34778 - What Is the Purpose of Hajj?

the question

I watched scenes of the pilgrims on TV, and saw them coming to visit the sacred House of Allah. I was overwhelmed and my eyes filled with tears when I saw this great scene, and I wished that I could be with them and do this great deed.

My question is this: does this great gathering have any effect on the Muslims and the people of Islam? What should the pilgrim remember when he is facing the sacred House of Allah?

Summary of answer

There are many purposes of Hajj in Islam, some of which are: 1- Hajj is the symbol of Tawhid; 2- Hajj is a reminder of the Hereafter; 3- Hajj is a symbol of unity; 4- Hajj trains him to be content with modest clothing and accommodation.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

We thank you for your question and appreciate your concern. We ask Allah to bless those who perform Hajj with forgiveness of sins, and for those who have not done Hajj we ask Him to grant them what they hope for and save them from that which they fear.

The aims and purposes of Hajj are great and sublime. There follows an outline of some of them:

1. A sense of connection with the Prophets (peace be upon them) from our father Ibrahim who built the House, to our Prophet Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), and his respect for the sanctity of Makkah. When the pilgrim visits the sacred places and performs the rituals, he remembers the visits of those pure prophets to this sacred place.

Muslim (241) narrated that Ibn ‘Abbas said: We traveled with the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) between Makkah and Madinah, and we passed by a valley. He said, “What valley is this?” They said, “The valley of al-Azraq.” He said, “It is as if I can see Musa, the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), putting his fingers in his ears beseeching Allah, reciting the Talbiyah and passing through this valley.”
Then we traveled on until we came to a mountain pass. He said, “What mountain pass is this?” They said, “Harsha or Lift.” He said, “It is as if I can see Yunus on a red camel, wearing a woollen cloak, the reins of his camel made from fibres of date-palm, passing through this valley reciting the Talbiyah.”

2. The whiteness and cleanness of the pilgrims’ clothes is a sign of inward purity, cleanness of heart and the purity of the message and the method. This means putting aside all adornment and showing humility, and it is a reminder of death when the deceased is shrouded in similar cloths. So it is as if he is preparing to meet Allah.

3. Entering ihram from the miqat is a physical expression of worship and enslavement to Allah, and of submission to His commands and laws. No one passes it (without entering ihram) because it is a command from Allah and a law that He has prescribed. This confirms the unity of the ummah and its following one system with no differentiation or exemptions with regard to the definition of the miqats.

4. Hajj is the symbol of Tawhid from the first moment the pilgrim enters ihram. Jabir ibn ‘Abd-Allah said, describing the Hajj of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him): “Then he started to say the words of Tawhid, ‘“Labbayka Allahumma labbayk, labbayka la sharika laka labbayk. Inna al-hamd wa’l-ni’mata laka wa’l-mulk, la sharika lak (Here I am, O Allah, here I am. Here I am, You have no partner, here I am. Verily all praise and blessings are Yours, and all sovereignty, You have no partner).’” (Narrated by Muslim, 2137; please see question no. 21617)

5. Hajj is a reminder of the Hereafter when all the people come together in one place in ‘Arafah and elsewhere, with no differentiation between them. All of them are equal in this place and no one is better than anyone else.

6. Hajj s a symbol of unity, because Hajj makes all people the same in their clothing, deeds, rituals, qiblah and the places they visit. So no one is better than anyone else, king or slave, rich or poor, are all the same.

So the people are equal in terms of rights and duties. They are equal in this sacred place, and differences in colour and nationality do not matter; no one has the right to differentiate between them.

Unity of feelings, unity of rituals.

Unity in purpose, unity in action.

Unity in words. “People come from Adam, and Adam came from dust. No Arab is superior to a non-Arab and no white man is superior to a black man, except in terms of piety (taqwa).”

More than two million Muslims all standing in one place, wearing the same clothes, sharing one aim, with one slogan, calling upon one Lord and following one Prophet… What unity can be greater than this?

Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Verily, those who disbelieved and hinder (men) from the path of Allah, and from Al-Masjid Al-Haram (at Makkah) which We have made (open) to (all) men, the dweller in it and the visitor from the country are equal there [as regards its sanctity and pilgrimage (Hajj and ‘Umrah)] — and whoever inclines to evil actions therein or to do wrong (i.e. practise polytheism and leave Islamic Monotheism), him We shall cause to taste from a painful torment.” [al-Hajj 22:25]

7. Hajj trains him to be content with modest clothing and accommodation, when he wears two pieces of cloth and it is sufficient for him, and his accommodation gives him just enough room to sleep.

8. Terrifying the disbelievers and followers of misguidance with this huge gathering of Muslims. Even though they are scattered and different, the simple fact that they come together despite

those differences at a certain time and in a certain place is indicative of their potential to unite at other times and in other places.

9.Pointing out the importance of Muslims coming together and establishing harmony. For we usually see each person travelling on his own, whereas in Hajj we see people coming in groups.

10. Getting to know the situation of the Muslims from trustworthy sources, since the Muslim can hear directly from his brother about the situation of his Muslim brothers in the land from which he has come.

11. Exchanging benefits and experience among the Muslims in general.

12. Meeting scholars and decision makers from all countries and studying the situation and needs of the Muslims, and the importance of cooperating with them.

13. Achieving true submission to Allah by standing in the holy places when the pilgrim leaves al-Masjid al-Haram which is the best of spots, and standing in ‘Arafah.

14. Forgiveness of sins, because the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “Whoever does Hajj and does not speak any obscene words or commit any sin will go back cleansed of sin as on the day his mother bore him.”

15. Opening the doors of hope to those who commit sin, and teaching them to give up their sin in these holy places, so that they will give up a lot of their bad habits during the period of Hajj and its rituals.

16. Proclaiming that Islam is the religion of organization, because during Hajj the rituals and time are organized, with every action done in the place and at the time defined for it.

17. Training oneself to spend in charitable ways and to avoid miserliness. The pilgrim spends a great deal of money for the sake of Hajj, on travel expenses, on the road and in the sacred places.

18. Increasing piety and making the heart fit to honour the Symbols of Allah. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“and whosoever honours the Symbols of Allah, then it is truly, from the piety of the hearts.” [al-Hajj 22:32]

19. Training the rich to give up their distinct clothing and accommodation and making them equal with the poor in clothing and in the rituals of tawaf, sa’i and stoning the jamarat. This teaches them to be humble and to realize the insignificance of this worldly life.

20. The pilgrim persists in worshipping and remembering Allah during the days of Hajj, moving from one sacred place to the next, from one action to another. This is a kind of intensive training in worship and remembrance of Allah.

21. Training oneself to be kind to people – so the pilgrim guides those who are lost, teaches those who are ignorant, helps the poor, and supports the disabled and weak.

22. Developing good characteristics such as forbearance and putting up with annoyance from people, because the pilgrim will inevitably be exposed to crowding and arguments, etc. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“The Hajj (pilgrimage) is (in) the well-known (lunar year) months (i.e. the 10th month, the 11th month and the first ten days of the 12th month of the Islamic calendar, i.e. two months and ten days). So whosoever intends to perform Hajj therein (by assuming Ihram), then he should not have sexual relations (with his wife), nor commit sin, nor dispute unjustly during the Hajj.” [al-Baqarah 2:197]

23. Training oneself to be patient and to put up with difficulties such as heat, long distances, being apart from one’s family, going back and forth between the holy sites and crowded conditions therein.

24. Learning to give up one's usual habits and the things that one is comfortable with, because the pilgrim has to uncover his head and give up his regular clothes, and leave behind the accommodation, food and drink that he is used to.

25. When the pilgrim does sa’i between al-Safa and al-Marwah, he remembers that the one who

obeys Allah and puts his trust in Him and turns to Him, He will not let him down, rather He will raise high the esteem in which he is held. When Hajar the mother of Isma'il (peace be upon them both) said to Ibrahim, "Has Allah commanded you to do this?" he said, "Yes." She said, "Then He will not let us down." So Allah raised high the esteem in which she was held and the people, including the prophets, started to run between the two hills as she had done.

26. Teaching oneself not to despair of the mercy of Allah, no matter how great one's worries and distress. For the way out is in Allah's Hand. The mother of Isma'il thought her son was about to die, and she started to run from one mountain to the other, looking for a solution, and it came to her from a source she could never imagine when the angel came down and struck the ground, and out came the water of Zamzam with its healing for diseases of the heart and body.

27. The pilgrim remembers that in doing these rituals he is the guest of the most Merciful. The gathering of Hajj is not at the invitation of any government or organization or king or president, rather it is the invitation of the Lord of the Worlds Who has made it an occasion on which the Muslims meet on a footing of equality in which no one is superior to anyone else. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

"And proclaim to mankind the Hajj (pilgrimage). They will come to you on foot and on every lean camel, they will come from every deep and distant (wide) mountain highway (to perform Hajj).

That they may witness things that are of benefit to them (i.e. reward of Hajj in the Hereafter, and also some worldly gain from trade)." [al-Hajj 22:27-28]

Al-Nasai (2578) narrated that Abu Hurayrah said: The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "The guests of Allah are three: the warrior for the sake of Allah, the pilgrim performing Hajj and the pilgrim performing 'Umrah." (Classed as sahih by al-Albani in Sahih al-Nasai, 2464)

28. Strengthening bonds with the believers, as represented in the words of the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him): "Your blood, your honour and your wealth are sacred to you as this day of yours in this month of yours in this land of yours is sacred." Narrated by al-

Bukhari, 65; Muslim, 3180.

29. The season of Hajj is distinguished by complete separation from the people of shirk and kufr who are forbidden to attend any part of it. It is forbidden for them to enter the Haram at any time, no matter what their purpose. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“O you who believe (in Allah’s Oneness and in His Messenger Muhammad)! Verily, the Mushrikun (polytheists, pagans, idolaters, disbelievers in the Oneness of Allah, and in the Message of Muhammad) are Najasun (impure). So let them not come near Al-Masjid Al-Haram (at Makkah) after this year; and if you fear poverty, Allah will enrich you if He wills, out of His Bounty. Surely, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise.” [al-Tawbah 9:28]

Al-Bukhari narrated that Abu Hurayrah said: “Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him) sent me as an announcer on that Hajj [which the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) appointed Abu Bakr to lead in 9 AH], to announce on the Day of Sacrifice in Mina that after this year no mushrik might perform Hajj and no one might circumambulate the House naked.”

And Allah knows best. May Allah send blessings and peace upon our Prophet Muhamamd and upon his family and Companions.