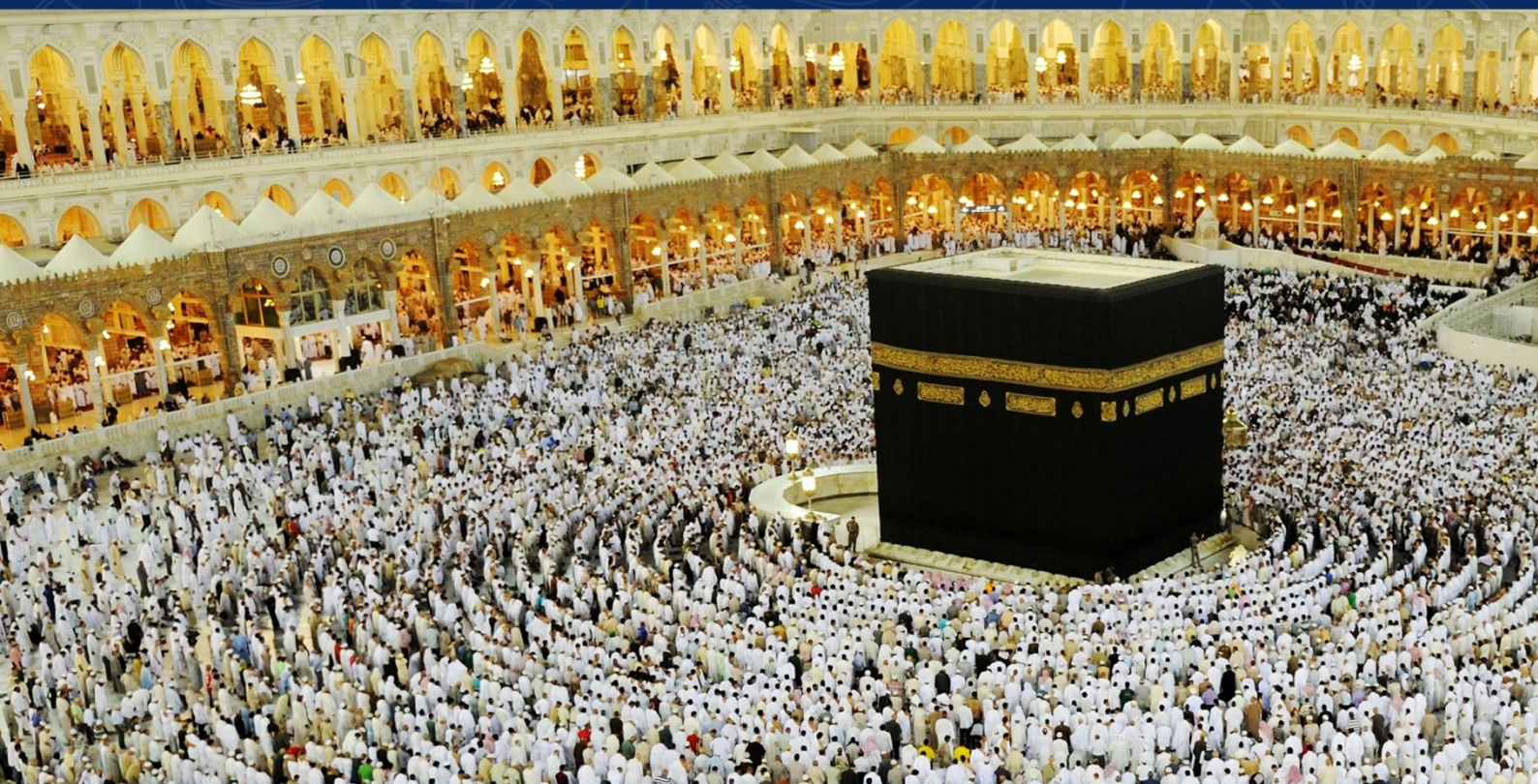




Preparing for Hajj, the Journey of a Lifetime



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Introduction

Every year, millions of Muslims make the journey of their lifetime. They come from all over the world for the sole purpose of fulfilling one of Allaah's greatest commandments to humankind – the *Hajj*. *Abu Hurayrah* رضي الله عنه narrated that the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was asked, 'Which is the best deed?' He صلى الله عليه وسلم said: "**To believe in Allaah and His Messenger.**" He صلى الله عليه وسلم was then asked, 'Which is the next (good deed)?' He صلى الله عليه وسلم said: "**To participate in *Jihad in Allaah's cause.***" He صلى الله عليه وسلم was then asked, 'Which is the next?' He صلى الله عليه وسلم said: "**To perform an accepted Hajj.**" [Al-Bukhaari] For over 1400 years, believers have been making *Hajj* to the House of Allaah in *Makkah*. It is an obligation for each and every Muslim to perform *Hajj* at least once in his/her lifetime if he is physically and financially able.

Due to the importance of *Hajj*, preparations for it should not be taken lightly. Besides planning the actual logistics of the trip, the Muslim needs to prepare Islamically, physically, mentally, and financially for this great act of worship. Islamically, one of the most important preparations for this journey is acquiring the necessary knowledge for performing the rituals of *Hajj* and 'Umrah correctly and in accordance to the *Sunnah* of the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. This means studying and learning about Islam, acquiring a high degree of *Eemaan* (faith) in order to deal with the emotional and physical demands of *Hajj*, and learning correctly the actual religious rituals and requirements from the beginning to the end of *Hajj* and 'Umrah. Studying and learning about the *Hajj* can be accomplished in a variety of fashions, from reading books on the subject or using computer programs which utilize a multimedia format, to actually taking classes offered by Islamic centers on the rituals of *Hajj* and 'Umrah. Furthermore, many travel groups that specialize in *Hajj* and 'Umrah trips

offer *Hajj* preparation classes as well as scholars and students of knowledge that help those going for *Hajj* perform the rituals of *Hajj* and '*Umrah* correctly.

In addition, it is important to mention that spiritually preparing for *Hajj* and '*Umrah* is also a lesson on how to follow the footsteps of the Prophet ﷺ who taught the Companions – a lesson that can be transformed into other acts of worship. Preparing for *Hajj* is a spiritual experience with a period of self-reflection and a lesson in piety and humility. The pilgrim must focus on his sole intention of performing *Hajj*. That it is solely for the pleasure of Allaah The Almighty and in accordance to His Commandment regarding this act of worship. The believer also needs to resolve any conflicts or differences between him and others and seek forgiveness for any acts of transgression. This stage of preparation should take place long before the actual departure for *Hajj*.

Preparing early for *Hajj*, the season of forgiveness and great salvation, is an important issue and one that is often overlooked by most people. A Muslim embarking on *Hajj* must make an early start in order to get ready for it so that Allaah The Almighty may guide us to perform this journey of a lifetime to His Sacred House. Just as one should get ready for *Ramadhaan* in order to attain the mercy and forgiveness of Allaah The Exalted and to be saved from Hell in this great season of forgiveness, one should start preparing for *Hajj* well in advance as well. If one does not start preparing early, then even if Allaah The Almighty decrees *Hajj* for him, his *Hajj* may not be *Hajj Mabroor* (an accepted *Hajj*) which is not equaled to anything upon which the sun rises as mentioned in a narration from the Prophet ﷺ.

Acquire knowledge of the various aspects of the Hajj

If Allaah The Exalted guides man to perform *Hajj*, he comes back from it with his sins and misdeeds obliterated. He returns as sinless as a newborn child that has just been delivered by his mother, as mentioned by the Prophet ﷺ in the *Saheeh* of *Al-Bukhaari* and *Muslim*. People should get ready for the days of *Hajj* and the season early, so that when these blessed days arrive and they are ready to receive the mercy of Allaah The Almighty and feel closer to Allaah The Exalted and good deeds. However, if death approaches him and he is not ready for the mercy, forgiveness and blessings of Allaah The Almighty, when will he ever attain them?

If one prepares for these days with righteousness and good deeds, perhaps Allaah The Almighty may guide him and bestow upon him the blessing of *Hajj*. This is if He finds him keen on attaining the reward of this great obligation, which is one of the obligations of Islam, if He finds him keen, truthful and sincere in seeking this season which is one of the seasons of forgiveness. Perhaps Allaah The Almighty may, out of His generosity, grant him the blessing of going to His Sacred House.

One of the most important factors by which Allaah The Almighty calls a person to His Sacred House is his longing for His House. That is to say that when a man has this feeling of longing, Allaah The Almighty carries him there regardless of the reasons, regardless of the impediments he was thinking of, regardless of the obstacles he meets and issues such as organizing money, a visa and so on. Allaah The Almighty drives all these cares away from him all of a sudden.

This is why if someone asks: 'How can one prepare for the season of *Hajj*?' it is said that the first thing with which one gets ready is longing. If one does not have the feeling of longing and yearning for the House of Allaah The Almighty, this is evidence that he has no longing to meet Allaah The Exalted, nor for the Hereafter. Instead, this is an indication that his heart is hard and distant and this deprives him from the good deeds and great acts that bring him closer to Allaah The Almighty. He grants the ability to visit His House to those who are longing, loving and feel sad when prevented and deprived for many years from reaching it.

Hence, the first thing with which man gets ready is yearning and longing for the House of Allaah The Almighty. If he does not feel longing or yearning, he will remain in this state of deprivation, remoteness and disinclination between himself and Allaah The Almighty.

Therefore, this is the first thing with which man prepares himself to be granted the blessings of Allaah The Almighty. If Allaah The Almighty wants a slave to visit His House and attain the honor of this visit and this great rank of the religion, He enables all the factors that bring this about.

Many times, we hear about and watch the journeys of those who have an overwhelming longing for Allaah The Exalted. Allaah The Almighty arranges for them what they themselves did not expect, such as money, visa and such other issues which may act as impediments or obstacles. Such obstacles and impediments do not exist for Allaah The Almighty, who only has to say to anything: "*Be*" and it is. In the story of *Zakariyya* عليه السلام he recited this amazing supplication (which means): ***{and my wife has been barren, so give me from Yourself an heir.}*** [Quran 19:5] The verse means, my wife cannot give birth and I want to have a child! My wife is barren but Your mercy, power and might are not compared to

anything and this power and might is in charge of everything and capable of making everything possible. Allaah The Almighty Says (what means): ***{His command is only when He intends a thing that He says to it, "Be," and it is.}***[Quran 36:82] This meaning also applies to *Hajj* and other things as well.

Those who long for Allaah The Exalted, for His House and for being honored with visiting these places, the places of the gatherings of the sincere slaves of Allaah The Almighty, and the places of mercy where tears are shed and obstacles are removed, should offer something to prove their longing. This longing appears in the good deeds with which they wish Allaah The Almighty would carry them and take them to His House, and that Allaah The Generous and the Most High grants them this visit, from which one returns with his sins forgiven and himself as sinless as a newborn baby.

How does man show his longing for Allaah The Exalted and for His House, and not think that there is no obstacle that may prevent him from reaching this House that Allaah The Almighty cannot remove? Or that any impediments will be lifted from his way by Allaah The Generous and The Omnipotent? Or that Allaah The Almighty will eliminate these obstacles and hardships, and that all of a sudden, he will find himself in the Sanctuary, in the House of Allaah The Almighty?

Longing for His House is the evidence of longing and yearning to Allaah The Almighty. That is why Allaah The Exalted Says (what means): ***{And [mention] when We made the House a place of return for the people and [a place of] security.}***[Quran 2:125] This means that people long for it and yearn for it; they go there and they come back thinking that they

have not yet fully accomplished their desire and objective from going there, and that they still need to go there again and again.

In other words, they perform *Hajj* time after time and still their yearning to this House increases. They never think that they no longer need it and that they have had their share of it. Rather, their yearning for it is intense more than ever, and their longing for it is overwhelming. Whenever they return from it, they long for it again. Therefore, they have a continuous feeling of longing for the House of Allaah The Almighty till they meet their Lord, so that their greatest longing is to see Allaah The Exalted and to have the pleasure of looking at His Countenance in the Hereafter.


The Virtues of Hajj

When man leaves his home heading towards the Sacred House, with every step he takes, a reward is recorded and a sin is obliterated for him.

When he performs *Tawaaf* (circumambulation) around the House, he is forgiven.

When he leaves 'Arafaat, Allaah The Almighty Says (what means):
{Depart, O My slaves, you are forgiven.}

When he cuts his hair, with every hair he obtains a reward.

When he performs *Sa'y* (seven circuits) between *As-Safa* and *Al-Marwah*, his reward for this act is equal to the reward of setting free seventy slaves from among the children of *Ismaa'eel*, .

These various meanings and great virtues are gathered in the *Hadeeth* of the Prophet ﷺ in which he says: "***The reward of Hajj Mabroor (the one accepted by Allaah) is nothing except Paradise.***" [Al-Bukhaari and Muslim] We should reflect upon this meaning. One should not think that he cannot perform *Hajj* because he has no money. On the contrary, the Prophet ﷺ said: "***A pilgrim never suffers poverty.***" [At-Tabaraani] That is to say, that no pilgrim would need the money he spent on *Hajj*. When you long for *Hajj* and Allaah The Almighty carries you to His House, then He has solved all problems for you. Do not think that money may be an obstacle as money should not be considered one of the reasons of hardships and obstacles that stand in your way. Moreover, one should not think afterwards that if his money decreases because of *Hajj* or 'Umrah that he may suffer poverty or that his money will diminish. The Prophet ﷺ said: "***A pilgrim never suffers poverty***", because spending a *Dirham* in *Hajj* as mentioned in the *Hasan Hadeeth* is rewarded with seven hundred *Dirhams* in return granted to him by Allaah The Almighty.

Allaah The Exalted subjugated everything to man; He only expects from His slaves to long for Him and yearn for His House. This will prove their longing and love for their Lord, and their hastening to His House to obey Him and draw closer to Him and to prove that by arriving at the House, they will arrive at the Lord of the House, Allaah willing.

Physical and financial preparation

Other preparations that should be planned long before the actual trip are financial in nature. Simply, going to *Hajj* costs money. Furthermore the pilgrim must pay off any old debts (this includes any type of loans),

household bills, and leave enough money to pay any living expenses likely that other members of his family not making *Hajj* might need. Finally, it is important to complete one's will (*Wasiyyah*) before departing on *Hajj*.

Another important step in preparing for *Hajj* is the need to prepare physically for the event. Not only is *Hajj* a spiritual event, it also requires a lot of physical stamina from the participant. Completing the rites of *Hajj* includes a lot of walking, mixing with many people, living in high temperatures (during summer), and exerting a great deal of effort. Another important step in preparing physically for *Hajj* is to make sure you are medically fit for the trip. Individuals with chronic health issues need to see their primary care physician in order to discuss any medical risks that need to be addressed prior to their *Hajj* experience.

Another recommendation is that these individuals also travel with a healthy caretaker in case any problems might arise during the actual *Hajj*. In addition, pilgrims must have the necessary vaccinations required by the Saudi Government for cholera and meningococcal meningitis. Because of these issues, it is also important to emphasize that one should complete *Hajj* and *'Umrah* as soon as one is able to both physically and financially. Some people wait until they are old to go for *Hajj*. This is wrong and makes *Hajj* more difficult than necessary for the participant and in many cases for his traveling companions. Performing *Hajj* as soon as possible corresponds to the *Hadeeth* narrated by 'Abdullaah Ibn 'Abbaas رضي الله عنه who said, "The Prophet ﷺ said: "**He who intends to perform Hajj should hasten to do so.**" [Abu Daawood]

A person who intends going for *Hajj* must learn and accepting that the *Hajj* experience includes frustration, intense desert heat (during summer),

and various differences in culture and food. The pilgrim can expect to stand in long lines, be shoved and pushed by others while completing the necessary rituals, and be in an uncomfortable close proximity to members of the opposite sex.

One purpose of *Hajj* is for the individual to be tested. The individual will be tested on physical, emotional, and spiritual levels.

After preparing oneself internally and financially for one of the most important events in the life of a Muslim, the pilgrim must plan and make actual decisions regarding his/her journey. While one can always make the trip by himself or with a small group of individuals close to him, in this modern day this is not always the best choice. It is not uncommon for hotels to be fully booked for at least one year in advance. Furthermore, unless one starts searching very early, it is also hard to find airline reservations and available flights to Saudi Arabia during the *Hajj* season and during *Ramadhaan* for *'Umrah*. Because of these challenges in planning, many individuals opt to join a travel group that specializes in *Hajj* and *'Umrah* tours. Since not all tour groups are equal and provide the same quality service, there are a number of items to look for in choosing the right tour group.

The first thing to look for in a group is the price of the trip. Most groups offer a variety of price packages that depend on a variety of factors. These factors include the type of hotel, number of people per room, use of private transportation and whether or not food is included within the package.. Since Muslims in the West are generally accustomed to a certain degree of comfort, some Western Muslims would find less expensive accommodations unacceptable and uncomfortable. For example, during *Hajj* some hotels accommodate up to 15 people per room

sharing a single communal bathroom. Furthermore, many Western Muslims are used to a certain degree of cleanliness in their hotel rooms and eating establishments that is not found in all hotels and restaurants. Another factor to consider is the distance of the hotel accommodations from the *Haram* (Sanctuary). As a rule of thumb, if the price is too cheap, so is probably the quality of the package. In other words, the cheaper in price of the package, the higher the probability of encountering problems during your *Hajj*, which in turn, can make for a more difficult *Hajj* experience.

Another thing to look for is the number of years of experience of the tour operator. Generally, experienced operators are the best since they are able to handle any problems that can and will probably occur during *Hajj* or *Umrah*. It is important to make sure that an experienced leader from the tour group accompanies the group for *Hajj*, since it is not uncommon to lose members of your group sometimes for hours or even days. Other problems that often occur include lost or stolen belongings and money, illnesses that require medical attention, and the death of a group member. It is important for the pilgrim to understand that their *Hajj* will not be problem free. Problems arise frequently and an experienced tour operator is needed to handle the situation. When looking for a tour operator, it is important to ask how they handle problems. If the potential tour operator tells you that you will have a problem free *Hajj*, continue searching for a better program.

Researching the business strength of your potential tour group is another important step in choosing a tour group. Generally, it is better to choose groups that have offices or contacts within Saudi Arabia. These contacts can make a *Hajj* experience run more smoothly in a number of areas which include helping facilitate and streamline the customs process in

Jeddah (which can take between 8 to 20 hours) to providing private ground transportation and buses for the pilgrims. One thing that is highly recommended is to look for a company that offers its own private tour buses. This is especially important since the pilgrim can literally expect to wait for hours for public transportation.

Another important quality of the travel agent is the degree they are versed in the rules and regulations of the *Hajj* process. This includes helping the pilgrims with the visa process from the Saudi Arabian Embassy or Consulate to understanding the *Hajj* and *'Umrah* rites from an Islamic standpoint. For example, in order for a pilgrim to enter Saudi Arabia, there are certain requirements that need to be met from the Saudi Arabian government. These requirements include the necessary vaccinations; if the person has a non-Muslim name, a letter from a mosque stating he is Muslim is needed. Women must have proof of being accompanied by a *Mahram* (a husband or non-marriageable relative). In addition, there are fees that need to be paid in advance for use of the public transportation system and use of the tents in *Mina* along with the necessary forms that need to be completed in full and approved prior to the trip. It is also best to use a travel agent that utilizes scholars as religious guides for the trip. Besides helping to keep the travel group focused on the worship of Allaah, rather than on worldly distractions such as chatting, playing cards, etc., he is also available to ensure that group members are correctly performing the rituals.

Performing *Hajj* can be one of the most important events in a Muslim's life. However, one should not make the decision to go on *Hajj* at the last minute. The planning of this trip takes time and is a process within itself.

Gaining knowledge of the inner dimensions of Hajj

Besides the financial aspects of the trip, one needs to be ready for the trip from an Islamic standpoint. This includes studying Islam, knowing what is obligatory and what is non-obligatory in the rites of *Hajj*, and developing a strong *Eemaan*. While both the process and task of *Hajj* can be difficult for some, the rewards of *Hajj* should not be underestimated.

In a *Hadeeth* narrated by *Abu Hurayrah* رضي الله عنه the Prophet ﷺ said: ***“Whoever performs Hajj for Allaah's pleasure and does not have sexual relations with his wife and does not do evil or sins then he will return [after Hajj free from all sins] as if he were born anew.”*** [Al-Bukhaari]

It is important to understand the sublime aims and objectives of *Hajj*. The *Hajj* journey gives a Muslim a sense of connection with the Prophets عليهم السلام from our father *Ibraaheem* who built the House, to our Prophet *Muhammad* the Messenger of Allaah ﷺ and his respect for the sanctity of *Makkah*. When the pilgrim visits the sacred places and performs the rituals, he remembers the visits of those pure Prophets to this sacred place.

Imaam Muslim رحمته الله narrated that *Ibn ‘Abbaas* رضي الله عنه said, "We traveled with the Messenger of Allaah ﷺ between *Makkah* and *Madeenah*, and we passed by a valley. He ﷺ said: ***“What valley is this?”*** They said, “The valley of *al-Azraq*.” He ﷺ said: ***“It is as if I can see Moosa the Messenger of Allaah putting his fingers in his ears beseeching Allaah, reciting the Talbiyah and passing through this valley.”***

Then we traveled on until we came to a mountain pass. He said: “*What mountain pass is this?*” They said, “*Harsha or Lift.*” He ﷺ said, “*It is as if I can see Yoonus on a red camel, wearing a woollen cloak, the reins of his camel made from fibres of date-palm, passing through this valley reciting the Talbiyah.*”

The whiteness and cleanness of the pilgrims’ clothes is a sign of inward purity, cleanness of heart and the purity of the message and the method. This means putting aside all adornment and showing humility, and it is a reminder of death when the deceased is shrouded in similar clothes. Therefore, it is as if he is preparing to meet Allaah The Almighty.

Entering *Ihraam* from the *Meeqaat* is a physical expression of worship and enslavement to Allaah The Almighty, and of submission to His commands and laws. No one passes it (without entering *Ihraam*) because it is a command from Allaah and a law that He has prescribed. This confirms the unity of the *Ummah* (Muslim nation) and its following one system with no differentiation or exemptions with regard to the definition of the *Meeqaats*.

Hajj is the symbol of *Tawheed* (Islamic Monotheism) from the first moment the pilgrim enters *Ihraam*. *Jaabir ibn ‘Abdullaah* ﷺ said, describing the *Hajj* of the Prophet ﷺ: “Then he started to say the words of *Tawheed*: “*Labbayka Allaahumma labbayk, labbayka laa shareeka laka labbayk. Inna al-hamd wa’l-ni’mata laka wa’l-mulk, laa shareeka lak* (Here I am, O Allaah, here I am. Here I am, You have no partner, here I am. Verily all praise and blessings are Yours, and all sovereignty, You have no partner).”

Hajj is a reminder of the Hereafter when all the people come together in one place in ‘*Arafah* and elsewhere, with no differentiation between them. All of them are equal in this place and no one is better than anyone else. It is a symbol of unity, because *Hajj* makes all people the same in their clothing, deeds, rituals, *Qiblah* and the places they visit. Thus, no one is better than anyone else, king or slave, rich or poor, are all the same: people are equal in terms of rights and duties. They are equal in this sacred place, and differences in color and nationality do not matter; no one has the right to differentiate between them.

In the words of the Prophet ﷺ: ***“People come from Adam, and Adam came from dust. No Arab is superior to a non-Arab and no white man is superior to a black man, except in terms of piety (taqwa).”***

More than two million Muslims all standing in one place, wearing the same clothes, sharing one aim, with one slogan, calling upon one Lord and following one Prophet... what unity can be greater than this?

Allaah The Almighty Says (what means): ***“Verily, those who disbelieved and hinder (men) from the path of Allaah, and from Al-Masjid Al-Haraam (at Makkah) which We have made (open) to (all) men, the dweller in it and the visitor from the country are equal there [as regards its sanctity and pilgrimage (Hajj and ‘Umrah)] — and whoever inclines to evil actions therein or to do wrong (i.e. practise polytheism and leave Islamic Monotheism), him We shall cause to taste from a painful torment”*** [Quran 22:25]

Hajj trains a person to be content with modest clothing and accommodation, when he wears two pieces of cloth and it is sufficient for him, and his accommodation gives him just enough room to sleep.

This huge gathering makes a great impression on the unbelievers and followers of misguidance. Even though they are scattered and different, the simple fact that they come together despite those differences at a certain time and in a certain place is indicative of their potential to unite at other times and in other places.

Pointing out the importance of Muslims coming together and establishing harmony. For we see usually each person travelling on his own, whereas in *Hajj* we see people coming in groups.

Getting to know the situation of the Muslims from trustworthy sources, since the Muslim can hear directly from his brother about the situation of his Muslim brothers in the land from which he has come. This leads to exchanging benefits and experience among the Muslims in general.

Another benefit of the *Hajj* is meeting scholars and decision makers from all countries and studying the situation and needs of the Muslims, and the importance of cooperating with them.

Hajj leads to achieving true submission to Allaah The Almighty by standing in the holy places when the pilgrim leaves *Al-Masjid Al-Haraam* which is the best of spots, and standing in ‘*Arafah*.

It also leads to forgiveness of sins, because the Prophet ﷺ said: ***“Whoever performs Hajj and does not speak any obscene words or commit any sin will go back cleansed of sin as on the day his mother bore him.”***

Hajj opens the doors of hope to those who commit sin, and teaching them to give up their sin in these holy places, so that they will give up many of their bad habits during the period of *Hajj* and its rituals.

The rituals of proclaim that Islam is the religion of organization, because during *Hajj* the rituals and time are organized, with every action done in the place and at the time defined for it.

Hajj trains a person to spend in charitable ways and to avoid miserliness. The pilgrim spends a great deal of money for the sake of *Hajj*, on travel expenses, on the road and in the sacred places.

Hajj increases piety and makes the heart fit to honor the Symbols of Allaah. Allaah The Almighty Says (what means): {“***and whosoever honors the Symbols of Allaah, then it is truly, from the piety of the hearts***”}[Quran 22:32]

Hajj serves the purpose of training the rich to give up their distinct clothing and accommodation and making them equal with the poor in clothing and in the rituals of *Tawaaf*, *Sa’y* and stoning the *Jamaraat*. This teaches them to be humble and to realize the insignificance of this worldly life.

The pilgrim persists in worshipping and remembering Allaah The Almighty during the days of *Hajj*, moving from one sacred place to the next, from one ritual to another. This is a kind of intensive training in worship and remembrance of Allaah The Almighty.

Hajj trains a Muslim to be kind to people – so the pilgrim guides those who are lost, teaches those who are ignorant, helps the poor, and supports the disabled and weak.

Hajj enables one to develop good characteristics such as forbearance and putting up with annoyance from people, because the pilgrim will

inevitably be exposed to crowding and arguments, etc. Allaah The Almighty Says (what means): {*“The Hajj (pilgrimage) is (in) the well-known (lunar year) months (i.e. the 10th month, the 11th month and the first ten days of the 12th month of the Islamic calendar, i.e. two months and ten days). So whosoever intends to perform Hajj therein (by assuming Ihraam), then he should not have sexual relations (with his wife), nor commit sin, nor dispute unjustly during the Hajj.”*}[Quran 2:197]

Hajj trains a person to be patient and to put up with difficulties such as heat, long distances, being apart from one’s family, going back and forth between the holy sites and crowded conditions therein.

Learning to give up one's usual habits and the things that one is comfortable with, because the pilgrim has to uncover his head and give up his regular clothes, and leave behind the accommodation, food and drink that he is used to.

When the pilgrim does *Sa'y* between *As-Safa* and *Al-Marwah*, he remembers that the one who obeys Allaah The Almighty and puts his trust in Him and turns to Him, He will not let him down, rather He will raise high the esteem in which he is held. When *Haajara* عليها السلام the mother of *Ismaa'eel* عليه السلام said to *Ibraaheem* عليه السلام “Has Allaah commanded you to do this?” he عليه السلام said, “Yes.” She said, “Then He will not let us down.” So Allaah raised high the esteem in which she was held and the people, including the Prophets, started to run between the two hills as she had done.

Hajj teaches one not to despair of the mercy of Allaah, no matter how great one's worries and distress. For the way out is in Allaah’s hand. The

mother of *Ismaa'eel* عليه السلام thought her son was about to die, and she started to run from one mountain to the other, looking for a solution, and it came to her from a source she could never imagine: an angel came down and struck the ground, and out came the water of *Zamzam* with its healing for diseases of the heart and body.

The pilgrim remembers that in doing these rituals he is the guest of the most Merciful. The gathering of *Hajj* is not at the invitation of any government or organization or king or president, rather it is the invitation of the Lord of the Worlds Who has made it an occasion on which the Muslims meet on a footing of equality in which no one is superior to anyone else.

Allaah The Almighty Says (what means): {***“And proclaim to mankind the Hajj (pilgrimage). They will come to you on foot and on every lean camel, they will come from every deep and distant (wide) mountain highway (to perform Hajj). That they may witness things that are of benefit to them (i.e. reward of Hajj in the Hereafter, and also some worldly gain from trade)”***}[Quran 22:27-28]

An-Nasaa'i رحمته narrated that Abu Hurayrah رضي الله عنه said, "The Messenger of Allaah صلى الله عليه وسلم said: ***“The guests of Allaah are three: the warrior for the sake of Allaah, the pilgrim performing Hajj and the pilgrim performing ‘Umrah.”*** [Saheeh by Al-Albaani in Saheeh al-Nasaa'i]

Hajj enables the believers to strengthen bonds with each other as represented in the words of the Messenger of Allaah صلى الله عليه وسلم: ***“Your blood, your honor and your wealth are sacred to you as this day of yours in this month of yours in this land of yours is sacred.”*** [Narrated by Al-Bukhaari, 65; Muslim, 3180]

The season of *Hajj* is distinguished by complete separation from the people of *Shirk* and *Kufr* who are forbidden to attend any part of it. It is forbidden for them to enter the *Haram* at any time, no matter what their purpose.

Allaah The Almighty Says (what means): ***“O you who believe (in Allaah’s Oneness and in His Messenger Muhammad)! Verily, the Mushrikoon (polytheists, pagans, idolaters, disbelievers in the Oneness of Allaah, and in the Message of Muhammad) are Najasun (impure). So let them not come near Al-Masjid Al-Haraam (at Makkah) after this year; and if you fear poverty, Allaah will enrich you if He wills, out of His Bounty. Surely, Allaah is All-Knowing, All-Wise”***][Quran 9:28]

Al-Bukhaari رحمته narrated that Abu Hurayrah رضي الله عنه said, “Abu Bakr رضي الله عنه sent me as an announcer on that Hajj [which the Prophet ﷺ appointed Abu Bakr to lead in 9 AH], to announce on the Day of Sacrifice in Mina that after this year no Mushrik might perform Hajj and no one might circumambulate the House naked.”

Conclusion

The *Hajj* teaches a lesson which opens a great door before the Muslim in *Fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence). A Muslim learns from this that deeds have different degrees in terms of reward and excellence and that each deed has a specific time and priority over other deeds. This is known as “dues to be fulfilled with priority in a certain time”.

The *Fiqh* of priorities means considering the ratio (of priorities) among deeds and *Sharee‘ah* (Islamic legislation) obligations and this is one

means of rearranging the Muslim mindset. Reversion in these ratios causes considerable damage to religion and life. In Islam, the creed takes precedence over deeds; deeds differ to a great extent, they are also different in the sight of Allaah The Almighty. Consequently, it is impermissible to give precedence to the voluntary act of worship over the obligatory ones. Likewise, the individual obligation takes precedence over the communal obligation.

When he was asked about the best deeds, whether the hardest or those whose benefit extends to others, *Ibn Al-Qayyim* رحمته indicated that the preponderant view is that there are no deeds which are absolutely the best. Rather, for each time there is a certain act of worship which is the best at that particular time. [*Madaarij As-Saalikeen*]

We should not forget the advice of the Prophet ﷺ when he arranged the priorities in spending as he ﷺ said: "**Start with those in your charge.**" [*Al-Bukhaari*]

A caller to Allaah The Almighty is the most deserving of all people to have a clear, organized mindset. By doing so, he realizes the importance of time, understands his priorities and avoids an unbalanced approach for dealing with different issues.

The blessed journey of *Hajj* starts from certain places called *Mawaaqeet* (plural of *Meeqaat*). They are five places from where pilgrims assume *Ihraam* (sacral state). It was narrated on the authority of *Ibn 'Abbaas* رضي الله عنه, that he said, "*The Messenger of Allaah* ﷺ *made Thul-Hulayfah as the Meeqaat for the people of Al-Madeenah; Al-Juhfah for the people of Ash-Shaam; Qarn Al-Manaazil for the people of Najd; and Yalamlam for the*

people of Yemen; and these Mawaaqeet are for the people at those very places, as well as for those who come through those places with the intention of performing Hajj and 'Umrah; and whoever is living within these boundaries can assume Ihraam from the place he starts, and the people of Makkah can assume Ihraam from Makkah." [Al-Bukhaari and Muslim]

When one intends to perform *Hajj* or *'Umrah*, it is not permissible for him to pass through the *Meeqaat* without assuming *Ihraam*. If someone passes the *Meeqaat* without assuming *Ihraam*, he is required to go back to the *Meeqaat* in order to assume *Ihraam* from it. Otherwise, he is liable to slaughter an animal that is to be distributed among the poor of the sanctuary of *Makkah*.

This particular ritual helps us learn a disciplinary lesson with far-reaching meanings: a Muslim must always be aware of the fact that there are certain limits for each act of worship that should not be transcended. Transcending these limits is dangerous as it is reflected on the soundness of the deed itself, besides rendering it unaccepted by Allaah The Almighty.

Discipline has far-reaching consequences on one's Islamic upbringing, which is one of the prominent features of the Islamic methodology that a Muslim should learn. A Muslim has to have this disciplinary spirit and develop it and therefore get used to loving order, discipline, obeying commands and adhering to the limits of each deed and not transcending it. All these aspects are included in the desired disciplinary characteristics.

All the other deeds of the obligation of *Hajj* are performed in this way and with the same spirit.

Reflect on the fact that this great obligation has four pillars: *Ihraam*, *Tawaaf Al-Ifaadhah*, staying at 'Arafah and Sa'y between As-Safa and Al-Marwah. Abandoning one of these pillars renders the *Hajj* invalid.

Reflect also on the fact that there are obligatory actions of this great pillar of Islam. When a pilgrim abandons one of these obligations, he is required to slaughter an animal and distribute it among the poor of Makkah. This is also the underlying spirit of all acts of worship and rituals.

We can take only one example, which is prayer. It has certain conditions, pillars as well as recommended acts. All these deeds are determined by *Sharee'ah* (Islamic legislation) texts with no room for human reasoning. It is impermissible to add anything to these acts.

The same holds true for the spirit of all the relationships of a Muslim. There are certain regulations for the Muslim's relations with his Lord, his self as well as his family. They are duties and he is obliged to fulfill them.

In a *Hadeeth*, the Prophet ﷺ said: "***Indeed, Your Lord has a right on you, your self has a right on you, your family has a right on you. So, you have to fulfill each one's due right.***" [At-Tirmithi]

We conclude from this that discipline and adherence to the limits set by Allaah The Almighty is the character of the true Muslim.

The opposite of discipline is disorder, indiscipline, violation and transgression. This has dangerous effects within oneself as well as within the Muslim community. Let us reflect on this great advice from the

beloved Prophet ﷺ which indicates that external and internal order are firmly connected. It is a warning and indicates that external deviance is reflected on hearts. In a *Hadeeth* (narration), the Prophet ﷺ said: "**Do not differ lest your hearts differ as well.**" [Muslim]

A caller to Allaah The Almighty is worthier of adhering to the spirit of regimentation and discipline. Mere signs are enough for an intelligent person to understand, thus, how would he act when he receives a clear and manifest Prophetic injunction?

Starting from the *Mawaaqeet* and during the *Hajj* months, a Muslim assumes *Ihraam* when he intends to perform either *Hajj* or 'Umrah. He takes off his clothes and wears the *Ihraam* dress, which consists of two white clean sheets, *Ridaa'* (the upper sheet) and *Izaar* (the lower sheet). A woman wears whatever she wants of permissible clothes while ensuring that there is neither impermissible exposure of beauty nor adornment. Before *Ihraam*, it is recommended to make *Ghusl*, apply perfume (for men) and wear clean clothes.

When a Muslim assumes *Ihraam*, he is required to loudly repeat *Talbiyah*, saying: "*Labbayka Allaahumma labbayk. Labbayka laa shareeka laka labbayk. Innalhamda wan-n'imata laka wal-mulk, laa shareeka lak (O Allaah, I answer Your Call, there is no partner with You, to You Alone belongs praise, favor and sovereignty, there is no partner with You)*". Thereafter, a pilgrim is required to avoid the known restrictions of *Ihraam*.


Reflect on the ritual of *Hajj* in the context of the verse in which Allaah The Exalted Says (what means): **{Indeed, Allaah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves.}**[Quran



13: 11], we are convinced that the desired change is the internal change of the human self and essence. We are also certain that Allaah The Almighty does not treat people according to their appearance. In a *Hadeeth*, the Prophet ﷺ said: "**Allaah does not look at your bodies or shapes; rather, He looks at your hearts and deeds.**" [Muslim]

Nevertheless, wearing the *Ihraam* directs us to another important perspective from the point of Islamic upbringing: a person who seeks internal change should not neglect external change. The human is one unit which cannot be divided into parts. External disorder causes a far-reaching internal effect. I have already referred to the advice of the Prophet ﷺ in the *Hadeeth*: "**Do not differ lest your hearts differ as well.**" [Muslim]

Ihraam is a symbol for shifting from one stage to another. It marks the beginning of a covenant between the Muslim and his Lord. He asserts his truthful intention to change and adheres to this externally by wearing the *Ihraam* dress. One also publicly declares this through repeating the *Talbiyah* so that people know about this covenant as well as the consequences of abandoning the restrictions of *Ihraam*. We can even understand and deduce the inner dimension of *Talbiyah* through the *Hadeeth* in which the Prophet ﷺ said: "**When any pilgrim utters *Talbiyah*, every stone and tree on his right and on his left responds with a (similar) *Talbiyah*, until the whole earth resounds with it.**" [Ibn Khuzaymah]

Reflect on this call and the act of repeating *Talbiyah* loudly as well as its external and internal impact and how it is related to the call of the founder of this great rite, the intimate friend of Allaah, Prophet *Ibraaheem*

(Abraham)  when Allaah The Almighty commanded him to call people and proclaim the message. Allaah The Almighty promised him that He will convey his call to all people. Allaah The Exalted Says (what means): ***{And proclaim to the people the Hajj [pilgrimage]; they will come to you on foot and on every lean camel; they will come from every distant pass.}*** [Quran 22: 27]

It means: announce *Hajj* to humankind and call them to perform *Hajj* to this House which We have commanded you to build. It was said that *Ibraaheem*  said, "O Lord, how can I convey this to people when my voice will not reach them?" It was said, "***Call them and We will convey it.***" So *Ibraaheem*  stood up (on his place, or on the Black Stone, or on (the mountain of) *As-Safa* or on (the mountain of) *Abu Qubays* and said, "O mankind! Your Lord has established a House so come for pilgrimage to it." It is said that the mountains lowered themselves so that his voice would reach all the corners of the earth, and those who were still in their mothers' wombs and their fathers' loins would hear the call. The response came from everything that heard him, from stones, trees, and those whom Allaah has decreed will make *Hajj*, until the Day of Resurrection: "*We answer your call, O Allaah, we answer your call.*" [Ibn *Katheer*]

Hajj is a means of declaring one's identity. It also indicates that this rite is universal and brings happiness to all creatures, that all beings respond to it and that the Lord of all creatures and the whole universe blesses this rite.

It is the symbol of distinction, which differentiates between the advocators of this great Divine rite and the advocators of other contrary earthly projects. It differentiates between this journey to which the whole

existence responds and the human nature finds comfort in, and other projects which, if they do not clash, go against existence and are alien to the human nature.

The challenge involved in this journey which makes it sublime over all other projects is depending on Allaah The Almighty, Who blesses it, purifies it and takes pride before the angels with it. It was narrated that the Prophet ﷺ once went out and found his Companions sitting in circles. He ﷺ asked: "**What made you sit?**" They said, "We sat to remember Allaah The Almighty and praise Him for guiding us to Islam and bestowing other favors on us." He ﷺ said: "**Would you swear by Allaah that you have sat for this only?**" They said, "By Allaah, we have sat only for this." He ﷺ said: "**I did not ask you to swear because I doubt your intention. Rather, Jibreel (Gabriel) came to me and told me that Allaah boasts of you before the angels.**" [Muslim]

Thus, we come to realize the universal effect of this great rite of *Hajj*. This is in addition to its internal effects which overwhelm the spirit and for which the heart palpitates out of yearning and love. This is in response to the supplication of the intimate Friend of Allaah, *Ibraaheem* عليه السلام which he raised on one of the days of this great project. Allaah The Exalted Says (what means) through his words (which mean): **{Our Lord, I have settled some of my descendants in an uncultivated valley near Your Sacred House, our Lord, that they may establish prayer. So make hearts among the people incline toward them.}**[Quran 14: 37]

Therefore, this is a tangible declaration of commitment to the covenant of change, a shift from the past with all its negative deeds and entering into the future.