

Hajj

Journey of Hearts



1435 AH / 2014 AC

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INTRODUCTION



Nowadays, Saudi Arabia is receiving thousands of air flights carrying hundreds of thousands, even millions, of Muslims coming from all corners of the worlds to perform Hajj, the fifth pillar of Islam.



For a true Muslim, This is a very special journey. No other travel, whatever the attraction or spectacular scenes it may include, can be comparable to this journey to Makkah and the holy sites.

One aspect that makes the journey of Hajj so unique is that rather than focusing on the material attractions and physical pleasures, it nourishes the spiritual and inner side of the human being. It focuses on the welfare of the most important component of a human that is often ignored and neglected, namely the soul and heart.

Hajj, therefore, is a journey of the heart to true attractions that do matter. During this unique experience, a pilgrim gets showered with the divine grace and blessings; the holy sites evoke great stories of sacrifice and dedication; and pilgrims, individually and collectively, are engaged in an intensive course of worship and sincere devotion.

This new book from Onislam.net focuses on this spiritual atmosphere. In Chapter one, **10 Blessed Days**, the special status of the days of Hajj are highlighted. These are very special days; their blessings are so expansive that all Muslims, not only pilgrims, can benefit from them.

Chapter two, **Attractions for Soul**, explores the limitless opportunities that Hajj offers to lift up your heart and nurture your soul. The spiritual attractions here are far joyful and fulfilling than those of the *dunya*.

How the Journey of Hajj could impact one's life? Chapter three, **Hajj Stories**, presents the experience of three pilgrims as well as the insights and lessons taken from their journeys.

We ask Allah Almighty to accept the Hajj of pilgrims, bless Muslims who have not undertaken this journey yet with accepted Hajj in the future and make this humble work beneficial and fruitful. Ameen

OnIslam Shari`ah Team

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CHAPTER ONE

10 BLESSED DAYS





BENEFITS OF DHUL-HIJJAH DAYS



By Sheikh Ahmad Kutty

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." (Al-Bukhari)

The first ten days of Dhul-Hijjah have been singled out especially for great merits and excellences like no other days in the Islamic calendar. Allah in His infinite wisdom and mercy has chosen to dispense infinite spiritual blessing and rewards.

Thanks to the high status these days enjoy, Allah has made them worthy of making an oath by them, when He says, **{By the Daybreak, by the Ten Nights}** (Al-Fajr 89:1–2). According to some Qur'an commentators or *mufasssirin*, the ten nights mentioned here are none other than the first ten nights of Dhul-Hijjah; others, however, hold the view that these nights specifically refer to the last ten nights of Ramadan. Anyhow, no one denies the fact that the first ten days of Dhul-Hijjah possess tremendous blessings and excellence.



This has been confirmed by the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) who is reported to have said,

"There are no days in which righteous deeds are more beloved to Allah than these ten days."

Based on this and similar traditions, scholars have stressed that the days and nights of Dhul-Hijjah must be set aside for intensive dedication to worship, increased preoccupation with virtuous acts, and contemplation.

Virtue and contemplation go hand in hand in Islam. Works that are especially worthy of mentioning include reading the Qur'an; making *dhikr* and *du`aa'*; performing supererogatory prayers; sending benedictions on the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him); rendering acts of kindness and compassion; visiting the sick; counseling what is good and forbidding what is wrong; bringing peace, reconciliation, and harmony among people; helping those who are in distress or need, and so on. While all of these works are to be active concerns of all Muslims every single day of their life, these must certainly be multiplied in these days more than any other time.

Fasting is especially mentioned as a most meritorious act of devotion to be performed in the first nine days of Dhul-



Hijjah; this is true of those who are not performing Hajj. According to some traditions, by fasting these days, one is accorded a tremendous opportunity to gain repentance and forgiveness. If, however, a person cannot afford to fast all nine days, he may at least fast the ninth day of Dhul-Hijjah, which is known as the Day of `Arafah.

However, it is also worth mentioning that while fasting the first nine days of Dhul-Hijjah is recommended, it is forbidden to fast during the days of the `Eid. This prohibition is not limited to the tenth of Dhul-Hijjah; rather it extends also to the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth, for all of these are days of festivities and celebrations.

Finally, it is perhaps worth mentioning that the special merits and excellences associated with the days of Dhul-Hijjah are in no small measure due to the fact that they coincide with the performance of the greatest rites of Hajj.

The foremost days of Hajj are the following: the day of *tarwiyah*, which falls on Dhul-Hijjah 8 and is the day the pilgrims resume ihram and proceed to Mina; the day of `Arafah, which is on the ninth, the *day* of the great ritual of standing on the plain of `Arafah; and the day of *nahr*, which falls on the tenth and is the day of sacrifice and stoning the Jamarat.

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The fact that the pilgrims are gathering in the sacred sites to perform the greatest rites of Hajj is itself a most significant event; it is, therefore, becoming of those who are not pilgrims to show spiritual and emotional solidarity with the pilgrims.

Therefore, as the pilgrims are engaged in performing the great rites of Hajj, Muslims wherever they are, are also encouraged to partake something of the great spiritual feast and experience by performing such acts of virtue and devotion as they are capable of.

May Allah the Most Exalted and Glorious expose us to the wisdom of these rites and bless us all to participate in them with our whole bodies, minds, and souls. Ameen.

A LITTLE EFFORT GOES A LONG WAY

Practical Tips for Dhul-Hijjah Days



By Muhammad Fathi

Have you missed some of the precious time of the previous Ramadan?

Do you feel you could have done more in that blessed month? Are you disappointed with your performance



during the last ten days of Ramadan and feel an overwhelming yearning for the spirituality of Laylat Al-Qadr?

Well, you have another chance! It is out of Allah's mercy that He bestows upon us blessed times in which rewards are multiplied. These seasons of goodness recur time after time, so that we can recharge our spiritual batteries and keep our hearts alive. Nowadays, we are witnessing one of them — the first 10 days of Dhul-Hijjah.

You certainly must have read or heard about the greatness of these days and the indescribable amount of forgiveness and mercy that Allah bestows upon people during them. Now that these days are almost here, it is time for deeds, not words.

The intelligent person is one who takes full advantage of every minute and every second, and this is not so difficult. There are many ways to achieve goodness, and with little effort you can get much reward.

Hajj: The Fifth Pillar of Islam

The first and foremost act of worship in these days is Hajj. If you are going to observe it this year, then try your best to



gain as much reward as possible. This is your real chance to become wholly absolved of your sins and have your record wiped clean.

So spare no effort in perfecting your rituals, and keep away from anything that may blemish your Hajj. During the journey, make use of your time through constant supplication, remembrance of Allah, and recitation of the Qur'an. Who knows, this may be your last journey to the Sacred House.

Reward of Hajj in Your Homeland

You may be unable to do Hajj this year, and you may feel sad because you are deprived of the great reward of Hajj. But you can also achieve this reward in your country of residence. Just reflect on the following hadith:

Whoever prays Fajr Prayer in congregation, and then sits and remembers Allah until the sun rises, then (after a while) prays two rak`has, he will gain a reward equal to that of making perfect Hajj and `Umrah. [The Prophet repeated the word "perfect" thrice.] (At-Tirmidhi)

It's so easy, isn't it?



Back to the Qur'an

It is time also to dust off your copy of the Qur'an and return to its refuge. Make these 10 days the beginning of a systematic and strong relationship with it. It's important to know that reading one letter of the Qur'an earns you 10 rewards. In this way, reading Surat Al-Fatihah — which doesn't take more than two minutes — will give you more than one thousand rewards. This is on ordinary days, so what about these great days! Certainly the reward will be far greater.

Furthermore, there are some surahs that have special merits. Reading Surat Al-Ikhlās (surah 112), for example, is equal to reading one third of the Qur'an (Al-Bukhari and Muslim). Regular recitation of Surat Al-Mulk (surah 67) intercedes for its reader (Abu Dawud), and reading Ayat Al-Kursi (Al-Baqarah 2:255) when going to sleep protects you from Satan for the whole night (Al-Bukhari).

Fasting: Evoking the Spirit of Ramadan

It is a good idea to evoke the spirituality of Ramadan by fasting during these blessed days. Remember that



observing the voluntary fast for day keeps you away from Hell. In a hadith, the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said,

Anyone who fasts for one day for Allah's pleasure, Allah will keep his face away from the (Hell) fire for (a distance covered by a journey of) seventy years. (Al-Bukhari and Muslim)

This is during ordinary days. Of course there is even more reward during these blessed days.

Day of `Arafah

On the day of `Arafah, Allah showers His mercy on the pilgrims and forgives their sins. If you are not a pilgrim, you still can have a share of this forgiveness. All you have to do is to fast on the Day of `Arafah, and by doing that, Allah will forgive your sins for two whole years — the past year and the coming one.

Night Vigil Prayer

You always hear about the virtues of spending night in prayer, and you have actually tasted its sweetness in



Ramadan nights. Why not revive this beautiful act of worship during these nights. You can add two or four extra *rak`has* after finishing `Isha' Prayer and before Witr Prayer. In addition to that, there is another easy way to gain the reward of the night vigil prayer. It is reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said:

He who attends `Isha' Prayer in congregation is as if he has performed *salah* for half of the night; and he who attends `Isha' and Fajr prayers in congregation, is as if he has performed *salah* for the whole night. (At-Tirmidhi)

The Golden Words

This is one of the easiest ways to gain treasures of reward. You can make *dhikr* wherever you are, at all times. You can make *dhikr* at your home, school, or workplace; and you can make it while you are driving, walking, traveling, and commuting.

In addition, the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) gave us guidance for reciting certain formulas of *dhikr* that have special reward. For example, Abu Hurairah (may Allah

be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said:

He who recites after every prayer:

***Subhan Allah* (Allah is free from imperfection) thirty-three times;**

***Al-hamdu lillah* (praise be to Allah) thirty-three times;**

***Allahu Akbar* (Allah is Greatest) thirty-three times;**

and completes the hundred with:

***La ilaha illallahu, wahdahu la sharika lahu, lahul-mulku wa lahul-hamdu, wa Huwa `ala kulli shai'in qadir* (there is no true god except Allah. He is One and He has no partner. His is the sovereignty and His is the praise, and He is Omnipotent),**

will have all his sins pardoned even if they may be as large as the foam on the surface of the sea. (Muslim)

Abu Hurairah (may Allah be pleased with him) also reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said:

He who says *Subhan-Allahi wa bihamdihi* (Allah is free from imperfection and His is the praise) one hundred times a day, his sins will be obliterated even if they are equal to the extent of the foam of the sea. (Al-Bukhari and Muslim)

Abu Ayyub Al-Ansari (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said:

He who utters ten times:

La ilaha illallahu, wahdahu la sharika lahu, la hulmulku wa la hulhamdu, wa Huwa `ala kulli sha'in qadir

(There is no true god except Allah. He is One and He has no partner. His is the sovereignty and His is the praise, and He is Omnipotent),

he will have a reward equal to that for freeing four slaves from the progeny of Prophet Isma`il. (Al-Bukhari and Muslim)



The Precious hours

In a wonderful hadith, the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said that on the last third of every night, Allah Almighty calls to His servants:

Is there anyone to invoke Me, so that I may respond to his invocation?

Is there anyone to ask Me, so that I may grant him his request?

Is there anyone seeking My forgiveness, so that I may forgive him? (Al-Bukhari and Muslim)

Why do we miss this golden opportunity? Now is the right time to expose yourself to His divine generosity and mercy. If you are going to fast during these days, you are most likely to wake up a little bit earlier than usual to have your *sahur*. So, seize the opportunity and pray two *rak'ahs*, and ask Allah to forgive your sins and to grant you happiness in this world and in the hereafter. Do not forget your brothers and sisters who suffer in Palestine, Iraq, Myanmar, and other countries.

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The doors of goodness are numerous and wide open. There are many ways to Paradise, and the more time and effort you give, the more reward and blessings you will get.

CHAPTER TWO

ATTRACTIONS FOR SOUL





THE MESSAGE OF PILGRIMAGE



By Wahiduddin Khan

Prior to 1982, my knowledge of Hajj had been limited to what I could gain from books, and so, when at last in that year I had the privilege of performing this religious duty, I felt myself singularly blessed. Although the rites of Hajj are



spread over only a few days, as symbolic guidelines, they stand a man in good stead for the rest of his life. The message of Hajj, as I now comprehend it from the study and performance of it, is that man should make the Almighty the very pivot of his existence, hastening at His call to do His every bidding.

When a man leaves his home and country to go on such a pilgrimage, he brims over with all the emotions aroused by the thought that he is embarking on a course that will lead him directly to Allah. He is, in effect, sloughing off his own world, leaving it behind him, and reaching out for the world of the Almighty. He is on his way to the House of Allah, a place where the great deeds of Allah's messengers and their followers have been preserved for all eternity; where we find the hallowed impressions of the lives of those who lived and died for the cause of Allah.

The pilgrim is then filled with the realization that he is bound for the very destination that Allah especially chose for His last revelation. Once launched on this course, the pilgrim is imbued with the awareness of Allah and His truths, as well as the feeling that it is imperative that he becomes God-oriented. If, up till then he had been self-centered in his thinking, he now turns his thoughts to Allah,



and his entire behavior is molded and transformed by these new thought processes.

Once the pilgrim's train of thought has become God-oriented, he begins to ponder over major issues: Allah's act of creation, particularly His creation of the pilgrim's own self; Allah's affording the pilgrim diverse opportunities of bettering himself in this world; Allah's very benevolence, which makes it possible for the pilgrim to set forth on this journey to the House of Allah. The pilgrim also gives his mind to the day when he will meet his death and be summoned to the court of Allah. This trend of thought turns the ostensible physical journey of the pilgrim into an intense, spiritual venture.

When the time nears for his entrance into Al-Haram (sacred territory), every pilgrim divests himself of his clothing in order to don a new kind of "uniform"—an unstitched, plain, white garment, which serves to heighten his consciousness of entering a new world. The very act of shedding his normal clothes (and with them all signs of status and ethnicity) signifies that he is separating himself from the way of life peculiar to his environment and is now ready to become suffused with such emotions as are



desired by Allah. In this way, thousands of men cast off their own hues and take on the hue of the Almighty.

After clothing himself in ihram, the pilgrim finds his tongue of itself beginning to utter godly words—“*Labbayk, Allahuma, labbayk!*”—and he continues, as if hastening to answer Allah’s call, to repeat the word “*labbayk*”—“O Allah, I am here, I have come!”

Labbayk (I am here) does not mean just that the pilgrim has come to stay in Makkah. It means that in leaving his normal abode he has cast aside his whole way of life. It means, “I am here, at Your command, and with all my heart and soul I am ready to obey You.” While on their pilgrimage, pilgrims simply give utterance to the word “*labbayk*,” but when they return to their own countries, they must put it into practice in their everyday lives.

On reaching Makkah, the pilgrim must perform Tawaf (circumambulation). To do this, he enters the House of Allah—the great mosque in whose spacious central courtyard stands the Ka`bah—that was erected by the Prophet Abraham in ancient times. Then the pilgrim goes round the Ka`bah seven times to demonstrate his willingness to make Allah the pivot of his whole existence.



After the Tawaf, there comes the ritual of Sa`i, which entails brisk walking from the hill of Safa to the hill of Marwah and back again. This procedure is repeated seven times in symbolic enactment of a promise, or covenant, to expend all of one's energies in the path of Allah. The form that this ritual takes can be traced back to the Prophet Isma'il's mother Hajar, when she was running from one hill to another in a frantic search for water for her young baby.

The most important period of worship during Hajj is the day-long sojourn on the plain of `Arafat. It is indeed an awesome spectacle, with people from all over the world clad in identical, simple, white garments chanting, "Lord, I am present, Lord, I am present." This serves to impress upon the mind of the pilgrim how great a gathering there will be in the presence of Allah on the Last Day, the Day of Reckoning. Once the pilgrim becomes aware of its true significance, all his problems fall into their true perspective, and his life cannot but take a turn for the better.

Another practice during Hajj is the casting of stones at Jamrat Al-`Aqabah. This is a symbolic act through which the pilgrim renews his determination to drive Satan away from



him. In this way, he makes it plain that his relationship with Satan is one of enmity and combat.

The next step for the pilgrim is to turn his piece of symbolism into reality, so that he may be purged of all evils, for all the evils besetting man are there at the instigation of Satan.

After this, the pilgrim sacrifices an animal to Allah, an act symbolizing the sacrifice of the self. His faith is such that even if it comes to giving his life—the last thing that he would normally be ready to part with—he will not hesitate to do so in the service of Allah.

Taken with slight modifications from: www.alrisala.org

HAJJ: A PRECIOUS CALL



By Muhammad Ash-Shareef

When Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) completed the building of the Ka`bah, Almighty Allah commanded him to call people to Hajj. Prophet Abraham pleaded, "O Allah, how shall my voice reach all humankind?" Almighty Allah



told him that his duty was only to make the call and that it was up to Allah to make it heard by people.

Prophet Abraham then climbed Mount `Arafat and, as loud as he could, yelled, "O People, verily, Allah has prescribed Hajj for you, so perform it."

The following verse from the Qur'an refers to the fact that Almighty Allah commanded Prophet Abraham to call people to Hajj:

{And proclaim unto humankind the pilgrimage: They will come unto you on foot and on every lean camel; they will come from every deep ravine.} (Al-Hajj 22:27)

To this day, millions upon millions of Muslims continue to answer the call of Prophet Abraham. May Allah help us all be among those who answer this noble call.

`Amr ibn Al-`Aas related,

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 extended his hand, but I withdrew mine.

The Prophet said, **"What is wrong, `Amr?"**

I said, "I want to make a condition."

The Prophet asked, **"And what is that?"**

I replied, "That Allah forgives me."

Upon that, 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?" (Authenticated by Al-Albani)

Hajj is the fifth pillar of Islam. Almighty Allah obliges every financially and physically capable Muslim male or female to perform Hajj once in a lifetime. Almighty Allah says,

{And pilgrimage to the House is incumbent upon humankind for the sake of Allah, (upon) everyone who is able to undertake the journey to it, and (for)

whoever disbelieves, surely Allah is Self-Sufficient, above any need of the worlds.} (Aal `Imran 3:97)

Virtues of Hajj

Sinless Like Newborns. Abu Hurairah (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated that he heard Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) say,

"Whoever performs Hajj and does not commit any obscenity or transgression shall return [free from sins] as he was on the day his mother gave birth to him." (Al-Bukhari)

One of the greatest deeds. Abu Hurairah narrated that the Prophet was asked, "Which deed is the best?" The Prophet said, "**Belief in Allah and His Messenger.**" He was asked again, "What is next?" The Prophet said, "**Jihad [striving] in the cause of Allah.**" He was further asked, "And what is next?" He said, "**Hajj mabroor** [i.e. Hajj accepted by Almighty Allah]" (Al-Bukhari).

Abu Ash-Sha`thaa' (one of the pious successors) said,

"I contemplated the good deeds that a person does, and I found that performing Prayer and fasting are [types of] jihad of the body, and charity is a jihad of the wealth, whereas Hajj is a jihad of both the body and the wealth."

Women's Jihad. `A'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) asked the Prophet, "As jihad is the best deed, shouldn't we [women] make jihad?" The Prophet replied, "**The best jihad for you [women] is a Hajj mabroor.**" `A'ishah later said, "I have been keen to regularly perform Hajj since I heard that from the Messenger of Allah" (agreed upon).

Answered Supplication. The Prophet is reported to have said,

"The one striving in the cause of Allah and the one performing Hajj and the one performing `Umrah are all the delegation of Allah. He calls them and they respond to His call, and they ask Him and He answers their supplication." (Ibn Majah and authenticated by Al-Albani)

Day of `Arafat. The Prophet is reported to have said,

"There is no day on which Allah frees servants of His from Fire more than [those freed on] the Day of `Arafat. And, verily, He draws near and then proudly speaks about them [i.e. the pilgrims] before the angels, saying, 'What do these seek?'" (Muslim)

The Prophet also said,

"Verily, Allah proudly speaks about the people of `Arafat before the people of Heaven [i.e. angels], saying, 'Look to My servants: They have come to Me disheveled and dusty.'" (Al-Haithami and Al-Wadi'i)

`Abdullah ibn Al-Mubarak related,

I went to Sufyan ibn `Uyaynah as the Day of `Arafat was approaching. He was resting on his knees, with his hands raised to the heaven and his cheeks and beard moistened with tears. He looked back and saw me, so I asked him, "Among the people who have gathered here for Hajj, who is in the worst state?" He replied, "He who thinks that Allah will not forgive him."

`A'ishah would see the Prophet standing for Night Vigil Prayer all night until his feet were cracked and swollen. She



asked him, "Why do you do this at a time when Allah has forgiven all your past and future sins?" The Prophet said, "Shall I not be a thankful servant?" (agreed upon).

This is the sublime example of Prophet Muhammad, whose sins were already forgiven. Now, how should we react to the glad tidings of Paradise and forgiveness of sins promised to those who perform Hajj?

Hajj Accepted by Allah

There are many hadiths that speak about the virtues of Hajj and affirm that sins are forgiven after a Hajj that is accepted by Allah. However, it should be emphasized that pilgrims should continue to obey Allah and His Messenger after Hajj. The belief that pilgrims will enter Paradise regardless of the sins they commit after Hajj is a misconception. This misconception is quite popular; it should therefore be corrected.

As mentioned earlier, the Arabic term Hajj *mabroor* means a Hajj that was accepted by Almighty Allah. Such Hajj is free from sins, during and after it. If pilgrims returned to their homes in a state better than their state before they went to Hajj, then this would be a sign that their Hajj was accepted.



Another sign is pilgrims' refraining from committing sins after Hajj.

While Ibn `Umar was on his deathbed, his son reminded him of all the good deeds he did along with the Prophet and his Companions. Ibn `Umar told his son, "Quiet! Don't you know whom Allah accepts from? Verily, Allah accepts only from those who have *taqwa* [piety and fear of Allah]."

Ready to go to Makkah for Hajj, `Ali ibn Al-Husayn wore his attire of ihram and mounted his camel. Suddenly, the color of his face changed and its skin shivered. As he started to cry, he was unable to intone the *Talbiyah* [Hajj prayer: Here I am at Your service, O Allah; here I am]. Someone asked him, "What's wrong?" `Ali ibn Al-Husayn said, "I am afraid that if I recite it [i.e. the *Talbiyah*], I will be answered, 'May your call not be answered, and may happiness not be your reward.'"

With that spirit, let's visit the House of Allah in pursuit of His mercy and forgiveness.

Special Experience

I recall that during my hajj some sad incidents occurred at the place where pilgrims stone the Jamarat. It was before the time of Dhuhr Prayer, and I had been sitting since early



morning, waiting for the time of Dhuhr Prayer to fling my pebbles.

About 30 minutes before Dhuhr Prayer, throngs of people toppled us like dominoes. I went through a really tough situation together with other pilgrims. Yet on my way back to the Ka`bah, I found a place with shady trees and a carpeted patio leading to a villa. The owner, an old man, stood watching all those who passed by; and I sat watching him. People would go to him and ask him for water. He would hurry and bring them cold water, so people would sincerely pray for him. I felt that their prayers were sincere and heartfelt, because I felt as thirsty as they were. Whenever the old man saw sick people, he would hasten on to the road and invite them in and provide them with food and a bed so that they would relax.

At first, I was embarrassed to ask for anything, but later I realized that I was thirsty, so I asked him for water. I had been in that patio for some time, and when I asked him for water, he realized that he had not offered me anything. He hastened on to the inside, and in addition to water, he brought me some fruit juice boxes. As I made my way back to the Ka`bah, I thought about this man: If a human being

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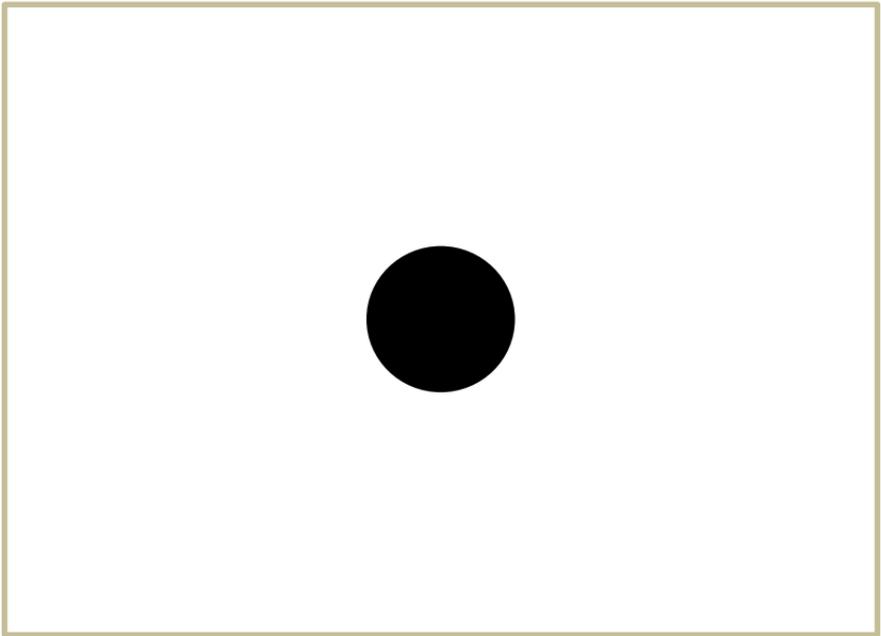
can be so merciful to those who came for Hajj, then how vast is the mercy of Almighty Allah for those pilgrims?

The Prophet is reported to have said, "**The reward for a Hajj *mabroor* is nothing but Paradise**" (Authenticated by Al-Albani).





HAJJ: BLACK OR WHITE DOTS?



By 'Ilm Seeker

Take a look at the following picture. What do you see?

Many will see the black dot, not the whole field of white dots. Despite the innumerable white dots around us - our



health, wealth, youth, household, offspring, fine clothing, ceaseless sustenance, etc. - some see only the few black dots (that guy at work who is always talking on the phone; that dripping tap that never stops; etc.). Believers are required to look positively at things around them and show gratitude to their Lord, the Most Generous. In the Qur'an, Almighty Allah says,

{And when your Lord proclaimed, "If you give thanks, I will give you more, but if you are thankless, lo! My punishment is dire.} (Ibrahim 14:7)

The majority fail to be thankful, however. This is related in a Qur'anic verse as follows: **{And very few of My servants are grateful.} (Saba' 34:13)**

This is true indeed, and it is more so when it comes to Hajj.

Difficult Journey

Hajj is a time of hardship; there is no doubt about that. But one way to make Hajj more inspiring and more acceptable in the sight of Allah is to focus on the white dots existing therein, not the black ones. Be sure you will be tested in ways you cannot imagine.



Suppose you are in Mina, and you suddenly realize you have to use the washroom. You rush out, only to find more than a hundred people lined up in front of 10 stalls! Obviously, that's a big black dot. But what are the white dots that are not so obvious?

1. You are alive, which is a big blessing in itself.
2. You are surrounded by your brothers and sisters in Islam; besides, they are pilgrims.
3. It is not a serious medical emergency. It is only a need to use the washroom.

For an acceptable and trouble-free Hajj, one should assume the conduct of looking for all the white dots that are associated with any given situation. About the boundless favors that He bestows upon us, Almighty Allah says,

{And He gives you of all that you ask for, and if you count the favors of Allah, never will you be able to number them. Verily, man is given up to injustice and ingratitude.} (Ibrahim 14:34)



Here are some other examples of such situations that a pilgrim is likely to encounter:

1. Your group leader tells you that the bus going to `Arafah is coming at 3:00 a.m. Consequently, you should get up at 2:00 a.m. to get ready. And actually you wake up in time and you wait until it is 8:00 a.m. with the bus making no appearance.

A white dot: You have a group! Sure it beats going alone. Hey, you could get lost if you go alone!

Another white dot: Almighty Allah let you wake up; He could have taken your soul that night, but He gave you respite and more time for you to ask for forgiveness and come back to Him.

2. You complete your Tawaf (circumambulation of the Ka`bah) and Sa`i (walking between Safa and Marwah) and return to your tent, only to find out that dinner has already been served, and you are hungry.

A white dot: It's all right. Remember! You fast the 30 days of Ramadan anyway, no matter how hungry you feel. Remember also that Almighty Allah provides you with foods day in, day out in your hometown. Being hungry for a



few hours is not so serious. If you are still not budging, remember those places where 10 or so people fight to get a piece of bread. Can you find a piece of bread in your tent? Eat it, and thank Allah for His bounty.

Another white dot: Say *al-hamdu lillah* that Allah has enabled you to perform the rituals of Sa`i and Tawaf. When you first started, you had inner feelings that "it is not going to be easy." But out of His mercy, Almighty Allah has made it easy for you, and it is all over now; you have carried out the ritual, and the rewards have been reaped. What a great blessing. You are sitting on a bus heading to Mina. You have been sitting for four hours. All of a sudden, the driver turns off the air-conditioner because the engine is overheating.

A white dot: Say *al-hamdu lillah* that Almighty Allah has made you a Muslim, and hope that He will show mercy to you and save you from Hellfire, the hottest place ever. Bringing this to mind will surely make you feel cooler.

These are only a few examples of such seemingly unpleasant situations that are not free from white dots. You only have to look for these not-so-obvious dots.

Reflections on the Spiritual Impact of Hajj

HAJJ: RENEWAL OF SELF



By Abul A'la Mawdudi

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 of 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 months, 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 religion 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* (Treasury 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.

* Taken with slight modifications from the Book: *Let Us Be Muslims* by Sayyid Abul A'la Mawdudi



AN EXPERIENCE TO INSPIRE YOUR WHOLE LIFE



By Muhammad Fathi

After finishing the rituals of Hajj, with all of its spirituality, devotion, sincerity, sacrifice and dedication, the question is:



Should all of these awe-inspiring feelings be restricted to the few days of Hajj?

We should always think of Hajj as a journey intended to guide us on how to lead our larger journey of life. It is the model after which Muslims should pattern their lives. This connection between Hajj and life is very important; after all, both of them are journeys that need special preparation and should have special goals.

Take for example, the first steps pilgrims do in preparation for their Hajj journey. They pay off their debts and bathe themselves. The lesson here is that our lives should be based on purity and cleanliness. How beautiful life would be if each and every one of us tried to adhere to this principle. If only everyone tried to steer clear of anything that may taint their beliefs or blemish their relations with Allah.

Of course, it may happen that Muslims commit a sin or succumb to Satan's whispers, but once such a thing occurs, they hasten to "clean" and "wash" their spirits. Just as they wear pure and clean clothes for their Hajj journeys, they are keen to meet Allah after the journey of life with a pure and clean heart.



Labbayk, Allahuma, labbayk. Here I am, O Allah, at Your service.

This eternal call, chanted by millions of Muslim pilgrims every year, gives us further inspiration. The pilgrims respond to Allah’s call with pleasure, paying no heed to the trouble they may undergo; they come to Him declaring in words and in deeds their submission to His commands—their unconditional obedience to His orders, their love of what He loves, and their honor to what He honors. This is the spirit that Muslims should keep throughout their entire whole lives.

Labbayk, Allahuma, labbayk. This is not merely a ritual phrase to be uttered in Hajj and then forgotten afterwards, rather, it is a motto for every Muslim, a way of life.

After hours—even long days and months—of travel, Muslim pilgrims reach Makkah and enjoy the sight of the holy sites. Throughout their observances of Hajj, in their movements from place to place, and from rite to rite, Muslims recall great scenes of sacrifice by their great forbearers, such as Prophet Ibrahim (peace be upon him) and his family, Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) and his noble Companions. These glorious scenes inspire us and motivate us to face the challenges of



life with a bold heart as well as to rise up to our responsibility of working and sacrificing in defense of our religion and for the advancement of our Ummah.

Furthermore, in Hajj, pilgrims feel brotherly and sisterly affections towards their fellow Muslims. They meet Muslims from all over the world, from Asia and Africa, from the North and the South, Arabs and non-Arabs, white and black, rich and poor.

Muslims from all four corners of the earth meet in this awe-inspiring gathering, in full submission to Allah. They try their best to be good to one another and to avoid anything that may harm or disturb one another.

To become absorbed in such a sense of unity and solidarity with fellow Muslims; to feel that you are a member of a big family that embraces Muslims wherever they come from; to care for your brothers and sisters; to avoid doing anything that may trouble them; to feel anguish for their pains and pleasures for their happiness. All of this is important, not only in Hajj, but also in our entire lives.

In addition, Hajj is a good chance to practice patience and to taste the sweetness of forbearance. Amidst such a large multitude of people, pilgrims are bound to face some



difficulties and problems, and they are most likely to get upset by the behavior of some pilgrims.

However, in order to make sure that their Hajj is accepted, they exercise self-restraint and show patience and forbearance. This is a lesson which we should learn and apply in our daily life.

We should apply it in our homes and workplaces. We need to show patience and forbearance with our spouses, colleagues, and friends. This is important for our lives to move smoothly, and most importantly, for Allah to love us.

In conclusion, the lessons reaped from Hajj are countless, and the spiritual provisions taken from it for the journey of life are truly indescribable. I believe that by forming connections between both journeys—namely Hajj and life—and with more reflection on the underlying wisdoms of Hajj, Muslims pilgrims can maximize the benefits they gain from Hajj and can experience a real life-long Hajj.

CHAPTER THREE

HAJJ STORIES





WHEN HAJJ IS MORE THAN TEMPORARY RITUALS

Malcolm X and the Transforming Power of Hajj



By Sheikh Ahmad Kutty

Malcolm X went to Hajj in the year 1964. He went as an ardent believer in Black Nationalism and returned to



America a changed man. He had a life-transforming experience. Prior to Hajj, he divided humanity into black and white and saw no possibility of uniting them. His experience of Hajj convinced him otherwise.

Hajj made Malcolm X a wholly transformed person - as if he were reborn. Afterwards he not only believed in the universal brotherhood of all of mankind; but became committed to work for the ideals he imbibed from Hajj.

The question is: How did this happen? How do we replicate this experience in order to attain the maximum benefits of Hajj and then continue to live by them?

First of all, Malcolm X was open and receptive to the experiences and lessons of Hajj: He explained himself thus:

“You may be shocked by these words coming from me. However, on this pilgrimage, what I have seen, and experienced, has forced me to rearrange much of my thought-patterns previously held, and to toss aside some of my previous conclusions.”

And of his life-transformation he says:

"Never have I witnessed such sincere hospitality and overwhelming spirit of true brotherhood as is



practiced by people of all colors and races here in this ancient Holy Land, the home of Abraham, Muhammad and all the other Prophets of the Holy Scriptures.

... there were tens of thousands of pilgrims, from all over the world. They were of all colors, from blue-eyed blondes to black-skinned Africans. But we were all participating in the same ritual, displaying a spirit of unity and brotherhood that my experiences in America had led me to believe never could exist between the white and non-white."

He had this message to share with America:

"America needs to understand Islam, because this is the one religion that erases from its society the race problem. Throughout my travels in the Muslim world, I have met, talked to, and even eaten with people who in America would have been considered white - but the white attitude was removed from their minds by the religion of Islam. I have never before seen sincere and true brotherhood practiced by all colors together, irrespective of their color."



Malcolm-X was able to attain this because he was willing to change his earlier beliefs and embrace the truth. The lessons of Hajj taught him vividly the message of peace, and universal brotherhood under the lordship of one God. It deepened his connection with God; it inspired in him a true spirit of trust and sacrifice; and above all, he experienced the deep meaning of Islam (surrender) and Iman (faith in God).

Therefore, in order for us to replicate the same experience, we must be willing to internalize the lessons of Hajj. Here are some tips to maintain the fragrance of Hajj:

1. Hajj deepens our awareness of our connection with Allah, our Creator and Lord. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) taught us that all the rites of Hajj and, indeed, all acts of worship are instituted to establish the remembrance of Allah. So, we ought to condition ourselves to make *dhikr* as second nature. This is possible only when we emulate the example of the beloved Prophet of Allah in his daily supplications and practice of *dhikr*.
2. Together with *dhikr* comes contemplation of death. Pilgrims are reminded of their final journey when they don the ihram garb - much like the shroud we are buried in.



There is no better way to cure the rust accumulated in our heart than through *dhikr* and remembrance of death.

3. The lessons of brotherhood that we learn from Hajj must be translated into daily practice: when we come to the mosque, we need to set aside our tribal mindset, and be willing to embrace all as brothers in faith and humanity. The Prophet said,

“By Allah, you will not enter Paradise until you believe and you will not believe until you love one another. Shall I guide you to something to do to that will make you love one another? Spread the greetings of peace (*salam*) among yourselves.” (Muslim).

So the next time you meet anyone in the mosque, share this spirit of love through *salam* from your heart.

4. Salah in congregation is intended not only to bring us to the presence of Allah; rather, like Hajj itself, it brings believers of all shapes and colors to stand shoulder to shoulder like brothers. So being diligent in conscious performance of salah should be a priority for us all.



5. Since the Qur'an is the life-giving message, source of healing and mercy, we should begin and end each day with this enlivening message. Reading the Qur'an is much more than chanting it; rather, it is receptiveness to receiving the message in one's heart, for no spiritual awakening is possible without opening the heart. There is nothing like the Qur'an in achieving this goal - as long as we are open to it. The Qur'an refers to it as *sharah as-sadr* (broadening of the heart/mind).

6. Hajj is meant to make us universal citizens and train us to live in peace and harmony with everyone. Hence the lessons of interacting with others and living the lessons of brotherhood, forgiveness, tolerance, compassion, and generosity should be practiced within the community. We have ample opportunities to do this in our mosques, schools, offices, hospitals, and neighborhood.

7. As the world is full of temptations, Hajj reminds us of the need to be vigilant about the snares and temptations of Satan; there is no way of overcoming them except through constancy in *dhikr*, contemplation of death and becoming occupied ourselves with God's work. Imam Shafi'i said,

“If you don’t occupy yourself with good works, your carnal soul will keep you occupied with sins (i.e. Satan’s work).”

Opportunities for good works are all around us.

8. Finally, constancy in *istighfaar* (seeking Allah's forgiveness) will keep us on track. One of the sages said,

“The best people to appear before Allah on the Day of Resurrection are those whose register is filled with *istighfaar*.”

Allah calls us to flee to Him. Through *istighfaar* we flee to Allah from our own failings, evil inclinations and sins.

I pray to Allah to forgive us all our sins: major and minor, first and last, secret and open, those which we know of and those which we have no knowledge of - Ameen.

FINDING SPIRITUALITY IN PILGRIMAGE

A Muslim Contemplates Hajj



By Shahul Hameed

Hajj is unique as it effectively declares the oneness of God, the oneness of mankind, and the oneness of the religion of God.



Humans can be called the "restless animals" because they are not contented with mere food and creature comforts.

From their very beginning, they are haunted by a feeling of dissatisfaction about their environment, which urges them to search for perfection.

We may say that the human discontent is related to their essential existence as souls. If material comforts or technological advancement could satisfy humans, the most advanced countries would not have recorded alarming suicide rates, for instance.

So the problem is basically spiritual. It is the spirit that urged Siddhartha (Buddha's first name) to leave the comforts of his palace looking for enlightenment. The same must have been the first motivation of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) when he sought the solitude of the Cave of Hira' for contemplation.

Thus, we may say that the primary impulse of humans that urges them to leave the warmth and security of their home is a spiritual yearning. And it is the soul that stirs humans to start on long pilgrimages seeking their God.



Of all the pilgrimages, hajj is unique as it effectively declares the oneness of God, the oneness of mankind, and the oneness of the religion of God.

Many non-Muslims misunderstand the importance of Makkah as the center of hajj. They imagine that it is because Prophet Muhammad was born in Makkah that Muslims flock to that city for hajj.

The truth is that the first House built for the worship of the one and only God of the universe was the Ka`bah in Makkah. The rites of hajj performed by millions every year commemorate events in the life of the family of the Prophet Abraham, "the patriarch of mankind", who is revered by Jews, Christians, and Muslims alike.

My Personal Experience

When I was doing *Tawaf* (circumambulation) of the Ka`bah last year during hajj, I was struck by the mingling voices of people with varying accents. People with differing colors and physical characteristics typical of divergent climes and cultures merged into one mass of humanity slowly revolved around the Ka`bah, which could be called "the axis of the earth" as it were.



You are only a drop in this ocean, and suddenly you know that all this mass of humanity is one. And this was an instance when one is really convinced of the meaning of hajj in practical terms, as Malcolm X (Al-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz) had written about his experience:

"I remember one night... with nothing but the sky overhead, I lay awake amid sleeping Muslim brothers and I learned that pilgrims from every land — every color, and class, and rank; high officials and the beggar alike — all snored in the same language."
([The Autobiography](#))

This indeed is everyone's experience in the spiritual journey called hajj.

Standing at Mount Arafat is special. There, standing in the midst of a crowd you are alone with your Lord. You liberate your heart from the burden of every transgression you had committed by lifting yourself up to God and clinging to Him.

Muslims believe that in the primordial times, God had asked us: "Am I not your Lord?" And we answered: "Yes indeed; we bear witness that You are our Lord." But during pilgrimage, you remember that: "O Lord, we have come to



You in answer to Your call. Forgive us our trespasses O Lord; and accept us as Your own servants!"

After leaving Mount Arafat and Muzdalifah, you reach the *Jamarat* area to throw stones at the pillars, I closed my eyes and mentally redirected each one of the stones I had thrown until they boomeranged upon me and hit my chest, because the Devil was not out there in those pillars, but inside my own chest, whispering to me.

If the stones I pelted did not hit the Devil inside me, it was as if I had not performed the casting of pebbles ritual. So I stood by, and tried to dislodge the Devil clinging to the inside of my heart, and sought the refuge of God from all the evil impulses the Devil was injecting into me.

There are umpteen negative instructions and warnings about what a pilgrim should not do while performing hajj. And I have found comparatively fewer pieces of advice about what pilgrims should do while in hajj.

But I always remember God's words in the Quran:

**{And whatever good you do, surely Allah knows it.
And take a provision with you for the journey, but**

the best provision is piety. So fear Me, O people of understanding!} (Al-Baqarah 2:197)

This means keep doing good. Once you are in the state of consecration, you have to give up doing so many ordinary things. For instance, are you ready to allow your brother to squeeze into the little space you are occupying after a struggle; for you see him looking for a place to pray in the Mosque? Are you ready to give a helping hand to someone who is about to fall down in the rush?

In your eagerness to earn merits from God, you have forgotten how to earn it the easy way. Do good to your brother. Why do the pilgrims forget this so often?

I am happy to record here that I have come away from hajj with this great spiritual lesson: Remember: I tell myself again and again, "...whatever good you do, surely God knows it."

If one's hajj is consciously or unconsciously dominated by a continuous search for whatever physical comforts and conveniences one can seize, where is the place for the spirit?

HAJJ: A JOURNEY WITHIN AND WITHOUT



By Abdul-Wahid Pederson

To go for hajj is certainly one of the most remarkable experiences a believing Muslim can have. It can be



compared to nothing else, and is absolutely unique in every way.

When we say our daily prayers, we turn towards the Ka`bah in Makkah, but for most Muslims this is a rather abstract matter, as they have only seen pictures of the holy site.

As soon as you get there, the direction of the prayer — the *qiblah* — becomes something entirely different.

I had my first blessed visit to that holy place in 1986, which was only a few years after having entered into Islam. I had come to Islam from a long travel through the world and through myself, during which I had spent some years as a Hindu going to Hindu holy sites in India.

So, it was not an entirely new experience for me to set off for a pilgrimage, and I had an expectation that it would be somewhat similar to what I had experienced before.

But when I got to Makkah, I was totally overwhelmed in a way which I had never experienced anywhere before. I had been told that the first supplication at the first sight of the



Ka`bah is granted and accepted by the Lord¹, and therefore I kept my gaze to the floor, as I entered the holy mosque.

When I had reached a point, where there were steps leading down to the inner courtyard, I looked up, and the square building in the middle of the area filled my sight.

In the same instant, it was as if all my inner barriers were broken. I was totally transparent and open as a book. My heart was ripped open and tears started flowing from my eyes.

I was a grown man of 32 years of age, and I had not cried for years, since in Danish culture we are taught that men don't cry. And there I stood in front of a square building and cried like a small child. Cried and prayed, prayed and cried. It probably lasted for about half an hour, and I was totally lost in that overwhelming feeling.

¹ Editor note: This saying is not based on an authentic text from Quran or Sunnah. Yet, it is recommended of course to seize the opportunity of being in Hajj and in such a sacred place to do as much *du`aa'* as you can.

Hajj

Journey of Hearts

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As a rather rational person, I was astonished of this reaction, but at the same time, I understood that it was a sign of the power of that very place on Earth. Having been to many holy sites from different religions throughout my life, I have never found a place with such a vivid spiritual power emanating through every inch.

Hajj is primarily an inner travel, and when the pilgrims come from the most important of all the rituals of them all, the day of prayer at the `Arafah plain, they come out as clean (inwardly) as newborn babies.

It is a once-in-a-lifetime for most of us, when we get a chance like this, and as such, hajj is an extremely unique experience. Most Muslims never get the chance to see the holy Mosque in Makkah, or to stand in prayer at the plain of `Arafah, and whoever gets the opportunity must understand that nobody reaches these places without a specific invitation from the Lord Himself.

The rituals for hajj are all relating back to the time of Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him). And according to Islam even the very place in Makkah, is where Abraham and



his son Ismail (peace be upon them) built the first house in recorded history for the worship of the One and Only Creator on His command.

Since that time, this particular place on Earth has been the chosen spot appointed by none else than Allah Himself. So when we as Muslims feel that there is a special blessing in that place, it is not just because we want it to be so, but because that place is picked out of all places on Earth by the Creator of the Earth. And who should know the most holy place on Earth if not Him?

Hajj is not a holiday-trip, and it can be rather hard to get through the few days with the actual rituals of the pilgrimage. The long afternoon on the plain of Arafah is hard for some due to the intense heat in Saudi Arabia.

The night at Muzdalifah on the way back from Arafat is quite a challenge. The stoning of the Jamarat (the Satan-symbols) at the plain of Mina, where the pilgrims stay two or three days in tents can be very strenuous, although the Saudi government has done a lot over the years to ease the process.



And even the last walk around the Ka`bah can be very hard, since far too many people want to do the walk at the same time. Moving a mere 7–10 meters may take half an hour in those last days of the hajj season.

After completing the hajj, many of the pilgrims go to Madinah, the town where Prophet Muhammad (may the endless blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) established the first Muslim community, and where his grave is to be found.

The visit to that town is very much different, and it can in many ways be seen as a kind of holiday after the hajj. It is much more relaxed and the number of people is much less.

There are no specific rituals to be performed, and therefore, one is much more at ease. Of course all visitors want to pay tribute to the Prophet, and therefore his grave is visited by thousands every day praying for his blessings and peace. And a visit to that particular place in his mosque, which is said to be like a small part of Paradise, is something all visitors strive to reach.



For me the first time to Makkah was comparable to nothing else, and although Makkah is a tremendous experience every time, the first time was something special. Madinah seems to get better and better from time to time. The sweetness of Madinah becomes more intense with every visit and especially in the Holy Mosque, which is the second holiest place on Earth according to Muslims.

These two wonderful places — Makkah and Madinah — will always work in their special way on every pilgrim visiting them, and even if you are in an ocean of people, when you are traveling for hajj, every pilgrim is on his or her own inner trip, and for everybody, the hajj is a deeply personal trip to the inside, even if we travel in the outer world.

ABOUT WRITERS

Imam Abdul-Wahid Pedersen embraced Islam in 1982 after a long search through different World religions.

He is Vice President of Muslims in Dialogue, a Danish Muslim multi-ethnic organization promoting Islam into the Danish society. He is co-founder and principal of three private schools for children of Muslim parents in Denmark. He is also co-founder and long-time vice chairman of Islamic Christian Study Center in Copenhagen. He is one of the European representatives of the Global Network of Religions for Children and is a board member of the Swedish Islamic Academy.

He has translated a number of books on Islam into Danish. In 1997, he was the first imam to start holding Friday sermons in Danish.

Sayyid Abul A'la Al-Mawdudui (1903-1979), one of the most outstanding Islamic thinker and writer of his time. He



devoted his entire life to expound the meaning and message of Islam and to organise a collective movement to establish the Islamic Order.

In this struggle, he had to pass through all kinds of sufferings. Between 1948-67, he was put behind bars on four occasions, spending a total of five years in different prisons of Pakistan. In 1953, he was also sentenced to death by a Martial Law court for writing a 'seditious' pamphlet, this sentence being later commuted to life imprisonment.

In 1941, he founded Jama'at-I Islami, of which he remained Amir (chief) until 1972 and which is one of the most prominent Islamic movements of our day. He authored more than one hundred works on Islam, both scholarly and popular, and his writings have been translated into forty languages.



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