

Hajj a Journey for Eternity

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Many non-Muslims are under the impression that Hajj was started by Prophet Muhammad, when in fact the first Prophet to perform Hajj was Prophet Abraham. The rites, obligations and sanctities were first revealed to Prophet Abraham by Allah the Omniscient (All-Knowing). This is found in many places in the Holy Quran: chapters, 2:158, 196-203, 3:97, 5:2, as well as in the chapter 22, called Hajj.



THE CALL

Hajj is a pilgrimage to the sacred House in Mecca where you find the Kaba. This is the focal point and direction of prayer five times a day for Muslims all over the world. The location of Mecca is in Saudi Arabia . Mecca is also found in the Old Testament of the Bible, referred to by its ancient name of Bekka. This is not to be confused with the place in modern day Jordan by the same name.

The obligation of Hajj is on all mankind and the call was giving by Allah through Prophet Abraham: “And proclaim to mankind the Hajj. They will come to you on foot and on every lean camel, they will come from every deep and distant mountain highway.” (chapter 2:27)

It must be remembered at that time there was no media, television, radio, satellites, or newspapers. This called was vocally made by Prophet Abraham and supernaturally reached all people. How else could you account for people coming from great distances? This accounts also for the supernatural yearning in the hearts of every Muslim to go to Mecca and make Hajj.

Hajj is an obligation that all Muslims owe to Allah. This is not a vacation or just a visitation to a Holy place. This is a strenuous and exhausting undertaking, encompassing many hardships. In the past it is known that people would sometimes have to travel a year before arriving in Mecca . Many died on the way from disease and sickness. One did not know if one would return or ever see their loved ones again. Even today many depart this life while on this scared journey.

Hajj and the Muslim

Hajj is one of the 5 pillars of Islam the others being 1) The Shahhada or Testimony that there is no God but Allah and the Muhammad is the Prophet and Messenger of Allah.2) Salah or Prayer, the Muslim is obligated to pray 5 times a day facing Mecca, the focal point of our prayers. 3) Zakat which is a purification of wealth. It is a fraction (2.5%) of

money due on specified wealth 4) Siyam or fasting during the month of Ramada and 5) Hajj, the pilgrimage to Mecca in accordance with the prescribe rites.

Hajj is the accumulation of all the 5 Pillars of Islam with the promise of forgiveness of sin and Paradise , for those who perform its rites properly and with the right spiritual frame of mind.

Hajj while being an individual act is also one of communal participation. It is a meeting of hearts and a consolidation of effort on behalf of all participating Muslims. One sets aside all racial, political and economic differences while promoting Islamic values and teaching. Kings, presidents, businessmen, professionals and ordinary people wear the same Ihram and under take the same rites, hardships and inconveniences together, making no distinction between one another. It is the appointed place by Allah for the converging of Muslims from every country and every language. For this reason the place and rites of Hajj can never be changed by man. It is a distinct and divine ordinance of God that brings Muslims of the world closer to each other. It enables us to have a better understanding of each others culture and bestows on us a love for each other that truly binds us in the “Ummah” or nation of Islam, dispelling both nationalities and nationalism. No other religion on the face of the earth has this ability. The emesis love that you feel for another human being that you neither know personally nor can speak their language can only bestowed by the One and True God, Allah.

PRECONDITIONS

First and foremost one must be a Muslim . A Muslim is one who surrenders their will to the Will of Allah. One whose testimony is: There is no god but Allah and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah. To believe otherwise, to give partners or sons to Allah is a major sin and one that Allah Himself says is unforgivable. It would be useless for a non-Muslim to make Hajj as it would be unacceptable. Like wise not to believe in Muhammad as the Prophet and Messenger of Allah is to deny whom Allah has appointed and revealed His Word to.

One must be in good health. Hajj is not a vacation, it is physically exhausting, you will be walking many, many, many miles at one time. There are no electronic walk ways like in airports or escalators. The limited buses that are allowed (the use of private vehicles is prohibited because of the masses of people), are parked at great distances from the place you will actually be going, so you must still walk Depending on the time of year, the weather can be almost unbearable with a summer time average of 115-118 Fahrenheit. That along with literally millions of people converging at the same place at the same time, causes many to experience sunstrokes, heatstroke's and high blood pressure. Any existing chronic illness or disabilities will most like be extravered. It is not impossible to make Hajj but one must be aware of the conditions that exist. Those who feeling ill are not advised to come, with so many people infections can spread rapidly.

Finances

One must be free of debts, and leave ones family with enough resources to cover their daily expenses in your absents. One should also have enough money to pay for the expenses of Hajj itself such as transportation and accommodations etc.

The Woman and Children

The woman should have a maharam (male relative) with her. That is a male relative who is non marriageable to her, such as her father, grandfather, uncle (mother or fathers brother), her husband, son, step son, or father in law.

Children are not obliged to make Hajj and any child who accompanies their parents the Hajj is not counted for them until they become adolescents, at which time they must make Hajj for themselves.

These are the conditions to perform Hajj; if a person is not able to meet any one of these conditions then Hajj is not obligatory on him or her.

Once in a lifetime

One is only required to make hajj once in ones life time. There are many people who have preformed hajj more than once but this is not necessary, as this may cause unneeded hardship and expense. Hajj may be preformed on behalf of a deceased person or one who would not other wise be able to make hajj for themselves: on the condition that the person who is making this hajj on behalf of another person has first made hajj for themselves. You can't make hajj for two people at one time. In other words you must make hajj for your self one year and then you may return another year to make hajj for someone else.

Rites of Hajj

Hajj starts with the ritual bathing somewhat different than an ordinary bath, the downing of the Ihram(special clothing worn by men, women may wear acceptable prayer clothing) and praying two raka (unit of prayer) of intention for Hajj. This is done at prescribed places called Miqaat, there are 4 throughout the Kingdom and these places were designated by Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) The location of the miqaat you use will depend on what place or country you are entering from. Some people coming by plane will not go to these places but will be required to the ritual bath at home before boarding the plane and will then put on their Ihram on the airplane when passing the place of the miqaat. The airline pilot will inform you as when to do this.

On the 8 th day of Hajj (the month) the pilgrim must be in Mina (where the tents are) by Duhr or noon time prayer where they will spend the day and night.

Early on the 9 th day of Hajj they will proceed to the plains of Arafat about 10 miles from Mina. They will spend the day there until sunset. They will shorten their Duhr (noon time) and Asr (afternoon) prayers. During this time on Arafat one performs prayers, make supplications and ask for the blessings of Allah and His forgiveness, reading the Quran and contemplating life and death. This day reminds us of another day in the near future when all people living and dead will be called together under a unrelenting sun surrounded by humanity, for the Day of Judgment. It is a time to pray for yourself and

your family and to resolve to stop those things that hinder you from getting closer to Allah and becoming a better Muslim. After sunset you will proceed to another place called Muzdalifah, where you combine your sunset and Isha (night) prayers. You will spend the night there and collect small stones for the next few days to be used at the Jamarat or pillars where you will throw the stones.

On the 10th day of Hajj, you will proceed back to Mina where you will throw seven stones each at two of the main Jamarats (there are three) The Jamarats are pillars in the places where Prophet Abraham (peace and blessings be upon him) and later his adult son Ismael were tempted by Satan. It is only a commemoration or symbol of this; at no time does the Muslim believe that they are throwing stones at the actual Satan. After performing this duty the next step is to slaughter a camel, cow, goat or sheep. This may also be done by someone appointed to do this. The men will then shave their head You will then perform the Tawaf of Hajj (circling the Kaba and making sa'i, going back and forth seven times between mount Safra and Marawah.) One may now remove their Ihram

The 11th day of Hajj, you will proceed to the Jamarat to stone the three pillars this time. Men accompanying women and children may go there any time after sunrise, otherwise they should not proceed until after midday . For those leaving Mecca at this time you must make Tawaf Ifadah (the farewell circumventing of the Kaba) to complete your Hajj. This is an obligatory act to complete your hajj. Also if you are leaving Mecca you must leave before sunset or stay another day.

The 12th day will follow like the day before, the stoning of the Jamarat. Before leaving Mecca your finale act will be the Tawaf Ifadah.

Those who fail to make Tawaf Ifadah must repeat their Hajj another year.

Benefits of Hajj

Unseen benefits are bestowed on one who has preformed hajj. Allah has promised us the forgiveness of all of our past sins. After this time one should be more aware of not committing the same sins and mistakes of the past. Allah has given us a new beginning and we should do all that is possible to keep ourselves clean and free of vices.

Hajj draws us closer to Allah, we find that we want to do the things that please Him. Things that in the past we found difficult such as; taking time to think about the words of the prayers we pray, reading the Holy Quran, interceding for others, performing acts of kindness to others, suddenly take on new meaning and pleasure.

Allah has promised to us the ultimate reward for hajj and that is Paradise . The encompassing reward for our hardship and obedience is nothing less than what He has promised to us. This does not mean that after hajj one may kill, steal, commit adultery and rely on their hajj to get them by. After hajj your good deeds continue to be rewarded twice as much but your bad deeds are also twice the penalty.

The purpose of this life is to strife for the next life and this is why Hajj is a journey for Eternity.