

Summary of 5.11 "Hajj: Rites & Significance"

First, we began by making a distinction between the lesser pilgrimage and the major pilgrimage known as Hajj. We said the lesser pilgrimage can be done at any time and constitutes visiting the holy house, the Kaaba, a doing a few rites which only take a couple of hours.

Second, we said that to go for any type of pilgrimage a person should enter into a state of consecration which is called *ihram* and involves both the making the intention in obedience and devotion to God and wearing the attire that is made of two pieces of cloth (one is wrapped around the waist and the other covers the upper part while leaving the left arm exposed). We discussed the wisdom behind this and the fact that a person casts their ego, clothing as a symbol of wealth, race, nationality or prestige and becoming simply human beings dressed like one another in simple plain clothing. This state of consecration begins before one enters Mecca. We described the boundaries of Mecca and we said that depending on the area one is coming from the area of Macca can be from 6 to 16 kilometers. One should enter the state of *ihram* prior to entering Mecca and there are specific locations allocated in the various directions which were specified by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) which rangers from 100 to 500 km away form Mecca.

We also mentioned that the state of consecration does not only involve intention and the dress but that one should be at perfect peace with other human beings avoid argument and violence, no animal or insect is to be killed (not even for food) unless there is danger to ones life, and make peace with other objects in nature as one is not allowed to cut down a tree, trim their nails or cut their hair.

When the person is on his way to the Kaaba they chant a specific prayer. Then once the pilgrim arrives at the Kaaba he circles it seven times with the Kaaba on his left hand side starting at the corner with the Black Stone lies.

5.12 Hajj: Rites and Significance (Cont.)

Host: What is the Black Stone and its significance?

Jamal Badawi: The Black Stone is neither an idol nor an image. In Islam we don't have any images of God and stands very strongly against idols or anything that resembles idols. The Black Stone is simply a small piece of stone (that doesn't have a particular shape) which was placed in one of the corners of the Kaaba.

As far as the origin of the Black Stone there are all kinds of speculations about it. Some traditions say that it was a meteor that fell from the sky. It actually looks like a meteor as it is not totally black but rather dark grey. There is another tradition that says that the angel brought the stone to Prophet Abraham about 3000 years ago when he was building the Kaaba, for the worship of the one God, to use as the corner stone of the building. However there is something certain about the Black Stone and that is that it is the only part remaining from the original structure that was built by Abraham. Throughout history because of natural disasters the Kaaba had been destroyed and rebuilt several times but the Black Stone always remained as a reminder of the origin of the Kaaba.

When Muslims go to the Kaaba and touch, kiss or point at the Black Stone it has nothing to do with adoration in a sense of worship, because a Muslim worships God alone. When one touches that stone they are identifying with Prophet Abraham who is the spiritual father of monotheism and the father of both Israelite and Ishmaelite prophets. One feels that they are part of a community of believers that descended throughout history. Muslims have a sort of emotional attachment with this relic from Prophet Abraham the grandfather of all monotheistic faiths. As a relic the Black Stone doesn't have any other significance.

The question that kissing the Black Stone implies worship is

irrelevant. ♦ We all kiss our kids and loved ones and it doesn't mean that we worship them or take them for gods. ♦ Kissing simply means that it is something we cherish and appreciate and we definitely appreciate and cherish this relic of Prophet Abraham. ♦ It is also important to notice, as additional evidence that the Black Stone has no significance in itself I will quote two sayings. ♦ One was a statement made by a very good Muslim, Umar ibn al-Khattab who was the second Caliph after the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) when he kissed the Black Stone he said ♦ I know that you are but a stone, incapable of doing good or harm. Had I not seen the Messenger of God kiss you - may God's blessing and peace be upon him - I would not have touched you. ♦♦ The other quote says that it is desirable when one starts circling the Kaaba to reach or raise one's hand in the direction of the stone and say *Bismi Allah Wa Allahu Akbar* which means ♦ in the name of God- God is the greatest. ♦♦ So even though one starts their point of movement there they remember that God is the greatest and no one else shares the divine attributes of God. ♦ One also says ♦ oh God out of faith in You, acceptance of the book that You sent, out of respect of the oath (of faith) in You and following the path of your Prophet ♦♦ then one goes on to make supplications and all kinds of prayers while going around the Kaaba seven times. ♦ By the way the kissing or touching of the stone is not a requirement because it is impossible when there are hundreds of thousands of people to reach and it suffices that when one starts to raise their hand and say the words and begin.

Host: ♦ After the Kaaba has been circled what takes place next?

Jamal Badawi: ♦ After the pilgrim finishes circling the Kaaba he goes to a place the Station of Abraham which is near the Kaaba. ♦ Currently this spot is surrounded by a small glass structure. ♦ This spot contains the foot print of Prophet Abraham when he was building the Kaaba (apparently the ground was moist and then it dried). ♦ Till today we can see the footprint of relatively big feet, it was said that Abraham was standing on that spot when he was trying to place the Black Stone. ♦ It is interesting to remember that Prophet Abraham did not build this house for himself, but in devotion to God to be used as the center of Monotheism and to be used by his son, Prophet Ishmael (PBUH), and all the descendents that came after him. ♦ Presently it is used by the millions of Muslims that come from all over the world to worship God and visit the sacred house.

♦♦ Once this is done the pilgrim goes to a nearby place called Safa and Marwah which are two small hills about a quarter of a mile apart. ♦ The pilgrim is supposed to go from one to the other seven times (one way from one hill to the other). ♦ Those who are weak or sick carried back and forth (there are facilities available for the old or weak). ♦ After finishing the seven rounds most pilgrims can cut their hair (just a few hairs would do it) and then they move to the well of Zamzam and drink or make ablution from it. ♦ Of course considering the huge number of pilgrims there are facilities for men and women where the water is pumped out of the well of Zamzam. ♦ This is the same well that gushed from under the feet of Prophet Ishmael when he was a baby.

Host: ♦ What is the significance of hastening between the two hills?

Jamal Badawi: ♦ This is actually a reenactment of what Hagar the wife of Prophet Abraham did after he left her and Ishmael in Mecca and she ran out of water. ♦ Hagar ran between the Safa and Marwah looking for any passer by who might have had water for her baby. ♦ After she finished the seven rounds she went back to check on her baby and she found miraculously that the well of Zamzam was gushing under his feet where he was kicking the earth with his heels.

♦♦ There

are a number of good lessons to be learned from this act and they all reflect the Islamic way of thinking. ♦ First of all, when Hagar was left in a desolate place with no plants or water and no other humans she did not sit down and cry and wait for her death and the death of her infant. ♦ She knew that there was nobody around to bring her water and that death was almost certain but she did not adopt a fatalistic approach (Islam rejects this attitude of fatalism and try to do something as little as it may be) and tried to do something about it. ♦ Second, it is a great lesson in certitude and the trust in God. ♦ She is alone and there is nothing that can help her but still she ran on the hope that God's mercy would give her a way out of this difficulty. ♦ This should always be the attitude of a devoted Muslim no matter how much tribulation or difficulty they have a person should always live by the hope that God's solution and compassion may not be far away.

The third point is that for hundreds of years now since Muhammad (PBUH) came and pilgrimage became an institution in Islam we find that hundreds of millions of people from all walks of life have ran between the hills of Safa and Marwah following the footsteps of a poor simple African bond woman. ♦ This carries a great deal of significance as it shows in a conclusive way the true Islamic attitude towards human brotherhood and that all of those artificial barriers that humans created by way of racial superiority, ethnic superiority and sex superiority has nothing to do in the sight of God with the basic human and spiritual qualities. ♦ The basic human and spiritual qualities are really what count because from among all people Muslims commemorate and respect a woman and from among all women she was a poor bond woman. ♦ In a way it reflects the profound respect that Islam gives to women which is something that has been greatly distorted by many misinformed people. ♦ The fact that everybody including the Prophet himself followed the footsteps of this humble woman shows us this respect for women. ♦ In the Quran we find much praise of many saintly women and there is a whole chapter (19) in the Quran named Mary after the Virgin Mary the mother of Prophet Jesus (PBUH) which shows Islam's respect for women and particularly for motherhood. ♦ Motherhood in Islam is regarded as the cornerstone and foundation of society; destroy it and the society is set towards self destruction.

Host: ♦ Many say that the rites of the pilgrimage were practiced by pre-Islamic Pagans and were integrated into the Islamic tradition, how would you respond to this?

Jamal Badawi:

This is a half truth which are very harmful. ♦ Yes, it true that before Islam even the Pagan Arabs observed some of the rites of the pilgrimage but they did not invent it. ♦ The Pagan Arabs were simply following what remained in their traditions (they did not invent it) of the original rites that were done during the days of Prophet Ishmael. ♦ Islam did not adopt any of the Pagan practices. ♦ The Pagans were imitating the practices of Prophet Ishmael who was a monotheistic Prophet like his father Abraham. ♦ Islam simply restored the Kaaba to its original purpose and restored the rites of the pilgrimage to its original pure form.

For example, the Kaaba was originally dedicated by Prophet Abraham for the worship of the one God; the pre-Islamic Pagan Arabs corrupted the Kaaba by placing Idols inside it. ♦ When Islam came it destroyed and removed those Idols. ♦ There were certain reforms that Islam introduced to the pilgrimage. ♦ For example, in pre-Islamic days they used to make they would make the rounds around the Kaaba naked, men during the day and women at night and Islam forbade that because it is contrary to the rules of modesty.

Host: ♦ Give us a description of what rites are involved in the greater pilgrimage, Hajj?

Jamal Badawi:

The same state of consecration and dress that I explained before and everything I mentioned about the lesser pilgrimage also applies. ♦ Hajj starts on the eighth day of *Dhul Hijjah* the

twelfth month in the Islamic calendar when the Muslims move to a place called Minah which is about 15 kilometers outside of Mecca. ♦ The Muslims wait there till the following day which is the ninth day of Hajj which is when the climax of Hajj takes place. ♦ After they pray the noon prayer the pilgrims enter the Plane of *Arafat* where they spend the whole day in utter devotion to God. ♦ The term *Arafat* is etymologically derived from the word for knowledge, Arafat. ♦ The Plane of *Arafat* is a vast empty plane which is surrounded with dark lava peaks which are covered with soft sands. ♦ Standing in the Plane of Arafat is indeed a unique experience which has the mount of mercy where Prophet Muhammad gave his last sermon before his death (the farewell sermon). ♦ The feeling that one has while there is amazing as 2 million people (in recent years) stand there in devotion to God, both males and females of all ethnic backgrounds from all walks of life and professions from all corners of the earth. ♦ This shows that social origin, race, ethnic orientation, wealth or profession has no bearing on the basic spiritual and human qualities. ♦ Indeed this particular experience was the primary thing that moved the late Malcolm X to change his ideas about racial superiority and that all humans are equal whether black or white.

♦ The other thing that is noticed when one looks at the scene is that it reminds people of death and resurrection and the standing of all people before God for the final judgment. ♦ It is indeed a very powerful profound experience.

♦ After leaving *Arafat* the pilgrims go to a place called Muzdalifa which is again a simple plane where they spend the night in vigil while relaxing a little. ♦ At dawn they make the morning prayers. ♦ Then after sunrise they go to a place called Minah where they collect small pebbles and throw it at a stone pillar which symbolizes victory over Satan and evil prompting from within ourselves. ♦ After this one should cut a little bit of their hair to symbolize the end of most of the restrictions of *Ihram*. ♦ After this they go to a place which is half way between Mecca and *Arafat* where they sacrifice an animal. ♦ After this the pilgrims go to the Kaaba another circling called *Ifada* which is the end of the procedures of the pilgrimage. ♦ If people stay longer than that pilgrims should make a farewell circling of the Kaaba.

♦ It is recommended for the pilgrims to stay a few more nights after Hajj in Minah and on each day to perform the symbolic stoning of the devil which symbolizes collective victory by the community of believers. ♦ Finally, if the pilgrims have time they can go visit the city of Madina and they can pray in the mosque, which is not a requirement of Hajj. ♦ When a person goes home they hopefully are reborn with new inspiration and a sense of purpose in their lives. Prophet Muhammad said that a person who does the pilgrimage properly comes back from it clean from sins as the day his mother gave birth to him.