



Honouring the Blessed Days of Ḥajj

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As we approach the sacred season of Ḥajj and the blessed days of Dhul Ḥijjah, it is disheartening to see how little attention these days receive. While the arrival of December is met with excitement, advanced planning, and a festive atmosphere, the days of Dhul Ḥijjah - rich in reward and significance - often pass by unnoticed. This reality indicates our poor affiliation with the teachings of Islam, with the Quran and the Sunnah.

The Real Virtue of the Season of Ḥajj

The world we live in moves through many seasons. For example, we eagerly anticipate the seasons of business, sports, and holidays. But for Muslims, this is the season of Ḥajj, a season of devotion, reflection, and immense reward.

In particular, the first ten days of the month of Dhul Ḥijjah are among the most virtuous days of the year. During these days, the mercy and forgiveness of Allāh ﷻ are abundantly available. Our beloved Prophet ﷺ emphasised this in the following ḥadīth:

ما من أيامٍ العملُ الصالحُ فيهن أحبُّ إلى الله من هذه الأيام العشر . قالوا : يا رسولَ الله ، ولا الجهادُ في سبيلِ الله ؟ قال : ولا الجهادُ في سبيلِ الله ، إلا رجلٌ خرج بنفسه وماله ، فلم يرجع من ذلك بشيءٍ

"There are no days in which righteous deeds are more beloved to Allāh than these ten days". They said: "Not even Jihād in the path of Allāh?" He ﷺ replied: "Not even Jihād in the path of Allāh, except for a man who went out with his life and wealth and did not return with any of it". (al-Tirmidhī: 757, Abū Dāwūd: 2438)

This narration highlights the astounding virtue of these blessed days. They offer us the opportunity to earn immense reward - greater even than the reward of some who have sacrificed their lives and wealth for the sake of Allāh ﷻ.

What Is Ḥajj?

The sacred pilgrimage of Ḥajj is a profound act of worship in which millions of Muslims from across the globe travel to Makkah to fulfil a major obligation of Islam. It is one of the five pillars of our faith. Every Muslim who is physically and financially able must perform Ḥajj at least once in their lifetime.

Why Do We Perform Ḥajj?

As believers, we naturally long to undertake this blessed journey. Allāh ﷻ has placed a deep yearning in the hearts of the faithful to visit the sacred lands of Makkah and Madīnah. This love is a direct result of the Du'ā' of Ibrāhīm (AS):

رَبَّنَا إِنِّي أَسْكَنْتُ مِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِي بِوَادٍ غَيْرِ ذِي زَرْعٍ عِنْدَ بَيْتِكَ الْمُحَرَّمِ رَبَّنَا لِيُقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ فَاجْعَلْ أَفْتَدَةً مِّنَ النَّاسِ تَهْوِي إِلَيْهِمْ

"Our Lord! I have settled some of my offspring in a barren valley near Your Sacred House, our Lord, so that they may establish prayer. So, make the hearts of the people incline towards them". (Sūrah Ibrāhīm, 14:37)

And Allāh ﷻ further honoured Ibrāhīm (AS) with the responsibility of purifying the Ka'bah:

وَإِذْ بَوَّأْنَا لِإِبْرَاهِيمَ مَكَانَ الْبَيْتِ أَنْ لَا تُشْرِكْ بِي شَيْئًا وَطَهِّرْ بَيْتِيَ لِلطَّائِفِينَ وَالْقَائِمِينَ وَالرُّكَّعِ السُّجُودِ

"And [mention] when We designated for Ibrāhīm the site of the House [saying], "Do not associate anything with Me and purify My House for those who perform Ṭawāf, and those who stand [in prayer], and those who bow and prostrate themselves". (Sūrah al-Ḥajj, 22:26)
Allāh ﷻ instructed Ibrāhīm (AS) to make a public call, inviting all of humanity to perform Ḥajj:

وَأَذِّنْ فِي النَّاسِ بِالْحَجِّ

"Call all people to the pilgrimage". (Sūrah al-Ḥajj, 22:27)

Ibrāhīm (AS) asked: "O my Lord, how will they hear me? There is no one around". Allāh ﷻ responded: "You make the call - I will ensure it reaches the people". So, Ibrāhīm (AS) climbed Mount Qubays and called out:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْحَجُّ إِلَى الْبَيْتِ الْعَتِيقِ، فَاسْمَعُوا مِنْ بَيْنِ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ

"O people! Allāh ﷻ has made Ḥajj obligatory upon you to the Ancient House, so respond to His call".

Every soul destined to perform Ḥajj, whether alive at that time or to come in future generations, heard the call. Those who responded with "Labbayk" accepted the invitation of Ḥajj - and the number of times one said "Labbayk" is the number of times one will be granted the honour of performing it. Allāh ﷻ says:

يَأْتُوكَ رِجَالًا وَعَلَى كُلِّ ضَامِرٍ يَأْتِينَ مِنْ كُلِّ فَجٍّ عَمِيقٍ

"They will come to you on foot and on every lean camel from every distant path".
(Sūrah al-Ḥajj, 22:27)

Even today, as you witness pilgrims arriving in Makkah from every corner of the world, you are seeing the fulfilment of Allāh's ﷻ promise. It is truly awe-inspiring to observe how people travel vast distances, enduring hardship and difficulty, purely to answer the call of Ibrāhīm (AS) and fulfil the obligation of Ḥajj.

We are in the sacred season of Ḥajj. We should be turning to Allāh ﷻ with sincere Du'ā', asking Him to grant us the opportunity to perform Ḥajj and 'Umrah. We should also pray for those who are currently on this blessed journey or preparing to undertake it.

Even if we are not personally performing Ḥajj, our hearts should remain connected to those sacred moments. One way to understand this is by imagining an athlete deeply involved in his team. If, on the day of the finals, he falls ill and is unable to play, his heart and thoughts remain with his teammates on the field. He feels a sense of absence, longing to be present. Similarly, though we may not be physically in Makkah, our hearts and prayers should remain with the pilgrims and the days of Ḥajj.

Let us pause and reflect. It's the season of Ḥajj - do we truly feel left out for not being among those in the blessed lands of Makkah? If we don't feel a sense of loss, it is a sign of how distant we have become from Islam and the Dīn. Such a feeling reveals a weakness in our Īmān.

The Importance of Ḥajj

When Allāh ﷻ speaks about the obligation of Ḥajj in the Qur'ān, He highlights it in a unique way compared to other commands. For example, there is no Sūrah titled Sūrah al-Ṣalāh, Sūrah al-Ṣawm, or Sūrah al-Zakāh. Yet we do find an entire chapter named Sūrah al-Ḥajj, dedicated to this sacred pillar.

When Allāh ﷻ made Ṣalāh compulsory, He said:

وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ

"Establish prayer". (Sūrah al-Baqarah, 2:43)

When He ﷻ made fasting obligatory, He said:

كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيَامُ

"Fasting has been prescribed upon you". (Sūrah al-Baqarah, 2:183)

When Zakāh was made compulsory, the command came as:

وَأَتُوا الزَّكَاةَ

"Discharge your Zakāh". (Sūrah al-Baqarah, 2:43)

However, when Allāh ﷻ made Ḥajj obligatory, the language was more elaborate and emphatic. He ﷻ said:

وَلِلَّهِ عَلَى النَّاسِ حُجُّ الْبَيْتِ مَنِ اسْتَطَاعَ إِلَيْهِ سَبِيلًا

"It is obligatory upon humanity to perform Ḥajj to the House - for whoever is able to find a way to it". (Sūrah Āli 'Imrān, 3:97)

This verse makes it clear that Ḥajj is not simply a religious ritual but a right that belongs to Allāh ﷻ. Those who have the physical and financial means must fulfil this duty. It is a debt owed to Allāh ﷻ.

As human beings, we must recognise the seriousness of neglecting this obligation. Allāh ﷻ continues in the same verse:

وَمَنْ كَفَرَ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَنِيٌّ عَنِ الْعَالَمِينَ

"And whoever disbelieves - then indeed, Allāh is free of need from all the worlds".

This strong closing serves as a divine warning: Allāh ﷻ does not need our worship - rather, we are the ones in need of His mercy and acceptance.

Allāh ﷻ has used the word *kafara*, indicating that if a person has the means to perform Ḥajj yet deliberately chooses not to go, then this is nothing less than a denial of the command of Allāh ﷻ.

The Virtues and Benefits of the Sacred Pilgrimage of Ḥajj

The Prophet ﷺ greatly emphasised the virtues of the sacred pilgrimage of Ḥajj:

1. Abū Hurayrah (RA) said: "The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ gave a sermon (khuṭbah) and said: "O people, Allāh has enjoined Ḥajj upon you, so do Ḥajj". (Muslim: 1337).
2. Ibn 'Abbās (RA) said: "The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said: "Whoever wants to go for Ḥajj, let him hasten to do it, because he may fall ill or some other problems may arise". (Abū Dāwūd: 1732 (without the phrase "because he may"); also reported by Ibn Mājah: 2883 and Aḥmad: 1836).

What are the benefits of Ḥajj?

Allāh ﷻ says : "That they may witness things that are of benefit to them". (Sūrah al-Ḥajj, 22:28)

The benefits of Ḥajj are both worldly and religious (spiritual). With regard to the religious benefits, the one who goes for Ḥajj earns the pleasure of his Lord and comes back with all his sins forgiven. He also earns the immense reward which he cannot earn anywhere else other than in these places.

One prayer in al-Masjid al-Ḥarām, for example, is equal to a hundred thousand prayers elsewhere, and Ṭawāf (circumambulation) and sa'y (running between Mount al-Ṣafā and al-Marwah) cannot be done anywhere except in these places.

Other benefits include meeting other Muslims and discussing their circumstances, meeting scholars, learning from them, and asking them about one's problems. Ultimately, the experience of Ḥajj is one that, through its hardships and by other means, increases one's īmān and consciousness of Allāh ﷻ as his Lord and Creator.

Advice to Those Who Are Going on the Blessed Journey of Ḥajj:

1. Keep focused on the purpose of your travel and do not be distracted.

مَا زَاغَ الْبَصَرُ وَمَا طَغَى

"The (Prophet's) sight never wandered, nor did it overreach". (Sūrah al-Najm, 53:17)

Allāh ﷻ mentioned the unwavering focus of the Prophet ﷺ - he remained fixed on what Allāh ﷻ presented to him and was not distracted by anything around him. When you are in the Ḥaram of Makkah or in the Prophet's ﷺ Masjid in Madīnah, avoid using your phone as much as you can. These are very special places where people come to pray, make Du'ā', and remember Allāh ﷻ. Using your phone unnecessarily - especially for photos, videos, or scrolling - can take away from your own worship and disturb others around you. Out of respect for these places and the people in them, it's best to stay focused and use the time for Ibādah and reflection.

2. Do not forget the vows you made with Allāh ﷻ when you were in Ḥajj.

ثُمَّ لِيَقْضُوا تَفَثَهُمْ وَلْيُوفُوا نُذُورَهُمْ وَلْيَطَّوَّفُوا بِالْبَيْتِ الْعَتِيقِ

"Then let them groom themselves, fulfil their vows, and make Ṭawāf of the Ka'bah". (Sūrah al-Ḥajj, 22:29)

This verse carries the meaning that you have made a promise to Allāh ﷻ to change during Ḥajj—so fulfil your promise to Him.

3. Ḥajj is a journey in which you will need strong ṣabr and patience.

Along the journey of Ḥajj, you will be faced with many unexpected obstacles and hardships. These challenges may stir your anger and heighten your emotions. It is important that you maintain ṣabr in these situations and prevent your negative reactions from affecting yourself or others.

Remember that during Ḥajj, Allāh ﷻ tests each person according to what is most difficult for them. The test of Ḥajj is not random - it is personally tailored. What may seem easy for one person could be a major challenge for another. Recognising this helps us stay humble, patient, and focused on pleasing Allāh ﷻ through every moment of the journey.

4. Make sure that you are truly taking benefit from your Ḥajj.

Ibn Rajab al-Ḥanbalī said:

أَكْثَرُهُمْ كَانُوا يَصِلُونَ إِلَى بَيْتِ اللَّهِ، وَلَا يَصِلُونَ إِلَى اللَّهِ

"Many of those who go for Ḥajj, they reach the Ka'bah - but they do not reach Allāh".

Ibn Rajab explains that there are two journeys involved in Ḥajj:

1. The journey of the body, which ends at the Ka'bah.
2. The journey of the heart, which leads to Allāh ﷻ.

Ibn Rajab al-Ḥanbalī further states:

1. After reaching the Ka'bah, you change your life. If your life before Ḥajj and your life after Ḥajj are completely different - and you now live in submission to the command of Allāh ﷻ while emulating the life of Muḥammad ﷺ - then you have truly reached Allāh ﷻ.
2. If your Ḥajj has brought about humility, love, compassion, kindness, and in general good Akhlāq within you, then you have reached Allāh ﷻ.

3. If your Ḥajj has removed pride and arrogance from your heart, and you have stopped quarrelling and arguing with others, then in reality, you have reached Allāh ﷻ - not just the Ka'bah.

The tragic reality is that for many, Ḥajj and 'Umrah have become forms of entertainment. Today, we see people performing Ḥajj after Ḥajj and 'Umrah after 'Umrah, yet nothing changes in their lifestyle. In fact, some return with even more pride and arrogance - more corrupted than before they left. Why? Simply put: they made the journey with their body, but not with what matters most - the heart.

Ḥajj Is an 'Ibādah of Love and Sincerity

Ḥajj is an 'Ibādah of love. A journey of love. It is a means through which we learn and grow. We don't perform the rituals of Ḥajj based on logic or reason - we do them purely out of obedience to the command of Allāh ﷻ.

Sayyidah Hājar ran between Ṣafā and Marwah in search of water. Today, there is water available every few metres, yet we still perform the sa'y between these two hills. Why? Because Allāh ﷻ commanded us to do so.

Likewise, Ibrāhīm (AS) pelted the Jamarāt because he saw Shayṭān there. We, on the other hand, do not see him - yet we continue to pelt, purely because it is the command of Allāh ﷻ. Every ritual of Ḥajj reminds us that this journey is one of surrender - not reason.

Sincere Desire to Make Ḥajj

Many people have the full opportunity to go for Ḥajj, but delay it with excuses: "I'm too busy", or "Inshā' Allāh, I'll go next year". Work, family, or finances become reasons to postpone. Ironically, when invited by a government official or a person of status, we find no difficulty in attending - yet when Allāh ﷻ invites us to His House, we hesitate.

It is important to understand that Ḥajj becomes compulsory immediately upon a person becoming Ṣāhib Al-Istiṭā'ah - that is, once they have the physical and financial means to perform it. From that point onwards, it is not permissible to delay Ḥajj without a valid reason. One cannot say: "I'll do it later" or wait for a more convenient time. Delaying it deliberately, while having the means, is a serious matter and a form of negligence toward one of the most important obligations in Islam.

We all say with our tongues that we want to go for Ḥajj - but in reality, our hearts and minds have no sincere yearning to go.

If you are honest with yourself and sincerely desire to go for Ḥajj, Allāh ﷻ will make a way for you - whether you have wealth or not. He can open doors through means, without means, or even against all odds. What matters most is that you ask Him sincerely and turn to Him with your heart.

This is a wake-up call for all of us. In reality, it isn't impossible to make arrangements - as long as we have the sincere desire and love to perform Ḥajj.

May Allāh ﷻ accept the Ḥajj of all those undertaking the sacred journey this year. May He grant them sincerity, ease, and complete acceptance. And may He open the doors and make the means easy for all those who long to go, allowing them to answer the call of Ibrāhīm (AS) and visit His blessed House. Āmīn.

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