persons or beings are distinct from each another, while being similar in character: uncreated and omnipotent.

The First Vatican Council has explained the meaning to be attributed to the term *mystery* in theology. It lays down that a mystery is a truth which we are not merely incapable of discovering apart from Divine Revelation, but which, even when revealed, remains "hidden by the veil of faith and enveloped, so to speak, by a kind of darkness" (Const., "De fide. cath.", iv). The First Vatican Council further defined that the Christian Faith contains mysteries strictly so called (can. 4). All theologians admit that the doctrine of the Trinity is of the number of these. The Catholic Encyclopedia notes that of all revealed truths, this is the most impenetrable to reason.

6. Do Christians believe that Jesus was the son of God? YES

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through Him (Bible: John 3:16).

However, it is interesting to note that the term "son of God" is used in other parts of the Bible to refer to Adam (Bible: Luke 3:38), Israel (Bible: Exodus 4:22) and David (Bible: Psalms 2:7) as well. The creatures of God are usually referred to in the Bible as children of God.

The role of Paul of Tarsus in shaping this belief and the belief in Trinity

The notion of Jesus as son of God is something that was established under the influence of Paul of Tarsus (originally named Saul), who had been an enemy of Jesus, but later changed course and joined the disciples after the departure of Jesus.

Later, however, he initiated a number of changes into early Christian teachings, in contradiction, for instance, to disciples like Barnabas, who believed in the Oneness of God and who had actually lived and met with Jesus.

Paul is considered by a number of Christian scholars to be the father of Christianity due to his additions of the following ideas:

- that Jesus is the son of God,
- the concept of Atonement,
- the renunciation of the Law of the Torah.

Paul did these things in hopes of winning over the Gentiles (non-Jewish people). His letters are another of the primary sources of information on Jesus according to the Christian tradition.

The original followers of Prophet Jesus opposed these blatant misrepresentations of the message of Jesus. They struggled to reject the notion of the Divinity of Jesus for close to 200 years.

One person who was an original follower of Jesus was Barnabas. He was a Jew born in Cyprus and a successful preacher of the teachings of Jesus. Because of his closeness to Jesus, he was an important member of the small group of disciples in Jerusalem who had had gathered together following the disappearance of Jesus.

The question of Jesus's nature, origin and relationship with God was not raised amongst Barnabas and the small group of disciples. Jesus was considered a man miraculously endowed by God. Nothing in the words of Jesus or the events in his life led them to modify this view.

The Gospel of Barnabas was accepted as a Canonical Gospel in the Churches of Alexandria till 325 CE. Irenaeus (130-200) wrote in support of pure monotheism and opposed Paul for injecting into Christianity doctrines of the pagan Roman religion and Platonic philosophy. He quoted extensively from the Gospel of Barnabas in support of his views. This indicates that the Gospel of Barnabas was in circulation in the first and second centuries of Christianity.

In 325 (CE), a council of Christian leaders met at Nicaea and made Paul's beliefs officially part of Christian doctrine. It also ordered that all original Gospels in Hebrew script which contradicted Paul's beliefs should be destroyed. An edict was issued that anyone in possession of these Gospels would be put to death.

The Gospel of Barnabas has miraculously survived though.

7. Do Christians believe he was killed on the cross? YES

This is a core Christian belief and it relates to the concept of atonement. According to this belief, Jesus died to save mankind from sin. However, this is not stated explicitly in the four gospels which form the primary source texts of Christianity. It is found, however, in Romans 6:8,9.

Christians believe Jesus was spat on, cut, humiliated, kicked, striped and finally hung up on the cross to endure a slow and painful death.

According, to Christian belief, the original sin of Adam and Eve of eating from the forbidden tree was so great that God could not forgive it by simply willing it, rather it was necessary to erase it with the blood of a sinless, innocent Jesus.

Resurrection

The four Gospels and the Epistles of St. Paul are the main sources of Christianity which discuss the Resurrection of Jesus after his crucifixion. According to St. Matthew, Jesus appeared to the holy women, and again on a mountain in Galilee. Mark's Gospel tells a different story: Jesus was seen by Mary Magdalene, by the two disciples at Emmaus, and the Eleven before his Ascension into heaven.

Luke's Gospel says Jesus walked with the disciples to Emmaus, appeared to Peter and to the assembled disciples in Jerusalem. In John's Gospel, Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene, to the ten Apostles on Easter Sunday, to the Eleven a week later, and to seven disciples at the Sea of Tiberias.

Another account of the resurrection by St. Paul is found in Bible: Corinthians 15: 3-8.

According to Christian belief, Resurrection is a manifestation of God's justice, Who exalted Christ to a life of glory, as Christ had humbled himself unto death (Phil., 2: 8-9). This event also completes the mystery of Christian salvation and redemption. The death of Jesus frees believers from sin, and with his resurrection, he restores to them the most important privileges lost by sin (Bible: Romans 4:25).

More importantly, the belief in the resurrection of Jesus indicates Christian acknowledgment of Christ as the immortal God, the cause of believers' own resurrection (Bible: I Corinthians 4: 21; Phil., 3:20-21), as well as the model and the support of a new life of grace (Bible: Romans 4: 4-6; 9-11).

MORE ON ISLAM AND CHRISTIANITY

- ◆The other Ansar: Companions of Prophet Jesus
- ◆John the Baptist: A Prophet of Islam
- ◆Muslim-Christian Relations, The Good, the Bad

For further study of a Muslim view of Jesus and Christianity read the following books:

◆ [Jesus, Prophet of Islam](#) by Muhammad 'Ata'ur-Rahim

◆ [For Christ Sake](#) by Ahmad Thomson and Muhammad 'Ata'ur-Rahim

For a unique Christian view of the Islamic contribution to the West read the following book:

◆ [Islam and the Discovery of Freedom](#) by Rose Wilder Lane

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