

Bismillah-ir-Rahman-ir-Rahim

Hajj, Umrah and Ziyarah

Hajj is a mandatory Pilgrimage and is the fifth Pillar of Islam. Umrah is not compulsory, it's voluntary, and can be performed at any time. Ziyarah is visiting Sacred and Holy places in Makkah and Madinah that have a significance in the Islamic religion. The purpose of performing Hajj, Umrah and Ziyarah is to seek Allah (S.W.T)'s pleasure, to become closer to Him and indulge in the blessed opportunity to make a stronger connection with Allah (S.W.T). Hadrat Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) said that the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) was asked, "Which action is best of all?" He replied, "To believe in Allah and His Messenger". He was further asked, "And which next?" He replied, "Jihad (fighting) in the cause of Allah". He was asked again, "And which after that?" He answered, "An accepted Pilgrimage" (that is a Pilgrimage free from vices and defects). (al-Bukhari and Muslim).

Hajj is the fifth Pillar in Islam and is an obligatory Pilgrimage, if only we are financially and physically capable of going. Our Prophet (S.A.W) is the one who taught us how to do Hajj. He did Hajj ten years after he moved to Madinah, that is the Hajj of Farewell. Hajj takes place in the month of Dhul-Hijjah and is the Pilgrimage to Makkah and Arafat. Before Hajj we should make the required intention to go. During Hajj men wear Ihram clothing and women wear modest clothing. In the time of Hajj we should help others (if they need help), pray nafl, make as many duas as we can, and recite the Qur'an.

When we arrive in Makkah, we should perform Umrah right away in the state of Ihram, Firstly, we walk around the Ka'ba seven times; this is called Tawaf. Once the Tawaf is completed, we pray two rakat Sunnah Salah behind Maqam Ibrahim and drink Zam Zam water. We also run between Safa and Marwa seven times. Once we have done that, men will have their hair clipped or shaved while women will only clip a little of their hair. We should do Tawaf of the Ka'ba as many times as we can.

Once we have completed our Umrah, we start performing Hajj on the 8th of Dhul-Hijjah, by doing Tawaf of the Ka'ba. Then we travel to Mina. After Fajr Salah in Mina, on the 9th, we go to mount Arafat where pilgrims ask for forgiveness from Allah (S.W.T) and make a lot of dua. On 9th of Dhul-Hijjah we must be in Arafat. This is a must to complete the Hajj. On this day our sins are forgiven by Allah (S.W.T). After sunset, we depart from Arafat and go to Muzdalifah. In Muzdalifah, we pray Maghrib and Isha Salah and collect forty-nine or more pebbles.

After Fajr Salah, the next day on the 10th of Dhul-Hijjah, we leave Muzdalifah and go to Mina where we sacrifice an animal to feed the poor as it is the day of Eid al-Adha. We stop reciting the Talbiya and begin to recite the Takbeeraat of Eid. We then pray Zuhr Salah and throw seven pebbles at the big pillar in Mina which represents shaytan. After we have sacrificed an animal, the men shave their head or cut their hair, and the women clip their hair. Now we come out of Ihram clothing and put on our usual clothes. We then return to Makkah and make Tawaf of the Kaba. This Tawaf

is a must. We pray Sunnah Prayer at Maqam Ibrahim, drink the water of Zam Zam, then run between Safa and Marwa seven times.

We then return to Mina, and on the 11th and 12th day, we throw seven pebbles at each of the three pillars there which represent shaytan. After that, we return to Makkah on the 12th day to make our farewell Tawaf. This is called Tawaf al-wada.

After Hajj, we should go to Masjid Nabawi in Madinah where Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W)'s resting place is. There, we say Salaams and send blessings on Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W). We also say Salaams to Sayyidina Abu Bakr (R.A.A) and Sayyidina Umar (R.A.A). We should also say Salaams to the Family members of the Prophet (S.A.W) and his Companions (R.A.A) who have been laid to rest in Makkah and Madinah. If we do Hajj, our sins are forgiven by Allah (S.W.T), as He is the Most Merciful. When we come back from Hajj, we must avoid sins and continue to be good Muslims.

Umrah is the smaller Pilgrimage and is not obligatory. It is still a blessing to go, and we still get rewards if we perform Umrah. Umrah will spiritually cleanse our souls and purify them, so we become good Muslims and become closer to Allah (S.W.T). Umrah is firstly done by making an intention to go, then being in the state of Ihram. This is followed by doing Tawaf (walking around the Kaba seven times). While we are doing Tawaf we can see the footprint of Prophet Ibrahim (A.S) in Maqam Ibrahim (this is where he used to stand while he was building the Ka'ba). We can also see Hajar Al-Aswad in the Corner of the Kaba. Hajar Al-Aswad is a stone that came from Heaven. We kiss Hajar Al-Aswad and if we are unable to do that, we blow a kiss towards it. We say "Labbaik Allahumma Labbaik". This is called the Talbiya. It means "Here I am, O Allah, to obey Your Command, here I am".

Once the Tawaf is done, we pray two rakat Sunnah Salah behind Maqam Ibrahim and drink Zam Zam water. After this we walk between the hills Safa and Marwa seven times. Men run while the green light is there. We run between Safa and Marwa because Sayyida Hajar (A.S) ran between these two hills searching for water for her son Prophet Ismail (A.S) who was a baby. She prayed to Allah (S.W.T) for help and when she got back, she found Zam Zam water under the feet of her baby Ismail (A.S) where he had been hitting the ground with his feet. After we walk between Safa and Marwa, men shave their hair, and women cut off a small piece of their hair. That is when our Umrah is complete, but Umrah can be done several times at any other time.

Ziyarah is what comes after Hajj and Umrah. Ziyarah is visiting significant Islamic places which are both historic and important in the Islamic religion. It is non compulsory and is not an obligatory act of worship. However, it is still a religious act and is highly recommended. While we are in Ziyarah, we can see all the historical places and know about the history of the Prophet (S.A.W). For example, we can see masjid Qiblatain, where Allah (S.W.T) told Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) to switch the direction of Qibla from Masjid Al-Aqsa to the Kab'a while he was leading the Salah. We can also see the Cave of Hira where Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) used to go and to him was revealed the first revelation of the Qur'an "Iqra" there by Angel Jibril (A.S). We can walk to this

cave. Another example is the Cave of Thawr. This is the cave where the spider weaved a web so the non-believers, who wanted to kill the Prophet (S.A.W) thought no one could have entered it and went away. We can visit Mount Uhud and Badr as well. Mount Uhud is where the Battle of Uhud took place and where Sayyidina Hamza (R.A.A) was laid to rest. Badr is a city, and we can go to the Masjid Al-Areesh, and right behind it is where the Battle of Badr took place. These are all historical places that we should visit because it will bring us closer to Allah (S.W.T) and bring us closer to our religion.

Hajj and Umrah are religious Pilgrimages that we should work towards so we can go. It is a huge achievement, big blessing, and an opportunity to be closer to Allah (S.W.T). We do Hajj, Umrah and Ziyarah so we can strengthen our connection with Allah (S.W.T), seek forgiveness for our sins, and connect to our faith. These things will increase our devotion to Allah (S.W.T) and cleanse our souls, so we can continue to be very good Muslims and practice our faith even more. May Allah (S.W.T) bless us all with the opportunity to go for Hajj, Umrah, and Ziyarah. Ameen.

Written by Aayat Sidik