

**Why do we do Hajj?
BS Foad, M.D 2010**

Hajj has been ordained on Muslims

pilgrimage thereto is a duty men owe to Allah, those who can afford the journey

Al-Imran 3: 97

And complete the Hajj or Umra in the service of Allah

Al-Baqara 2: 196

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said:

(O people Hajj has been ordained on you, therefore perform Hajj)
Ahmad, Muslim & Nesa'ee

Hajj is ordained only once in a life time

Abu Horaira related that the Messenger of Allah stood up giving a sermon and said: (O people Allah has ordained on you Hajj, therefore perform Hajj). A man asked: Is it ordained on us every year O Messenger of Allah? He kept quiet, till he asked the same question three times, then he said: (If I said yes then it would have become obligatory on you, and you will not be able to do it. Leave alone what I did not order you to do. Those before you perished because they asked their messengers too many questions and they differed and did not comply. When I order you to do something do what you are capable of, and when I forbid you something avoid it) Muslim, Ahmad, Nesa'ee

We learn from this Hadeeth several important lessons:

1-We should obey Allah's orders to the best of our ability. We will fall short some times and we will make mistakes. Allah does not ask us to do more than we are able to do:

So fear Allah as much as ye can; listen and obey; and spend in charity for the benefit of your own souls. And those saved from the covetousness of their own souls; they are the ones that achieve prosperity.

At-Taghabun 64: 16

On no soul doth Allah place a burden greater than it can bear. It gets every good that it earns, and it suffers every ill that it earns.

Al-Baqara 2: 286

2-We should try to understand the wisdom and rationale of the Divine order, but not persist in asking questions that are not relevant or imply that we argue about God's orders or His will:

O ye who believe! ask not questions about things which, if made plain to you, may cause you trouble. But if ye ask about things when the Qur-an is being revealed, they will be made plain to you, Allah will forgive those: for Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Forbearing.

Al-Maeda 5: 101

So what is the rationale of Hajj? Why did Allah order us to perform Hajj?

We can get our answer from studying the activities that the pilgrims do during Hajj and what does it mean:

- 1-Circling the Ka'Ba
- 2-Sa'y or walking between Safa & Marwa
- 3-Standing in Arafat
- 4-Rites in Mena:
 - Stoning the devil
 - Offering a sacrifice

Circling the Ka Ba

Circling the Ka Ba is a form of worship. The pilgrim walks around the Ka'Ba 7 times, seeking God's forgiveness. The Ka'Ba was built by Prophets Ibrahim & Ishma'il to celebrate God's praises:

And remember Abraham and Isma'il raised the foundations of the House (with this prayer): "Our Lord! Accept (this service) from us: for Thou art the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing.

Al-Baqara 2: 127

"Our Lord! Make of us Muslims bowing to Thy (Will); and of our progeny a people Muslim, bowing to Thy (Will); and show us our places for the celebration of (due) rites; and turn unto us (in Mercy); for Thou art the Oft-Returning, Most Merciful.

Al-Baqara 2: 128

"Our Lord! Send amongst them a Messenger of their own, who shall rehearse Thy Signs to them and instruct them in Scripture and Wisdom, and sanctify them: for Thou art the Exalted in Might, the Wise."

Al-Baqara 2: 129

We learn from these verses the following important concepts:

-Allah sends human messengers to their people explaining the duty of mankind to serve God. Prophets Abraham and Isma'il built the Ka Ba as a place of worship. The Ka Ba is a symbol and a sacred shrine. It symbolizes our commitment and devotion to Allah. When we go there and pray in the vicinity of the Ka Ba we feel God's presence and we remember our responsibility in worshipping God.

-We remember Abraham, Isma'il and their prayer to Allah. We as Muslims are descendants of Abraham and Isma'il. Allah blessed Abraham and his descendants and favored them

And remember that Abraham was tried by his Lord with certain commands, which he fulfilled: he said: "I will make thee an Imam to the Nations

Al-Baqara 2: 124

Who can be better in religion than one who submits his whole self to Allah, does good, and follows the way of Abraham the true in faith? For Allah did take Abraham for a friend.

An-Nesa'a 4: 125

So We have taught thee the inspired (message), "Follow the ways of Abraham the True in Faith, and he joined not gods with Allah."

An-Nahl 16: 123

-Allah also responded to their prayer and sent Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as a mercy to mankind. He showed us in his character and behavior the example of a true devoted servant of Allah. We follow his example and we obey his orders because by doing so we are guided to Allah and we are purified and we receive God's mercy:

So believe in Allah and His Messenger, the unlettered Prophet, who believed in Allah and His Words: follow him that (so) ye may be guided."

Al-Araf 7: 158

Say: "Obey Allah, and obey the Messenger: but if ye turn away, he is only responsible for the duty placed on him and ye for that placed on you. If ye obey him, ye shall be on right guidance. The Messenger's duty is only to preach the clear (Message).

An-Nur 24: 54

Therefore in Hajj we remember Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and we understand God's blessing in sending him as a messenger to mankind, and we follow his orders and example. Our Islam requires not only the Qur'an and its guidelines. It also requires the Sunnah (tradition) of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). He taught us how to live our lives as Muslims and how to serve Allah and gain His pleasure. When we do Hajj we remember the Seerah (life story) of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and how he reacted to the difficulties that he faced.

2-Sa'y or walking between the hills of Safa & Marwa, paying homage to Hajir, the wife of Prophet Ibrahim and the mother of Prophet Isma'il. The Qur'an stresses that Sa'y is one of the rites of Hajj:

Behold! Safa and Marwa are among the Symbols of Allah. So if those who visit the House in the Season or at other times, should compass them round, it is no sin in them. And if any one obeyeth his own impulse to Good, be sure that Allah is He Who recogniseth and knoweth.

Al-Baqara 2: 158

Islam has been accused of demeaning women, but here in Hajj Muslims, men and women alike are praising and paying homage to a woman: Hajir the wife of Abraham and the mother of Isma'il. They are retracing her steps as she walked in the desert searching for water for herself and her infant son.

We learn that Allah never leaves his servant to perish and always comes to our rescue. When Hajir asked Abraham: Why are you leaving us here in a desolate place with no one around and no sustenance? When he told her it was Allah's order, she said: Allah will not leave us alone, and He will take care of us. And Allah did take care of them as the well of Zamzum erupted and people came and settled in Macca as it became a shrine. Allah takes care of His righteous servants, and never allows our sincere efforts to go to waste:

We will, without doubt, help Our Messengers and those who believe, (both) in this world's life and on the Day when the Witnesses will stand forth,

GHafir 40: 51

In the end We deliver Our Messengers and those who believe: thus is it fitting on Our part that We should deliver those who believe!

Yunus 10: 103

As to those who believe and work righteousness, verily We shall not suffer to perish the reward of any who do a (single) righteous deed.

Al-Kahf 18: 30

Whoever works righteousness, man or woman, and has Faith, verily, to him will We give a new Life, a life that is good and pure, and We will bestow on such their reward according to the best of their actions.

An-Nahl 16: 97

3-Standing in Arafat: One of the main rites in Hajj is standing in Arafat, seeking God's forgiveness and turning to Him in repentance and renewing the pledge and covenant

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) emphasized the importance of Arafat when he sent a man proclaiming that:

“Al-Hajjo Arafa” (Pilgrimage is standing in Arafat) Bokhari.

He also said:

(The best Du'a on the day of Arafat is the Du'a of God's prophets: There is no god but Allah, He is alone with no partners; To Hi belongs all dominion and all praise, and He has control over all things)

Bokhari

During Hajj we journey towards Allah, as we leave our preoccupation with this worldly life and we come seeking Allah's forgiveness and guidance, and making a pledge with Allah that from this moment on we are going to obey and live our lives as He has commanded us to do.

Many people delay Hajj till they are old and go with the idea that their Hajj will atone for all their sins. This is a wrong understanding of the wisdom of Hajj and its rationale. If the goal is to start a new chapter in our life and to reaffirm our devotion and commitment to Allah then Hajj should be done earlier rather than later. Also this journey is difficult and if we wait we may get sick and be unable to perform this obligation. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said:

(Whoever intends to do Hajj let him hurry, for a person may get sick, or he may not be able to take the journey, or other needs may interfere)

Ahmad, Ibn Majja, Baihaqi & Abou Dawood

Hajj and standing in Arafat making a pledge with Allah is a new beginning and a new chapter in our lives. From now on we are going to obey Allah and serve Him and live our lives as He wants us to do, aware of our accountability to Him. We show our gratitude for God's many blessings and we show our love of God in the way we reach out and help other people who need our help. We show that we love others because we love Allah.

And those who dispense their charity with their hearts full of fear, because they will return to their Lord;

Al-Mumenoun 23: 60

It is these who hasten in every good work, and these who are foremost in them.

Al-Mumenoun 23: 61

Standing in Arafat reminds us of the Day of Judgment, when every person will come to Allah alone with no one to help him. What will intercede for us is our good deeds and our faith:

Not one of the beings in the heavens and the earth but must come to (Allah) Most Gracious as a servant.

Marium 19: 93

He does take an account of them (all), and hath numbered them (all) exactly.

Marium 19: 94

And every one of them will come to Him singly on the Day of Judgment.

Marium 19: 95

O mankind! do your duty to your Lord, and fear (the coming of) a Day when no father can avail aught for his son, nor a son avail aught for his father. Verily, the promise of Allah is true: let not then this present life deceive you, nor let the Chief Deceiver deceive you about Allah.

Lugman 31: 33

And fear the Day when ye shall be brought back to Allah. Then shall every soul be paid what it earned, and none shall be dealt with unjustly.

Al-Baqara 2: 281

4-Rites in Mena

-**Stoning the devil** is a symbolic act of disobedience to Satan and obedience to God. The Qur'an warns us against Satan and his attempts to misguide us and deceive us:

Satan makes them promises, and creates in them false desires; but Satan's promises are nothing but deception.

An-Nesa'a 4: 120

And Satan will say when the matter is decided: "It was Allah Who gave you a promise of Truth: I too promised, but I failed in my promise to you. I had no authority over you except to call you, but ye listened to me: then reproach not me, but reproach your own souls

Ibrahim 14: 22

-Offering a sacrifice

This is done remembering how Prophet Abraham was willing to offer his son Isma'il in sacrifice obeying God's order, and Isma'il also submitted to Allah and was willing to die:

Then, when (the son) reached (the age of) (serious) work with him, he said: "O my son! I see in vision that I offer thee in sacrifice: now see what is thy view!" (the son) said: "O my father! do as thou art commanded: thou will find me, if Allah so wills, one practising Patience and Constancy!"

As-Saffat 37: 102

So when they had both submitted their wills (to Allah), and he had laid him prostrate on his forehead (for sacrifice),

As-Saffat 37: 103

We called out to him, "O Abraham!

As-Saffat 37: 104

"Thou hast already fulfilled the vision!" thus indeed do We reward those who do right.

As-Saffat 37: 105

For this was obviously a trial,

As-Saffat 37: 106

And We ransomed him with a momentous sacrifice:

As-Saffat 37: 107

To offer your own son in sacrifice shows great devotion to Allah. And for the son to obey and be willing to die also shows great faith in Allah. Nowadays our children will not obey our orders except grudgingly and only after many questions and only when they are convinced.

The Qur'an explains that it is not the blood or the meat of the sacrificed animal that is important. What reaches Allah is our piety and devotion:

It is not their meat nor their blood, that reaches Allah: it is your piety that reaches Him: He has thus made them subject to you, that ye may glorify Allah for His guidance to you: and proclaim the Good News to all who do right.

Al-Hajj 22: 37