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# Hajj: A Spiritual Journey

# HUM 4145

Introduction:

Hajj is the annual pilgrimage of Muslims all over the world to Mecca, a city in Saudi Arabia and the most holy city for Muslims. It is one of the five pillars of Islam, and Fard (mandatory) for all Muslim adults who are physically and financially capable, to perform Hajj at least once in their lifetimes.

Taking place from the 8th to the 12th of the Dhu Al-Hijjah (literally, The Month of The Pilgrimage), the last month of the Islamic calendar, the rites of Hajj go back to the time of Prophet Ibrahim (A.S.), although the current form has been around since the lifetime of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), around the 7th century.

Rituals:

The state of being physically and financially capable of performing Hajj is called istita’ah and a Muslim who fulfils this condition is called a mustati. For those who begin their journey with the intention of performing Hajj, they do so wearing an ihram which are two white sheets of seamless clothing. According to Islamic teaching, this is also the shroud in which Muslims are buried. This simple piece of clothing is used in a display of humbleness and equality among Muslims. It represents the insignificance of the current world, and the importance of the world to come.

Muslims then go on to join hundreds of thousands of their fellow Muslims at Mecca, and perform a series of rituals. These including walking counter-clockwise 7 times around the Ka’aba (tawaf), running back and forth between the hills of AlSafa and Al-Marwah, drinking from the Zamzam well, standing in vigil in the plains of Mount Arafat, spending a night in the plains of Muzdalifa and performing a symbolic stoning of the devil by throwing stones at three pillars. Male pilgrims also shave their heads at the end of the week of Hajj, when an animal sacrifice is performed. This last ritual is performed by Muslims worldwide in the festival of Eid al-Adha.

Each of these rituals have a significant meaning. For example, the pacing between the two hills of Safa and Marwa, is a representation of the same act performed by Hazrat Hajr, the wife of Prophet Ibrahim (A.S.), in desperation when she could not find water for her son Ismail (A.S.). The pelting of stones is a re-enactment of the action of Prophet Ibrahim (A.S.), who did so in an attempt to chase away the Shaiytan, who was attempting to discourage him from obeying Allah. The animal sacrifice is in remembrance of the willingness of Ibrahim (A.S.) and his son Ismail (A.S.) to sacrifice the latter in the name of Allah. Each ritual also teaches us an importance lesson about life, the promise of rewards from Allah for hard work, the warning to be careful of the Shaiytan and the importance of complete submission to Allah respectively for each of the given examples.

Significance:

Hajj is a demonstration of the solidarity of the Muslim people and their collective submission to Allah. Hajj represents both the outward act of a journey, and the inward act of intentions. Purely from the display of emotions it becomes obvious how significant this event is for Muslims. It is commonplace to find Muslims in tears begging for forgiveness, acceptance and help, or for them to become lost in prayer and forget about the world surrounding them. Hajj is a display of the spiritual journey of devotees and their stages of servitude. It is a physical journey made for spiritual reasons. During the time of Hajj, a Muslim leaves behind all worldly things and concentrates their mind and their heart to the worship of Allah. It brings together people of different cultures and ensures mutual respect and harmony.

Conclusion:

Those who return from Hajj do so with a deep spiritual and emotional power. Some have described feeling as though they stand alone with Allah, even though they are surrounded by fellow Muslims from all walks of life. Ultimately, Hajj is a life changing experience. It is a moment of utmost repentance and forgiveness, the end of which is a realization of the amazing rewards to come. As the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said, the reward for an accepted Hajj is nothing less the paradise