

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Hajj: Virtues and Contemplations

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This article originally appeared in the Journal of the Islaamic University of Madeenah, Rajab 1391H issue. It discusses the virtues of Hajj as well as a set of “fawaa’id” which I have chosen to call “contemplations” due to the nature of what is contained in that section of the article.

There are six such contemplations in this translation, as appeared in the original edition of the article. However, in subsequent printings and editions – including the one available in the collection of the Shaykh’s written works, *Kutub wa Rasaa’il ‘Abdil-Muhsin ibn Hamad al-‘Abbaad al-Badr* (6/217-224) – the sixth has been omitted and only the first five remain. The sixth contemplation is based upon how Minaa used to be during Hajj in older times. However, Minaa has undergone much change in recent years, and those who don’t know what Minaa used to be like many years ago may not be able to fully appreciate what the sixth, and last, point of the article discusses. Nonetheless, I have still included it in this translation as it was in the original Arabic version of the article.

In the name of Allaah, the Most Merciful, the Bestower of Mercy

Hajj is among the acts of worship which Allaah has obligated and instituted as one of the five pillars which uphold the religion of Islaam, as explained by the Messenger of Allaah (ﷺ) in the authentic hadeeth,

بُنِيَ الْإِسْلَامُ عَلَى خَمْسٍ: شَهَادَةِ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَأَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ

وإِقَامِ الصَّلَاةِ وَإِيتَاءِ الزَّكَاةِ وَصَوْمِ رَمَضَانَ وَحَجِّ بَيْتِ اللَّهِ الْحَرَامِ

“Islaam is built upon five: bearing witness that none has the right to be worshipped except Allaah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allaah; establishing *Salaah*; paying *Zakaah*; fasting *Ramadaan*; and performing Hajj at the Sanctified House of Allaah.”

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) led the people performing Hajj in the tenth year of the *Hijrah*, providing them with a practical demonstration of how to fulfill this obligation. Furthermore, he encouraged them to learn every statement and action which emanated from him by saying,

خُذُوا عَنِّي مَنَاسِكَكُمْ فَلَعَلِّي لَا أَلْقَاكُمْ بَعْدَ عَامِي هَذَا

“Take your rites of Hajj from me, for I may not meet you after this year of mine.” As a result, it was named the Farewell Hajj (*Hajjatul-Wadaa*).

The Messenger of Allaah (ﷺ) encouraged his *Ummah* to perform Hajj, and he explained its virtues as well as the abundant reward which Allaah has prepared for someone who performs Hajj in the best manner. In a Hadeeth reported by al-Bukhaaree and Muslim, the Prophet (ﷺ) stated,

مَنْ حَجَّ فَلَمْ يَرُفْثْ وَلَمْ يَفْسُقْ رَجَعَ كَيَوْمِ وَلَدَتْهُ أُمُّهُ

“Whoever performs Hajj, desisting from speaking indecently, refraining from marital relations, and not acting wrongly, shall return absolved from his sins just as the day his mother gave birth to him.” In another Hadeeth reported by al-Bukhaaree and Muslim, Aboo Hurayrah (رضي الله عنه) narrated that the Prophet (ﷺ) stated,

الْعُمْرَةُ إِلَى الْعُمْرَةِ كَفَّارَةٌ لِمَا بَيْنَهُمَا وَالْحَجُّ الْمَبْرُورُ لَيْسَ لَهُ جَزَاءٌ إِلَّا الْجَنَّةُ

“The performance of ‘*Umrah* is an expiation for what occurred between it and the previous ‘*Umrah*; and there is no reward for the accepted Hajj other than *Jannah*.” In yet another Hadeeth collected by al-Bukhaaree and Muslim, Aboo Hurayrah (رضي الله عنه) narrated that

سُئِلَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ (ﷺ) أَيُّ الْعَمَلِ أَفْضَلُ؟ قَالَ: إِيمَانٌ بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ،

قِيلَ: ثُمَّ مَاذَا؟ قَالَ: الْجِهَادُ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ، قِيلَ: ثُمَّ مَاذَا؟ قَالَ: حَجٌّ مَبْرُورٌ

The Prophet (ﷺ) was asked which deed is best. He replied, “Having *Eemaan* in Allaah and His Messenger.” He was then asked, “Then which?” and he replied, “Performing *Jihad* for the sake of

Allaah.” He was further asked, “Then which?” and he replied, “An accepted **Hajj**.” It was also reported in *Sabeeh Muslim* that when ‘Amr ibn al-‘Aas (رضي الله عنه) accepted Islaam the Prophet (ﷺ) told him,

أَمَا عَلِمْتَ أَنَّ الْإِسْلَامَ يَهْدِمُ مَا كَانَ قَبْلَهُ وَأَنَّ الْهَجْرَةَ تَهْدِمُ مَا كَانَ قَبْلَهَا وَأَنَّ الْحَجَّ يَهْدِمُ مَا كَانَ قَبْلَهُ؟

“Don’t you know that Islaam wipes away what was before it; and that *Hijrah* wipes away what was before it; and that **Hajj** wipes away what was before it?” In addition, Al-Bukhaaree reported in his *Sabeeh* from ‘Aa’ishah (رضي الله عنها) that she said,

يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ نَرَى الْجِهَادَ أَفْضَلَ الْعَمَلِ أَفَلَا نُجَاهِدُ؟ قَالَ لَا وَلَكِنْ أَفْضَلُ الْجِهَادِ حَجٌّ مَبْرُورٌ

“O Messenger of Allaah, we consider *Jihaad* as the best deed, so shouldn’t we then participate?” He responded, “No. Rather, the best *Jihaad* for women is an accepted **Hajj**.”

These narrations elucidate the virtues of **Hajj** and the tremendous reward Allaah grants those who perform it. It is also clear that this great reward is exclusively for someone whose performance of **Hajj** is accepted. Consequently, the question arises as to what exactly is the acceptable **Hajj** for which Allaah grants such a tremendous reward?

An accepted **Hajj** is one which the Muslim performs in the best, most complete manner possible: sincerely for the Face of Allaah and in conformity with the *Sunnah* of His Messenger (ﷺ); continuously abiding by the commands of Allaah and avoiding His prohibitions. Although the observance of commands and avoidance of prohibitions are required of a Muslim at all times, they become further emphasized for occasions and locations known to have certain virtues. This is so because Allaah has created all beings to worship Him, which entails abiding by His commands and avoiding His prohibitions, as He has stated,

﴿الَّذِي خَلَقَ الْمَوْتَ وَالْحَيَاةَ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْعَفُورُ﴾

“He Who has created death and life, that He may test which of you is best in action.”¹ Allaah (ﷻ) also stated,

﴿وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ﴾

“And I have not created *jinn*s and humans except that they should worship Me alone.”² Therefore, the Muslim must always obey Allaah and keep away from sins before, during, and after his performance of **Hajj**. In doing so, he would be in a favorable state at the inevitable conclusion of his appointed term, and his end would be an admirable one. Allaah has said,

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ تَقَاتِهِ وَلَا تَمُونُوا إِلَّا وَأَنْتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ﴾

“O you who have *Eemaan*! Observe *Taqwaa* of Allaah as is rightfully due to Him, and do not die except in a state of Islaam, with complete submission to Allaah.”³ He (ﷻ) further stated,

¹ *Soorah al-Mulk* (67):2.

² *Soorah ath-Thaariyaat* (51):56.

³ *Soorah Aali-Imraan* (3):102.

﴿وَأَعْبُدْ رَبَّكَ حَتَّىٰ يَأْتِيَكَ الْيَقِينُ﴾

“And worship your Lord until the certainty (of death) comes to you.”⁴ Additionally, the Messenger of Allaah (ﷺ) said,

وَأَيُّمَا الْأَعْمَالُ بِالْخَوَاتِيمِ

“Verily, actions are judged based on those which come last.”

The accepted Hajj is also one in which the Muslim earnestly contemplates over some of its more subtle aspects, and acquaints himself with its short-term and long-term benefits both in this world and the hereafter. These are very many and Allaah has summed them up in His saying,

﴿لِيَشْهَدُوا مَنَافِعَ لَهُمْ﴾

“So that they may witness things of benefit to them.”⁵ Below is a brief mention of a few such subtleties included in the meaning of this verse.

CONTEMPLATION 1:

There is a strong bond between the Muslim and the Sanctified House of Allaah beginning from the time he embraces the religion of Islaam, and lasting as long as his soul remains in his body. When a child is born into Islaam, the first religious duties which he hears about are the five pillars of Islaam, one of which is performing Hajj at the Sanctified House of Allaah. When a non-Muslim proclaims the testimony of truth – declaring the oneness of Allaah and affirming that the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) is His Messenger – this makes him a Muslim. At that point, the first obligatory duties which he is taught are the remaining pillars of Islaam following the testimony of faith: establishing Salaah, paying Zakaah, fasting Ramaḍaan, and performing Hajj at the Sanctified House of Allaah. The first pillar after the testimony of faith is the establishment of the five obligatory daily prayers for which Allaah has stipulated facing the Ka’bah as one of their prerequisite conditions. Thus, the Muslim has a continuous bond to the House of Allaah each day and night when he faces it, to the best of his ability, in every prayer he performs, whether obligatory or optional. He also faces it while making Du’aa’.

This firm relationship which continuously binds the heart of the Muslim to the House of his Lord undoubtedly creates within him an incessant yearning to journey there and experience the delight of setting his eyes upon it, and to perform Hajj which Allaah has prescribed for those who have the ability to do so. Whenever a Muslim is able to perform Hajj, he hastens to fulfill this obligation, desiring to behold the house to which he turns himself in all of his prayers, and attain the benefits of Hajj which Allaah has alluded to by saying,

﴿لِيَشْهَدُوا مَنَافِعَ لَهُمْ﴾

⁴ Soorah al-Hijr (15):99.

⁵ Soorah al-Hajj (22):28.

“So that they may witness things of benefit to them.”⁶

When the Muslim arrives at the House of his Lord, he sees with his very own eyes the noblest house and most sacred place upon the face of the Earth – the glorious *Ka'bah*. It is the focal point faced by Muslims in prayer from all parts of the world, whether they be in the East or West. He also sees the Muslims in concentric circles around this house during their prayers, the smallest one adjacent to the *Ka'bah*, followed by the next one outward, and so on until the largest one at the farthest reaches of the Earth. Thus, the Muslims in prayer, facing the house of their Lord, are like dots which together form perimeters of circles, small and large, with the *Ka'bah* at the heart of them all.

CONTEMPLATION 2:

If a Muslim has been blessed with the ability to travel to the House of his Lord, and he arrives at the *Meeqaat* set by the Messenger of Allaah (ﷺ) for assuming *Ihram*, he removes his normal clothing and replaces them, wearing an *Izhaar* on his lower body and a *Ridaa'* on his upper body, leaving his head uncovered. In this mode of dress, there exists equality between all those performing Hajj such that there is no distinction between wealthy and needy, or leader and subjects. Such uniformity in appearance reminds them of the shrouds they shall be wrapped in when they die, since each and every individual shall shed his usual clothing and have them replaced with shrouds bearing no distinction between wealthy and poor. Therefore, when someone performing Hajj sheds his customary garb and dons the *Ihram*, he should remember the time of death at which point the life of this world ends and the life of the Hereafter begins; and he should prepare himself for what lies ahead by doing righteous deeds and avoiding disobedience to Allaah. This preparation is the necessary provision he must take with him along his journey to the Hereafter which Allaah refers to in his saying,

﴿وَتَسَرَّوْا فَاِنَّ خَيْرَ لِّزَادِ النَّقْوَى﴾

“And take provision for yourselves; but surely, the best provision is *Taqwaa*.”⁷ This is why when a man inquired from the Prophet (ﷺ) about when the last hour would come, he replied,

وَمَاذَا أَعَدَدْتَ لَهَا ؟

“And what have you prepared for it?” drawing his attention to the fact that it is imperative for the Muslim to always be mindful of what lays ahead after death, and to be prepared for it at all times by enacting the commands of Allaah and keeping away from His prohibitions.

CONTEMPLATION 3:

When the Muslim begins the rites of Hajj, he utters the *Talbiyah* proclaiming *Tamheed*, just as the Prophet (ﷺ) said in his *Talbiyah*,

⁶ *Soorah al-Hajj* (22):28.

⁷ *Soorah al-Baqarah* (2):197.

لَيْتَكَ اللَّهُمَّ لَيْتَكَ، لَيْتَكَ لَا شَرِيكَ لَكَ لَيْتَكَ، إِنَّ الْحَمْدَ وَالنَّعْمَةَ لَكَ وَالْمُلْكَ، لَا شَرِيكَ لَكَ

“Here I am, O Allaah, obediently responding to your call, here I am. Here I am, testifying that you have no partner, here I am. To You belong all Praise, Favor, and Dominion. You have no partner.”

He says it while conscious of its meaning, namely, that Allaah alone is to be singled out for worship to the exclusion of all else. Hence, just as Allaah is the only one who creates, He is similarly the only one to whom all acts of worship must be directed, to the exclusion of all others, whatever they might be. Directing any worship to other than Allaah is the worst form of wrongdoing and falsehood.

The Muslim proclaims this phrase answering the invitation of Allaah to His servants calling them to perform Hajj at His Sanctified House. He feels the magnificence of the One who has invited him, and the magnitude of what he has been invited to, and he strives to complete Hajj in a manner that would be most pleasing to his Lord. He does so with the conviction that this act of worship, as is the case with any other, revolves around sincerity to Allaah – as indicated by the declaration of *Tawbeed* contained in the *Talbiyah* – along with emulating the Messenger of Allaah (ﷺ) as he instructed the people during his Hajj when he said,

خُذُوا عَنِّي مَنَاسِكَكُمْ

“Take your rites of Hajj from me.”

CONTEMPLATION 4:

When the Muslim arrives at the revered *Ka'bah* he sees *Tawaaf* being performed around it. It is an act of worship which the *Share'ah* does not permit except at this location. Hence, *Tawaaf* performed in any other place is something prescribed by *Shaytaan*, causing one who does it to be among those included in the statement of Allaah,

﴿أَمْ لَهُمْ شُرَكَاءُ شَرَعُوا لَهُمْ مِنَ الدِّينِ مَا لَمْ يَأْذَنْ بِهِ اللَّهُ﴾

“Or do they have partners with Allaah who have instituted for them a religion which Allaah has not allowed?”⁸

When the Muslim arrives at the *Ka'bah*, he also sees people kissing the Black Stone, touching it, and also touching the Yemeni corner. The *Share'ah* has not prescribed the kissing or touching of any stones or structures except these two specific spots. Thus, when 'Umar ibn al-Khattaab (رضي الله عنه) kissed the black stone, he clarified that he was merely emulating an action of the Messenger of Allaah (ﷺ), and he said,

وَلَوْ لَا أَنِّي رَأَيْتُ النَّبِيَّ ﷺ يُقَبِّلُكَ مَا قَبَّلْتُكَ

“Had I not seen the Prophet (ﷺ) kiss you then I would not have kissed you.”

CONTEMPLATION 5:

⁸ *Soorah ash-Shooraa* (42):21.

The greatest Islaamic assembly is witnessed during Hajj. It takes place in ‘Arafah on the day of ‘Arafah (i.e. the 9th of Thul-Hijjah), when those performing Hajj stop there altogether responding to the call of Allaah, entreating Him, and asking for the best in this world and the hereafter.

This massive gathering reminds the Muslim of the standing which will take place on the Day of Resurrection. Therein, the former generations shall meet with the later ones. They will all be waiting for Judgment to begin so they can proceed to their destinations based upon their actions – if good then good, and if evil then evil. Then the worshipping servant, the Messenger of Allaah, Muḥammad (ﷺ), shall intercede for them all in order for Allaah to judge between them, and his intercession shall be accepted. This is called *al-Maqaam al-Mahmood* (the praiseworthy station) which the earlier and later generations praise him for, and it is the greatest intercession specific to the Messenger of Allaah (ﷺ) and no angel or Prophet shares in it with him.

In this enormous Islaamic gathering at ‘Arafah – and similarly at all other locations during the rites of Hajj – Muslims from all parts of the world, East and West, meet and become familiar with each other and exchange words of advice. They learn more about the situations of others, sharing in their happiness, feeling their pain, and guiding them to the correct course of action. All of this is done complying with the command of Allaah to mutually cooperate in righteousness and piety.

CONTEMPLATION 6:

An amazing demonstration of mutual cooperation is also witnessed in Minaa. After seeing it entirely covered with tents, it returns to its original appearance, or close to that, before the first day of departure (i.e. the 12th of Thul-Hijjah) barely even passes. This happens by each individual playing his part, carrying out his duties. In a similar fashion, if each Muslim does whatever is within his ability to serve Islaam, and all Muslims cooperate with each other to achieve that goal, the individual efforts, however little they might be, would become significant when combined as a whole.

These few subtleties which I have outlined are among the many benefits which are summed up in the statement of Allaah,

﴿لِيَشْهَدُوا مَنَافِعَ لَهُمْ﴾

“So that they may witness things of benefit to them.”⁹ However, the greatest benefit for the Muslim after the completion of Hajj is for his performance of Hajj to be accepted by Allaah; that it make him a better individual after it than he was before; and that it transform his conduct and actions, making him change from bad to good, and from good to even better.

I ask Allaah to grant all Muslims understanding of the religion and steadfastness upon it; and to empower them in the earth, aiding them against His enemy and their enemy. He is indeed in control of all things and ever capable of bringing them into being. May Allaah send *salaah*, *salaam*, and blessings upon His worshipping servant and Messenger, our Prophet Muḥammad, and upon his family and Companions.

⁹ *Soorah al-Hajj* (22):28.