



# The Spiritual Dimensions of Hajj

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*Thanks to Nabiha Butt, Samia Ahmed and Hana Khan*

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the Name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful. All praise to Allah, Lord of the Worlds. Peace and blessings upon the Prophet Muhammad, the final prophet of Allah, and upon his family, his companions, and his followers.

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# 1. A History of Hajj

The word Hajj is composed of three Arabic letters, although written as two letters - ha and jeem, because the shaddah over the jeem means it is a double letter. Hajjah means to intend to something that is glorified and sanctified. Thus part of Hajj is visit the most sanctified place on earth, which is the Ka'bah, the House of Allah Almighty.



Hajj is full of blessings. When you delve into it, it is full sweetness and fruits despite its myriad challenges. Like Ramadan, which is a gift exclusive to our Ummah, Hajj is another gift from Allah Almighty, and through it Allah unifies the Ummah and also gives elevates those who perform it. Hajj also connects us back through history to all those who performed it before us.

## Hajj – an ancient rite

Hajj has been performed since time of Adam (peace be upon him). It was also performed by Prophet Ibrahim (peace be upon him) during the month of Dhul Hijjah and the rituals of Hajj were passed down through the generations, but over time these became corrupted and errant practices were introduced including idol worship, until the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) came and as the Final Messenger of Allah, he taught people how Hajj should be performed as Allah Almighty wants it, saying 'Take your rituals from me' and he rid the Hajj of deviant non-Islamic practices.

There are many verses in the Quran which talk about Hajj, but the most common ayah is from Surat al Imran.

إِنَّ أَوَّلَ بَيْتٍ وُضِعَ لِلنَّاسِ لَلَّذِي بِبَكَّةَ مُبَارَكًا وَهُدًى  
لِّلْعَالَمِينَ ٩٦

*The first House that has been established for humanity is in Bakkah (which is one of the names for Makkah), full of blessings and guidance for humanity. (3:96)*

فِيهِ ءَايَاتٌ بَيِّنَاتٌ مَّقَامُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَمَنْ دَخَلَهُ كَانَ ءَامِنًا وَ لِلَّهِ عَلَى النَّاسِ  
حِجُّ الْبَيْتِ مَنْ اسْتَطَاعَ إِلَيْهِ سَبِيلًا وَمَنْ كَفَرَ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَنِيٌّ عَنِ  
الْعَالَمِينَ ٩٧

*So in it are clear signs (in that very House of Allah Almighty, clear signs) for those who are reflecting and pondering the station of Ibrahim. Whoever enters it attains security; (whoever is in the House of Allah Almighty he is protected. (3:97)*



Bakkah is the old name for Makkah. The root word for Bakkah means to break something. Makkah was called Bakkah because it broke the necks of oppressors and transgressors. For instance, Abrahah wanted to destroy the Ka'bah (Surah Al Fil) but instead Allah Almighty broke him. Madinah, by contrast, is sweet and relaxing. Makkah is known as 'jalal' i.e. majestic and Madinah is known as 'jamaal' i.e. beautiful. You can see the difference when you see the Ka'bah and feel its majesty and the buzz of worshippers busy with rituals, whereas when you go to Madinah which is not as majestic or full of rituals, but instead you simply go there to pray without any additional rituals apart from praying in the Rawdah.

## Who built the Ka'bah?

In Surat Al Baqarah, Allah Almighty tells us who established the House by His command:

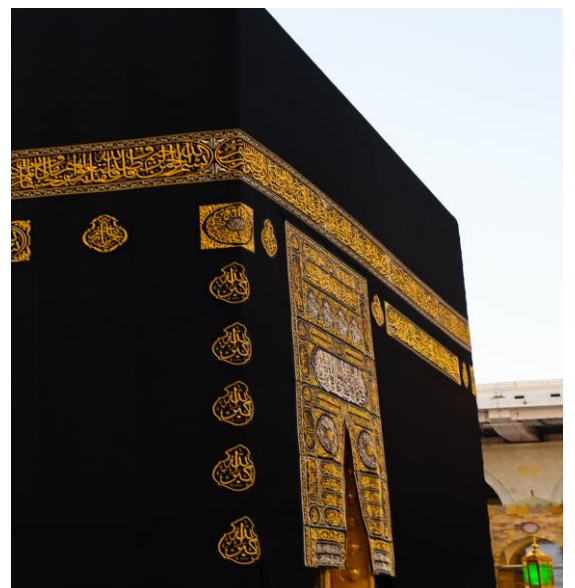
وَإِذْ يَرْفَعُ إِبْرَاهِيمُ الْقَوَاعِدَ مِنَ الْبَيْتِ وَإِسْمَاعِيلُ رَبَّنَا تَقَبَّلْ  
مِنَّا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ ۝ ۱۲۷

*And 'remember' when Abraham raised the foundation of the House with Ismail, 'both praying,' "Our Lord! Accept 'this' from us. You are indeed the All-Hearing, All-Knowing. (2:127)*

There is some discussion whether Adam (peace be upon him) constructed the House before Ibrahim (peace be upon him). While we know for sure that Ibrahim built the Ka'bah as Allah Almighty mentioned it, we do not have any authentic evidence that Adam built it first and then it was re-built by Ibrahim (peace be upon him), as is commonly mentioned in some books of tafsir and seerah.

As Ibrahim was in his 80s or even nearly 90 when he built the Ka'bah, so he needed some help to do it. His teenage son Ismail (peace be upon him) provided this and the energy and vigour of youth synthesised with his father's wisdom and experience made them a powerful combination. It is through the noble lineage of Ibrahim and Ismail that Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon them) would descend centuries later.

Ibrahim (peace be upon him) was one of the five Resolute Messengers of Allah, known as Ulul Azm, which were selected by Allah Almighty, namely Nuh, Ibrahim, Musa, Isa and Muhammad (peace be upon them). From Ibrahim's younger son, Ishaq, would descend many prophets and messengers including Musa (peace be upon him) and Eesa (peace be upon him).



## The call of Ibrahim (peace be upon him)

Hajj is mentioned many times in the Qur'an. In Surat al-Baqarah and in Surat al-Imran and in Surat al-Hajj. The verses contain very beautiful descriptions. They mention the story of Ibrahim (peace be upon him) building the Ka'bah and how Ibrahim and Ismail (peace be on him) made dua for Allah Almighty to accept what they had built, showing that their main concern was His acceptance and that this very sentiment is connected with Hajj, the history of Hajj and the House of Allah Almighty. Therefore they made the dua:

*'When Abraham and Ishmael were raising the foundations of the House,  
(Abraham prayed): Our Lord! Accept from us (this duty). Lo! You, only You, are the  
Hearer, the Knower' (2:127)*

His dua as captured in the Quran, reminds us that there is no guarantee that any action of ours is automatically accepted by Allah. An act of goodness is not sufficient, unless we have the right ingredients in it. For instance, it's not enough just to pray Asr and Dhuhr, or perform any obligation, for that action to be acceptable to Allah Almighty. The action has to be accompanied by the right intention, carried out with the right knowledge, and performed with the right etiquettes, then hopefully, Allah Almighty will accept it.

Ibrahim (peace be upon him), though he was a messenger and had knowledge and the right intention, showed us that even if you are supported by Allah Almighty, and have the best intention you have to keep revisiting it and purifying it. Don't allow yourself to feel complacent or self-satisfied at your actions. Instead, stay humble and do not let arrogance ruin your action. Say 'Alhamdulillah, I have done this with the help and support of Allah Almighty' and ask Him to accept it from you.

It is the intention behind the action that makes any deed acceptable or not. Whatever we do, we must always consider whether it is acceptable to Allah Almighty or not.

In the saying (hadith) of the Prophet (peace be on him) said: 'Actions are but by intentions.' (Bukhari). Therefore, the password for acceptance is sincerity (ikhlas). Whenever you do something, ask ourselves why are you doing this deed? The purity of the intention is what makes a deed acceptable or not. Is it for Allah Almighty's sake? If it is, it will be accepted.

When Ibrahim completed the construction of the Ka'bah, Allah Almighty commanded him to call upon the people to come to Hajj and he said to Allah Almighty that he was an old man in the desert, how would anyone hear his voice. Allah Almighty instructed him to give the adhan and He would make it reach everyone and this is what happened. He called the people to Hajj, and since then Allah Almighty has written that people will perform it and they do.

This is probably why people going for Hajj say they have responded to the call. It is the call of Ibrahim (peace be upon him) resounding through the ages. And people are of two kinds - those who received the call and went and those who did not respond.



## When Hajj became a pillar

Allah Almighty said Hajj is obligatory for those who can make the journey.

وَلِلَّهِ عَلَى النَّاسِ حِجُّ الْبَيْتِ مَنِ اسْتَطَاعَ إِلَيْهِ سَبِيلًا وَمَنْ كَفَرَ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَنِيٌّ عَنِ الْعَالَمِينَ ٩٧

*Pilgrimage to the House is a duty to God for all who can make the journey. But as for those who refuse—God is Independent of the worlds. (3:97)*

When we look at narrations of the Prophet (peace be upon him) responding to those who asked what they had to do as believers, there are narrations in which he did not mention Hajj. While we have been handed the whole religion of Islam as a complete package, we have to remember that during his life, the revelations were descending bit by bit and responding to the questions that arose and incidents and events that took place. Salah was only prescribed as an obligation 18 months before migration to Makkah during the journey of Isra wal Miraj, and fasting was prescribed two years after Hijrah, along with Zakah – so not during the period in Makkah and only once Islam was being established in the hearts and minds of the Muslim community in Madinah as their practices were gradually moulded and shaped.

We have different views and different narrations regarding which year Hajj was revealed as an obligation. The most authentic one across the board from the critics of hadith and authentication of the sunnah of the Prophet (peace be upon him) is that it was made an obligation in the ninth year after migration. This was just a year before the death of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Thus the hadith that 'Islam has been built on five' was only said in the 9AH, until then there were only four pillars. Narrations which talk about five obligations came at the end of the life of the Prophet (peace be upon him).

In the famous Hadith Jibril, when Jibril came to the Prophet (peace be upon him) in human form as a mysterious stranger, not in the form of the handsome companion Dihya bn Khalifah al-Kalbi. No one recognised him, and the fact he was dressed in white without any traces of dust on him added to the mystery because if he was a stranger he must have travelled but he looked so fresh and approached the Prophet (peace be upon him) as though he knew him well coming right up to him and sitting down opposite him.

*Umar ibn al-Khattab (may Allah be pleased with him) reported: We were sitting with the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) one day, a man appeared with very white clothes and very black hair. There were no signs of travel on him and we did not recognise him. He sat in front of the Prophet, rested his knees by his knees, and placed his hands on his thighs. The man said, "O Muhammad, tell me about Islam." The Prophet said, "Islam is to testify there is no God but Allah and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, to establish prayer, to give charity, to fast the month of Ramadan, and to perform pilgrimage to the House if a way is possible." The man said, "You have spoken truthfully."*

Thus we have the package of the five pillars as we know it.

## The Farewell Hajj of the Prophet (peace be upon him)



In the last year of his blessed life, the Prophet (peace be upon him) performed the only obligatory Hajj since receiving the revelation. It was called al Hajj al Akbar and Hajat al Wada, the Farewell Hajj. During this Hajj, he delivered the words which would capture his teachings over the past 23 years of his prophethood. These were his final words of advice, before he passed away, which would be soon after, as he became ill in the month of Safar and died just three months after his Hajj, on 12th Rabi al Awwal.

The year before this, in 9AH, the Prophet (peace be upon him) sent Abu Bakr to lead the believers in Hajj and as the verses of Surat Tawbah were revealed which declared the new policy towards the mushrikeen, he dispatched Ali to catch them up and announce these verses to the different clans of Arabs. The Quraysh had

broken their treaty with the Prophet (peace be upon him) making them punishable and the whole of Arabia had come under the rule of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and Islam. Therefore, the Quran declared that henceforth all treaties with the mushrikeen were abolished, they were given a grace period of 4 months to accept Islam. The guardianship of the Ka'bah would now be by Muslims and the rituals would be purged of pre-Islamic practices that went against Islam, which were based on the original practices of Ibrahim (peace be upon him).

At that time, the Quraysh insisted that visiting pilgrims had to throw away their clothes as they were full of sins, and hire clothes from them. It was a nice little money-making scheme. If the pilgrims could not afford this, they had no choice but to perform tawaf naked. Islam brought back dignity to the Hajj and re-instigated the rules that clothes must be worn and the obligation that men have to wear two pieces of unstitched, white cloth.

This meant that the House would be cleared of any elements of shirk, and no mushrik would be able to enter the Sacred site and no one would be permitted to do tawaf naked, as per the mushrik custom.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said:

أَلَّا لَا يَدْخُلُ الْجَنَّةَ إِلَّا مُؤْمِنٌ

*Say no one will enter Jannah except a believer. (Musnad Ahmad)*

Abu Hurayah (may Allah be pleased with him) said he announced this at the top of his voice throughout the Hajj - in Mina and Arafah until he lost his voice.

With this cleansing in place, the Prophet (peace be upon him) decided to perform Hajj himself the following year (year 10AH), and unsurprisingly there was huge excitement in the whole region, as every Arab in the peninsula knew he would go for Hajj and wanted to be there so they too could see and hear him for themselves.

How many Hajjis attended the Farewell Hajj? According to estimates there may have been 100,000, 120,000 to 140,000 but we do not have an accurate number because no one counted them.

During this Hajj, some people would see him for the first time. There had been an influx of groups from various tribes around the peninsula in the Year of Delegations (8AH) when representatives of various tribes came to receive a 'crash-course' on Islam in the Prophet's mosque (peace be upon him) and took it back to their clans. Those clan members had not met the Prophet (peace be upon him) and were highly curious and desirous to see him.

The Hajj of the Prophet (peace be upon him) was eventful. The more I explored it the more I came across incidents which brought to life this mass converging of companions and their humanness as they embarked upon and navigated their pilgrimage. Along the way, as they travelled from Madinah to Makkah, Asma bint Umayy, who was in the last month of her pregnancy, gave birth to a baby. They asked the Prophet (peace be upon him) what they should do and he directed them. On another occasion, Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) burst into tears and the Prophet (peace be upon him) realised that her period had started and she was upset she would not be able to perform her Hajj, but the Prophet (peace be upon him) reassured her she could participate in all of it except tawaf (and salah).

In addition to birth, there was death, as a man in Arafat fell off his camel and died. And of course, they had to eat and we have a narration in which we see Ibn Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) sharing his pomegranate with the Prophet (peace be upon him). It is a journey full of little surprises, as everyone who has been on Hajj knows, it is always not complete without the unexpected.

## **Incident during the Hajj of the Prophet (peace be upon him)**

During the Hajj of the Prophet (peace be upon him), he gave his camel which was fully loaded with his luggage and provisions, to be looked after by a slave, but while he was engaged in his ibadah, supplication, salah etc. the slave disappeared.

Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him) who was always with the Prophet (peace be upon him) started searching for him, but he couldn't be found. Abu Bakr became increasingly anxious, and eventually found him, but he had lost the camel! Abu Bakr was beside himself with anger so he started beating him with a stick. The Prophet (peace be upon him) saw him and said, 'Look at this Haji! Look what he's doing with that person whose looking after the camel.' The Prophet (peace be upon him) was correcting his behaviour, telling him that he should not have done this. Abu Bakr stopped and immediately apologised, explaining that bother that the slave had caused by losing the camel with all the luggage and food. The Prophet (peace be upon him) knew this but reminded him that they were on Hajj!

Even under the extreme provocation of the slave's negligence with the amanah of the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself, the Prophet (peace be upon him) reminded Abu Bakr to be nice to him. Within seconds, as we have social media now, the news that the Prophet (peace be upon him) had no food went viral. Within seconds the dishes started coming from left, right, and centre, offering him the best dishes they could serve.

It is a nice story and it contains many lessons in it. It shows we have to be kind to our companions, the workers and whomever we interact with. We also observe the sweet way in which the Prophet (peace be upon him) was addressed Abu Bakr. The message from the Prophet (peace be upon him)

was clear - you shouldn't lose your temper even when you are incensed by what has happened and it is someone else's fault.

## The Farewell Sermon

The Prophet (peace be upon him) wanted to reach all of the Hajjis with his final message. He delivered four main speeches - on Yaum Tarwiya in Makkah on 8th Dhul Hijjah, on the plains of Arafat on 9th Dhul Hijah and that evening in Muzdalifah, and then in Mina during the days of Tashreeq (three days of Eid).

These speeches are the core source for this is the hadith of Jabir ibn Abdullah (may Allah be pleased with him), who described the Hajj of the Prophet (peace be upon him). It is the foundation of every research and commentary on his blessed Hajj. Though it was not only Jabir (may Allah be pleased with him) who narrated what the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, his narrations are the most comprehensive. In addition, there are narrations from 50 companions.

In his farewell sermons, the Prophet (peace be upon him) was telling every soul present and all those who would come after, what to do, how to make it to the Hereafter and how to become the best version of oneself. He was guiding them and all those who would follow, how to deal with each other - our fellow brothers and sisters, and our families – parents, wives and children, as well as to be ethical in our financial affairs. He set the boundaries and rules for his Ummah to follow to lead successful lives and gain the pleasure of Allah Almighty.

In these words, the Prophet (peace be upon him) repeatedly asked 'Have I not conveyed the message?' to check that his Ummah had understood what he had painstakingly delivered and taken it on board.

Ibn `Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) said:

*"Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him) delivered a sermon on the Day of Nahr, and said, 'O people! (Tell me) what is the day today?' The people replied, 'It is the forbidden (sacred) day.' He asked again, 'What town is this?' They replied, 'It is the forbidden (Sacred) town.' He asked, 'Which month is this?' They replied, 'It is the forbidden (Sacred) month.' He said, 'No doubt! Your blood, your properties, and your honour are sacred to one another like the sanctity of this day of yours, in this (sacred) town (Makkah) of yours, in this month of yours.' The Prophet (peace be upon him) repeated his statement again and again. After that he raised his head and said, 'O Allah! Haven't conveyed (Your Message) to them'.*

*Haven't I conveyed Your Message to them?'*

*Ibn `Abbas added, "By Him in Whose Hand my soul is, the following was his will (Prophet's will) to his followers: It is incumbent upon those who are present to convey this information to those who are absent.' (Bukhari)*

At the end of his sermon the Prophet (peace be upon him) raised his finger and asked the crowd if they had heard him, and asked Allah to bear witness that he had delivered the message and completed his mission.

*And you would be asked about me (on the Day of Resurrection), (now tell me) what would you say? They (the audience) said: We will bear witness that you*

*have conveyed (the message), discharged (the ministry of Prophethood) and given wise (sincere) counsel. He (the narrator) said: He (the Holy Prophet) then raised his forefinger towards the sky and pointing it at the people (said):" O Allah, be witness. O Allah, be witness," saying it thrice. (Muslim)*

## The three different types of Hajj

There are three types of Hajj, which are all valid:

- Hajj-ul-Ifrad
- Hajj-ul-Qiran
- Hajj-ul-Tamattu

Which Hajj did the Prophet (peace be upon him) perform? He travelled from Madinah with all the people who accompanied him for Hajj, and they put on their ihram when they were approaching Makkah. In Makkah, they were joined by the people of Makkah who wanted to perform Hajj with them.

There is a big debate among scholars which kind of Hajj the Prophet (peace be upon him) performed. They have their own evidences based on what different Companions observed of the Hajj for their reasoning, (including Hadith Jabir) and accordingly we have three kinds of Hajj– Ifrad, Tamattu' and Qiran. All are legitimate ways of performing Hajj and pilgrims can choose the one that suits them best, as these variations create ease for the Ummah.

*Ifrad (Hajj only)* - One performs Hajj only. If they wish to perform Umrah later that is their choice.

*Qiran (Umrah and Hajj together)* - Qiran means remaining in ihram for Hajj and Umrah - it's two in one, as the Hajji performs both Hajj and umrah.

*Tamattu' (Umrah and Hajj with a break in between)* - Tamattu' involves performing umrah, then coming out of ihram and then performing Hajj.

The Shafi'i school say the Prophet (peace be upon him) performed the Tamattu' but each school has their own preference and all provide their evidences.

## Who can perform Hajj

Hajj is an immediate obligation, the moment you can do it, you should do it. However it does not become an obligation until one reaches puberty. Before that it is only counted as a nawafil Hajj. It won't be recorded for them like the obligatory Hajj. Imam Ghazali (may Allah have mercy on him), quoted a hadith the one who was able to do Hajj but did not, has died as a Jew or as a Christian. This narration is weak and inauthentic.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) therefore said perform Hajj before you cannot perform Hajj. For that reason, anyone who can perform it, should not delay it, because you never know when things will change and you will not be able to do it. Even those who were physically fit were thwarted from going when Makkah had to shut down due to the pandemic in 2020. It had not crossed anyone's mind that this was a possibility. Those who made the intention to go but could not go due to

circumstances beyond their control, will be rewarded for their preparation. Although their Hajj is still due when circumstances allow it.

The sooner one can do Hajj, they should. Do not postpone going. People have a tendency to delay going for Hajj because of the perception that one should leave it to later and then get their slate wiped clean. They want to enjoy life in their youth and do anything they want from the haram list, then go for Hajj and repent. This is flawed thinking. Can anyone guarantee that they will be able to do this? That they will have time to repent?

Hajj is not for old people and repentance is not for old people and similarly praying in congregation in the mosque is not for old people. Yet, ninety percent of men in the mosques are in their 70s and 80s. The front row is made up of a few old people. And worse still the young do not feel welcome or that they belong to the mosque. This is another misconception, the mosque is for the young and the old – it is for everyone. Similarly, Hajj is for the young, the old and everyone. Salah is for the young, the old and everyone. Yet shockingly, many people living in Makkah have never been for Hajj. Therefore we ask Allah Almighty to enable us to respond to His call, all the time, Ya Rabb.

As Hajj costs time, money and effort, Allah confirms that it is only expected from those who are able to perform it - those physically, mentally and financially fit to do it. Thus scholars have split the ability (istata'a) to do Hajj into three main conditions, as the Prophet (peace be upon him) Allah marriage to ability when he said 'Whoever can marry, should marry.' For Hajj, one must have:

1. **Physical ability** - One should have good health and the physical stamina to travel and perform Hajj.
2. **Financial ability** – If you are as strong as a horse, but penniless, then Hajj is not an obligation. Just as Zakah is not an obligation for the faqir (poor); rather the faqir is the beneficiary of Zakah.
3. **Mental capacity** - One must have the mental capacity to do Hajj. If you are physically well and financially able but not mentally well, for instance you have depression, or other mental health issues which will affect your ability to perform Hajj, you should not go for Hajj.

Hajj holds a special place in Islam and my first Hajj was a truly enjoyable experience. Unlike salah, which is required five times a day, or Ramadan and Zakat, which are required once a year, Hajj is only required once in a lifetime, and only if one is able. Although people do sometimes perform Hajj more than one Hajj, the obligation is to perform it only once. This is due to its strenuous and challenging nature.

When the Prophet (peace be upon him) was asked whether Hajj is obligatory every year, he remained silent. The companion who was eager to find out pushed him by repeating the question until the revelation came:

*"Do not make your life difficult by asking questions." Ali (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated that when the verse "And Hajj (pilgrimage to Makkah) to the House (Ka'bah) is a duty that mankind owes to Allah, for whoever can bear the way" was revealed, they asked the Prophet (peace be upon him) if Hajj was obligatory every year. He said no and explained that if he had said yes, it would*



*have become obligatory. Then, the verse "O you who believe! Ask not about things which, if made plain to you, may cause you trouble" was revealed.*

*(Ibn Majah)*

Safety is also a factor. This varies from one era to another. In the past, when people travelled they were at risk of being mugged or attacked. The roads were not safe and there were gangs operating there. When there is a risk, it is not an obligation to go. Before the Covid pandemic hit, Hajj was performed by at least 2 million people. However, when Covid hit, the obligation to perform Hajj was lifted, because it is more important to preserve and protect life by staying home than risking lives. Allah Almighty, out of His mercy, puts people's rights before his. Therefore Hajj is only an obligation when it can be done and for those who are able to.

We are blessed that in our day, reaching Makkah only takes some hours, whereas in the past it took a month or more depending how far one was coming from. Just getting from Makkah to Madinah used to take twelve days, not it's half an hour by plane. The favours of Allah Almighty are plenty, so let's not complain, let's always praise Allah Almighty and show gratitude to Him.

## 2. The Blessed Time and Place

In general, salah can be prayed anywhere, as long as it is performed during a specific window of time. Fasting can also be carried out in any place, but has to be observed during the specific hours of a specific month. However, Hajj is linked both to a specially chosen time and a specially chosen place. Allah Almighty knows the wisdom behind this. The pillars have to be performed in accordance with what has been prescribed.

As Hajj is related to a time and place, you cannot perform it outside of the time or the place, just as you cannot perform dhuhr outside its time. If one does not reach Arafah before Maghrib on the 9<sup>th</sup> day of Dhul Hijjah, one's Hajj does not count.

Why did Allah connect the different forms of ibadah to specific times? It creates discipline in us. It is about being punctual, precise and heading in the same direction. When we pray on time and when you wake up during the night for prayer or for suhoor, it disciplines us. The one who is disciplined is more productive, more employable and more beloved to others.

Thus Allah Almighty is moulding us inside and outside, time keeping and preparation and the purity of the heart, to be on time, to be a better person.

Dhul Hijjah is one of the most important months in the Islamic calendar, and scholars have written a great deal about it.

*The Hajj is during specific months. (2:197)*

The specific months are: Shawwal, Dhul Qa'dah and Dhul Hijjah.

There are Prohibited/Sacred Months (Al-Ashahr ul Hurum) and the Hajj pilgrimage takes place in one of the three months:

1. Dhul Qa'dah (11th)
2. Dhul Hijjah (12th)
3. Muharram (1st)

These three consecutive months are known as the prohibited months. There are four prohibited months in total, the fourth one is Rajab (7<sup>th</sup> month). They are called prohibited because it is prohibited to start a war or fight in these months. It is also prohibited to kill animals or cut down or prune trees in the Haram area. The prohibition is extensive and comprehensive. Why are there prohibitions? The reason is that these are the months of Hajj. In the past it used to take two months to do Hajj, due to the time it took to travel to Makkah, therefore to ensure that people reached and returned safely from the Haram, Allah Almighty made these months safe (prohibited).

Why Rajab? Rajab is also classed as a prohibited month because it is the month of Umrah. So there is security from the inside as well as safety on the outside. Allah Almighty mentions His order for safety and security in the last two verses of Surah Quraysh:

*'Let them worship the Lord of this House, Who has fed them from hunger and has secured them against fear,' (106:3-4)*

Here Allah Almighty is counting the favours He bestowed upon them. These are blessings, so in gratitude He wants us to worship Him with full concentration.

My favourite piece about the importance of Dhul Hijjah is by ibn Rajab al Hanbali, the great muhaddith, faqih and spiritual scholar, whose writings are very deep and comprehensive. In his book *Lataif al Ma'arif*, he wrote about the virtues of different times in the year. He mentioned that Allah Almighty divided the year into different months and conferred them with various virtues – selecting certain hours, days, nights and months. Allah Almighty created the heavens and earth and 12 months, and dedicated more blessings in some of the months than others, and that is why He, out of His wisdom, instructed believers to perform Hajj in Dhul Hijjah. The Prophet (peace be on him) told us that the first ten days of Dhul Hijjah are special days, as the blessings and mercy Allah grants increase during these days.

*Surely the number of months with Allah is twelve months in Allah's ordinance since the day when He created the heavens and the earth, of these four being sacred; that is the right reckoning; therefore be not unjust to yourselves regarding them, and fight the polytheists all together as they fight you all together; and know that Allah is with those who guard (against evil). (9:36)*

It was narrated from Ibn 'Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Messenger of Allah (peace be on him) said:

*"There are no days during which righteous deeds are more beloved to Allah than these days," meaning the (first) ten days of Dhul Hijjah. They said: "O Messenger of Allah! Not even Jihad in the cause of Allah?" He said: "Not even Jihad in the cause of Allah, unless a man goes out with himself and his wealth and does not bring anything back." (Ibn Majah)*

The companions were wondering which were better the days of Dhul Hijjah or jihad, because they had heard the best deed was jihad. They were surprised that good deeds in these days could be better than jihad for Allah. The Prophet (peace be on him) explained that doing good deeds during these days were better than jihad, with the exception of the man who left for jihad and gave away everything he owned. He was prepared to sacrifice his life and money and prepared to give up everything for Allah. Apart from this, doing good deeds in these days will be most beloved to Allah.

The Haram is a sacred precinct. It is protected and for that reason it is prohibited to wage war inside the Haram, making it safe and secure for pilgrims to perform Hajj.

## 3. Seven Qualities you Need on Hajj

### 1. Obedience and submission

As everyone knows, Hajj is one of the main pillars of Islam, as the Prophet (peace be upon him) said:

عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عُمَرَ بْنِ الْخَطَّابِ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا قَالَ: سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَقُولُ: " بُنِيَ الْإِسْلَامُ عَلَى خَمْسٍ: شَهَادَةِ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَأَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ، وَإِقَامَ الصَّلَاةِ، وَإِيتَاءَ الزَّكَاةِ، وَحَجِّ الْبَيْتِ، وَصَوْمِ رَمَضَانَ". (رَوَاهُ الْبُخَارِيُّ) ، (وَمُسْلِمٌ).

*Islam has been built on five. Testifying that there is no deity worthy of worship except Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, establishing the salah (prayer), paying the Zakat (obligatory charity), making the Hajj (pilgrimage) to the House, and fasting in Ramadan." (Bukhari and Muslim)*

Very simply, we perform Hajj to attain Allah Almighty's pleasure - it's an act of obedience to Allah's command and submission. We travel all the way to Makkah to please Allah Almighty. Why do we need to travel when we could please Allah Almighty at home? We undertake the journey of Hajj because we are servants of Allah Almighty and we have to follow His commands. This makes Hajj a practical training course in learning obedience. We peel ourselves away from the dunya with all its concerns and connect ourselves sincerely to Allah, the One.

Whether we understand the rituals, for example the seven circuits for tawaf or not, we perform them as they we have been commanded, knowing that there is a wisdom behind all that we do, which we do not fully understand. Islam is based on obedience and submission, and this permeates all prescribed forms of worship, whether it is Hajj, salah or fasting. That is why the Prophet (peace be on him) said:

*'Take your rituals from me.'* (Muslim)

We have to follow the commands and follow his footsteps. We can continually increase our obedience to Allah Almighty so that we come to the point where we automatically follow His commands without hesitation. When Allah Almighty says alcohol or pork is forbidden, for example, we do not ask why, we simply accept it and comply. Similarly, Hajj is a command. It is a connection between the servant and his Lord and this permeates everything we do. The moment we lose this connection and begin acting as though we know better than Him, we set ourselves up as lords, and corruption kicks in. This is why we need to strengthen and maintain our connection with Allah Almighty as much as possible.

The great secret of servitude to Allah Almighty is say 'sami'na wa 'ata'na' we hear and we obey. Not as the previous nations, who said 'We hear and we disobey; for instance when they told Musa to go and fight while they waited for him to come back.

Our model is that of the Ansar, who told the Prophet (peace be upon him) that they would go into battle with him, even though their agreement did not necessitate it. They said, 'Ya Rasullallah, if you were to go through the seas we'll go with you and we'll follow you, we will not say to you as the people of Musa said to Musa but we will say, 'go and we are behind you, go and we will follow you,

we will be with you, the Prophet (peace be upon him) and even if you were to go through the seas we will go with you.

Imam Ghazali (may Allah have mercy on him) goes on to say that not understanding the actions and forms of worship which we do during Hajj is part and parcel of being a servant of Allah Almighty. Just as we perform salah in the way it has been prescribed, and we do not change the number of rakahs or their times, we perform tawaf and sa'ee and pelt stones as it has been prescribed.

While Zakah is about feeling empathy for the poor, fasting is about controlling our desires, the core of Hajj is worshipping Allah at Arafah. Unlike Makkah where you have the Ka'bah and rituals to perform, at Arafah, there is nothing but you and Allah Almighty on a barren plain. It is part of our humility and submission.

We cannot penetrate the Unseen with our own intellect without the companionship of the revelation, in order to reach the truth, you need both the revelation and your intellect. You might have the revelation but sometimes you do not understand it. So unless you have both you will not arrive at the truth.

When some companions asked the Prophet (peace be upon him) to allow them to be among those who wandered in the land and left the dunya behind, he said we do not do this. He said we do jihad instead.

## **2. Connectivity with Allah Almighty and with the Ummah**

Salah is a one-to-one connection with Allah, but when we perform it in jamaat (congregation) it takes on a community dimension. Hajj is jamaat on an even greater scale, it involves a large section of the Ummah, as well as incorporating the one-to-one connection with Allah. Therefore we experience this feeling of cohesion and equality, as one cannot distinguish one person from another, and brotherhood. We are connected both with Allah Almighty and the Ummah at the same time.

In Hajj, you come into contact with the diverse colours and languages of humanity, with all their hopes and wishes. Muslims from all over the world converge to worship Allah simultaneously with their shared belief and united purpose. We learn many lessons through this sacred journey.

## **3. Discipline**

When we engage in different acts of worship e.g. fasting, it disciplines our soul – enabling our spirit to lead us rather than our desires. Hajj is a different level of discipline – it is patience in action. It is active patience. When you watch Hajjis going around the Ka'bah from the third floor, it is apparent that no one controls the crowd - not the police or anyone else, only Allah Almighty.

Remember that in the heavens there are the angels doing tawaaf around the Throne of Allah Almighty and Baitul Mamur. This means you are emulating the angels and in a hadith, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said whoever emulates a people he'll be one of them, so let's be like the angels in our obedience and our closeness to Allah Almighty. The intention is essential every time. With every ritual and every action you are doing, remember you are worshipping Allah Almighty

## 4. Kindness

In general Hajjis are helpful, compassionate and humble. We can't feel this communal and universal spirit anywhere but at Hajj. Without overstepping boundaries, show compassion and consideration towards others. To perform a perfect Hajj, we have to be good with Allah Almighty and also people. Hajj teaches us both. Part of your salah in Hajj is to be good to others around you. To be good to people is also a worship.

Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet (peace be on him) said:

*Whoever performs Hajj (pilgrimage) and does not have foul language, nor commits sin, nor disputes unjustly (during Hajj), then he returns from Hajj as pure and free from sins as on the day on which his mother gave birth to him. (Bukhari and Muslim)*

As per the hadith of Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him), who reported that the Prophet (peace be on him) said:

*The reward of Hajj Mabrur (i.e. one accepted) is nothing but Jannah. (Bukhari and Muslim)*

Using foul language, behaving badly towards other people will nullify your Hajj. It is unacceptable if someone's prayers and tawaf are correct, but they are harsh with people. Controlling the tongue, your gaze and your body is also a compulsory part of Hajj, not a separate package. Keep this in mind throughout Hajj, wherever you go - whether it is Makkah, Mina, Arafat, Muzdalifah, or Madinah, you have to bear this in mind. Anyone can be harsh especially when provoked, but being kind even when stressed, is heroic. Harshness is a quality that is disliked. The Prophet (peace be on him) said:

*'The best amongst you is the best in character.'* (Muslim)

## 5. Sabr

Despite its challenges, Hajj is an indescribable and unique experience, filled with moments of bliss. Indeed, one becomes so absorbed in performing all the rituals at the right time and in the right way that one usually forgets the family they left behind.

As I always tell those departing for Hajj, they need to pack three things – sabr, sabr and sabr. From the moment they head for the airport, as they reach their camps, as they perform tawaf and sa'ee – they will need buckets full of sabr.

When it is very congested, you can lose focus in the squash and squeeze, pushes and shoves, so you need to be patient and keep bringing your heart back. Don't let what is going on disturb you. . People will push you, people will step on you sometimes, people will pull you, and there will be plenty of people. Always have patience (sabr). You don't want to lose your patience, remember. From day one till the last day, you need sabr.

## 6. Introspection



Hajj is a journey, 'safar' in Arabic. 'Safar' is from the root word 'to reveal something', because travelling with someone reveals their character and their exposes their qualities. When Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) asked what someone was like, he would enquire: 'Have you travelled with them or had dealings in money with them?' You can't always judge someone's character until you have travelled with them. So be careful, people will judge you, and you will also get to know them for who they really are when you travel with them.

Overall, think about the whole trip. It teaches you deep lessons about sabr and yourself. You explore things about yourself that you never experienced before - the good and the bad. You will probably be more surprised by the bad things you never knew about yourself. Sometimes you will even be surprised by the good things, as you never thought you would be able to do what you managed to.

For instance, we went to the Mountain of Hira and the Cave of Hira. Some people could not make the journey; it was so difficult they dropped out at the beginning of the journey, and some people whom appeared very weak were so strong they made it to the top.

The whole journey is about self-exploration. Though you are fulfilling an obligation it has different dimensions. I came across somebody, who was a new Muslim and he had just read about Hajj and attended some courses but when he came back, he said he felt nothing – all he noticed were that it was crowded, messy, very dirty – all the negatives.

## 7. Purpose

When I started explaining to him what the deeper significance of the rituals were, he said he wished he had known these before. He had been focused on the other things, the dirty streets, rather than the purpose of the journey itself.

There are many distractions all over the place, so remember your direction and your purpose. You are here to do your obligation and Allah Almighty called upon you here for a certain reason. So don't lose this opportunity, whether it's Hajj or Umrah. It is a special gift from Allah Almighty, so don't waste it.

## 4. Performing Hajj

The rituals of Hajj are performed in a five to six days duration, officially beginning on the 8<sup>th</sup> Dhul-Hijjah to ending on the 13<sup>th</sup>. There are 7 main steps:

1. Ihram and Umrah (unless performing Hajj ul-Ifrad)
2. Yaum at-Tarwiyah Mina (8<sup>th</sup> Dhul Hijjah)
3. Waiting at Arafat (9<sup>th</sup> Dhul Hijjah)
4. Muzdalifah
5. Rami at Mina – Stoning the devil
6. Nahr (sacrifice) – Eid day (10<sup>th</sup> Dhul Hijjah)
7. Farewell Tawaf



### From the House to the miqat

The first action is the journey one sets off on. This may be from hundreds if not thousands of miles away and at that time took a month's travel or more to reach the Haram. The Prophet (peace be upon him) put boundaries for Hajj, which we call mawaqit. A miqat cannot be crossed unless you are in ihram.

At the miqat take a shower, put your ihram, pray two rakahs and make your intention. If you are nearby you would go to the boundaries. There are five stations of miqat of which four are mentioned in the hadith narrated by Abdullah ibn Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him):

*“Allah’s Messenger, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) had fixed Dhul Hulayfah as the Miqat for the people of Madinah; al-Juhfah for the people of Sham; and Qarn al-Manazil for the people of Najd; and Yalamlam for the people of Yemen. So, these (above mentioned) are the Mawaqit for all those living in those places, and besides them for those who come through those places with the intention of performing Hajj and Umrah and whoever lives within these places should assume Ihram from his dwelling place, and similarly the people of Makkah can assume Ihram from Makkah.” (Bukhari)*

### The state of ihram – spirituality over desire

Imam Ghazali finds deep significance in each action of Hajj, and Allah Almighty enlightens certain hearts to perceive these secrets and benefit from them.

Ghazali highlights the parallels between the rituals of Hajj and the journey towards the Hereafter. Just as leaving one's house and bidding farewell to family is the first step towards the akhirah, in death, one is separated from their loved ones and home. Hajj symbolizes this transition, akin to the time of death.

Leaving the city during Hajj signifies leaving this world. Boarding the transport mirrors the commencement of a funeral procession. Putting on the ihram is reminiscent of wearing the kaffan, or shroud, used for the deceased. It is not a coffin but a cloth, emphasizing the transient nature of worldly possessions.

On your journey you fear being attacked by thieves and robbers just as in the grave you fear being questioned by the two angels. When you cross the desert you fear the scorpions and snakes which might bite you, as in your grave, your body will be eaten, except for the prophets and martyrs, whose bodies have been protected by Allah Almighty in their graves.

Ghazali reminds us that we will be alone on your journey – without friends, family and relatives, just as we will be alone in our grave. When you do the talbiyah, it's like responding to the call of Allah Almighty when the caller will call and resurrection will start.

Informing friends and family about the Hajj journey is akin to notifying them of one's journey to Allah Almighty. Seeking forgiveness before departing is akin to sorting out our affairs in case we do not return.

Returning people's loans or borrowed possessions before Hajj is an important etiquette, recognising the rights of individuals. If one has a mortgage, it does not hinder them from performing Hajj as long as they are making regular monthly payments. However, a lump sum that remains unpaid should not be spent on Hajj until the debt is cleared.

In Islam, both Allah Almighty's rights and people's rights are acknowledged. When there is a conflict between the two, people's rights take precedence. Allah, being self-sufficient, forgives His rights, understanding that people cannot forsake their own obligations. Thus, fulfilling people's rights should be prioritized before fulfilling Allah's right through Hajj.

The attire of ihram, consisting of unstitched towels, eliminates distinctions between the rich and poor. It resembles a white shroud, symbolising that in death, worldly possessions are left behind, and only one's deeds accompany them. Donning the ihram restricts certain actions, turning them from permissible to impermissible, reflecting the focus on abstaining from sins and desires during Hajj.

Similarly, in salah, consuming food or drink becomes prohibited after performing the forbidding takbeer (takbiratul ihram). The state of ihram requires refraining from actions such as using perfume, cutting nails or hair, and engaging in marital relations. By setting aside desires, the spirit of Hajj is preserved, similar to how desires can hinder fasting and salah. The state of ihram helps individuals cleanse themselves of these desires before embarking on the journey, allowing their spirits to guide them.

While purchasing and keeping one's kaffan at home, as well as washing it with zam zam water, is not from the Sunnah, it is also not prohibited. This practice stems from being prepared for the inevitable, and there is no harm in doing so.

## The majesty and tranquility of Makkah

*'And whoever enters into this House will have security and tranquillity descend on him'. (3:97)*

There is a unique soothing calmness and tranquillity you feel in your heart in Makkah. You forget your family, time, and dunya. It is a different world. Blessings descend and mercy is showered upon those performing tawaf, or those who are praying or even those who are just gazing at the Ka'bah.

The Ka'bah is so majestic. There's no other feeling you get similar to seeing the Ka'bah, and all the people going round it. Anytime you see a live stream of the tawaf around the Ka'bah, you feel the beauty of the synchrony of people circumulating the House of Allah Almighty, steeped in history going back to Ibrahim (peace be upon him).

When entering the Haram the best worship is tawaf, so rather than doing tahayatul masjid (2 units of salah when you enter the mosque), do tawaf.

### Tawaf

Performing tawaf around the Ka'bah echoes God's system which Allah Almighty created of rotating anti-clockwise, like the earth and galaxies which are all going anti-clockwise. So we are all part of the system, which Allah Almighty created. So you are one in trillions, so small that we can't be seen on a map of the universe let alone our galaxy. If you were to zoom out of our galaxy we are a very tiny, tiny dot, you can't see it let alone see the earth, let alone see me and you. Yet despite this insignificance, Allah Almighty revealed the Quran to the Prophet (peace be upon him) and He is addressing us.



The universe at our service. You see all this universe is nothing but with that in mind you feel Allah Almighty has honoured the children of Adam as He stated very clearly in the Quran:

*We have indeed ennobled the children of Adam. (17:70)*

Allah Almighty put this universe at our service. Can you believe this? The whole universe at our service, the sun, the moon, the stars, the rain, the animals, the plants, the crops, the fruits, the insects, bees, all at our service. So we shouldn't be distracted with them because they've been designed to serve us and we've been designed to serve Him. When we do something else other than serving Him, we lose our purpose if we were to do

When you go to Hajj you feel that the whole world is there together - African, Chinese, Indonesian, Zimbabwean, Lebanese, Arab, Non-Arabs, Pakistani, Indian, American, British, French, you name it; all of them circulating around the Ka'bah reciting labbaik Allah huma labbaik.

Just watch the people around the tawaf doing the tawaf, especially when it's heavily crowded. You see miracles, upon miracles. All of them are one body, one movement, one sound, one beat, 'Labaik

allahuma labaik, Labaik la sharika laka labbayk, Innal Hamda wan nimata laka wal mulk, la sharika lak.' 2 million bodies supplicating at the same time, and even more outside the Haram, making it 3 million or even more. All of them asking Allah Almighty in their own language, and dialects - more than probably 200 languages. And Allah Almighty is listening to every single one of them dearly, as if their dua is the most important, giving each one full attention.

Ibn Abbas (may Allah have mercy on him) narrated that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said when you do tawaf around the Ka'bah, it is as if you are in salah except that you can speak during the tawaf. Definitely do not engage in idle chatter; your heart has to be present when you're doing tawaf. So one should not say anything unless it's good. Remain engaged in dhikr or Darood or dua or reciting Quran or istighfar. Don't waste your time and do not take selfies on mobile phones or facetime. Focus on your ibadah. That is why you are there. Otherwise you are ruining the spirit of your ibadah and the sanctity of the space. Take some photos once you have finished.

## Talbiyah

Much of the time, during Hajj you recite the talbiyah. The first word of the talbiyah, 'Labbaik' means 'Here I am, at Your service', which is the same as your reply when your parents call you. Surat al-Mulk mentions that Allah Almighty created the universe and all that is in it. It all belongs to the Almighty. Your brains, muscles, jobs, money, health, everything that enabled you to perform Hajj are all amanah (trust) from Him. The means and efforts that you used to get here i.e. job, money, annual leave, time are all from Allah Almighty. This is why we are declaring:

*'Everything is from You (Allah), the blessings are from You and we have nothing.'*

It literally exposes you to all that is around you. Allah Almighty chose you to come there; you are responding to His call. The talbiyah ends in the same manner as it started by declaring the oneness of Allah Almighty:

*'You have no partner.'*

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said:

*I do talbiyah for You, true talbiyah, to perform Hajj it means by doing this it's a form of worship and as an obedient servant to you. (Musnad al-Bazzar)*

The talbiyah is not exclusively for Hajj. The Arabs knew this word before Islam, so for instance if you ask somebody to do you a favour and you say labbaik, 'At your service' it is confirmation that you will do it.

In the context of Hajj, we know that the command has come from Allah Almighty, therefore we don't need more than that. It is from the highest source of wisdom and authority.

## Calling upon Allah

At the Haram, you can put forward your needs and your desires to Allah. All supplications and cries are being heard by Him. The Almighty listens to everyone, no matter where they are on the globe. Ask Him for anything you wish for and He will grant it to you as long as it's for your good.

When our children all talking to us at the same time, we can't understand what they are all saying, and we cannot respond. Yet Allah is responding to 5 million people at the same time, calling out to Him in dua. And if we zoom out to all the surrounding cities and countries of the world and even the animals calling upon Allah Almighty in their own way, rely on Him to provide their rizq. He's right there, looking after them, providing for them, protecting them, and supporting them. Huwa Allah, He is Allah Almighty.

It is a miracle of how the crowds organise themselves. When salah time comes, watch how the rows form within minutes. The sequence, organisation and management of 2-3 million people, is beyond human control. The only explanation is that it is a miracle from Allah Almighty, who enables them to organise themselves and straighten their rows and look after each other. When you hear the different voices and see all the different colours, the different nationalities and classes converging in one place, you are reminded that Allah Almighty will gather everyone on the day of qiyamah and we will be with them.

## Significance of seven

Why do we do seven tawaf? What is the significance of the number? Unless we have a hadith or an ayah in the Quran explaining it, we don't know. We do it as we received it. The Prophet (peace be upon him) did Hajj in this manner and we simply follow him.

The number seven has significance - the Fatihah has seven verses, Allah Almighty talks about seven skies, and seven earths as well, but we don't know the reality of it. It's been mentioned in the hadith, the Prophet (peace be upon him) mentioned that if somebody has unjustly taken someone's land he would be shackled to this very land from the seventh earth. We have to accept that there are things, which we don't understand, we just submit. And this is one of them. Why do we go anti-clockwise, why not clockwise? We don't know but this is how we received it and this how we follow. It reinforces our attitude of submission.

This does not mean that Islam freezes the mind, on the contrary, we have to use our minds, we have to think, and reflect but we have limitations as well. Allah Almighty shows us there are certain areas where our intellect cannot reach. Why do you pray 3 rakahs at Maghrib? Allah knows the wisdom behind it and we defer to Him in these matters.

When we do the tawaf around the Ka'bah, we are one with the cycle of the universe, planets and galaxies.

If in tawaf you forget the number of rounds you have done – go with the smallest number that you are sure you have completed and then build from there. (This is the same principle as in salah - if you forget the number of rakats that you have done, you continue from the lower number you think you have done).



## Two rakahs at the station of Ibrahim

After tawaf, we pray two rakahs behind the Station of Ibrahim or anywhere in the mosque, not necessarily behind the station of Ibrahim as this blocks people's tawaf. It is haram to pray two rakahs if you are blocking people's path. Although they have no idea that they are sinful, they think that they are fulfilling an obligation. It's not an obligation and it should not be prayed in the midst of the crowd. Let the tawaf flow and pray anywhere in the mosque, inshallah it will be accepted.

What should you do if you lose your wudu during tawaf? When you have finished your tawaf, a common question which arises is what to do if you lose your wudu. Many people have texted me with this question! In this scenario, you count how many tawaf you have completed and you do not count the one which is incomplete. You go and re-do your wudu, and then continue your tawaf.

Can you do perform tawaf by itself? You can do tawaf on its own as nafl tawaf but you cannot perform sa'ee on its own. Sa'ee has to be preceded by tawaf.

If we sin during Hajj (and it is quite normal that all of us will sin at some point during Hajj) immediately seek forgiveness from Allah Almighty. Depending on the severity of the sin, an expiation may also be needed. Ask Allah Almighty to protect you from Shaytan and the evil within you.

Allah Almighty wants us to move in this direction to join the tasbeeh to Him, the Almighty. All the galaxies are also doing this. In heaven, angels are also doing tawaf above us. 70,000 angels enter al-Bait ul Mamur daily. Angels, galaxies all do tawaf – blending all together – celebrating the name of Allah Almighty, His Majesty and Beauty.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) mentioned what he saw in his Mi'raj to the heavens:

*Then the Bait-ul-Ma'mur was raised up to me. I said: O Gabriel! what is this? He replied: It is the Bait-ul-Ma'mur. Seventy thousand angels pray in it daily and, after they come out, they never return again. (Bukhari and Muslim)*

## As-Sa'ee

When you finish this, you pray two rakahs, and then you go to perform Sa'ee. You start from Safa and then finish with Marwah. From Safa to Marwah is one, from Marwah to Safa is two. Going from Safa to Marwah and back is not one, it's two.

When doing sa'ee remember Hajar (may Allah be pleased with her) and her yaqeen (certainty). This action echoes her faith (imaan) and full trust (tawakkul). Hajar, on her own and in her very fragile condition as a nursing mother, was left alone. At his point of leaving them, she asked Ibrahim (peace be on him) 'Why are you leaving us? Did the Almighty ask you to do so?' Ibrahim (peace on him) replied, 'Yes' to which Hajar responded 'Then He will look after us.'

The lessons for us in Hajar's story are:

1. Having full trust in Allah Almighty. One expects fragile people to break but she was very tough and strong in her imaan.
2. She was doing her best to seek help and deal with the means around her between Safa and Marwah and not just sitting around. Although we do rely on Him Almighty, dealing with the means is also important – it is the bit we have to do in the process – we have to do our best

knowing the outcome depends on Allah's will. It is akin to visiting the doctor and taking medicine (that is the means) and knowing that the cure is in Allah's Hands. If He wills it the medicine will take effect, and if He wills otherwise it won't. But we do not lie in bed awaiting cure to happen by itself. Reliance is active – not passive.

3. When you do sa'ee between Safa and Marwa it's as if you are asking Allah Almighty to forgive for what you have done and you don't know if Allah Almighty has forgiven you or not so you are going back and forth and asking for forgiveness again and again. Ghazali says imagine that Safa and Marwa are like the two pans of the scales on the Day of Judgement - one for the good deeds, one for the bad deeds. And you are going between them not sure what the final judgement will be. It's another scene for the worshipper to find khushoo and remember that it is a journey of a lifetime.

## Yawm at-Tarwiyah: The sacrifice of Ismail - Sacrificing your will to Allah's

On 8<sup>th</sup> Dhul Hijjah, Hajjis go to Mina, this is known as the Yawm at-Tarwiyah. This name originates from:

The process of filling bottles with water to take to Mina. Therefore, when someone is thirsty and then drinks until they are full they are irtawa i.e. full.

Ibrahim (peace be on him) saw a vision from Allah Almighty, as mentioned in Surat as-Saffat that he was asked to sacrifice his son Ismail (peace be on him).

*'and when he was old enough to go about and work with him, (one day) Abraham said to him: "My son, I see in my dream that I am slaughtering you. So consider (and tell me) what you think." He said: "Do as you are bidden. You will find me, if Allah so wills, among the steadfast."' (37:102)*

When Ibrahim (peace be on him) told Ismail (peace be on him) of this request, Ismail (peace be on him) agreed immediately.

Ibrahim (peace be on him) saw the vision on 8th Dhul Hijjah and began to wonder if it was from Allah Almighty or from Shaytan? Tarawwa means pondering or thinking. The lesson here is not to rush things but to ponder and think.

The fact that Ibrahim (peace be on him) could think that an idea may have been from Shaytan shows that he (peace be on him) was not arrogant. The vision was repeated three times, so he knew for sure it was from Allah Almighty.

On the third day he took Ismail (peace be on him) to be sacrificed, and this day is known as Yawm Al Nahr (day of sacrifice). When Ismail knelt down, Allah informed Ibrahim that he had passed his test and earned a huge reward:

فَلَمَّا أَسْلَمَا وَتَلَّهُ لِلْجَبِينِ

*And when they had both submitted and he put him down upon his forehead,*

وَنَدَّيْنَاهُ أَنْ يَا أَبْرَاهِيمَ

*We called to him, "O Abraham,*

قَدْ صَدَّقْتَ الرُّءْيَا إِنَّا كَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ

*You have fulfilled the vision." Indeed, We thus reward the doers of good.*

إِنَّ هَذَا لَهُوَ الْبَلَاءُ الْمُبِينُ

*And We redeemed him with a great sacrifice. (37:103-107)*

## Choosing between our will and Allah's Will

There are very spiritual dimensions to the religious acts that we do, they are not empty rituals. They reveal how we respond to Allah Almighty's call and whether we put His commands at the top of our priorities – even though we may not like doing them. Who would want to sacrifice his son? The nature of a test is whether you will carry out what you hate because it has been commanded.

Hajj tests you by requiring you to sacrifice your wealth, time and leisure to please Allah Almighty. Therefore, Hajj trains us to respond to Allah Almighty's commands. We need this training because we are asked to choose between following our likes and Allah Almighty's commands outside of Hajj as well.

Apply this test whenever choosing – am I bothered about what people think or Allah Almighty's commands?

Ibrahim (peace be upon him) was the father of the prophets (peace be upon them), yet he was also human. If we put ourselves in the position of being told to sacrifice our son, it would be very hard to obey the command to sacrifice someone we love. We experience this test on a lesser scale in different forms on a daily basis. Do we follow Allah Almighty's commands or do we choose what we love?

Following Allah Almighty's command means overcoming our love for our children, who are the peak of our love, or love for things such as our job, study or business.

Ibrahim (peace be upon him) did something very difficult which showed that he had full commitment to Allah Almighty. Now look at this from the point of view of what Ismail (peace be on him) did. He also showed full submission and obedience - he obeyed the order to be sacrificed not because Ibrahim (peace be upon him) was his father - but because he was a prophet. Ismail saw the obedience and trust firstly in Allah Almighty because Ibrahim (peace be upon him) was a prophet and then secondly in his father Ibrahim (peace be on him). We must remember that the dreams of the Prophets (peace be on him) are commands or revelations whereas dreams of people are not. We have to obey our parents but if they ask us to do something that isn't right or very strange we must discuss it with them without being argumentative.

Over and over again we are taught to trust Allah Almighty. If He is commanding us to do something, we have to do it and trust Him.

Do not just act on your dreams. Dream interpretation is a special science and needs to be done by experts. It is not enough for someone to read Ibn Sireen's book (which was actually inaccurately attributed to Ibn Sireen) to be able to interpret dreams. A person that interprets dreams has to have some knowledge of Qur'an and Sunnah and some element of inspiration.

Ismail (peace be upon him) didn't hesitate, he had full trust in Allah Almighty. Just like his mother Hajar (may Allah be pleased with her) put her trust in Allah Almighty. It is important to teach children to have full trust in Allah Almighty.

## The Day of Arafah

The Day of Arafah is the most important day of the year. Stopping (wuquf) at Arafah is a crucial part of Hajj. Hajj is not accepted if this is missed. It is one of the three pillars (fard) of Hajj. The three pillars are: ihram, wuquf at Arafah and tawaf al-Ifada. If any of these are missed, or there is a mistake in them, it is impossible to rectify it and the Hajj is not accepted. There are an additional 6 wajibs (obligations) in Hajj. However, these can be rectified if a mistake is made in them. The Prophet (peace be on him) went from Mina to Arafah on Yawm ul Arafah, which is like the Day of Gathering.

There is another unique feature which is that Arafah Day is day with two nights. As per the Islamic concept of time, the next day begins at maghrib. So Sunday evening we say is the evening of Monday. Tuesday evening is the eve of Wednesday. Except on the Day of Arafah. It is preceded by evening before it, but when it is maghrib of the Day of Arafah it does not become the eve of Eid al Adha, but it is the second evening of Arafah, as extended it beyond 24 hours. He gave us 12 hours extra. How so? Because Allah said that Whoever catches Arafah before Fajr, his Hajj is accepted. If any Hajji failed to reach Arafat before maghrib, but arrived before Fajr his Hajj would still be valid. This is like a riddle. Which day has two nights? Arafah Day. And which day has no night? Eid al Adha, because it begins at Fajr and ends at maghrib.

This fills our heart with pleasure that Allah Almighty extend our time to ask for more favours and blessings and mercy. Who else can give this except Allah? He bestows these favours.

The next chapter will discuss the importance of the Day of Arafah in more detail.

## Muzdalifah

After sunset you leave Arafah and go to Muzdalifah, where you pray Maghrib and Isha together, collect pebbles and sleep. The main thing in Muzdalifah is to stick together and not start making your own way. Stay up in Muzdalifah only as much as you can or else performing rituals the next day will be difficult. Arafah is about being fully connected with Allah Almighty and forgetting about the dunya (although you can ask for the dunya in the supplications that you make).

## Eid

Hajj ends with the day of Eid. Refer to chapter 9 for more on Eid.

## 5. The Heart of Hajj

The Prophet (peace be on him) said:

*'Hajj is Arafah.'* (Tirmidhi)

Why did he not say this about tawaf or sa'ee? In Arafah there is nothing! It is just a plain land with mountains. This strips us of anything coming between us and Allah Almighty.

Arafah is about waiting - waiting for the sun to set, waiting, waiting, as a tiny simulation of the Day of Judgement when we will wait for the rahma of Allah Almighty and waiting for the shafa'a (intercession) of the Prophet (peace be upon him).

The Prophet (peace be on him) went from Mina to Arafah on Yawm ul Arafah, which is like the Day of Gathering. On that day, everyone who came into existence since Adam (peace be upon him) until the Day of Gathering will be assembled, and wait. Just as the pilgrims will be waiting for the sun to set, on the Day of Gathering people will be waiting and waiting and waiting. Some will have beads of sweat on their foreheads whilst others will be drowning in sweat up to their knees or waist, depending on their sins, oblivious to their nakedness and everyone around them.



Allah Almighty says:

*On a Day the duration of which is fifty thousand years. (70:4)*

Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet (peace be on him) said:

*Any person who possesses gold or silver and does not pay what is due on it (i.e., the Zakat); on the Day of Resurrection, sheets of silver and gold would be heated for him in the fire of Hell and with them his flank, forehead and back will be branded. When they cool down, they will be heated again and the same process will be repeated during the day the measure whereof will be fifty thousand years. (This would go on) until Judgement is pronounced among (Allah's) slaves, and he will be shown his final abode, either to Jannah or to Hell. (Bukhari)*

People will be waiting on the same ground, but the time will move differently for different people. For believers time will move quickly, and just be like the time it takes to pray two rakats whilst for others it will feel like days or years.

Abu Said Al-Khudri (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Prophet (peace be on him) said:

*'On a Day the duration of which is fifty thousand years' (70:4) It was said to him: 'What a long day!' Then he said (peace be upon him): 'By the One who's my soul is in His hand, it will be very light and short for the believer, lighter than an obligatory prayer.'* (Ahmed and ibn Hibban)

When you talk about Arafah, it is the treasures of Allah being opened and offered to help ourselves. His treasure are there for us to take whatever we want. Imagine if a rich person said I will open my safe filled with gold and silver for ten minutes, 'Help yourself. You can have anything you want'. Similarly Allah Almighty has given us ten days and offered us whatever we want. How generous He is!

## The intercession of the Prophet (peace be upon him)

Allah Almighty will give Muslims something on the Day of Gathering and they will be pleased with. Anas bin Malik (may Allah be pleased with him) said:

*The Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) talked to us saying, 'On the Day of Resurrection, people will surge with each other like waves, and then they will come to Adam and say, 'Please intercede for us with your Lord.' He will say, 'I am not fit for that but you'd better go to Abraham as he is the Khalil of the Beneficent.' They will go to Abraham and he will say, 'I am not fit for that, but you'd better go to Moses as he is the one to whom Allah spoke directly.' So they will go to Moses and he will say, 'I am not fit for that, but you'd better go to Jesus as he is a soul created by Allah and His Word.' (Be: And it was) they will go to Jesus and he will say, 'I am not fit for that, but you'd better go to Muhammad.' They would come to me and I would say, 'I am for that.' (Bukhari)*

## The completion of revelation

It has many virtues and one of these is that it was the day on which the revelation was completed. Laylatul Qadr is the most blessed night of the year, as this was when the first revelation descended and the Day of Arafah was when the revelation was completed. Hence these are the most blessed day and the most blessed night of the year. Allah Almighty said:

*This day I have perfected for you your religion and completed My favour upon you and have approved for you Islam as religion. (5:3)*

In his tafsir Imam Ibn Kathir says:

*A Jewish man said to `Umar bin Al-Khattab, `O Leader of the Believers! There is a verse in your Book, which is read by all of you (Muslims), and had it been revealed to us, we would have taken that day (on which it was revealed) as a day of celebration.' `Umar bin Al-Khattab asked, `Which is that verse?' The Jewish man replied:*

*'This day I have perfected for you your religion and completed My favour upon you and have approved for you Islam as religion.'*

*Umar replied, 'By Allah! I know when and where this verse was revealed to Allah's Messenger. It was the evening on the Day of Arafah on a Friday.'*

We see from this narration, that the Prophet (peace be upon him) was in Arafah when this very last ayah was revealed. What a great honour it is for us to recall this memory and acknowledge the



favour of Allah, who completed His revelation to us on this day, and chose to send us Muhammad, His beloved prophet (peace be on him) as a mercy to us.

Scholars, because of this ayah, also call the Day of Arafah, Yaumat Tamam – the Day of Completion.

## Allah's special mercy descends

A special feature of this day, is that Allah Almighty descends to the heavens.

Jabir (may Allah be pleased with him) reported:

*The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, "No days are better to Allah than the first ten days of Dhul-Hijjah." A man said, "O Messenger of Allah, are they better or time spent waging jihad in the way of Allah?" The Prophet said, "They are better than time spent waging jihad in the way of Allah. No day is better to Allah than the day of Arafat. Allah descends to the lowest heaven and He boasts to the inhabitants of the heavens about the inhabitants of the earth, saying: Look at My servants, appearing disheveled and dusty. They came from every mountain pass hoping for My mercy. They do not see My punishment, yet they do not see that on no day are more saved from Hellfire than the day of Arafat." (ibn Hibban)*

Usually when we read such statements, we do not attribute any similarity of Allah's creation to Allah, so we understand that though He descends this bears no resemblance to movement as we understand it. Rather it is His extra mercy and forgiveness which descend.

This is something we usually associate with Allah's descent from the heavens to sky during the last third of every night, which we know from the famous hadith reported by Abu Hurairah:

The Messenger of Allah (peace be on him) said:

*'Our Lord descends to the lowest heaven in the last third of every night, and he says: Who is calling upon me that I may answer him? Who is asking from me that I may give him? Who is seeking my forgiveness that I may forgive him?' (Bukhari and Muslim)*

There is no other hadith which mentions this descent of extra mercy during the day.

All other narrations relate to the night.

At this time, Allah is so pleased that He boasts to His angels that His servants have arrived from all over the world, dusty and tired to seek His forgiveness, mercy and blessings.

### Humility

The core of waiting on the plain of Arafah is your connection with Allah Almighty.

Have full tawheed and connection with Allah Almighty. Feel like you are nothing – humble yourself, forget about everything, feel like the dust. Ask Allah Almighty to accept you and to forgive you.

When there is a vacuum inside you, who do you go to? Allah Almighty. Allah Almighty wants us to feel that we have nothing. All that we have is from Him Almighty. He wants us to leave everything

behind and go to Him. He is saying 'I am the One Who gave you these things, luggage etc. and can take them at any time. He Almighty is asking us to supplicate to Him.

Be very careful not to let anything ruin your Hajj, such as enmity or envy. This journey is a journey to test your patience. You need to develop your connection with Allah Almighty to give you tranquillity and serenity in your heart. If this connection is interrupted by something you don't like, have patience and maintain the tranquillity. Don't let the interruption affect the serenity in your heart. Allah Almighty will test your patience. You are here only to seek Allah Almighty's pleasure, so obey His commands fully and be obedient.

### **Having everything when you have nothing**

In 'Al Hikam' by Ibn Atta Allah al-Iskandari there is a special section at the end talking about intimate discourse between him and Allah Almighty:

*'My Lord what did he find who lost you and what did he lose who found you.'*

This is a very deep statement and paradox: When you are connected with Allah Almighty, even if you have nothing, you have everything. Conversely, when you are not connected with Allah Almighty, even if you have everything, you have nothing. We can feel this meaning in the talbiyah. Sovereignty, kingdom, ownership belong to Allah Almighty, we are just trustees and we will be questioned about this trust. When we read the talbiyah we can see that it is very comprehensive. As we repeat it, it instils this beautiful meaning which connects our heart to Allah Almighty in. It is a deep connection. Not just a superficial one. Hence, the Prophet (peace be upon him) chose the talbiyah as the slogan for Hajj as it encompasses all this.

### **Increase connection with Allah**

This day is very special and Allah Almighty gives extra mercy, forgiveness and reward for those who are seeking it. It is an opportunity to ask Allah for everything you are hoping for. To increase your supplications and beg for whatever you want. Allah Almighty facilitates our connection with Him.

### **Remaining focused during extended worship**

Different forms of worship vary in length – for instance, fasting starts at Fajr and ends at sunset, whereas Hajj is the longest amongst all our ibadah and is unrelated to sunrise and sunset. How do you maintain focus when the ibadah is unbroken for so long? This is where wearing ihram and reciting the talbiyah form part of your worship of Allah Almighty during Hajj. White clothes are a reflection of purity of intention, communication and connection with Allah Almighty and purity of the heart, tongue and ibadah in seeking Allah's pleasure. You are saying: 'I don't want to go back with same heart, spirit and inspiration.' You don't want to return renewed.

Just as salah continues until you turn to do the salam, keep thinking about Allah Almighty throughout Hajj, and while you are in ihram. Allah Almighty wants you to experience something new in Hajj. You are in a state of worship in ihram even though you are communicating with those around you, so refrain from obscenity and arguing because you are performing a continuous act of worship. You would not commit obscenities or argue in salah.

Our main focus during our journey is how to improve our connection with Allah Almighty and forget the dunya around us. When you look at the ihram you are wearing you realise that you have been forced to cast off nice clothes and trained instead to shift your attention to Allah Almighty while walking, sleeping, or even when communicating with others.

Hajj also trains us to control our anger and not criticise anything because our aim should not be shifted from seeking the pleasure of Allah Almighty.

Think to yourself: 'In my journey I should not be focused on anything except Allah Almighty' and forget anything that happens around you and focus fully on doing salah, recitation of the Qur'an and remembrance (dhikr). This trains your heart, mind and character to be better with Allah Almighty first and then with people.

## The best dua

It is a special occasion when Allah Almighty offers His visitors gifts. These are large or small depending on your sincerity. It is up to you. Ask Him with sincerity.

When you supplicate, supplicate Allah with certainty in your heart that He will respond to you.

Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said:



*Call upon Allah with certainty that he will answer you. Know that Allah will not answer the supplication of a heart that is negligent and distracted. (Tirmidhi)*

If you doubt His ability to answer your dua, He will not respond to you.

Say 'Ya Allah accept me. Have mercy on me.' Allah is the Lord of mercy.

The Prophet (peace be on him) said: The best dua is the dua of Arafah.

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ ، وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ ، لَهُ الْمُلْكُ وَلَهُ الْحَمْدُ ، وَهُوَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

*'Laa ilaaha illallaahu wahdahu laa shareeka lahu lahul mulku wa lahul hamdu wa Huwa 'alaa kulli shay'in Qadeer'.*

*None has the right to be worshipped except Allah, alone, without partner. To Him belongs sovereignty and all praise and He is over all things omnipotent. (Muwatta' Malik)*

## Forgiveness on the Day of Arafah

One of the is that Allah Almighty forgives us beyond our expectations and imagination and frees a huge number of people from hell fire. May we all be included in His forgiveness and mercy.

Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) reported that the Messenger of Allah (peace be on him) said:

*There is no day upon which Allah frees more of his servants from the Hellfire than the day of Arafat. He draws near and then he boasts of them to the angels, saying, 'What do these servants want?' (Muslim)*

Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) reported the Prophet peace be on him) said:

*There is no day when God sets free more servants from Hell than the Day of Arafah. He draws near, then praises them to the angels, saying, 'What do these want?'* (Muslim)

There are many days during the year when Allah Almighty releases people from hell. However, during the Day of Arafah, Allah Almighty releases more people than throughout the whole year.

He descends from the heavens i.e. He will send down the angels as His agents and they will be amongst us. It is the day of forgiveness. He says to the angels:

*'Look at them they have come from different places, with different hopes and wishes, but all dishevelled and I have forgiven all of them.'* (Bayhaqi)

The angels say but so and so person did such and such and Allah Almighty will say:

*'I'll forgive them. They came all the way to seek My Forgiveness, so be my witness that I have forgiven them.'* (Bayhaqi)

The Prophet (peace be on him) advised us to behave in the right way by saying:

*'Whoever controlled their tongue, hearing and sight he will be forgiven.'*  
(Musnad Ahmad)

## **Beyond istighfar**

The Prophet (peace be on him) told us there are three things which lead to forgiveness. These are the conditions of forgiveness:

1. Control your tongue
2. Control your hearing
3. Control your sight

If you do this, you will be forgiven. Show Allah Almighty your need and desperation for His forgiveness as well as your wishes. Another narration states, Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) said that the Prophet (peace be on him) said:

*The pilgrims performing Hajj and Umrah are a delegation to Allah. If they call upon Him, He will answer them; and if they ask for His forgiveness, He will forgive them. (Ibn Majah)*

Every single second on this day is for us to utilise and benefit from it.

## **Physical and spiritual journey to Allah**

Focus on how to change and connect with Allah Almighty. This is a journey to Allah Almighty not to a time or place. Forget about the dunya in Hajj. Just as in fasting you are forced to change your routine, Hajj also changes your habits and puts Allah Almighty at the forefront of your concerns. You may not live to complete this Hajj or perform another. Make the best of the time that you have here. Make your heart fully focused on the remembrance of Allah Almighty. Make your tongue busy in the remembrance of Allah Almighty. Whatever is in your heart will be reflected by your tongue. Ask Him for all your needs. You will be granted whatever you ask for.

## **Hit the delete button and start afresh**

Allah Almighty looks at our hearts and sees them busy with dunya in which we are immersed. Empty your heart from dunya and fill your heart with love of Allah Almighty. Go to your hard disk and delete everything and install a new program that is the love of Allah Almighty. Your heart has to be filled with Allah Almighty with no space for any other on the hard disk. Today delete all the old files and fill your heart with Allah's love. If can't do this, then fake it until you will eventually make it. Be sincere and Allah Almighty will open your heart. A sensitive heart is reflected by tears in your eyes. If you have no tears it shows that there is something wrong in your heart. Tears are the purification of your heart.

This is your chance – you have been selected. Grasp this opportunity and don't ruin it with pettiness. Be focused and sincere. Sincerity will change your life and it creates miracles. Be sincere. Alhamdulillah Allah Almighty enabled you to come and you came.

May Allah Almighty help us change our hearts and be the best in character when we return. Use this opportunity to change yourself. Try. If you don't feel change, go back to Him. Be very sincere and He will change your life. The heart of Hajj is Arafah and the Day of Arafah is full of mercy and blessings. Perform your worship with full sincerity (ikhlas). Ask Allah Almighty to change your character to be amongst those with the best hearts. Arafah is the best day, so be the best people on the best day and have the best heart and the best deeds on that day.

## 6. Hajj is a Transformation

### Taqwa

Taqwa is the best preparation. Allah Almighty told the Prophet (peace be on him) to purify his clothes:

*And purify your clothes. (74:4)*

This is the first level of outward purity; inward purity is even more important. Allah Almighty also says in the verse:

*'And prepare for your journey, And take provisions, but the best provision is taqwa righteousness. And be mindful of Me, O people of understanding. (2:197)*

Preparation is a common aspect in other acts of worship too. Allah Almighty mentions preparation to draw our attention to the most important aspect – which is not luggage or other provisions for travelling – but the best provision is taqwa, i.e. doing the obligations and refraining from prohibitions. Therefore, make preparation with taqwa – fear displeasing Allah Almighty and behave with piety, to be closer to Him in all that you do. Feel answerable to Him. The first and most important thing is taqwa.

Having taqwa is not exclusive to Hajj, so do not leave taqwa behind when you leave Makkah. The outcome of Hajj has to be an increase in taqwa. Just as the outcome of salah (prayer) and siyam (fasting) should be a heightened level of taqwa.

How do we increase our taqwa? Allah Almighty mentions the avoidance of three things during Hajj to increase our taqwa, i.e. control of:

1) **Rafath** (sexual talk and intercourse)

There is no room for evil actions. Abstain from arguments, sexual talk and intercourse. If we avoid these we will have Hajj Mabroor (an accepted Hajj).

Whoever decides to perform the Hajj—there shall be no sexual relations, nor misconduct, nor quarrelling during the Hajj. And whatever good you do, God knows it. (2:197)

2) **Fusuq** (literally means to swerve from the right path like swerving on the motorway i.e. avoid committing sins or mistakes intentionally). Fusuq is the opposite of the right path.

3) **Jidala** (quarrelling)

Avoiding these three things will increase your taqwa.

## Transformation and tests

Hajj is not a tick box exercise. Allah Almighty uses Hajj as training for us to change our bad habits. It's not about ticking off tawaf and sa'ee and standing in Arafat. These are not the end but the means to the end. Hajj is about personal transformation. For this reason the Prophet (peace be on him) said

*'The reward for accepted Hajj is nothing but Jannah'. (Musnad Ahmad)*

Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said:

*Whoever performs Hajj for Allah'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. (Bukhari)*

So a Hajj that is accepted (mabroor) clears your records.

## The internal reboot

Hajj is an internal reboot and upgrade. It encompasses everything. If you have a bad habit, this is the time to change it. Hajj provides the right company, time and environment to facilitate this change. Everything is supporting you to change yourself unless deep down inside you don't want to change. You are the one who decides whether you truly want to change. If you are sincere ask Allah Almighty to help you come back to the right path.

Fusuq (wrong paths) can take different forms. For instance, arguing all the time. Now is the time to stop arguing and nagging, and to change your habits – control your tongue, do not swear, lower your gaze. Now is the time to get a grip of these aspects of yourself, in this very time and place.

Where else do you have the time and place where prayers are accepted. Use your time here to change yourself for the better and to come back on track.

## Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for the akhirah

You will be tested in your journey. Allah Almighty tests you while you are here to see if you really deserve to be here. Who is putting these tests your way? Who controls everything? None other than Allah Almighty. These tests prove whether you are really worthy of coming or if you failed from the start.

Don't ruin your Hajj for trivial matters. Move on. This is not the time for arguments. Allah Almighty wants us to change ourselves. The nature of any test is hardship. It is bitter and hard to swallow.

What if He tests you in something that you love?

The nature of any test is that it is tough and hard. The purpose of the test is to improve the quality of our character, and to become a better person and improve our life. It is like CPD (Continuing Professional Development) in your professional lives. CPD helps you to develop and improve yourself. If we keep up with our CPD for our careers in this world, imagine what we should be doing



as CPD for the everlasting akhirah. Allah Almighty is testing us and wants us to improve. The heavier the test, the higher the level of the person.

Allah Almighty tested the noble Prophets (peace be on him) and how are we compared to them? Even though they were so much better than us, they were still tested. We can only imagine the types of tests that the Prophets (peace be on him) went through (even though supported by Allah Almighty and the angels).

Throughout all tests in life, we are supported by the number one support – Allah Almighty – and also by His angels. However, when little thing goes wrong we blow up in anger over them. It is all a test, so we need to improve the quality of our characters. These tests come from all angles to reveal how we cope with them. Prepare yourself for these tests. Do not fail them or else you will ruin your Hajj. May Allah Almighty make our patience strong and improve our character.

## Closeness to Allah

The following are ways in which you can increase your closeness to Allah Almighty starting with the most important:

- 1) Salah
- 2) Quran
- 3) Dhikr

Note that of these three, salah is fard (obligatory) and is our one-to-one connection and conversation with Allah Almighty.

Rabi'a bin Ka'b (may Allah be pleased with him) said:

*I was with the Prophet (peace be on him) one night. and I brought him water and what he required. He said to me: Ask (anything you like). I said: I ask your company in Paradise. He (the Holy Prophet) said: Or anything else besides it. I said: That is all (what I require). He said: Then help me to achieve this for you by devoting yourself often to prostration. (Muslim)*

This shows that we need to do our bit. Good deeds strengthen us.

## Training and shortcuts to change

The main aspect of Hajj is to change your character. Your character controls everything. If you change your character, you change your life. Hajj is about changing your character for the better. To fix the problem – fix the character and then inshallah all problems will be fixed. Make the right intention and persist with your training, as you would in preparation for a marathon. For example, one would start with two or three miles then increase it, because one can't run 26 miles on the first day. In Islam we have short cuts that give a boost in this training. Hajj is a shortcut to changing yourself. If you stick to the rules and commands of Hajj, it will change you. The best way to teach and convey knowledge is through practical training. For instance if you see patience and sincerity in a person walking in front of you, you can almost feel and touch these qualities it is much more effective and different than reading about these qualities in a book. Therefore, if you can stick to one of the heirs of the Prophet (peace be upon him) – the shuykh - it will be easier to change yourself.

Some shuyukh have a very special level of patience, ikhlas (sincerity), character and devotion and at the same time are very down to earth. You can learn just by sitting with them and watching what they do. In this way you can see practical examples of characteristics such as patience and sincerity and instead of just reading about it, you can feel it and touch it.

Always ask Allah to make you closer to Him. Train your mind and heart to focus on supplication, and on Him. Ask Allah Almighty to make you closer to Him and make you among those who can recognise His majesty and beauty, whether you are near the Ka'bah, or at Arafah or at home. It is something to reflect on.

## **Prioritise Allah Almighty**

How can we prioritise Allah Almighty in our thoughts and put Him first in our lives? We do not know how to prioritise Allah Almighty above all else.

We are not able to do this. Worldly distractions usually get in the way. For instance, I remember a particular Hajj trip, when I suddenly heard shouting coming from a neighbouring tent. A fight had broken out among some Hajjis and the organisers of their trip because they had paid for 5-star trip and food but they had not received it on Arafah Day. I was appalled. Even if they were 100% right, and the organisers were 100% wrong, this was not the day you argue. This is ghaflah. They were thinking about the food and the money they paid. If you have 10-star food but Allah does not accept your Hajj what will you do? Though there are many rituals in Hajj, the most significant part of it, the core of it, is Arafah.

## 7. Ghazali on Hajj

### Asrar ul Hajj: The secrets of Hajj

Imam Ghazali refers to the etiquettes of Hajj which he calls the special etiquettes and inner secrets of Hajj. We all like secrets and shortcuts and getting quick results. Imam Ghazali (may Allah have mercy on him) is giving us the password to access these.

#### 1. Choose a good companion for your journey

The first is choosing a rafiqa salihah - a good companion for your journey, which is very good advice especially at that time, when it wasn't a 7 or 10 hour flight, but travel time between Madinah and Makkah alone was 11 days. It was a long journey and even lengthier for those coming from beyond the Arabian peninsula, it took around 2 months to reach the Haram.

If you have the wrong companions, it can ruin the whole trip for you and it is very difficult to get rid of them. Having a good companion can make or break your journey. On one of my trips, we had people who did not stop whingeing and complaining and nagging. It was suffocating to be in their company, it killed the spirituality of the experience. And on top of that, they were anxious about everything. They complained about the food, they complained that they were not getting what they had paid for, they found something wrong with everything. This is not the time to discuss these things.

Choose the right companion for your Hajj and for any journey in general. Hajj is the most important journey in your life; it's once in your lifetime, so choose the right person or group to travel with. In the past, there have been many complaints and fraud.

In addition, choose the tayyib provisions – so the money you use to fund your Hajj should come from halal provisions and not be acquired by haram or doubtful means, or be tainted by interest (riba). Be careful to take the pure, halal money to spend in Hajj.

Imam Ghazali (may Allah have mercy on him) observed that halal provisions enlighten your heart and vice versa, haram or doubtful provisions (rizq) warp the softness of your heart.

A good companion reminds you about goodness. If you forgot something they remind you, if you are asleep at Fajr time, they will wake you up, if you forgot to do your Sunnah or your dhikr or your recitation, they remind you. They help you to excel and be better.

In Arabic, journey is safar, and the traveller is a musafir. Safar means to reveal something. The connection is that when you travel it reveals your reality - your true character, your strengths and weaknesses. You cannot pretend to be someone you are not for the entire duration of the journey. The reality will come out. This is why Umar (may Allah have mercy on him) would always ask when someone was recommended to him if they had travelled with him or dealt with him financially. These expose one's real nature.

Thus having pure money and a good companion is the best way to begin your journey. They have internal and external aspects. Money is external but because you buy food with it, it can affect you, and the same with the companion, they are external, but they can affect your internal state.

## 2. Exclude business in your journey

The second etiquette is not to mix business with Hajj. It is not haram, but it is not the from the best etiquettes. He's talking about high level etiquettes. Avoid making Hajj a two-in-one trip. Keep your focus and concentration solely on Allah, otherwise it will be scattered and preoccupied by the affairs of the dunya. You will be distracted by the products, the sales, the customers, and not fulfilling your obligation.

Similarly in salah, in order to attain khushoo, you have to gather the scattered fragments of your mind and soul together in one piece before start. Synchronize your mind, your heart, and your body. If your mind is busy, your heart is absent and your body is detached, you won't get the tranquillity in your salah.

We need to be focused and Allah makes it a priority for us to connect to Him at Hajj. However, if you've been offered to go on Hajj and help as you cannot afford to pay all the expenses then you have to fulfil that role.

Unfortunately we have different classes in Hajj as well. Silver, gold and platinum packages. It is hugely expensive. This is why Allah Almighty says Hajj is only an obligation if you can afford it. So people will die without doing Hajj, as it's not destined for them - it's not an obligation for them because they couldn't afford it, so they won't be sinful.

## 3. Eat well but don't overeat

The third etiquette is to be careful with your food intake. Eat very little, because it's a long journey, eat well, but do not overeat. If you fall ill it will defeat the whole journey, so eat what is sufficient and what is enough for you to stay strong and fit for that journey.

Be sure that you do not say anything that displeases Allah. He said in the Quran,

*Tell my servants to say what is best. (17:53)*

As per the Sunnah, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Whomsoever believes in Allah and the Last Day, let him say good words or remain silent. (Bukhari and Muslim)

If you don't have anything good to say then don't say anything bad – just be silent.

I have been on many different journeys and I was blessed to do more than one Hajj, so I have seen different people and had different experiences. I have seen people with patience, and people who have zero patience, people who are tolerant and people who are hot-tempered, people who can keep their mouths shut and people who have a big mouth. On your journey, remember speaking good words is a charity. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said:

*"It is also charity to utter a good word." (Bukhari and Muslim)*

You have the opportunity to do charity throughout your Hajj by being good in your actions and your words and your dealings with others, not being stingy with those around you. The Prophet (peace be upon him) also said we should be good to the city people, al mukharin, in those days the ones who organised the camels and caravans camels, and in our time, the ones who booked your flight, supervised your journey, who allocated your rooms, etc, we have to treat them nicely as well.

#### 4. Hajj is a journey of tests

Undoubtedly, Hajj a test from start to finish and consequently we see many people lose it even before they step foot in Makkah. They lose their temper at the airport, fed up by the queues, the heat, the mis-organisation...

Remain courteous. Be nice to the people around you, who are serving you, who are facilitating the journey for you. I remember on one of my journeys, we had a very wealthy person who did not get what he had paid for. He ended up in a two-star hotel, instead of the five-star hotel he had paid for, and which he was not accustomed to, as he was a diplomat and he was my roommate. Though you could tell he was annoyed, he never complained. Even when finished his Hajj, he remained polite and did not utter a word to us about his dissatisfaction, instead he took up the matter with the organisers respectfully afterwards.

I am not saying that one should oneself be ripped off. You should ask for your rights, but don't ruin your Hajj by creating a fuss at that time. When things are over, point out the issues and ask for a refund on what they failed to deliver. Or forgive them, it's up to you. It is not right for any company to deliberately cheat customers, though at times circumstances are beyond the control of the organisers. In Arabic we say, take what is rightfully yours and then you are free to throw it in the sea. Just be careful not to ruin your Hajj over it.

By contrast to the wise diplomat, what I witnessed on the Day of Arafah was shocking. I heard shouting and screaming coming from a tent. It turned out that instead of the food they expected they were given a buffet. They began arguing that this was not what they had paid for. They should have eaten whatever was available, and drank what they were offered, and complained afterwards. But they let their anger control their tongues and they completely missed their priorities. The priority is to finish your Hajj peacefully without any arguments, this is why the Prophet (peace be upon him), as reported by Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) said:

عن أبي هريرة رضي الله عنه مرفوعاً:  
مَنْ حَجَّ، فَلَمْ يَرْفُثْ، وَلَمْ يَفْسُقْ، رَجَعَ كَيَوْمِ وَلَدَتْهُ أُمُّهُ.  
(صحيح) - (متفق عليه)

"Whoever performs Hajj and does not commit obscenity or commit any evil therein will go back (free of sin) as on the day his mother gave birth to him." (Bukhari and Muslim)

#### 5. Leave arguments

To pass the test, one must not engage in any activities that violate the shariah. It's important to refrain from arguments as well as rafath, which refers to any sexually explicit language or behaviour. When in ihram, it's crucial to avoid any sexual activity or talking about it.

Now many people whether they are allowed to haggle shopkeepers. Many people love bargaining down prices, and this is not an argument, as the shopkeeper inflates prices knowing that he will bring it down. However, be careful, not to flex your muscles against those who are weak on the street, give them what you feel is right and don't squeeze them too much, because sometimes a few riyals won't make a big difference with you but it will make a huge difference to them because they are needy. And they do not want to beg.

Control your tongue by keeping it busy in dhikr and fikr (remembering, reflecting and reciting the Quran). Minimise your speech but do not fast from speaking. Unless you have something important to say, don't waste time on pointless, trivial and inconsequential things, what is called fudul things – related to worldly issues. This is not the journey to dunya, this is the journey to a different realm. Don't bring the dunya with you to Hajj. Park the dunya outside and leave it behind.

Maximise your time. Don't kill time. It is waste to kill the time, as you should invest your time in producing goodness.

### **6. Leave your dunya concerns**

Imam Ghazali (may Allah have mercy on him) recommended choosing a humble vehicle rather than a luxury vehicle. At that time, there was zamila which was a camel for carrying loads, like a cargo camel. And mahmila was a special camel for riding. Hajj is about humility rather than luxury. Usually you sleep on the bed, but in Hajj now sleep on the floor in Mina, Arafah, and Muzdalifah and so riding the zamila keeps you from feeling arrogant.

Part of Hajj is to be dusty and not dressed in luxurious clothing. The idea is not to be written amongst people of dunya and luxury. This is not a question of halal and haram but Ghazali's etiquettes and recommendation, so if you want to experience something new in your journey don't let the dunya determine your choices.

It doesn't mean you are not allowed to comb your hair or wash or look after yourself and your clothes, but as you are a musafir and the traveller who is dusty and dishevelled then his supplication is hopefully more accepted from Allah Almighty because he's not concerned about the dunia, not concerned about anything but Allah Almighty.

There is nothing wrong in looking after one's hygiene and appearance and being connected to Allah Almighty, as the point is that your attention is fully on Allah Almighty.

### **7. Show kindness**

Ghazali also mentioned that sometimes you should dismount from the camel, to allow the camel to rest, as you don't want to exhaust the camel. This will also satisfy the camel-owner because usually he looks after the camel and it will not break the camel's back. It's about showing kindness to the camel, and showing kindness to the owner of the camel and you feel satisfaction and goodness when you do that.

### **8. Do not complain**

Whatever you've been afflicted with, or tested with, whether it's fatigue, or difficulties, you should always consider this as reward in your account, and indications or signs of acceptance from Allah Almighty that you are not complaining. Don't consider any test you are going through as bad for you, as it increases your reward and makes your Hajj more rewarding. If you see it like this, you will taste the sweetness of Hajj, and feel the barakah of Hajj.

### **9. Rabaniya (celibacy) for our Ummah is Jihad (sacrifice)**

Imam Ghazali (may Allah have mercy on him), that in the previous nations they used to have rabaniyah which was celibacy. Monks and priests in different practices and different religions would renounce the world, and go to the top of the mountain, isolate themselves from the community, to stay in a state of worship. However, in our Ummah we don't have rabaniyah, so this is why the ayah says that rabaniyah for our Ummah is jihad. Jihad is a taboo word these days, but the comparison is deep. People think rabaniyah which is isolation, dedication, and devotion will make them closer to

Allah Almighty, as they are living lives of devotion and sacrifice – not talking to anyone or marrying. However, jihad is about sacrificing your efforts, your likings and the most valuable thing you have in this life, which is your life. If you are willing to sacrifice your life for Allah Almighty's sake, for the right reason, in the right context, in line with general guidance then you reach the highest status. Allah Almighty mentions that the shuhada those who fought for His sake have the highest rank in Jannah. The foremost shuhada are the prophets and messengers and they have the highest rank because they sacrificed their lives for Allah Almighty's sake, they spared nothing – not even their lives.

When you fight for justice and fairness you defend the oppressed and the weak and those who are most vulnerable in the community.

Allah Almighty glorified His House and sanctified it. Ka'bah is known as Baitullah, the House of Allah. It gets its glory and sanctity because it belongs to Allah Almighty. Similarly, though not on the same level are the mosques, which are also called Baitullah, because we worship Him there. Though we say the House of Allah Almighty, of course He's not in the House, as no space can accommodate Allah Almighty or confine Him. It's simply a term of glorification. Due to its sanctity, no one is allowed to cut down any tree or any branch, or hunt in the vicinity of Haram not just in the House of Allah Almighty.

The protection of nature started with the Quranic command from Allah Almighty and from the Sunnah of the Prophet (peace be upon him). The fortresses and boundaries of any kingdom or castle are protected and Allah Almighty is the King of the kings. In this dedicated space, animals, insects, you name it, trees are protected by His command. Anyone who cuts a tree or a branch has to pay charity.

Whoever visits the Haram comes with humility. Just as those who are practicing celibacy on the top of the mountain are striving and training themselves to be humble and control their ego and minimise their arrogance, the journey for Hajj helps us become a humble person. Even if you are the richest person you can't wear a Gucci logo on your ihram. There are no brands on your ihram, it is just two simple white towels and no one can distinguish between the rich and the poor. This makes everyone equal, as we are in the eyes of Allah Almighty. The only thing that distinguishes us from each other is the purity of our hearts and the devotion of our actions.

### **10. Whims and desires**

Imam Ghazali mentioned that Allah Almighty's wisdom dictates here that you will be safe from hellfire as long as you fight your whims and desires, which is a very deep reflection. During our salah we are not allowed to eat or drink. This is what we desire, however we have to refrain from this for a limited time. When we fast we refrain from our desires for food and drink as well as intimacy over many hours over 30 days. This trains us to control our desire at other times which saves us from going astray and being punished. During Hajj we can eat and drink but refrain from intimacy which again puts brakes on our desire.

When you first see the Ka'bah, remember this that the dua you make will be un-rejected, so make sure you make the right supplication, when you see the Ka'bah for the first time. A smart dua, 'O Allah make my duas accepted'; so whatever dua you make Allah Almighty make it accepted.



## 8. Misconceptions about Hajj

### 1. Great Hajj is on Friday

As the last ayah 'This day have I perfected for you your religion' was revealed on a Friday, people often think that if the Day of Arafah falls on a Friday, it will be 'Great Hajj' but this is a misconception. Every Hajj is 'great', regardless which day it falls, as compared to Umrah which is considered a minor Hajj (Hajj al Asghar).

### 2. Arafat was where Adam and Hawwa re-met

There is no authenticity that Adam was reunited with Hawwa on the mountain of Arafat. (The place is known as Arafat and the day is known as the Day of Arafah.)

### 3. The name of Arafat derives from Jibil teaching Ibrahim how to perform Hajj.

Another story which has no basis is that the mountain is called Arafat because when Jibril taught Ibrahim (peace be upon him) to perform Hajj, he said 'Arafta? Arafta? Arafta?' (Do you understand? Do you understand? Do you understand?) And he replied 'Arafat' (I understand).

### 4. The significance of the barren landscape and lack of rituals

Most rituals of Hajj are connected to activity – for instance doing tawaf around Ka'bah, moving between Safa and Marwah during sa'ee. However, when you come to Arafat you are not required to perform any ritual as such. No tawaf. No sa'ee. No stoning. There is nothing there. It is bare. Just soil and sky and some small mountains, barely any trees. Just your tent and nothing else. And here you spend the whole day, soon after sun rises til sunset. What are we supposed to do? It is purely a time of reflection, prayer and supplication.

I reflected on this many times during various Hajj trips. It seems to me that Allah wants us to think about nothing but Him. Not even the Ka'bah. There are no distractions and barriers between us and Him. This is deep and difficult. But we can train ourself – our mind and heart to focus on supplication.

## 9. Visiting Masjid An-Nabawi

When travelling to Madinah, as the Prophet (peace be on him) did, we do not experience hardship as he did, but we can utilise that time for dhikr. One of the best types of dhikr is to say salam upon him. Ubayy bin Ka'b (may Allah be pleased with him) reported:

*I said: 'O Prophet (peace be on you), I frequently invoke Allah to elevate your rank. How much of my supplications should I devote to you?' He said, 'You may devote as much as you wish.'*

*When I suggested a quarter, he said, 'Do whatever you wish, but it will be better for you if you increase it.'*

*I suggested half, and he said, 'Do whatever you wish, but it will be better for you if you increase.'*

*I suggested two-thirds, and he said, 'Do whatever you wish but it will be better for you if you increase it.'*

*I said, 'Shall I devote all my supplications invoking Allah to elevate your rank?' He said, 'Then you will be freed from your worries and your sins will be forgiven.' (Tirmidhi)*



Never underestimate the power of saying 'salallahu alayhi wasalam'. By reading it with full understanding, concentration and dedication all your concerns will be looked after inshallah.

## Madinah is protected

Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated that the Prophet (peace be on him) said:

*Verily, Belief returns and goes back to Madinah as a snake returns and goes back to its hole (when in danger). (Bukhari)*

It means Madinah is protected as is Makkah. Ibrahim (peace be on him) made dua for Makkah and the Prophet (peace be on him) made dua for Madinah. Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) reported:

‘When we came to Madinah, and it was an unhealthy, uncongenial place, Abu Bakr fell sick and Bilal also fell sick; and when the Prophet (peace be on him) saw the illness of his companions, he said:

*O Allah, make Madinah as congenial to us as you made Makkah congenial or more than that; make it conducive to health, and blesses in its sa’ and in its mudd, and transfer its fever to al-Juhfa’. (Muslim)*

Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated that the Prophet (peace be on him) said:

*Do not set out on a journey except for three Mosques i.e. Al-Masjid-Al-Haram, the Mosque of the Prophet (peace be on him), and the Mosque of Al-Aqsa, (Mosque of Jerusalem). (Bukhari)*

Ibn ‘Umar (Allah be pleased with them) reported that the Prophet (peace be on him) said:

*Prayer in this mosque of mine is better than a thousand prayers (observed in other mosque.) Besides it, except that of Masjid al-Haram. (Muslim)*

Abdullah bin Zaid Al-Mazini (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated that the Prophet (peace be on him) said:

*Between my House and the pulpit there is a garden of the gardens of Paradise. (Bukhari)*

## 10. The Day of Eid

### Eid for the Ummah - glorification and gratitude

Every Eid begins with the takbeer. Across all countries around the world: Allahu Akber, Allahu Akber, Allahu Akber, wa lilahi hamd. The rhythm of the takbeer is like the beat of the heart. All together north and south, east and west, the takbeer resounds throughout the Ummah. It shows how strong we are when we are together. It shows us how strong we are when we are grateful to Allah Almighty. Our salah begin with the takbeer. It is about Allah's power. We repeat it to glorify Allah and show gratitude to Him. Without Him we have no power. There is no might except from Allah – la hawla wa la quwwata ila billah. Whenever we finish any major act of ibadah we recite the takbeer – during Hajj, one of the great pillars; when we finish Ramadan, one of the great pillars; when we perform salah, we begin with salah. Allah Almighty wants us to be in the state of gratitude to Him and mindfulness of Him at all times.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said on the day of Eid:

*“They are days of eating, drinking and remembering Allah.” (Muslim)*

Do not forget Allah during the festivities. Enjoy the halal food, from your halal earnings but do not forget Allah during that time because He is the One who provided that to you.

During the first sermon that the Prophet (peace be upon him) gave in Madinah, he stood there, praised Allah for what He deserved, then said that Allah would ask them if they had received a Messenger, and what they had sent forth for their souls in the Hereafter. He mentioned that one day all the wealth we spent our time in dunya acquiring would be left like a sheep without a shepherd and we would find ourselves before Allah Almighty – accountable for the gifts that He bestowed on us:

كَانَتْ أَوَّلُ خُطْبَةٍ خَطَبَهَا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ بِالْمَدِينَةِ، أَنْ قَامَ فِيهِمْ فَحَمِدَ اللَّهَ وَأَثْنَى عَلَيْهِ بِمَا هُوَ أَهْلُهُ، ثُمَّ قَالَ: أَمَّا بَعْدُ، أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ، فَقَدِمُوا لِأَنْفُسِكُمْ، تَعْلَمُونَ وَاللَّهِ لَيُصَعِقَنَّ أَحَدُكُمْ، ثُمَّ لَيَدَعَنَّ غَنَمَهُ لَيْسَ لَهَا رَاعٍ، ثُمَّ لَيَقُولَنَّ لَهُ رَبُّهُ - لَيْسَ لَهُ تَرْجَمَانٌ وَلَا حَاجِبٌ يَحْجُبُهُ دُونَهُ -: أَلَمْ يَأْتِكُمْ رَسُولِي فَبَلَّغْتُكُمْ، وَأَتَيْتُكُمْ مَا لَّا، وَأَفْضَلْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ، فَمَا قَدَّمْتُمْ لِنَفْسِكُمْ؟ فَيَنْظُرُ يَمِينًا وَشِمَالًا فَلَا يَرَى شَيْئًا، ثُمَّ يَنْظُرُ قَدَّامَهُ فَلَا يَرَى غَيْرَ جَهَنَّمَ، فَمَنْ اسْتَطَاعَ أَنْ يَقِيَ وَجْهَهُ مِنَ النَّارِ، وَلَوْ بِشِقِّ تَمْرَةٍ، فَلْيَفْعَلْ، وَمَنْ لَمْ يَجِدْ فَبِكَلِمَةٍ طَيِّبَةٍ، فَإِنَّ بِهَا تُجْزَى الْحَسَنَةُ عَشْرَ أَمْثَالِهَا إِلَى سَبْعِ مِئَةِ ضِعْفٍ، وَالسَّلَامُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَعَلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ.

*“O people, whatever good you advance for yourselves you will find it, you know, that (one day) you will die suddenly, then will leave your sheep with no shepherd, then He will say to him, your Lord – you have no interpreter, and there is no veil that veils you – did not my Messenger come to you and inform you? And I gave*

*you money, and I favoured you, so what did you offer for yourself? So he looks from his right and his left and does not see anything, then he looks in front of him and does not see anything but Hell, so whoever is able to protect his face from the Fire, even if it is by half a date, let him do so. And whoever does not find it, then with a kind word, for with it the good will be rewarded ten times up to seven hundred times, and peace be upon you and the Messenger of Allah. (Bayhaqi)*

Be thankful and be happy. The core of Eid is being grateful for Allah's favours and to show happiness and dress well and spread goodness, as well as to avoid what is prohibited and doubtful. The Sunnah of Eid is to be obedient to Allah Almighty, as we should be throughout the year.

Those who can afford to give qurbani ('udhiya) should as it is the sunnah of the Prophet (peace be upon him). You can eat from it, distribute it to your family and the poor. For those who cannot afford to offer it, then at least they can do their best to be engaged in dhikr and show gratitude to Allah.

Stay in happy mode, not grumpy mode. The Sunnah of Eid is to show happiness despite the difficulties we may face, and the current rise in the cost of living. No matter what pain and calamities we might be suffering, the Sunnah is to show happiness. Focus on all the favours we have been given, rather than the things you lack. When you show gratitude, Allah Almighty increases the favours. If you are ungrateful, Allah Almighty takes your blessings away. As He stated in the Quran:

*"If you are grateful, I will surely increase you (in favour)." (14:7)*

The Prophet (peace be upon him) used to spread happiness in his family and in his community. Let's emulate him.

وَإِذْ تَأَذَّنَ رَبُّكُمْ لَئِن شَكَرْتُمْ لَأَزِيدَنَّكُمْ ط وَلَئِن كَفَرْتُمْ إِنَّ عَذَابِي لَشَدِيدٌ

*And when your Lord proclaimed: "If you give thanks, I will grant you increase; but if you are ungrateful, My punishment is severe." (14:7)*

We should feel the rhythm of the heart of the Ummah in our bodies and minds. Let's keep our brothers and sisters in our duas.

## Trimming nails and cutting hair for sacrifice

Is it permissible to trim your nails and cut your hair if you intend to do a sacrifice (qurbani) on Eid?

When a person enters a state of ihram for Hajj, they are not allowed to trim their hair or clip their nails since these are among the things prohibited while in ihram. This includes shaving, and any other forms of hair removal. Does this apply to those who are doing a sacrifice but have not gone for Hajj? This question arises every year and is famously disagreed upon by scholars.

In a nutshell it is recommended but not obligatory to avoid cutting hair and nails if you are the person paying for the sacrifice. It is worth noting that this only applies to the one who is paying for the sacrifice – not all the family members on whose behalf the sacrifice is made.

The explanation for this is that there are three valid opinions from the four Schools of Thought:

### **Permissible – Hanafi and Maliki opinion**

1. The position Abu Hanifa and some Malikis, is that trimming hair and nails during the first ten days of Dhul Hijjah by the one who intends to offer a sacrifice is permissible. It is not forbidden.

### **Disliked – Shafi'i school**

2. The position of the Shafi'i's, and Malik is that it is 'makrooh' (disliked) and within that category, specifically 'makrooh tanzeeh', (discouraged but closer to permissible than sinful). It is not forbidden.

### **Forbidden – Hanbali opinion**

3. The Hanbali school, according to Imam Ahmad says that it is sinful and forbidden.

What is the evidence it is prohibited?

The hadith of Umm Salamah who reported that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said:

If anyone has in his possession a sacrificial animal to offer as a sacrifice (on Eid al-Adha), he should not get his hair cut and nails trimmed after he has entered the first days of Dhu'l Hijjah. (Muslim)

What is the evidence that it is permitted?

Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) said:

*I used to twist the garlands for the Hadi (sacrificial animals) of the Prophet (peace be on him) with my own hands, then the Prophet (peace be on him) would garland them with his own hand. Then he would send them with my father, and the Prophet (peace be on him) would not refrain from anything that Allah, the Might and sublime, has permitted until the Hadi was sacrificed. (Muslim and Nasa'i)*

What she is saying is the Prophet (peace be on him) would send his animals to be slaughtered, (when he was not performing Hajj) and would not refrain from doing anything such as cutting nails or anything else that was prohibited to those who are in ihram.

Imam Nawawi discussed the opinions in his book Al-Majmou':

Our school is that removing hair and nails in the ten days of Dhul Hijjah for those who want to sacrifice is lightly makrooh, until he makes the sacrifice. Malik and Abu Hanifa said it is not makrouh, (i.e it's permissible).

The Hanafi and Shafi'i give precedence to the Hadith of Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) over the hadith of Umm Salamah.

What is the wisdom behind not cutting nails and hair?

The reason the one offering the qurbani does not cut their hair or nails is that they are emulating those who have gone for Hajj, as one of the conditions of being in ihram is that one does not cut their hair or nails. However in reality there are three types of Hajj, and in Hajj al-Tamattu' the Hajji does not stay in ihram for 9 days continuously, therefore the requirement not to cut hair and nails is a recommendation not an obligation.

There are two main opinions – one which says it is haram and one which says it is permissible. The issue has a broad scope, so whoever wants to be on the side of caution, can keep away from cutting

nails and hair and thus avoid the disagreement. Whoever wants to cut his hair or nails, there is no sin on him as per the hadith of Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her).

In summary, the pilgrim by undertaking Hajj has gone through a life-transforming spiritual experience, a gift from Allah Almighty. We are constantly reminded of the importance of sincere intentions carried out with any action through the Quranic verses of Surah Ibrahim. We are provided with a clear understanding of the rituals of Hajj and the lessons we can draw from our experiences, including the significance of certain days e.g. Day of Arafah in seeking forgiveness. It is also a source of motivation that no matter how young or old, we should try and fulfil this important obligation as a means of attaining Allah Almighty's pleasure and to strengthen our bond with Him, through working on our character and eliminating bad habits. I make dua that everyone has the opportunity to make this spiritual journey.



## Shaykh Haytham Tamim

Shaykh Haytham Tamim is a highly respected Islamic scholar, author, and teacher with extensive knowledge and experience in various fields of Islamic studies. Originally from Lebanon, he has dedicated his life to the pursuit of Islamic knowledge and the dissemination of authentic teachings to a global audience.

Shaykh Haytham studied Islamic sciences and jurisprudence under the guidance of renowned scholars, acquiring deep insights into Quranic exegesis, Hadith (Prophetic traditions), Fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence), and Usul al-Fiqh (principles of jurisprudence).

With his comprehensive understanding of Islamic teachings, Shaykh Haytham has been actively involved in teaching and mentoring students of knowledge for several decades. He has delivered numerous lectures, seminars, and courses, both in person and online, covering a wide range of subjects related to Islamic spirituality, jurisprudence, ethics, and personal development.

In addition to his teaching engagements, Shaykh Haytham has garnered recognition for his insightful analysis, clarity, and relevance to contemporary issues faced by Muslims around the world. His works reflect a balanced approach to Islamic teachings, emphasising the principles of moderation, mercy, and practical application in daily life.

Shaykh Haytham's dedication to promoting interfaith dialogue, social cohesion, and community development has earned him respect and admiration from diverse audiences. He actively engages in initiatives that foster mutual understanding and respect between different religious and cultural communities, working towards a harmonious and inclusive society.

As an esteemed scholar and educator, Shaykh Haytham continues to inspire and guide individuals on their spiritual journey, encouraging them to seek knowledge, develop a deep connection with Allah, and apply Islamic principles in navigating the challenges of the modern world. His profound insights, coupled with his compassionate and approachable demeanour, make him a revered figure in the realm of Islamic scholarship, and his work continues to have a transformative impact on individuals seeking guidance in their religious and personal lives.

As the founder and director of Shariah Solutions Limited, a consultancy firm in Islamic finance, Shaykh Haytham has played a pivotal role in meeting the growing need for Sharia-compliant financial products in Europe and the Middle East. Furthermore, Shaykh Haytham's contributions extend beyond his advisory role in Islamic finance. He has served on the Shariah supervisory boards of banks, funds, and Zakat foundations, and has been a Zakat Shariah advisor for organizations such as the Prince's Trust International, UNICEF, and Save the Children. Through his transformative impact and revered status in the realm of Islamic scholarship, Shaykh Haytham continues to make a significant difference in the lives of individuals seeking guidance in their religious and personal endeavours.