

In the Name of Allāh, the Loving, the Love-Giving

THE INTERNAL DIMENSIONS OF HAJJ*

The ultimate destination

You're the luckiest person in the world. Allāh has invited you personally to His House.

What is Hajj? Hajj in the Arabic language means aim, destination or purpose (*qaṣd*). The reason is clear: Hajj is the ultimate journey of loving submission (*'ubūdīyah*) and conscious surrender (*riq*) to Allāh. Its ultimate destination is your encounter with the House of Allāh (*Bayt al-Allāh*) – the *Ka'bah* – with both your physical body and, more importantly, your heart (*qalb*).

Ibn al-Jawzī (*raḥimah al-Allāh*) relates a story of an old, blind woman who was journeying to Hajj years ago with a caravan. Throughout the journey, she keeps asking: “Are we at the house of my Lord?” Time and again, she is told, “No, mother, we are not there yet.” As the caravan nears Makkah, she is informed that they are almost there. Finally, they enter Masjid al-Harām. She is led to the *Ka'bah*. Touching the *Ka'bah*, she cries, “*Baytu rabbī? The House of my Lord?*” Weeping, she clings to the cloth of the *Ka'bah* – and dies.

The woman realized with her heart (*qalb*) the true significance of visiting the House of her Lord.

Allāh has invited you to His House, which He has called the *Bayt al-'Atīq* – the ancient, liberated and liberating house. Your journey is one of freedom and liberation. For as your body leaves its material house to journey to Allāh's House, your heart is meant to disengage from the lower self (*nafs*), the *shayṭān*, and the world (*dunya*) and journey to Allāh.

The ultimate reward for a Hajj *mabrūr* is to return home with the purity of a newborn child. What could be a greater incentive! But beware, for Hajj is a selective process. Only a few will attain a Hajj *mabrūr*, which is a Hajj performed correctly, without any disobedience to Allāh and without indulging in any argumentation. Be prepared. Be vigilant. Be focused. This will be one of the greatest – and sweetest – struggles of your life. And though you will long and dream for the rest of your life to come back, you may never return again.

May Allāh allow our bodies to journey to His House; may He permit our hearts to find Him, the Lord of the House. Ameen.

* This work is a general summary of a series of lectures by Shaykh Mokhtār Maghrāouī on the internal dimensions of Hajj. The audio series (as well as the more recent 2006 seminar) may be ordered at www.zawiyah.net. I ask for your indulgence regarding any errors in this summary. I would request that readers please remember Shaykh Mokhtār Maghrāouī in their supplications during Hajj – as well as the summarizer).

The most sacred space

You will be journeying from your earthly house to Makkah, your spiritual home, the most beloved place to Allāh in all of space and time. Allāh himself has decreed it to be so since the beginning of creation. There is no place more blessed, more beautiful, more virtuous, more exalted than Makkah. Every inch and every corner of Makkah is a *ḥaram*, a sanctuary made sacred by Allāh. The more you revere Makkah, the more you will be ennobled by Allāh. We must take the greatest of care to never think casually of our sojourn in Makkah or live within its precincts in disobedience or negligence.

Some reports teach that it was in Makkah that our father Ādam (‘alayhi al-salām) longed to go back to paradise and be in the presence of Allāh. To console his loneliness, Allāh commanded him to do *ṭawāf* around the space of the current Ka‘bah. And Ādam did, and felt whole again.

Other texts teach that Nuh (‘alayhi al-salām), Ibrāhīm (‘alayhi al-salām), and many Prophets before them (‘alayhim al-salām), all did *ṭawāf* around Allāh’s sacred House. Their spiritual energy and legacy fills the air. You will be walking in the footsteps and the heart-steps of Rasūlullah (sallallahu ‘alayhi wasallam) and his noble companions.

Shelter, solace and sight

Hajj and its rites are described in various and powerful ways by Allāh and his Rasūl (sallallahu ‘alayhi wasallam). Through these descriptions, we gain insight into the deeper meanings of *Hajj*. The rites of *hajj* are described, for example, as *manāsik*, *mashā‘ir* and *mashāhid*.

Mansak (plural *manāsik*), usually translated as ritual, connotes shelter (*maskan*) and tranquility (*sukūn*). The rites of *Hajj* are residences of shelter and tranquility for the heart.

Mash‘ar (plural *mashā‘ir*) connotes feeling and experience. The rites of *Hajj* cause the heart to feel and experience the sweetness of nearness to Allāh.

Mashad (plural *mashāhid*) is to witness with the heart the blessings of Allāh at every station – to see, with one’s inner sight, Allāh’s will as the Decreeer of decrees and the Causer of causes.

Each word connotes a different inner dimension of *Hajj*, as the movement, not only of your body or limbs, but of your heart. For as your body journeys from one place to another, so too must your heart travel through various stations (*maqāmāt*), each of which will provide it with shelter, solace and inner sight.

Become angelic

Hajj is your chance to become an angel and to live with the delight of an angel.

In tawāf, you will be mirroring the worship of the angels, the *malā'ikah*, those heavenly creatures created of pure light and enveloped in the worship of Allāh. Texts teach that the Ka'bah is connected in an imperceptible way to the *Bayt al-Ma'mūr*, the heavenly Ka'bah of the angels, around which they are constantly in tawāf. Seventy thousand angels perform tawāf around this house and are replaced with others, never to return.

Around the Ka'bah, we are in a heavenly dimension. Near the Ka'bah are the *Hajr al-Aswad*, or black stone, and the *Maqām Ibrahim*, both gems from *jannah*. We are taught that the hajr was darkened by the sins and transgressions of man. Its heavenly light is now folded from us. The hajr will be personified in the afterlife by Allāh and will witness on behalf of those who approached it with truth and sincerity. The hajr can be said to take a picture recording of your heart as you stand before it. Kissing the hajr is the most profound renewal of your covenant with Allāh and a pledge of love, dedicated obedience and soulful allegiance to Him.

THE JOURNEY BEGINS

Entering into Ihram

As you near the miqāt, your heart will tremble and tremor. Is this really happening? Is my heart getting closer and closer to His House? Soon you will enter Allāh's haram. It is only fitting that you enter into a state, both externally and internally, that justly corresponds to this honour. Beyond the miqāt, there is only talbiyah.

The essence of Hajj is the journey of our hearts away from the house of our lower selves (*nufūs*) with its passions (*shahawāt*), inclinations (*ahwā'*) and attachment to the created world (*khalq*) to the haram and, ultimately, the House of Allāh. We must leave our attachments to receive the greatest connection. We must leave to arrive.

Ihram is from harām. Both meanings, to be sacred and to be forbidden, are carried in it. Through the ihram, the heart is meant to leave the temporary and the finite – to make it, in a sense, “forbidden” – and to prepare for the sacred audience of Allāh's presence.

The *muhrim* has disengaged from everything and anything that distracts him or her from Allāh and, consequently, from remembrance, peace and stillness. The muhrim has left his or her home taking *taqwā* or Allāh-consciousness, the best sustenance, as a provision.

Beginning Talbiyah

One enters into ihram with *talbiyah*. Talbiyah is the heart's most profound surrender to the invitation and call of Allāh: *Here I come to You, my Lord, here I come – fully and forever.*

With the talbiyah, we proclaim that no associate (*sharīk*) or attachment will distract us from seeking Allāh. Our hearts will not see, hear, obey, or be lured to another, besides Him. The recitation of this talbiyah is to be said with constancy and conviction, and not intermittently and infrequently. Talbiyah is essential to focusing our hearts. It will remind us of the purpose of our journey; it will facilitate us in foregoing our rights, demands and expectations while yet rendering fully the major and minor rights of others; it will dispel distractions; and it will make all obstacles easy, even pleasurable.

There is no praise (*ḥamd*) and no dominion and power (*mulk*) except that Allāh owns it. Everything, whether tangible or intangible, belongs to Him. In fact, we are in praise of Him by Him.

Munā

Minā, or Munā, means desire, hope, longing.

Some texts teach that it was in Munā that Ādam (‘alayhi al-salam) longed and desired to journey back home to paradise and to be, once again, in Allāh’s presence.

It is in Munā that the journey begins. The day spent in Munā, termed the day of *tarwiyah* (meaning, in part, to quench, to drink to one’s fill), is meant for our heart to focus on the aim of their journey, to gather in resolution and focus, and to begin our inner momentum towards the House of Allāh.

‘Arafāt

‘Arafāt means to know, to understand. Another verb scale conveys the meaning of perfuming, making fragrant, scenting. *‘Arafāt* is the essential pillar (*rukṅ*), of Hajj; without *‘Arafāt* there is no Hajj.

‘Arafāt is the cleansing station outside the ḥaram where we stand and seek forgiveness for all that we’ve committed in our lives. We beg and implore Allāh to make us worthy of entering into His ḥaram, visiting His House and being in His presence.

Here, on *‘Arafāt*, we learn two things. As we acknowledge our disobedience, our sins, our rebelliousness and our forgetfulness, we know our unworthiness as true servants. We reveal everything to Allāh, minor or major, Who knows already but simply wants us to admit with true transparency and sincerity what we is inside of our selves. Moreover, we begin to know the all-enveloping knowledge, the inestimable mercy, the boundless generosity and the limitless grace of Allāh in forgiving and effacing our sins. Who is it, beside Him, that can forgive and that does forgive? There is no refuge or flight from Allāh except to Him.

Allāh celebrates, in the presence of the angels, the ḥujjāj on *‘Arafāt* asking for forgiveness. And He affirms to the angels that, yes, He has forgiven them.

Now, as the sun begins to set, you continue, perfumed and scented with the purity of Allāh's grace and forgiveness, ever closer to His ḥaram.

Muzdalifa

Muzdalifa, from the Arabic root *izdilāf*, means to approach, to get closer.

Muzdalifa is a second station of cleansing and purification. The pilgrim is now closer to the Ka'bah. We remain in supplication (*du'ā'*) after *fajr*, imploring Allāh again for pardon and guidance. Some scholars have said that in Muzdalifa, Allāh also forgives our violations against the rights of others. Such violations are not usually forgiven unless, in addition to seeking forgiveness, we remedy what has been violated.

Munā and the casting of the pebbles

During the Ḥajj of Ibrāhim ('alayhi al-salām), he was commanded to sacrifice his son. Allāh, of course, never intended that the slaughter take place. Allāh wanted, instead, to purify and free Ibrāhim ('alayhi al-salām) from every love and every attachment besides Him.

It was in Munā that the shayṭān attempted to waylay Ibrāhim ('alayhi al-salām) from sacrificing his son. Ibrāhim ('alayhi al-salām) casted pebbles at the shayṭān to reject his designs and prompting.

In casting the pebbles, the pilgrim affirms Allāh's greatness over everything and covenants with Allāh that he or she will never regress to anything which displeases Him. Casting the pebbles is the casting away of shayṭān, the lower self (*nafs*) with its desires, inclinations and evil, and, ultimately, casting away everything besides Allāh. The pebble is meant, not to hit the pillar, but to fall inside the container, or *majmar*, where it will remain. The fire of the *nafs*, its impetus to evil, must be cast out, contained and confined. Our *nafs* must be jailed for us to become free.

After the *nafs* is jailed by the casting of the pebbles, it is slaughtered. The sacrifice of the animal signifies the slaughter of the *nafs* by Ibrāhim ('alayhi al-salām). Ibrāhim's ('alayhi al-salām) sacrifice was momentous: he sacrificed his very will. Ibrāhim was named the *Khalīl* (cherished friend) of Allāh because his love for Allāh pierced and consumed his entire heart.

The hair – signifying status, station and pride – is now shaved. Whatever remaining trace and residue of the disobedient *nafs* is now completely cleansed.

Now, the pilgrim is welcomed by Allāh to visit His Ḥaram and His House. He or she is now freed from *iḥrām*, but not completely. Washing and the use of perfume are now permitted; intimate relations are not. Approaching one's spouse is unbecoming considering that now the pilgrim is going to visit the Host.

Tawāf al-Ifādah

Ifādah means to flood, to rush, to move.

The movement from ‘Arafāt to the haram is called *ifādah*. The rite of *tawāf* that takes place after the casting of the pebbles, the sacrifice and the shaving of the head is likewise termed *Tawaaf al-Ifādah*.

The heart (*qalb*), cleansed and purified from its attachments, inundated with love, desire and longing, floods to the *haram*, to the House, and to its Lord. There, it circumambulates the House and renews its pledge of complete and loving submission.

Sa‘i between Safā and Marwā

Sa‘i means to work, to strive, to act.

We remember in *sa‘i* the actions of Hājar (‘alayha al-salām) as she climbed, walked and ran up both *Safā* and *Marwā* looking for sustenance for her starving child. The miracle of *Zam zam* was gifted to Hājar for her efforts and sincere reliance. Rasūlullah (sallallahu ‘alayhi wasallam) teaches that if we drink *zam zam* with firm faith and certainty, Allāh will most definitely answer our supplication.

As servants of Allāh, we are embedded in time and space. We must act, all the while cognizant that it is Allāh who creates both cause and effect. To see waves upon waves of pilgrims walking and running between *Safā* and *Marwā* is to recognize that the reality of our life is constant *sa‘i* between struggle and reward, struggle and reward. On the hills of *Safā* and *Marwā*, where the pilgrim alights in reflection and supplication, the heart exalts, seeing Allāh’s power in all matters, yours and others, large or small.

The days and nights of Munā

During our stay in *Munā*, we re-affirm and re-declare our desire and hope for spiritual freedom by casting pebbles for three days. Each casting of the pebbles cements our resolution to contain and confine both the lower self (*nafs*) and *shayṭān*.

You remain in *Munā* as Allāh’s guest. Here, we must eat and drink with the consciousness of a guest in front of a Most-Magnanimous Host. The greatest nourishment during these days, as Allāh himself indicates, is His *dhikr*, or remembrance. We are destined to leave but Allāh intends we leave gradually, in gratitude to Him, remembrance of Him and gathering a firm resolution for permanent change when we depart.

Then the last pebble is cast. Our final farewell is imminent.

The farewell

Most have waited their entire lives for the encounter with the House of Allāh. Many will never return. In truth, there is no certainty that any of us will ever gaze on the Ka‘bah again.

Whether we return or not, we will never forget. It is said – and it is true – that the Ka‘bah beckons you from afar, then haunts you forever.

It is related that Ibn ‘Abbas prayed this as his final farewell, clinging with his entire being to the *multazam*, the wall of the Ka‘bah between the hajr and the door:

O Allāh

This House is Your House

And this servant is Your servant, and the son of Your servants

You have carried me here on what You have made accessible to me of Your creation

Until You have made me reach, by Your grace, Your House

And You have helped me fulfill my rites of Hajj

(O Allāh)

If You have been pleased with me, then be more pleased with me

And if You are not pleased with me, then I implore you to be generous to me now –

Before my house becomes distant from Your house

For now it is time for my departure, if You permit me –

Never to exchange You for anything else, nor Your House for any other house

Not being desirous of others instead of You, nor of any other house besides Your House

O Allāh,

Grant me safety and good health in my body, protection in my religion and allow me a beautiful return

And provide me with deeds and acts of Your obedience for as long as You grant me life

And gather for me the best of this world and the next

For truly You have power over all things.

A mother once told her son that the Ka‘bah says: *The one who does not see me will never rest; and the one who sees me will never rest.*

May our hearts find their ultimate rest by journeying to Allāh long after our bodies have returned from Hajj. May we always be in Hajj.

Hajj mabrūr, my beloved brother and sister.