



# *Hajj Mabruur and Umrah*

THE ACCEPTED PILGRIMAGE PERFORMED IN A SPIRITUAL CLIMATE

Osman Nûri TOPBAŞ

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# CONTENTS

FOREWORD.....	7
HAJJ MABRUR AND UMRAH.....	17
Mount Arafat.....	30
Muzdalifa and Sacrifice.....	33
Mina and Stoning the Devil.....	40
Hills of Safa and Marwa and Running Between Them (Sa'i).....	43
The Great Ka'bah.....	44
Before Death Knocks On Your Door ...	49
Trust in and Submission to Allah the Almighty .....	52
Spiritual Guidelines for an Accepted and Praiseworthy Hajj and Umrah .....	57
VISITING MEDINA.....	85







## FOREWORD

*Endless praises are due to Allah the Almighty Who has bestowed upon us the blessing of faith and opened for us the many paths upon which we may meet with Him through acts of worship!*

*Endless peace and blessings be upon the Prophet Muhammad, the excellent exemplar of humanity, the light of our existence, our intercessor in the Hereafter, and our master!*

Human beings have many needs and demands. Some of them are necessary to sustain one's life. Air, water and food, for instance, are vital for the body. Similarly there are necessities of the soul, which are just as vital, if not more so than as the needs of the human body; for the body is destined to go to earth and decay, whereas the soul is a pilgrim of eternity.

In this respect, Allah the Almighty points out the spiritual sustenance of human beings in the Qur'an as follows:

**“And in heaven is your Sustenance, as (also) that which you are promised.”** (al-Zariyat 51; 22).



He then bestowed upon His servants the acts of worship as the means of reaching Him. This is why, even though these acts of worship are ordered by Allah the Almighty, people are the ones in need of them, for these acts are essential for the spiritual nourishment of human beings. Such nourishment cannot be obtained from any other source. In today's world those who are not aware of this fact do nothing but watch their souls writhe in agony; whereas the fortunate ones who properly nourish their souls live an utterly different existence of peace and tranquility. Transforming the hardships and sorrows of this world into happiness and pleasure, the faithful continue their lives on the straight path. Their lives are absorbed in the divine love and this love and spiritual enjoyment protects them from succumbing to the dangers of this world.

In other words, certain acts of worship have been given in order to satisfy the spiritual needs of human beings and protect them from turning into ungrateful servants of the endless blessings of Allah the Almighty. Such prescribed acts of worship are like a prescription written by a doctor for his or her patients. People usually do not properly fulfill their acts of worship either because of their laziness or unawareness of the mystery of this matter. This is why Allah the Almighty has wished to protect His servants from being



deprived of the benefits of the acts of worship and thus made some of them obligatory upon those who believe.

**Ritual prayer** certainly comes at the head of these vital acts of worship. This is why it was the first act pronounced as obligatory. In fact, properly performed prayers can remove the veils enmeshed in a believer's heart and he or she experiences an indescribable union with The Lord as a manifestation of the statement of "***prayer is the ascension of a believer.***" This union manifests itself to the believer after showing obedience to the command of Allah the Almighty "***prostrate yourself and draw near (unto Allah)***"<sup>\*1</sup> (Alaq 96; 19).

After ritual prayer, **fasting** comes next among the obligatory acts of worship which nourishes our souls. Fasting is a great act of worship that matures ones morality by strengthening it through patience, will power, and resistance against selfish desires. It reminds people of the value of God's numerous blessings and causes us to contemplate upon the

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1 \* For English translation of the verses, I have benefited from Shakir, M.H. (Trans.), *The Qur'an = [Al-Qur'An Al-'akim]*, Elmhurst, N.Y.: Tahrike Tarsile Qur'an, 1997; Pickthall, Marmaduke William, *The Meaning Of The Glorious Koran; An Explanatory Translation*, New York: Dorset Press, [1988?]; And Ali, Abdullah Yusuf, *The Glorious Qur'an Text, Translation And Commentary*, McGregor & Werner, 1946 (Translator)

sufferings of the hungry and the poor. Fasting makes the rich equal to the poor by subjecting them to the same hardships of the needy, and in doing so enhances the wealthy persons' sense of mercy and helping others.

**“Alms giving and charity”** can be noted among the obligatory acts of worship which generate love and compassion, thus eliminating enmity between the rich and the poor in Islamic social system.

In this prescribed act of worship there are many inner concepts, such as hindering the possible outcomes of submission to one's wealth and preventing the emergence of the animosity towards the wealthy. Thus the social balance is protected.

Beside these prescribed acts of worship, there is another one which is performed both physically and financially. This important act of worship is called Hajj or major pilgrimage. And it completes the faith by creating a similitude of the place of last judgment in this world. It is also an important means to make a person understand the meaning of ***“die before death comes to you.”***

The inner aspects of pilgrimage are much more important than its outer aspect. This pilgrimage defined by the Messenger of Allah (Peace Be Upon

Him) as *Hajj Mabruur*, or an accepted pilgrimage is an act of worship which is filled with spiritual beauties from its beginning to the end. From this point of view pilgrimage means supplication, repentance, as well as the attainment of Divine mercy, blessings and merits. It is the improvement of this life by righteous deeds and it is used to pledge to Allah the Almighty the intention to maintain the fine state attained during the pilgrimage after coming back from these holy places.

While stating the results of righteous deeds performed during a major or minor pilgrimage, the Messenger of Allah (Peace Be Upon Him) expressed the goal of this act of worship as follows:

*“Combine the performance of Hajj (major pilgrimage) and Umrah (minor pilgrimage), for they eliminate the sins just as the bellows eliminate rust from iron.”* (Nasai, Manasik, 6; Ibn Majah, Manasik, 3)

Umrah, or minor pilgrimage, which is advised in this tradition to combine with the major pilgrimage as a means of purification, is also a very important act of worship in Islam.

Unlike Hajj, which is required to be done only once and in certain days of the years, Umrah can be performed any time of the year and as many times as one wishes. Due to its tremendous

rewards and virtues, Umrah is also called a “minor Hajj.” One should also know its merits well.

What is remarkable in all these acts of worship is the condition that they must all be performed sincerely and with a sound heart. If we want our servitude to be accepted in the presence of Allah the Almighty, all our efforts must be directed to perform our worship in a spirit of love and within the limits of good manners. Only then our actions will gain the characteristic of righteous deeds and become nourishment of joy in the eternal world of the afterlife.

In this humble work, I have tried to present the spiritual side of Hajj and Umrah and the necessary manners for their fulfillment within the limits of piety. In this context, I have revisited and made a selection from my writings already published in several books and articles; and thus I prepared this booklet for those who are looking for brief, concise and well-organized information about the spiritual side of pilgrimage in Islam.

**May Allah the Almighty bestow upon us the ability to perform all our acts of worship with sincerity and piety! May He make the ritual prayer our eternal companion, alms and charity our sustenance, fasting and the pilgrimage our best friend on the path to the Hereafter! May our**



Foreword 

**Lord let us be successful to fulfill our obligations  
in the best manner!**

**Amin!**

Osman Nûri TOPBAŞ

August 2006

Üsküdar, İstanbul











## HAJJ MABRUR AND UMRAH

As one of the five principles of Islam, Hajj is both a physical and financial act of worship. Proper fulfillment of this meritorious act depends on an elevated state of the heart and a perfect state of faith and spirituality.

Hajj is a sublime act of worship beginning with Adam (Peace Be Upon Him), the first ring of the chain of the Prophets, and continuing till the last Prophet Muhammad (Peace and Blessings Be Upon Him). It is a means of comprehending the true meaning of “*die before death comes to you.*”

The family of human beings starting with Adam and Eve has adopted the place of the Ka’bah in the respected city of Mecca as their first place of worship in order to live in a state of religious peace and happiness. Due to of changing individual and social circumstances the sons of Adam spread all around the world. Centuries passed; generations passed, and people deviated from the straight path. Tragically, this sacred place of worship was lost. By the command of Allah the Almighty, Abraham (Peace Be Upon Him)



rebuilt it and had it blessed by his prayers. This is stated in the Holy Qur'an as follows:

**“And when Abraham said: My Lord! Make this city secure, and save me and my sons from worshiping idols: My Lord! Surely they have led many men astray; then whoever follows me, he is surely of me, and whoever disobeys me, You surely are Forgiving, Merciful: O our Lord! Surely I have settled a part of my offspring in a valley unproductive of fruit near Your Sacred House, our Lord! That they may keep up prayer; therefore make the hearts of some people yearn towards them and provide them with fruits; haply they may be grateful.”** (Ibrahim 14; 35-37)

Pilgrimage was an act of worship during the pre-Islamic period; however polytheists had changed its character and, in a way, turned it into an immoral ceremony displayed towards those who held the power. In fact the people of the Arab tribes used to circumambulate nude around the Ka'bah except for those of the Quraish who had a privileged status. It was the benevolence of the Quraish to let others to cover their private parts. In other words if the Quraish gave them garments, they could cover themselves, otherwise they would circumambulate around the Ka'bah nude. When they sacrificed an animal, they used to rub its blood to the gate and walls of the Ka'bah and burn its flesh.

Finally, with the coming of the Prophet Muhammad Mustafa (Peace Be Upon Him) and with the emergence of the age of happiness, religious life reached its zenith at the same place where it had begun. Islam completely abolished all those shameful customs and superstitions; for the object of Islamic acts of worship is to remember Allah and ask His forgiveness.

The Messenger of Allah (Peace Be Upon Him) lived and enabled people to live in an age of happiness centered around Mecca and Medina. Thus these cities have become blessed places where Islam and believers' hearts will beat until the end of the world.

These blessed places of pilgrimage have been watered by the tears of believers and have flourished by the spirituality of the believer's hearts since Adam (Peace Be Upon Him). Those who perform their pilgrimage with a sagacious heart look for these and other spiritual marks of the many prophets. They are inspired by their memories; because, these exceptionally inspiring and sacred places are filled with the memories of the prophets. Allah's mercy, benevolence, and blessings always come to mind in these places.

Another goal of pilgrimage is to show respect to the signs of our Lord at these Holy places and



to inspire our souls by the contemplation of these sacred memorials.

Those who visit these places with the intention of performing Hajj or Umrah participate in and are honored with the blessings of Abraham's following supplication:

**“Our Lord! And make us both submissive to Thee and (raise) from our offspring a nation submitting to Thee, and show us our ways of devotion ...”** (al-Baqara 2; 128)

This and many other blessings and manifestations kindle the believing heart with the longing and wish for visiting these places. Many caravans' of those who love Allah are reverberated with the expressions such as:

*“I have become blind of far and near  
O beautiful Ka’bah! I wish to come to you”*

or with the lines of

*“O morning breeze! If you pass by the two  
Sacred places  
Take my greetings to the Messenger of the two  
worlds.”*

And thus they sent their greetings and best wishes to these places and to the master of the worlds, saying *“O morning breeze! If your happen to pass by Mecca and Medina, present my greetings*

*to Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) the Messenger of the people and genies.”*

These manifestations of love have deepened in the hearts of believers so much that it has become a custom to send those who set out the journey of pilgrimage with supplications and greetings. A poet reflects the loving wishes whispered into the ears of the pilgrims as follows:

*To the roads you pass*

*Take our greetings.*

*To the servants saying the Truth is our friend*

*Take our greetings.*

*Go and perform your pilgrimage*

*Reach endless pleasure*

*To Muhammad Mustafa*

*Take our greetings.*

*Mecca and Medina*

*Are two unique treasure*

*To the distinguished beloved*

*Take our greetings.*

*Constantly say labbaik*

*Run to zamzam water*

*To the Hashim's offspring*

*Take our greetings.*

*You wear ihram*

*Without touching the illicit*



*To the blessed Companions  
Take our greetings.*

*Beg to our Lord  
Say prayer for us  
To our great Ka'bah  
Take our greetings.*

*Those who enter the garden of love  
Will not fall into the trap of heedlessness  
To the beautiful mountain of Light  
Take our greetings.*

*Enter the heart of Hatim  
Prostrate yourselves to The All-Merciful  
To the station of Abraham  
Take our greetings.*

*To the Excellence of the Lord  
To all stretched wings  
To Mina, to Arafah  
Take our greetings.*

*To the garden of Baqi  
To our pure rose garden  
To our joy  
Take our greetings.*

Throughout history, those lovers of the Truth who could not calm down the excitement of their souls miraculously folded up the distances and rushed to these Holy places to perform their acts of





worship. Some of them have even taken along with them some poor lovers of Truth who did not have the means to travel. The following story about Aziz Mahmud Hudayi is a famous one concerning this:

During the days when he was the judge of Bursa a weird case was brought to his attention. A woman complained about her husband saying:

“Your honor! Every year my husband plans to go to pilgrimage, but due to our poverty he never had a chance to fulfill his plans. This year he insisted on going to pilgrimage. He even said: “If I do not go to pilgrimage this year, I will divorce you.” Then around the days of the festival of sacrifice he disappeared. Five or six days later he came back and claimed that he had gone to pilgrimage. How can this be possible? Your honor! I request a divorce from this liar.”

Judge Mahmud summoned the woman’s husband to enquire into the validity of the claims. He asked the man whether or not his wife was telling the truth. The man replied:

“You honor! Both my wife and I are telling the truth. You should know that I really went to Hajj. There I even met some pilgrims from Bursa and entrusted them with some presents to take to Bursa.” Puzzled with this response Judge Mahmud asked again:



“How could this be true?” The man began to narrate:

“Like previous years, when I had not been able to go to Hajj, I went to Eskici Mehmet Dede in deep sorrow. He told me to hold his hand and close my eyes. When I opened my eyes I was at the Ka’bah.” Never having witnessed such an incident before, Judge Mahmud did not accept this statement. Thereupon the poor man, who was still under the influence of the spirituality of those sacred places, gave the following thought-provoking response:

**“Your Honor! If the Devil who is an enemy of Allah is able to travel all around the world, why can a friend of Allah not go to Ka’bah in an instant?”**

Judge found this response very meaningful and postponed his verdict till the pilgrims returned. When the pilgrim from Bursa came back, he confirmed the incident that this man had really gone for Hajj. Hence he had to dismiss the case. However, he did not feel comfortable, so he met his master Uftada (May Allah Bless his Secret) through Eskici Dede Efendi and became one of the sultans of the souls.



We should remember that the longing and love for these blessed places is not just to see its physical appearance or sandy deserts. It is done to visit the station of Abraham (Peace Be Upon Him) and abode of his son Ishmael (Peace Be Upon Him). It is done to see the lands where the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) was born, where he grew up and where he conveyed the message of Islam. Another goal of pilgrimage is to inhale the air and absorb into our souls the image of the lands where this noble Messenger of Allah lived. How eloquently the poet describes this:

*“Wherever I turn my eyes, countless miracles grab the heart saying: “this is the real place.”*

These are not just poetic words but divine realities. Allah the Almighty expresses in the Qur’an:

فِيهِ آيَاتٌ بَيِّنَاتٌ

**“Wherein are plain memorials (of Allah’s guidance)...”** (Al-i Imran 3; 97)

Therefore in these sacred places those who remove the veils of heedlessness from their eyes and look about through the windows of their souls will strengthen their faith and the Divine love will encompass all their being. Wherever they turn their faces, a state of rapture and spiritual ecstasy will embrace them. Their eyes begin to shed tears



and their tongues are busy with pronouncements of ceaseless praises to Allah and declarations of His unity. They spend all their time in a state of reverence and lofty manners. And this is the great blessing obtained from the secret noted in the following verse:

ذَلِكَ وَمَنْ يُعْظِمَ شَعَائِرَ اللَّهِ فَإِنَّهَا مِنْ تَقْوَى الْقُلُوبِ

**“That (shall be so); and whoever respects the signs of Allah, this surely is (the outcome) of the piety of hearts.”** (al-Hajj 22; 32)

Therefore pilgrimage is not a physical and outward act of worship alone. It consists also of an inner aspect, which is much more important than its outer manifestations.. The pilgrimage which is called by the Messenger of Allah (Peace Be Upon Him) as *Hajj mabruur*, or the accepted pilgrimage, is the one that is made up by spiritual beauties from its beginning to the end. From this point of view pilgrimage entails supplication, repentance, as well as attainment of Divine mercy, blessings and virtues. It is the improvement of this life by righteous deeds. We also pledge to Allah the Almighty that we will strive to maintain the beautiful state attained during the pilgrimage following the return from these holy places.



How wonderful the following prayer of the prophet Abraham (Peace Be Upon Him) is:

**“Our Lord! And make us both submissive to You and (raise) from our offspring a nation submitting to You, and show us our ways of devotion and turn to us (mercifully), surely You are the Oft-returning (to mercy), the Merciful.”**

(al-Baqara 2; 128)

The loving souls which happen to perform pilgrimage get molded by prayers while contemplating that they are within the borders of sacred places where the Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) lived. They feel the deep excitement of thinking that he or she may be walking on the same spots as the Prophet’s footsteps. When they visit the hill of Safa, they think, for instance, of the Prophet’s address to the polytheists of Quraish. They remember that on that hill the Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) told the people of Quraish, pointing at that mountain of Abu Qubais:

*“If I told you that there were horses on the other side of this mountain about to attack you, would you believe me?”* The Meccans replied:

“Yes. Even if we do not see what is behind that mountain, we do not have any doubts about what you tell us for you are Muhammad al-Amin



(trustworthy Muhammad).” Upon hearing this when our Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) said:

*“As you believe in me, believe that there is Allah who created this universe and who is one and omnipotent. The idols you worship are just pieces of stones and wood. Abandon them and believe in the One God. You should know that Allah has sent me as a prophet to you.”* Polytheists including Prophet’s uncle Abu Lahab told him:

“Have you gathered us here for this?” Then they turned away from the Messenger of Allah (Peace Be Upon Him). Even though they conscientiously accepted his trustworthiness, they refused his message because of their selfishness.

Nevertheless, he was the Messenger of Allah and the Prophet for the worlds, so he never lost his heart before such manifestations of heedlessness. He continued to convey the Divine truths to the thirsty souls whenever possible, under any circumstances..

If we reflect upon these moments and look around ourselves in such a spiritual state, we might feel as though we are reprising the Quranic event manifested by the House of Arqam. On these moments the experience of Hijra (Exodus from Mecca) is evolved deep within us, with its Quranic resonance and the blessings that accompany them.



Maybe we can be a part of the three-day-long spiritual interaction which occurred between the Messenger of Allah (Peace Be Upon Him) and his friend Abu Bakr (May Allah Be Pleased With Him) in the cave of Sawr and benefit from its divine secrets to the extent of our spiritual capacity to comprehend this amazing event. Afterwards our souls may experience the sweetness of faith which emerged from the love and rapture of the golden chain which has started with that conversation.

After tasting the sweetness of faith, we can follow the Companions of the Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him), who have become like stars, and think about how they lived in Medina and then conquered Mecca under the command of the Messenger of Allah (Peace Be Upon Him).

When we gaze upon the mountains around Mecca, we can imagine the thousands of fires lit by the Companions to frighten the Meccans. We can hear the echoes of the call for prayer pronounced by Bilal Habashi (May Allah Be Pleased With Him) on the Ka'bah's roof on that day. We may also picture how our Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) destroyed the idols in the Ka'bah while reciting the verse: **"...The truth has come and the falsehood has vanished away ..."** (al-Isra 17; 81)



We should remember that our hearts, like the Ka'bah, might also be filled with the idols of our selfish wants. We can destroy these idols by the spiritual strength we gather in every step of our pilgrimage and turn our hearts into places of Divine sight.

Pilgrimage, which is a gate to attain many manifestations and insights like these, is an event of spiritual purification, calming down and revival. Pilgrimage is a comprehensive act of worship, which directs the individual to perfect his or her religiosity.

Pilgrimage means to take off the garments of being and of inner self and step into the spiritual world. It is an act of worship in which one can find ones own spiritual color, climate, and harmony, as well as gain ones real identity. In pilgrimage one gets washed by the showers of enlightenment. It is an act of worship filled with manifestations of spirituality.

### **MOUNT ARAFAT**

Arafat is a place of forgiveness and refuge.

Arafat reminds us that people will rise up from their graves in the morning of the Last Day and gather in crowds at the place of final judgment. Needy servants of Allah hopefully shall wait for forgiveness in the presence of Allah. Hearts and eyes are soaked by the tears of repentance. Many sincere supplications ascend towards Allah the Almighty.





One starts with a clean slate in his or her life and promises to Allah the Almighty to continue to live the rest of his or her life in obedience.

Therefore mount Arafat presents a scene from the last judgment. Some of its sights are experienced there. It really reminds us of the state of rising up from the grave , coming to the place of final judgment, struggling in desperation, and sincerely begging the Lord for mercy. It is the state of shedding all worldly rank and entering into the presence of Allah with only two pieces of clothing.

On the other hand Arafat takes us to ancient memories. As we know, because of their lapse of eating from the forbidden fruit, Adam (Peace Be Upon Him) and Eve were expelled from Paradise and sent to different places on earth. They were consequently made to miss each other greatly.

Adam (Peace Be Upon Him) begged for forgiveness from Allah the Almighty for the sake of Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) thinking of his esteem and honor in the presence of Allah the Almighty. His request, then, got accepted and Allah the Almighty appointed an angel to show Adam (Peace Be Upon Him) the path to Mecca. As a consequence of Adam's supplication, our mother Eve was taken by another angel towards Adam (Peace Be Upon Him). They got together



in the valley of Arafat in the late afternoon of a certain day. They wept and repented of their sins.

Allah the Almighty, the Generous, not only accepted their invocation but also bestowed upon them and promised that every year He will forgive those from their offspring who come and repent at the same place on the same day and at the same hour. This is the reason why pilgrims go to Arafat and ask for forgiveness on the day called '*Arafah* a day before the '*Eid*.

After their meeting Adam (Peace Be Upon Him) and our mother Eve adopted Mecca as their homeland by the command of Allah. This is why Mecca is also called "Umm al-Qura" or the mother of all lands; because Mecca has become a place where all temporal and relative attributes, like homeland, color, wealth, poverty and physical appearance, lose their meaning, and believers become one nation under the brotherhood of Islam. In Mecca employer and employee, rich and poor, ignorant and educated are all at the same place and in the same garments. All persons stand in the same rows. Mecca is the place to be freed from all differences of class, to experience the feel of burial garments, to turn toward the Lord, and to tremble with the thought of the terrifying scene of the Judgment Day.



This blessed city is the arms of safety, peace, and love; it is the city of the prophets who fill our hearts with blessings and mercy. Today despite all the sufferings of the Muslim world, the summit of unity, love and brotherhood generated by pilgrimage to these holy places is something that the rest of the world dreams of. Nations do everything they can to establish this level of unity through their international institutions but they could not achieve a complete success. Due to their endless worldly desires and spiritual collapse they have countless disagreements, divisions, enmity, oppression, injustices and the winds of favoritism divide them.

### **MUZDALIFA AND SACRIFICE**

Muzdalifa, which is the next stop after the mount of Arafat, is a place filled with the manifestations of mercy. It is among the places of, as it is called in a verse, *Mash'ar al-Haram* or symbols of the sacred place. It is a place of learning how to forget everything, even the life in the Hereafter, and to turn the hearts toward Allah the Almighty with love and obedience.

After completion of certain rituals, offering a material sacrifice, which represents the spiritual sacrifice of Abraham (Peace Be Upon Him), is a breeze of mercy and wisdom reminding pilgrims the



feelings of the Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him). Those who breathe this wind remember and repeat the following words of Abraham (Peace Be Upon Him):

**“Surely I have turned myself, being upright, wholly to Him Who originated the heavens and the earth, and I am not of the polytheists.”**

(al-An’am 6; 79)

**“Say: surely my prayer and my sacrifice and my life and my death are (all) for Allah, the Lord of the worlds; no associate has He; and this am I commanded, and I am the first of those who submit.”** (al-An’am 6; 162-63)

And when Abraham was on his way from Babel to Damascus, he was saying:

**“I will go to my Lord, He will surely guide me. My Lord! Grant me of the righteous.”** (al-Saffat

37; 99-100)

Here is an indication to the spiritual journey from the inner world to the Most Supreme Friend. The following verses are about Ishmael and the incident of his sacrifice:

**“So We gave him the good news of a boy ready to suffer and forbear.”** (al-Saffat 37; 101)

**“And when he reached the age to work with him, he said: O my son! Surely I have seen in a dream that I should sacrifice you; consider then**



**what you see. He said: O my father! Do what you are commanded; if Allah please, you will find me of the patient ones.”** (al-Saffat 37; 102)

**“So when they both submitted and he threw him down upon his forehead, We called out to him, O Abraham You have indeed shown the truth of the vision; surely thus do We reward the doers of good: Lo! That verily was a clear test.”**

(al-Saffat 37; 103-106)

**“And We ransomed him with a momentous sacrifice. And We perpetuated (praise) to him among the later generations. Peace and salutation to Abraham Thus indeed do We reward those who do right Surely he was one of Our believing servants.”** (al-Saffat 37; 107-111)



After Abraham (Peace Be Upon Him) left our mother Hagar and Ishmael (Peace Be Upon Him) in Mecca, he went back to our mother Sarah. From time to time he was visiting Hagar and Ishmael. He, once, saw a dream when he was in Mecca. In his dream, he saw that he was sacrificing Ishmael (Peace Be Upon Him) as it was commanded in the above mentioned verses. Abraham (Peace Be Upon Him) had doubts whether his dream was from the Devil or from the Lord Almighty. His



dream continued for three days. These days were the days of *Tawriya*, the day before the sacrificial holiday, and the first day of the ‘Eid.

According to a report Abraham (Peace Be Upon Him) had said:

“If Allah had given me a son, I would sacrifice him to the Lord.” It was because of these words he was getting tested.

Abraham (Peace Be Upon Him) asked his wife Hagar to clean up their son Ishmael and put some perfume on him. Abraham (Peace Be Upon Him) told his wife that he was going to take their son to a friend. He also told his son to take some rope and a knife with him and continued:

“My dear son! I will sacrifice you for the sake of Allah.” They set off on a journey towards Arafat. Just then the Devil in human form came to Hagar and said:

“Do you know where Abraham is taking your son?” She replied:

“Yes, he is taking him to his friend.” The Devil said again:

“No, he is taking him to slaughter.” Hagar replied:

“He loves his son.” When the Devil continued:



“Abraham is going to slaughter your son because Allah ordered him to do so” Hagar told the Devil:

“If Allah ordered this, then it is a good thing. We obey His orders.” When the Devil realized that he will not be able to deceive Hagar, he went to Ishmael (Peace Be Upon Him) and asked:

“Do you know where your father is taking you?” Ishmael (Peace Be Upon Him) responded:

“To fulfill his Lord’s command” The Devil tried to scare him saying:

“As you know, he is going to slaughter you.” Upon this Ishmael drove Satan away and threw stones at him saying:

“Go away! O cursed one. We willingly fulfill our Lord’s commands.” Satan was not able to deceive Ishmael, either. This time he turned to Abraham (Peace Be Upon Him) and said:

“O old man! Where are you taking your son? The Devil has deceived you by your dreams. Those dreams were from the Satan. Abraham (Peace Be Upon Him) said:

“You are the Devil. Go away from me.” Abraham took twenty one stones and threw them at the Devil in three different places.



And this is how the stoning of the Devil, or one of the prescribed acts of pilgrimage, has started. Abraham (Peace Be Upon Him) and his family's submission and obedience has become an example for the followers of Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him).

When Abraham (Peace Be Upon Him) and Ishmael (Peace Be Upon Him) were on their way from Arafat to Mina, angels in heaven got excited. They amazed, said to each other:

"Praise be to Allah! A prophet is taking a prophet to slaughter." Abraham (Peace Be Upon Him) explained the situation to his son Ishmael (Peace Be Upon Him):

"O my son! I was ordered to slaughter you in my dream." Ishmael (Peace Be Upon Him) asked:

"O my father! Has Allah ordered you to do this?" Abraham replied:

"Yes." Upon this, Ishmael (Peace Be Upon Him) told his father:

"O my father! Do what you are commanded; if Allah please, you will find me of the patient ones." Thus he told his father that he was ready to give his life. Ishmael was either around seven or thirteen years of age at the time.





According to the reports, in three incidents the Angel Gabriel (Peace Be Upon Him) became extremely worried about whether or not he was going to be on time. One of them was when Abraham (Peace Be Upon Him) placed his knife to Ishmael's (Peace Be Upon Him) throat. Just then, Gabriel (Peace Be Upon Him) made the knife blunt and he told them that because of their utter obedience and submission he brought a ram from heaven and not Ishmael but that ram was going to be sacrificed. Thus it was slaughtered, and Ishmael lived.

Therefore the true goal of sacrificing an animal is to remember these events, to benefit from the divine lessons hidden in them and to make our souls vigilant in regards to obedience and submission to Allah the Almighty. This is expressed in the Qur'an as follows:

**“It is neither their flesh nor their blood that reaches Allah: it is your piety that reaches Him ...”** (al-Hajj 22; 37)

Furthermore, cutting the hair after sacrificing an animal also has a historical meaning. Before the emergence of Islam when someone wanted to free a slave, he would shave the slave's head. This was a sign of his slavery. By cutting their hair pilgrims accept and confess their servitude to Allah the Almighty. In other words, this haircut is in a way a



statement of our submission to Allah the Almighty and declaration of our servitude to Him.

### **MINA AND STONING THE DEVIL**

Mina, where Abraham and Ishmael (peace be upon them) threw stones at the Devil and beat him, is a blessed place inspiring the Muslims of the necessity of trust in Allah and submission to Him.

Stoning the Devil, on the other hand, begins first and primarily by stoning the Devil inside a person. As we mentioned above the Devil tried to deceive Abraham, Ishmael, and Hagar. Stoning the Devil, which is among the requirements of pilgrimage, is a remembrance of their stoning and riddance of the Devil.

In a way, stoning means cursing, for cursing was done by stoning at the time. In fact *rajim*, one of the attributes of Satan, which means stoned, is a statement expressing his cursed state.

It should also be mentioned that a stone picked up and thrown at the Devil is also the stone thrown at ones sins. Intention is to reach Allah's contentment. In fact the Messenger of Allah (Peace Be Upon Him) stated that:



*“Stoning (the Devil) and running between the hills of Safa and Marwa are commanded to substitute the remembrance of Allah.”* (Tirmidhi, Hajj, 64/902)

Another meaning expressed in the act of throwing pebbles at the Devil is to express enmity towards him. This is because the Devil was conceited and looked down at Adam (Peace Be Upon Him) for Adam was created from earth whereas he was created from fire, so Allah the Almighty throws the Devil something (pebbles) composed from the thing (earth) that he belittled.

The sensitivity and consciousness reached during stoning the Devil should embrace all aspects of our lives. We need to drive away every doubt whispered by Satan in our hearts by the words:

أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ

**“I seek refuge in Allah from the [evil of] accursed Satan.”** Thus by means of these words one needs to throw stones at the Devil until the end of ones life. Allah the Almighty says in the Qur’an:

**“And if a whisper from the devil reach you (O Muhammad) then seek refuge in Allah...”**

(Fussilat 41; 36)

Stoning the Devil means to curse him and to purify the heart from heedlessness and doubt.

It also reminds the believer to turn the cleansed heart towards Allah the Almighty.

One should also keep the following thoughts in mind during pilgrimage:

Thieves do not try to rob the junk dealers when there are jewelry stores nearby; for the wealth is found in the jewelry stores. This can be compared to the state of pious believer who properly fulfills the acts of worship and the state of a heedless person. Satan, to whom Allah the Almighty has given permission to corrupt and seduce people, first tries to deceive the pious ones. He especially attacks and tries to deceive those who plan to perform pilgrimage. This is why patience should be the first weapon with which a pilgrim should be armed with. It is because pilgrimage is different than other acts of worship. It looks easy in appearance, but in fact it is one of the most difficult acts of worship. This is why pilgrims utter the following words when they express their intention for pilgrimage: “O Allah! Make it (the pilgrimage) easy to me ...”

Those hearts that turn towards Allah the Almighty emphasize their faith in His unity saying:

لَبَّيْكَ اللَّهُمَّ لَبَّيْكَ، لَبَّيْكَ لَا شَرِيكَ لَكَ لَبَّيْكَ،  
 إِنَّ الْحَمْدَ وَالنِّعْمَةَ لَكَ وَالْمُلْكَ لَا شَرِيكَ لَكَ

“O Lord! Here I am at Your service, here I am. Here I am at Your service and You have no partners. Yours alone is All Praise and All Bounty, and Yours alone is the Sovereignty. You have no partners.” They know that they are in the lands of Allah the Almighty and promise that from that time on they will not be fooled by the deceptions of the Devil.

The believer should try to be aware of the Devil’s tricks and deceptions. Again the believer should stand up to the hardships of the journey and know that they are tests of this world. In this way they will not lose the spiritual rewards of their pilgrimage.

### **HILLS OF SAFA AND MARWA AND RUNNING BETWEEN THEM (SA’I)**

Safa and Marwa are two blessed hills close to the *zamzam* well. These were the hills where Hagar (may Allah be pleased with her) worriedly ran between with the hope to find some water for her thirsty son Ishmael (Peace Be Upon Him). Therefore running between them as part of pilgrimage is a manifestation of reverence towards Allah and our confession of our weakness and nothingness before Him. This is why it is added among the requirements of pilgrimage under the name of *sa’i*



(or exertion and endeavor). Allah the Almighty states the significance of these hills as follows:

إِنَّ الصَّفَا وَالْمَرْوَةَ مِنْ شَعَائِرِ اللَّهِ

**“Behold! Safa and Marwah are among the symbols of Allah...”** (al-Baqara 2; 158)

In another verse, our Lord Almighty notes how we should behave before His signs:

**“...and whoever respects the signs of Allah, this surely is (the outcome) of the piety of hearts.”** (al-Hajj 22; 32)

## THE GREAT KA’BAH

The Great Ka’bah is the direction towards which believers turn their faces during their prayers, which is commanded by Allah the Almighty saying **“prostrate in adoration and bring yourself closer (to Allah).”** (Alaq 96; 19) Since all believers turn towards it, the Ka’bah is the place where the heart of the Muslim world beats. Just like the heart being the place of Divine manifestations in the human body, the Ka’bah is the place of Divine manifestations in this universe. Because of this, pilgrimage is an act of worship which has to be performed in awareness of the magnificence of the Ka’bah and with a sensitive heart.



The Ka'bah, which is also called as *Baitullah* or the House of Allah, has been a sacred place for believers since the time of the prophet Adam (Peace Be Upon Him). In the following verses the Holy Qur'an states the obligation to visit the Ka'bah upon those who are able to do so:

**“The first house (of worship) appointed for human beings was the one at Bakka [Mecca], full of blessing and of guidance for all kinds of beings:**

**In it are clear signs, the standing place of Abraham, and whoever enters it shall be secure, and pilgrimage to the House is incumbent upon men for the sake of Allah, (upon) everyone who is able to undertake the journey to it; and those who disbelieve should know that surely Allah is Self-sufficient, above any need of the worlds.”**

(Al-i Imran 3; 96-97)

*Maqam-i Ibrahim* or the standing place of Abraham (Peace Be Upon Him) is in the Ka'bah. Allah the Almighty asks from the believers to walk where His friend Abraham walked and to perform the prayer of circumambulation close to place of his footprint.

*Hajar al-Aswad* is a blessed black stone, which is respectfully kissed by the pilgrims as a sign of paying allegiance to Allah the Almighty and promising to obey Him. Greeting it during the



circumambulation means to promise to leave all of our selfish and evil desires behind.

*Hajar al-Aswad* is the point of beginning and finishing the circumambulation around the Ka'bah. Almost every piece of the Ka'bah has been changed since its construction except this black stone. It has been kissed by many blessed lips, including those of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him). It has been touched by many blessed hands. Because of this, while it was once an ordinary stone, it has gained its effective and beloved place in the hearts of those who believe.

With these and many more qualities the Ka'bah is like the shadow of the Divine Throne on this world and a source of blessings. In other words, it is a shining mirror reflecting Allah's attributes of mercy and benevolence. It is a sun, or a fountain of light, illuminating the soul.

According to the reports about the construction of the Ka'bah, after Adam (Peace Be Upon Him) and our mother Eve were expelled from Paradise, they reunited at Arafat and walked together towards the west. They finally came to the place of the Ka'bah. Just then, Adam (Peace Be Upon Him) wanted to pray to Allah to give thanks for bestowing their reunion. He asked Allah for the pillar of light that they used to circumambulate around in Paradise.





The pillar appeared at the place where the Ka'bah is standing today; so Adam (Peace Be Upon Him) began to turn around it as an act of worship.

This pillar of light disappeared during the time of the Prophet Seth (Peace Be Upon Him) and only a black stone remained behind. Upon this Seth (Peace Be Upon Him) constructed a cubic building at the same place and placed the black stone on one of its corners. This is the stone that we know as Hajar al-Aswad today.

After the Flood, this building stayed under the sand for long time. By the order of Allah the Almighty Abraham (Peace Be Upon Him) went to the location of Ka'bah and settled there with his son Ishmael (Peace Be Upon Him) and his wife Hagar. Then together with his son, he dug at the place where the Ka'bah had been built. They discovered the foundations of the building constructed by Seth (Peace Be Upon Him) and rebuilt the Great Ka'bah upon the same foundations. When the construction was completed, Abraham (Peace Be Upon Him) prayed to Allah the Almighty saying:

**“...My Lord! Make this a region of security and bestow upon its people fruits, such of them as believe in Allah and the Last Day...”** (al-Baqara 2; 126)



As a blessing of Abraham's supplication, sweetness of faith and worldly beauties have been hand in hand in Mecca since those times.

Throughout history the Ka'bah was rebuilt eleven times. The first one was by angels; the second one was by Adam (Peace Be Upon Him); the third time was by Seth (Peace Be Upon Him); the fourth one was by Abraham (Peace Be Upon Him); the fifth time was by the people of Amaliqa; the sixth one was by the clan of Jurhum; the seventh one was by the clan of Qusai; the eighth one was by the people of Quraish; the ninth one was by Abdullah b. Zubair, one of the successors of the Companions; the tenth one was by Hajjaj b. Yusuf or the infamous Hajjaj the oppressor; and the last one was by Ottoman Sultan Murad IV.

The manifestations of the Ottomans' special respect to the Ka'bah were observed during this last reconstruction work. Below are some of them:

During the reign of Murad IV there was a flood in Mecca and two sides of Ka'bah were collapsed. Ridvan Aga, the head architect of the palace, was immediately sent to Mecca for the reconstruction. When making his initial assessment the head architect considered it inappropriate to use words like "collapsed or destroyed" in respect to the



Respected Ka'bah and instead he expressed the situation as follows:

***“Such and such parts of the Ka’bah went down to the place of prostration.”***

It is also remarkable that precautions were taken for the animals carrying the necessary equipment of the reconstruction not to pollute those holy places.

### **BEFORE DEATH KNOCKS AT YOUR DOOR ...**

It should not be forgotten that life is a onetime only blessing bestowed upon human beings and death is an inescapable end obligated by Allah the Almighty for His mortal creation. The time of the coming of death and the number of breaths are all pre-determined in detail. It is an obvious fact that the time of death can neither be postponed nor brought about at an earlier date. When the time comes, it can neither be held up nor brought forward for a single moment. There is no one who can escape from the time of death.

This is why those who have to perform pilgrimage should think about this fact. We should strongly avoid negligence and laziness in fulfilling this act of worship; for there is no benefit of remorse after one dies. Therefore, able



believers should seize the earliest opportunity and should not show heedlessness in fulfilling their obligation. Otherwise the following warnings of the Messenger of Allah (Peace Be Upon Him) are very striking and fearsome:

*“If someone does not perform his pilgrimage after having the opportunity and acquiring the necessary provisions, ride, and wealth, there is no obstacle for him to die as a Jew or a Christian.”*  
(Tirmidhi, Hajj, 3)

This prophetic warning points out the great loss of those who do not fulfill their obligation of pilgrimage when they are able to do so. Therefore what an unfortunate heedlessness for the able believers to become detached from this act of worship!...

Pilgrimage is obligatory once in a lifetime upon the believers who are able. Pilgrimage more than once is also advised and it brings many rewards. Indeed the Messenger of Allah (Peace Be Upon Him) stated:

*“Performing Hajj (major pilgrimage) and Umrah (minor pilgrimage) consecutively lengthens the life and increases the blessings and eliminates the sins just as the bellows eliminate rust from iron.”* (Ahmad, III, 446-447)

It is also noted in a sacred tradition that:



*“Allah the Almighty says: If My servant does not come to Me once in every four years (or does not perform Hajj or Umrah), even if I have given him health and abundant wealth, he is in fact a destitute one.”* (Haythami, III, 206)

As we can see, just like supererogatory prayer or fasting, there is supererogatory pilgrimage, too. One should be careful about the ignorant criticism against performing supererogatory pilgrimage since this may end in with disbelief. Some people think that supererogatory pilgrimage is a waste of money. Such criticism comes from a deep ignorance that has no basis in religion and lacks the true meaning of faith and worship.

Supererogatory acts of worship have been continuous since the first days of Islam. In fact it should be enough of an example to remember that Imam Abu Hanifa performed fifty five pilgrimages in his lifetime. Even though he had many students and numerous responsibilities, he spent about one third of his life on pilgrimage. One can imagine how hard it was traveling from Baghdad to Mecca and Medina on a camel under the difficult circumstances of his time. Due to the fact that the friends of Allah feel the spiritual benefits nowhere but in the sacred atmosphere of these two places, they deemed it a valuable treasure to visit the Messenger of Allah whenever they have a chance.



Faithfully and sincerely performed acts of worship enable the servants to come closer to their Creator Allah the Almighty. Such acts increase the sensitivity of the soul. Allah the Almighty becomes the seeing eyes and hearing ears of such believers. In other words their sight, senses, perception and thoughts turn into the reflections of Divine light.

### **TRUST IN AND SUBMISSION TO ALLAH THE ALMIGHTY**

With its special prescribed program, pilgrimage leads human beings to spiritual sensitivity. The Ka'bah is a place filled with memories of Abraham (Peace Be Upon Him) and his family's trust in Allah and submission to Him. When the words of trust, submission and pilgrimage are mentioned together, one remembers Abraham (Peace Be Upon Him) and his son Ishmael (Peace Be Upon Him). Pilgrimage is turned into a righteous deed, which will be performed till the end of the days.

The Arabic term *tawakkul* means "trust in, reliance on, and appointing an agent." In Sufi terminology it means that someone whose heart is filled with love for Allah trusts only in Allah and takes refuge in Him. Allah the Almighty asked Moses about the staff in his hand and ordered him to "**throw it**"; because it was shadowing Moses' trust in Allah.



This is expressed in some verses:

**“...And on Allah let all men of faith put their trust.”** (Ibrahim 14; 11, al-Tawba 9; 51)

**“...So put your trust (in Allah) if you are indeed believers.”** (al-Maida 5; 23)

**“...And whosoever puts his trust in Allah, He will suffice him...”** (al-Talaq 65; 3)

It is stated in one of the sayings of the Prophet (pbuh):

*“If you properly trust in Allah, you will certainly receive the blessings of Allah as the birds that leave their nests hungry in the morning and return with full stomach at dusk.”* (Tirmidhi, Zuhd, 33)

Trust in Allah does not mean to abandon precautions and effort. On the contrary it means to do everything that can be done and then take refuge in Allah. Allah the Almighty expresses this in the Holy Qur’an as follows:

**“...and consult with them upon the conduct of affairs. And when you are resolved, then put your trust in Allah...”** (Ali- Imran 3; 159)

Allah is the Helper of the believers both in this world and in the Hereafter. Allah suffices for those who put their trust in Him. The real peace and tranquility, whether it is on an individual or social



level, is in turning towards Him, asking help only from Him and putting ones trust in Him.

*Taslimiyyah* is the Arabic word for submission which is derived from the root “سَلِمَ”. It refers to complete obedience and readily acceptance of incidents as they are. Consequently this brings salvation.

In Abraham’s (Peace Be Upon Him) heart there is no place for anything but Allah. This is why Allah the Almighty declared Abraham as His friend. Angels asked:

“O Lord! Abraham has life, children and wealth. How can he be Your friend?”

Thereupon Allah the Almighty presented them three instances of Abraham’s obedience without objection. These three tests and their results will be exemplary examples for the believers until the end of the world.

When Abraham (Peace Be Upon Him) was going to be thrown into the fire, angels came to help him. But he said:

“I do not need you. Who has given the fire the power to burn?” Then he took refuge in his Lord saying:

“What an Excellent Protector Allah is in Whom I trust.” As a reward for his utter submission, it was commanded to the fire:





**“We said: O fire! Be coolness and peace to Ibrahim.”** (al-Anbiya 21; 69)

Abraham (Peace Be Upon Him) regarded his wealth worthless and gave it to Gabriel (Peace Be Upon Him) when he (Gabriel) mentioned the name of Allah the Almighty three times.

Again Abraham (Peace Be Upon Him) was tested by slaughtering his son and he successfully passed the test.

Obedience is the true servitude, for Allah the Almighty does not approve His servants to yield themselves to anything but Him.

Submission is obedience based on love. Due to his obedience and submission, Abraham’s wealth, children and life could not become obstacles on his path to his Lord. Pilgrimage has become the best symbol of Abraham’s trust and submission to Allah.

Abraham’s (Peace Be Upon Him) tongue became an interpreter for what was in his heart and always said that:

**“...I have surrendered to the Lord of the Worlds.”** (al-Baqara 2; 131)

Pilgrimage, which is the symbol of Abraham’s (Peace Be Upon Him) and Ishmael’s (Peace Be Upon Him) trust and submission to Allah, means



laying down all human attributes and entering into a climate of mercy. It is adhering to obedience with confidence. Pilgrimage is the performance of servitude filled with love.

As pilgrimage has shown us, riddance of sins can be achieved only by means of the acts of worship performed by a heart filled with repentance, submission and trust.

Believers who set off for the journey to perform major or minor pilgrimage should comprehend the true meaning of submission and trust. They have to make the necessary material and spiritual preparations for their journey. The following verse was revealed because some Yemenite people had just said “we put our trust in Allah” without making necessary preparations for their pilgrimage:

**“...So make provision for yourselves; surely piety is the best provision ...”** (al-Baqara 2; 197)

As it is referred to by this verse, in the sacred lands of pilgrimage we need both material and spiritual provisions, which are more significant. This can surely be possible for one with a sound heart who has that achieved piety. One of the most natural results a life being characterized by proper Islamic manners is the attainment of a sensitive heart reflecting on manifestations of piety.



## **SPIRITUAL GUIDELINES FOR AN ACCEPTED AND PRAISEWORTHY HAJJ AND UMRAH**

Here are the main guidelines that need to be followed for a *mabrur* or accepted and praised Hajj or Umrah:

- 1. To make a sincere intention for Hajj or Umrah and abandon the contrary intentions and behaviors:**

In order to attain the consent of Allah the Almighty and benefit from the Divine blessings, we should sincerely intend to perform our pilgrimage and we should also be able to promise to Allah the Almighty that we will purify our souls and abandon our selfish desires. In those sacred places, we should especially forget our beings and not focus on our inner selves. Those who perform their pilgrimage in such a state of mind will be able to attain Divine mercy and blessings. Such a pilgrim can also be a guest in the paradise of wisdom and secrets. After this first step, one should do the following:

- 2. While taking off the worldly garment in order to put on *ihram* (or the special garments of pilgrimage), one should also take everything other than Allah out of his heart.**



One of the manifestations of giving our promise to Allah and making sincere intention for the fulfillment of our pilgrimage just for the sake of Allah is to get rid of all kinds of passions in our heart, like desire for wealth, fame and rank. When we take off our clothes to wear *ihram*, we also need to take out such feelings from our heart and put on the garment of piety. Because of this, Allah the Almighty notes that:

**“He will indeed be successful who purifies it [his soul]”** (al-Shams 91; 9)

While one is in those sacred lands, one should abstain from occupying oneself with worldly activities and walking around the markets as much as possible. Being busy with such actions loosens the soul’s connection with spirituality and produces heedlessness. Such a focus on worldly goods and needs makes it hard to benefit from the spiritual atmosphere of those blessed lands.

When the Messenger of Allah (Peace Be Upon Him) was asked about staying in Mecca after the completion of pilgrimage, he said that:

*“Mecca is not a place to stay. After completing the rituals of pilgrimage there are (only) three days to stay in Mecca for those who come to it from outside.”* (Ahmad, IV, 339) This statement supports the above mentioned fact. Umar (May Allah Be

Pleased With Him) also advised the pilgrims to go back to their hometowns after performing their obligation in order to not give any harm to their feelings of respect for Mecca.

One should turn his heart to the Lord of the Ka'bah during Hajj and Umrah and comprehend the meaning of the verse “...**We are nearer to him than his jugular vein.**” (Qaf 50; 16). It is also necessary to know that nothing can be hidden from Allah as it is expressed in another verse: “...**and know that Allah comes in between a man and his heart...**” (al-Anfal 8; 24) In other words one should get rid of the temporary desires of this world and try to keep his heart busy with Allah the Almighty as much as possible. This is because the essence of pilgrimage is:

### **3. To get physically and spiritually cleansed:**

Expressing the result of righteous deeds performed during pilgrimage the Messenger of Allah (Peace Be Upon Him) noted the objectives of this blessed act of worship as follows:

*“Combine the performance of Hajj (major pilgrimage) and Umrah (minor pilgrimage), for they eliminate the sins just as the bellows eliminate rust from iron.”* (Nasai, Manasik, 6; Ibn Majah, Manasik, 3)



Umrah, or minor pilgrimage, which is advised to be combined with Hajj, is a very significant act of worship. It purifies the believers' hearts and refreshes their faith in Allah.

Unlike Hajj, which has to be performed during specific days of the year and can be performed only once in a year, it is possible to perform Umrah as many times as is possible. Because of its merits, Umrah is called the minor pilgrimage. One should also understand the meaning of this meritorious act of worship very well.

Umar b. al-Khattab tells us (May Allah Be Pleased With Him):

“I sought permission of the Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) to perform minor pilgrimage. He gave me permission and said:

*“My brother, do not forget me in your supplication.”* (Tirmidhi, Daawat, 109/3562)

Upon hearing these words Umar (May Allah Be Pleased With Him) described his happiness as follows:

“These words of the Prophet pleased me so much that I would not have been more pleased if I were given the whole world.” (Abu Dawud, Witr, 23/1498)

Along with its other merits, this example also points out the higher probability of the acceptance

of the supplications during Umrah than other times. Therefore sincere supplications said during an Umrah attract great spiritual rewards.

Umrah's performed after Hajj and especially during the month of Ramadan are a means of spiritual purification. In fact our beloved Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) stated that: "Umrah during the month of Ramadan would suffice for Hajj or Hajj along with me." (see. Bukhari, Umrah, 4; Muslim, Hajj, 221)

When the object of Hajj and Umrah becomes to attain such great rewards, then there should be some other significant matters that a pilgrim should be careful about, such as:

**4. To abstain from the unlawful and the doubtful things, to enter the sacred places with utmost respect, and to show the proper esteem to the religious symbols.**

It should be primarily mentioned that all the good deeds of worship have to be done out of lawful gains; because, the spiritual benefits of the acts of worship can be achieved only by a body grown by lawful provisions. The following saying of the Prophet is very remarkable in this regard:

*"Whoever visits this House by earnings from unlawful sources leaves the obedience to Allah. When this person intends to perform pilgrimage,*

gets on his ride, begins his journey, and then says: “*Labbaik, Allahumma Labbaik! (Here I am at Your service, O Allah! Here I am at Your service),*” an announcer from heaven calls:

*“There is no Labbaik or sa’daik (acceptance) for you. Because your earnings are unlawful, your food is unlawful, and your ride is unlawful. Go back with no rewards. Be sad for you will face what you do not like.”*

However when someone sets out for a pilgrimage journey by spending lawful earnings, gets on his ride and says “*Labbaik, Allahumma Labbaik! (Here I am at Your service, O Allah! Here I am at Your service),*” an announcer from heaven calls:

*“Labbaik and sa’daik! I have responded to your call, for your ride is lawful, garments are lawful, and food is lawful. Go back to your home with great rewards earned and with no sin committed. Be happy for you will face the thing with which you will be happy and delighted.”* (Haythami, III, 209-210)

In accordance with this tradition, those who go to pilgrimage and say “*Labbaik*” just by tip of their tongue will get no benefit from their journey other than the words “*No Labbaik.*”

This is why lawful gain is the first condition of pilgrimage. After that a sincere heart comes next. Every *Labbaik* or the phrase “*O Allah! Here*



I am at Your service” coming out of one’s mouth should burn his heart with love and yearning. The sounds of *Labbaik* get the servant closer to Allah the Almighty, but the empty and idle talks bare no results. This is why when the Prophet’s grandson Hussain (May Allah Be Pleased With Him) recited the phrase “Labbaik,” he would grow pale out of his concern: “what if I get “La labbaik” as a reward.”

There are also some prohibitions that believers must abstain from. Allah the Almighty says in the Qur’an:

**“The pilgrimage is (in) the well-known months, and whoever is minded to perform the pilgrimage therein (let him remember that) there is (to be) no lewdness nor abuse nor angry conversation on the pilgrimage. And whatsoever good you do Allah knows it. So make provision for yourselves (hereafter); for the best provision is to ward off evil. Therefore keep your duty unto Me, O men of understanding.”** (al-Baqara 2; 197)

In this respect we should also remember that one should not just stay away from carnal desires such as lewdness, abuse and angry conversations during pilgrimage, but one should also be very careful not to hurt the servants of Allah. Because of the crowds, pilgrims are always under the risk of hurting one another in these places. In order to



avoid this risk, one should especially be attentive during circumambulation and should not try to go in the opposite direction of the people going around the Ka'bah.

We should also be careful about the borders of modesty in places as the Ka'bah or hotel elevators, where men and women intermingle. We need to pay attention to maintaining order and dignity in entering and exiting the mosque. In these sacred places we should not forget that it is forbidden even to pick up grass. Everything we do may take us closer to Allah the Almighty and we should endeavor that our harsh and impolite actions may be turned into acts of love, mercy, kindness, and elegance. One should not forget that just like the good deeds, sins and misdeeds will receive their retribution.<sup>2</sup>

Such sensitivities were among the subtleties that the Messenger of Allah (Peace Be Upon Him) emphasized in his blessed life. One day He (Peace Be Upon Him) told Umar (May Allah Be Pleased With Him):

*“O Umar! You are a strong man. Do not push people and squeeze the weak to get closer to the black stone. Neither disturb nor be disturbed! If the mosque is empty, you may go and kiss it, otherwise*

2 See Qasimi, M. Jamal al-Din, *Zubdat al-Ihya*, Istanbul, 1999, p. 94

*just make the gesture of rubbing and kissing it with your hand. Pass by it saying takbirs<sup>3</sup> and tahlils<sup>4</sup>.”*

(Haythami, III, 241; Ahmad, I, 28)

As a manifestation of this state of mind, Umar (May Allah Be Pleased With Him) once addressed to the respected Ka’bah saying:

*“How great you are (O Ka’bah)! How glorious you are! But in the presence of Allah a true believer’s esteem is even greater than yours.”* (Tirmidhi, Birr, 85)

Therefore a believer should be careful not to hurt anyone in those sacred places. He or she should also pay attention to his or her inner and outer manners. The object of pilgrimage is to show respect to those blessed places and to improve ones spiritual state by remembering the incidents that took place there. It is expressed in a Qur’anic verse:

**“...and whoever respects the signs of Allah, this surely is (the outcome) of the piety of hearts.”** (al-Hajj 22; 32)

Therefore ritual prayers, mosques, the Holy Qur’an, the call for prayer, the Respected Ka’bah, the hills of Safa and Marwa, and many other sacred places are all symbols of Allah the Almighty.

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3 \* *Allahu akbar* or Allah is the Greatest

4 \*\* *La ilaha illallah* or There is no god but Allah

Believers should especially be respectful of these symbols during pilgrimage.

One should avoid inappropriate behaviors like sitting or laying down by stretching the legs towards the Ka'bah, making meaningless talks and reciting the Qur'an in an irrespectful manner and leaving it on the ground.

Moreover, in those holy places we should also endeavor to help those who are in need. We need to share the sufferings of the wayfarer, the sick, those who lose their financial means, or those who lose one of their relatives. This is a manifestation of the lofty attributes, such as mercy, compassion, and altruism, which a believing heart is required to have. We should also try not to break but to restore the heart remembering that it is the place of Divine sight.

In his following lines how eloquently Jalal al-Din Rumi (May Allah Bless his Secret) elaborates that the reality of pilgrimage can be understood only with a sensitive and soft heart:

*“Bayazid, the Shaykh of the community, was hurrying to Mecca for the major pilgrimage (Hajj) and the minor (Umrah). In every city to which he went he would at first make search after the venerable (saints). He would roam about, asking, “is there anybody in this town who has (spiritual)*

*insight?” He was aware of the necessity to look for and find the friends of Allah for Allah has said,*

***“...if you know this not, ask of those who possess the Message...”*** (al-Anbiya 21; 7)

*... Even Moses (Peace Be Upon Him) was ordered to visit Khizr who had the esoteric knowledge. So Bayazid, on his journey (to the Ka’ba), sought much to find someone that was the Khizr of his time. He espied an old man with a stature bent like the new moon; he saw in him the majesty and lofty speech of holy men; His eyes sightless and his heart illumined as the sun...*

*He (Bayazid) sat down before him and asked about his condition; he found him to be a dervish and also a family man. He (the old man) said, “Where are you going, O Bayazid? To what place are you taking this travel baggage (or your body) in this strange land?”*

*Bayazid answered, “I start for the Ka’bah at daybreak.” “Eh,” cried the other, “what have you got as provisions for the road?”*

*“I have two hundred silver dirhems,” said he; “look, (they are) tied fast in the corner of my cloak.” The old man said:*

*“Distribute some of that money to the needy and destitute for the sake of Allah. Go into their*



*hearts and get their prayers so that your soul's horizon gets cleared. Attain an everlasting life. Make your soul go to pilgrimage first. Then continue your pilgrimage with this sensitive heart.*

*Because the Ka'bah is Allah's House of Birr (That is to say it is a place of mercy that takes a servant to the perfection of faith and gets him closer to Allah.) It is a house to which paying a visit is obligatory as one of the requirements of Islam. However the human heart is a treasure of secrets.*

*The Ka'bah is the building of Abraham the son of Azar; whereas the heart is the loci of Allah the Almighty.*

*If you have insight, then circumambulate the Ka'bah of the heart. Soul is the real meaning of Ka'bah, which, you think, is built from sand and stones. (In other words your heart gets closer to your Lord by means of it.)*

*Allah the Almighty has ordered you to circumambulate the physical Ka'bah in order for you to achieve a purified and cleansed Ka'bah of heart.*

*Know this well that pilgrimage is an obligation that you must fulfill; but you should also know that if you hurt and break a heart which is the place of Divine sight, your sins could not be cleared by the rewards of your journey even if you do it on foot.*



*Bayazid gave heed to those mystic sayings, and put them in his ear as a golden ring. Through him (the old man), Bayazid came into an increase (of spiritual endowment): the adept at last attained unto the end.” (Mathnawi, II, verses: 2218-2251)*

Rumi, who directs the souls to the straight path with this and other similar beautiful examples, addresses to those who would like to go to those sacred lands:

*“When it is the time of pilgrimage, go there to visit and circumambulate the Ka’bah. If you go there with this intention, you can see the realities of Mecca.”*

Rumi’s reason for giving this specific example is that pilgrimage is a very sensitive act of worship. This is why one should set out for ones pilgrimage journey only after making a spiritual preparation.

Major and minor pilgrimage performed without these feelings will not bear the results expected from them. This is why all pilgrimages have to be performed with such a feeling heart that this act of worship should be turned into an effort worthy of attaining a share of the elegance of the angels. This is also why pilgrims in their sacred garments must not hunt animals, pick up grass, or pluck even a single hair. Those who put on their special pilgrimage garments (*ihram*) perceive the necessity of abstaining from unlawful



and doubtful things by means of staying away from lawful things for a certain period of time during their pilgrimage. They realize the need to show mercy, compassion and kindness to the creation and especially not to break any hearts out of respect for their Creator.

The most important task in both major and minor pilgrimage is to spend our breaths and limited time on this earth in doing the most valuable of deeds. We should meticulously abstain from wasting our time in searching out other people's deficiencies and mistakes, which is none of our business. Our state during pilgrimage also reflects the level of our hearts' sensitivity and the deepness of our spirituality.

Believers should not look down and feel hatred and reproach towards their brothers and sisters in Islam; because one cannot know, especially in those sacred places, who is in what state. What is in the heart is unknown to human eyes but surely known by Allah the Almighty.

The following incident experienced by Khalid al-Baghdadi (May Allah Bless his Secret) before joining the Sufi path is a meaningful one in this context:

Khalid al-Baghdadi (May Allah Bless his Secret) once started out for a journey to perform pilgrimage and arrived at Medina. There he met a benevolent





looking person. Khalid al-Baghdadi was influenced by this friend of Allah from Yemen and began to ask advice from him like an ignorant person asks questions to a scholar. The man replied:

“O Khalid! When you arrive at Mecca, if you see someone acting inappropriately in the Ka’bah, do not be quick to judge him and reach the wrong conclusions. Keep your eyes and heart away from inquiring about other people’s states. Be busy adorning your inner world.”

Even though these words looked like an implicit warning to Khalid al-Baghdadi (May Allah Bless his Secret), in reality they were the signs of a mysterious connection between him and the man who was going to take him through the spiritual stations.

When Khalid al-Baghdadi arrived at Mecca, he forgot the old man’s warnings because of the spiritual atmosphere of Mecca. On a Friday, he saw a strange and messy looking dervish, who had turned his back to the Ka’bah and was gazing at him. Khalid al-Baghdadi thought:

“What a heedless man! He has rudely turned his back to the Ka’bah. He is unaware of the greatness of this blessed place.”



Just then the man, whose chest was towards the Khalid's chest, told him:

“O Khalid! Do not you know showing respect to a believer is more meritorious than showing respect to Ka'bah? Because the heart is the place of Divine sight. A pure and strong heart is the house of Allah. Remember the advice made by the righteous man in Medina...”

Upon these words Khalid al-Baghdadi (May Allah Bless his Secret) realized his mistake and understood that this man was a great saint. He apologized to him and asked:

“O righteous man! Please help me and accept me as your disciple.” The mysterious dervish looked at the horizon and replied:

“Your discipline does not belong to me. You will achieve perfection under the supervision of Abdullah Pir-i Dahlawi from the city of Delhi in India. May Allah grant you success! ...”

In this context I would also like to narrate the following recommendations of my father Musa Topbas (May Allah Bless his Secret):

*“Below is my advice to the travelers of pilgrimage: always maintain your reverence. Be busy with your inner world. Do not waste your time*



*with useless things. Try to benefit from the spiritual manifestations in those sacred places.*

*Of course by going to pilgrimage a believer's spirituality unknowingly improves. Those who do good deeds and give in charity are usually from those who repeatedly go on pilgrimage. By means of spiritual manifestations of pilgrimage, one will improve the attributes of generosity, mercy, and compassion. Such people's hands and heart will be opened; and they willingly give charity from the blessings of Allah for His sake.”<sup>5</sup>*

As it is stated in a verse:

**“By no means shall you attain to righteousness until you spend (benevolently) out of what you love; and whatever thing you spend, Allah surely knows it.”** (Al-i Imran 3; 92) SO the important matter is:

### **5. To sacrifice the will to the contentment of Allah:**

The real object of sacrificing an animal during pilgrimage is to remember the submission of Abraham (Peace Be Upon Him) and his son Ishmael (Peace Be Upon Him), to get benefit from the Divine wisdom hidden in their story and to

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5 Topbaş, Musa, *Allâh Dostunun Dünyâsından*, İstanbul, 1999, p. 112.



keep the soul aware of the necessity to worship Allah sincerely and piously. In other words, one should be in a similar mood as those who can strip their souls from their worldly existence and of those who do not assume any existence in them, submit themselves completely to Allah the Almighty, and are ready to be burned in Divine love. In fact Allah the Almighty says in the Qur'an:

**“It is neither their flesh nor their blood that reaches Allah: it is your piety that reaches Him ...”** (al-Hajj 22; 37)

Therefore we should think how Abraham (Peace Be Upon Him) sacrificed his son and his son Ishmael (Peace Be Upon Him) willingly presented his life. We need to think how much we can sacrifice of our lives and wealth, and how much we conform to the characteristics of the believers stated in the verse: **“Allah hath bought from the believers their lives and their wealth because the Garden will be theirs.”** (al-Tawba 9; 111) To be able to make such sacrifices there is a requirement that we have to fulfill:

## **6. Throwing stones at the Devil and at our inner selves:**

As we mentioned before stoning the Devil starts primarily with stoning the Satan inside us. Stoning the Devil is the remembrance of how



Abraham (Peace Be Upon Him), Ishmael (Peace Be Upon Him), and Hagar threw stones at the Devil and drove him away because of his attempt to make them hesitate in their faith.

We should always question and ask ourselves how much we are able to stone our hesitations, doubts and mistakes; how many lessons we may get from the sincerity and righteousness of Abraham, Ishmael and Hagar at the time when they stoned the Devil; and how much such states affect our spirituality.

The spiritual state and level which a servant hopes to reach is:

**7. To be in a continuous state of praying and remembering Allah the Almighty:**

Allah the Almighty says in the Qur'an:

**“...Then when you pour down from (mount) Arafat, celebrate the praises of Allah at the Sacred Monument, and celebrate His praises as He has directed you, even though, before this, you went astray.”** (al- Baqara 2; 198)

**“And when you have completed your devotions, then remember Allah as you remember your fathers or with a more lively remembrance. But of mankind is he who says: “our Lord! Give unto us in the world,” and he has no portion in the Hereafter.”** (al-Baqara 2; 200)



Indeed *talbiya*<sup>6</sup>, which is ordered to be repeated during a pilgrimage, also suggests us to be in continuous state of praying and remembrance. The Messenger of Allah (Peace Be Upon Him) said that:

*“There is no believer who recites talbiya and the rocks, trees and earth around him do not participate in his talbiyah. This participation continues till the end of the world in this and that direction (just then the Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) was pointing at his right and left).”* (Tirmidhi, Hajj, 14/828)

Talbiyah is so important to settle the state of remembrance and prayer in the heart that it is ordered to be performed loudly while all other individual acts of worship are done silently. In this way a believer keeps himself and the people around him busy with remembrance of Allah and praying.

Allah’s Messenger (Peace Be Upon Him) expressed in one of his sayings:

*“Gabriel came to me and commanded me to order my Companions and the people with me to raise their voices in talbiyah.”* (Abu Dawud, Manasiq, 26/1814)

In another saying our beloved Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) explained to us how to converse so

6 \* The Arabic phrase “Labbaik Allahumma Labbaik Labbaik la sharika laka labbaik inna’l hamda wa’l ni’mata laka wa’l mulk la sharika laka.”

as to maintain the state of continuous remembrance and praying in those sacred places:

*“Circumambulation around the Ka’bah is similar to performing ritual prayer except that you may talk during circumambulation. Therefore whoever speaks during circumambulation should speak about goodness.”* (Tirmidhi, Hajj, 112)

By adhering to the principles I have enumerated so far, we can all hope to attain that:

### **8. Our souls taste the Divine forgiveness, benevolence, and rewards:**

Allah’s Messenger (Peace Be Upon Him) said that,

*“(The fulfillment of) Umra is expiation for the sins committed (between it and the previous one). And the reward of Hajj Mabruur (the one accepted by Allah) is nothing short of Paradise.”* (Bukhari, Umrah, 1)

The desire of every believer who reaches these sacred places must be to fulfill their duty perfectly and be deserving to be among those who go back to their houses as sinless as the day they were born. In this regard Abu Huraira (May Allah Be Pleased With Him) reported Allah’s Messenger (Peace Be Upon Him) as saying:

*“He who came to this House (the Ka’bah) (with the intention of performing Pilgrimage), and*



*neither spoke indecently nor did he act wickedly would return free from sin as on the very first day his mother bore him.”* (Muslim, Hajj, 438)

This good news is of course applicable for the believers who perform an accepted Hajj, or a pilgrimage which is filled with goodness and virtues from its beginning to the end.

As it is emphasized in some sayings of the Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him), all sins except **“the ones about human rights”** will be forgiven as result of an accepted pilgrimage. Allah the Almighty is the Owner of forgiveness, but the rights of human beings are left to the Hereafter in order to be taken care of.

However one should not misunderstand the meaning of this good news about such a general amnesty; because we do not have certain information about whether or not unfulfilled prayers, fasting and alms giving can be regarded under the category of the sins that will be forgiven. A believer must try to perform these obligations till the end of his life. There are two levels of responsibility held by a servant for not performing his acts of worship:

1. Responsibility of not fulfilling them





2. And, even if he performs them after their required time, he or she is still responsible for not fulfilling them in their required time.

Even if Allah the Almighty forgives the latter responsibility, we will still be responsible for our unfulfilled acts of worship. This is why one should perform his obligations even after its required time passes. In the case of alms giving, one should also calculate the difference of inflation and add it to ones debt. Even then it is also necessary to ask forgiveness of Allah for not performing them in time.

This is why those who set out for the journey of pilgrimage are advised to pay their debt, if there is any, to ask forgiveness from those whose rights he violated and to perform their unfulfilled prayers, fasting and give their alms giving as soon as possible. Trusting the general amnesty of pilgrimage, we should not show negligence and looseness in fulfilling our responsibilities and violate other people's rights. We have to do everything we can and if there are still obligations left after that, then we can ask the forgiveness of our Lord Almighty and take refuge in His mercy.

The sign of an accepted pilgrimage is that **the pilgrim maintains his spiritual purity that he gains during pilgrimage and stays on the straight path after the pilgrimage.** A believer should not



show weakness in performing his responsibilities by trusting on being forgiven as a result of his pilgrimage. He or she should never forget that this world is but a testing place. As it was stated in one of the sayings of the Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him), there are men who do the deeds of the people of Paradise till there is only a step between himself and Paradise, and then he or she does the deeds of the people of the Fire and enters the fire.<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately history is filled with examples of such slipping. Accordingly a believer should live between hope and fear and apply the verse “**And serve your Lord till the inevitable (death) comes unto you.**” (al-Hijr 15; 99) as the principle of his or her life.



A properly performed Hajj, or Hajj al-Mabruur, brings to the pilgrim’s life not just the good news of general amnesty but also praiseworthy characteristics such as consciousness of a sense of responsibility, forgiveness, keeping body and heart pure all the time, brotherhood of Islam, being aware of the fact that piety is the only measure of superiority in Islam, sensitivity to earning only lawful gains, trust in Allah, submission and sincerity. These are some

7 See Bukhari, Qadar, 1



of the rewards of the pilgrimage in this life and in the Hereafter. The rewards are limitless.

The most significant reward of a pilgrimage is that it first brings the contentment of Allah the Almighty. It also develops love among believers. In fact pilgrimage takes place in a blessed and magnificent atmosphere in which the endless mercy of Allah manifests itself, and believers, forgiven by that Divine mercy may join together in the excitement of faith. Many believers from different countries, different backgrounds, colors, languages, customs and lifestyles, manifest a marvelous scene of unity around the Ka'bah. Love and feelings of beauty and brotherhood make the believers disregard the mortal and relative differences among them. Such feelings turn the believers into a single beating heart. Those who believe experience a beautiful brotherhood in the peace and tranquility of the unity of their souls.

Therefore pilgrimage is not just one of the requirements of Islam but also it is something which strengthens the social and political aspects of this great religion. Pilgrimage stands before us as a great monument of the world-embracing nature of Islam.









## VISITING MEDINA

The resting place of the Messenger of Allah in Medina, which pilgrims visit either at the beginning or at the end of their pilgrimage, is spiritually a very important place for the believers. Believing hearts feel the Divine love there. This is why when we walk around and breathe the air in Medina, we should remember and think about the act and the breaths of the Messenger of Allah. When we visit his tomb, we hope to be filled with his spirituality and we should never forget that this is the last resting place of the most valuable gem of this universe. We need to show the utmost respect and the appropriate excitement of being among his ummah.

The Messenger of Allah (Peace Be Upon Him) said that:

*“...I have declared sacred what is between the two lava grounds of Medina just as Abraham (Peace Be Upon Him) declared Mecca as sacred and prayed for it...”* (Bukhari, Fada’il al-Madina, 6; Muslim, Hajj, 462)



We have to love the Messenger of Allah more than ourselves, our wealth, our children or more than everything we have; because he is the only person whom Allah the Almighty praised with the complement of “**Habibi or My friend/beloved**” and also ordered the believers to love Him. In this context Qadi Iyad (may Allah show mercy on his soul) interpreted the following verses:

**“Say: If your fathers and your sons and your brethren and your friends and your kinsfolk and property which you have acquired, and the slackness of trade which you fear and dwellings which you like, are dearer to you than Allah and His Messenger and striving in His way, then wait till Allah brings about His command: and Allah does not guide the transgressors”** (al-Tawba 9; 24) as:

“Allah the Almighty made obligatory to the Prophet’s ummah to love His Messenger along with loving Him.”

Love felt for a being will spread and get reflected on everything which is committed to it. For instance, what makes Uhud different and lovable than the rest of the mountains on earth is the Prophet’s special love for it. This is why when someone comes to Medina he or she should look upon Uhud with love. Allah’s Messenger (Peace



Be Upon Him) stated that: “*Uhud loves us and we love it, too.*” (Bukhari, Jihad, 71)

What made this city called Medina to be loved by the believers, even though it was known as the city of Yathrib before the migration, is its connection with the Messenger of Allah and the rich memories of him that abound there. The believers’ unique love for this city is a result of being reminded of Allah’s messenger (Peace Be Upon Him) whenever we hear the cities name.

Similarly loving Allah requires love for His Messenger and showing obedience to him. This is why Allah the Almighty ordered in His Holy Book:

**“Say (O Muhammad!): If you love Allah, then follow me, Allah will love you...”** (Al-i Imran 3; 31)

Endeavoring to follow and love for the Messenger of Allah (Peace Be Upon Him) will also give us the honor of being among the servants loved by Allah the Almighty. The Companions of the Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) paid the utmost attention to the Messenger of Allah (Peace Be Upon Him) so as to get closer to his reality and benefit from his spirituality. Consequently they were blessed with endless Divine blessings. This is why the most effective cure for our sick and



heedless hearts is to love the Messenger of Allah and **“to obey and follow his Sunnah.”**

Nothing should come before the love for the Messenger of Allah (Peace Be Upon Him). Neither our house, nor our family, nor our children, nor our jobs and responsibilities!

Saying *“my ummah, my ummah”* the Messenger of Allah (Peace Be Upon Him) spent all his life in love for his followers. He tried to protect them like a compassionate mother protecting her children. He (Peace Be Upon Him) once told his Companions:

*“Beware! I am a security for you in my lifetime and after my death, I will say in my grave “my ummah, my ummah ...” until the first trumpet of the Day of Judgment is blown...”* (Ali al-Muttaqi, *Kanzu'l Ummal*, v. 14, p. 414)

In fact he (Peace Be Upon Him) went to his Best Friend repeating the words *“my ummah, my ummah ...”* In his final breaths, he was expressing his love, compassion and fondness for us saying: *“I will be waiting for you by my pond of Kawthar in Paradise...”*

In short as it is stated in the Holy Qur'an:

**“Now has come unto you a Messenger from amongst yourselves: it grieves him that you**



**should perish: ardently anxious is he over you: to the Believers is he most kind and merciful.”**

(al-Tawba 9; 128) Allah’s Messenger (Peace Be Upon Him) thought about us in his crying, laughter, sadness and happiness, prayers and supplications. Even in very special times like the Ascension to Heaven (Miraj) he did not forget us and struggled for us...

He was such a vast sea of mercy that, for his sake, Allah the Almighty did not send disasters and calamities upon the people of Mecca even during the harshest times of oppression, disbelief, and disobedience. It was because the Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) was among them they were spared. This fact is noted by Allah the Almighty as follows:

**“But Allah was not going to chastise them while you were among them ...”** (al-Anfal 8; 33)

However the situation changed after the Messenger of Allah (Peace Be Upon Him) migrated from Mecca to Medina. Disasters from heavens began to be sent upon the polytheists of Mecca. There occurred an outbreak of famine and infertility. When the Meccan people looked up at the skies, they felt dizzy from hunger.

Allah the Almighty will not punish those who carry love for the Messenger of Allah (Peace



Be Upon Him) in their hearts. How can Allah, who did not even punish the polytheists when His Messenger had been among them, punish those who love His Messenger (Peace Be Upon Him) and follow his path for their entire lives? On the other hand those who do not have this sun of guidance in their hearts will not be able to escape from the Divine punishment.

Responding to his love with love is the primary task of those who are honored to be among the ummah of this sultan of the prophets (Peace Be Upon Him), who always kept the believers in his words and in his heart.

However this does not mean just saying or thinking that the Messenger of Allah is in the heart. According to the principle of “those who love imitate what their beloved does and always remember him or her,” lovers of the Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) should reflect the Prophet’s Sunnah in every aspect of their lives. The believers should also frequently call for Divine blessings for the Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) and salute him.

According to Imam Malik (may Allah show mercy on his soul) because the Messenger of Allah (Peace Be Upon Him) has such a lofty place in the presence of Allah, the place of his grave in Medina needs to be considered more sacred than the place

of the Ka'bah; because the entire universe has been created for the love and sake of the Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him).

Allah's Messenger (Peace Be Upon Him) also stated in one of his sayings:

*“He who visits me after my death is like the one who visited me during my lifetime.”* (daraqutni, Sunan, II, 278)

It is very important to pay attention to manners while visiting the Prophet's tomb, for manners are of the first rank of importance for getting the benefit of the spirituality of such places.

One day when Imam Malik (may Allah show mercy on his soul) was in the pulpit, Abu Jafar Mansur, the caliph of the time, went into the mosque. He asked some questions to the Imam and a scholarly conversation started between them. However when Abu Jafar Mansur had engaged himself in their conversation too much and began to raise his voice, Imam Malik warned him saying:

“O Caliph! Lower your voice, because Allah's warning came upon those who were more virtuous than you are.”

The caliph asked:



“O Imam! When I say my supplications, should I turn towards the Ka’bah or the Messenger of Allah (Peace Be Upon Him)?” Imam replied:

“Why should you turn your face away from him? He is the means for you and your ancestor Adam (Peace Be Upon Him) to Allah the Almighty till the Day of Judgment. On the contrary you should turn towards our Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) and pray for his intercession so that Allah the Almighty may make him an intercessor for you.”<sup>8</sup>

Some people pretend to be blind for this fact and do not let pilgrims turn towards the tomb of the Messenger of Allah (Peace Be Upon Him). They say “just salute the Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) and turn towards the direction of the Ka’bah;” whereas Allah’s Messenger (Peace Be Upon Him) is alive. Just like the fact that the martyrs of Islam continue to live, it is an absolute truth that the prophets and especially the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon them), who have much higher status than the martyrs, are in an exceptional liveliness even as their bodies are dead.

Abida al-Salmani was one of the prominent jurists and scholars of the subsequent generation of the Companions. He converted to Islam two

years before the death of the Messenger of Allah (Peace Be Upon Him), but he did not have the honor of meeting him. The following words of Abida beautifully manifest the early believers' love for the Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him):

“Having a single hair of the Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) with me is more valuable to me than all the treasures of the world.” (Ahmad, III, 256)

When the famous Muslim scholar Dhahabi heard the Abida's words about the love for the Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him), he described his own feelings as follows:

“Abida's words expressing his preference of the Prophet's single hair over the entire gold and silver hoard of this world are the utmost manifestation of love for the Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him). If this great scholar says these words only fifty years after the Prophet's death, what should we say seven hundred years after his death, if we had found a strand of his hair, or laces of his shoes, or the pot from which he had drunk water?

Would you consider a rich person as someone spending his wealth foolishly if he spent most of his wealth to acquire such an item?

No, No! Do not abstain from spending all your wealth to visit his blessed mosque, which he



built by his own hands, and to get the chance to salute him in his home.

When you get to Medina, gaze fondly at the beloved mountain of Uhud; because the Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) loved it very much. Frequently visit his mosque and the places where he sat and try to feed your soul with their spirituality, because you cannot be a perfect believer unless you love the Messenger of Allah (Peace Be Upon Him) more than yourself, your children, your wealth, and all the people on earth..." (Dhahabi, *Siyar A'lam al-Nubala*, IV, 42-43)

The period of the Ottoman Empire, which constituted the most magnificent period of Islamic history after the period of the Companions and their successors, witnessed a society filled with love for the Messenger of Allah (Peace Be Upon Him). This was true for every member of the Ottoman society from the Sultan to lowly shepherds.

For instance just like today whenever the name of the Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) was mentioned in those times, believers would say their blessings for him and take their hands to their hearts as a sign of respect for him. Poets wrote poems called mawlid praising his life. Whenever the parts of these poems about his birth were recited, people would stand up to show their





respect for him. These became customs among the Ottomans as manifestations of their love for the Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him). There was no Ottoman Sultan who did not refresh his ablution, kiss the letters, and rub them to his eyes, when the mail from Medina arrived. Only after this was done would they would read them, always standing to do so.

During the reconstruction of the Prophet's mosque in Medina, Ottoman workers paid great care to be ritually pure and to say *basmalah* (in the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful) every time they placed a stone or piece to the building. They tied clothes around their hammers so as not to disturb the spirituality of the Messenger of Allah. These and others are among the most excellent manifestations of Islamic manners.

In this period, Ottomans used to send a procession called "*sürre alayı*"<sup>9</sup> to these sacred places. When the procession arrived in Medina, people would not enter the city. They would camp

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9 **Sürre alayı:** it was the money, gold and gifts which were sent along with a special entourage by the Ottoman Sultans in order to be distributed to the entire Meccan and Medinan people from the poorest to the wealthiest during the month of Rajab (See Münir Atalar, *Sürre-i Hümayun ve Sürre Alayları*, Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı yayınları, Ankara, 1991, p. 2)



in a place close to the city for one night and prepare themselves spiritually for its atmosphere. Only after such preparation they would go into the city and perform their rites. On their return to their hometowns, they would take some Medinan soil with them as a blessing.

When we examine the miniatures of the Ottoman Sultans, we can see a feather like piece on top of their turbans. Does anybody know that these plumes were representing a broom? In this way Ottoman Sultans were expressing that they were the custodians of those sacred places. They also paid the salaries of the people who swept these sacred places out of their own personal treasury.

For centuries keeping the hairs of the Prophet's (Peace Be Upon Him) beard in some mosques and protecting them in nicely folded clothe has been a reflection of the believers' love for him.

Ottoman respect for those holy places began in the capital of the Empire. For instance when the people of Istanbul set out for the pilgrimage journey from the European side of the city, the first place they passed on the Asian side was called *Haram* (the sacred place). In this way they were starting to prepare themselves for the spiritual atmosphere of *Haramain al-Sharifain* (the two sacred places or Mecca and Medina) at the very

beginning of their journey. Then they would not approve of any inappropriate manners or heedlessness for the entire their journey.

In this context, Ottoman poet Nabi's following memoir of his pilgrimage with some employees of the Ottoman government in 1678 is very remarkable:

On his journey Nabi saw an Ottoman Pasha laying down and heedlessly stretched his legs towards Medina. Nabi was affected by the scene so deeply that he began to write his famous poem praising the Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him).

When the caravan got close to Medina around the time of dawn prayer, Nabi heard that his poem was recited from the minarets of the Prophet's mosque in Medina:

*Sakın terk-i edebden kûy-i mahbûb-i Hudâ'dır bu;  
Nazargâh-ı ilâhîdir, makâm-ı Mustafâ'dır bu!..*

*“Be careful about your manners in this place which is place of the Divine sight and the town of Allah's beloved Prophet Mustafa.”*

*Murâât-ı edeb şartıyla gir Nâbi bu dergâha,  
Metâf-ı kudsiyândır, bûsegâh-ı enbiyâdır bu!..*

*“O Nabi! Enter this place paying attention to your manners. This is a blessed place around which angels turn and prophets kiss (its door step).”*



Nabi, who was exited by what had happened, immediately went and found the muezzin:

“How and from whom have you learned this poem?” Muezzin replied:

“Tonight I saw the Messenger of Allah in my dream. He told me:

“A poet called Nabi from my ummah is coming to visit me. This poet is filled with love for me. In return for his love, meet this man by reciting his own poem from the minarets of my mosque.” So I just fulfilled the orders of the Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him).”

Nabi began to sob saying:

“The Messenger of Allah (Peace Be Upon Him) regarded me as a member of his ummah. The sun of both worlds accepted me to his ummah...”

Therefore the most important matter in performing pilgrimage is to have such lofty feelings during ones visit to the Messenger of Allah and circumambulating around the Ka’bah.

Just like all the other acts of worship, performing pilgrimage in a way that will be accepted by Allah the Almighty depends on perfection of faith and spiritual knowledge. Being able to make our pilgrimage a *mabrur* pilgrimage (accepted pilgrimage) is a means of attaining



the contentment of Allah and being purified of ones sins. In other words the expected result of these acts of worship can be achieved only by performing them in the lofty spiritual level most pleasing to Allah the Almighty.

In this regard the following words of Shibli (May Allah Bless his Secret) to someone who recently performed pilgrimage attracts our attention to the spiritual aspect of pilgrimage and they are very valuable advice and a warning for those who are on their way to pilgrimage:

*“When you intend to go to pilgrimage, if you do not repent for all your sins and turn to the straight path, you have not really intended to do it.*

*When you take of your daily garments to put on ihram, if you do not take the useless things off you, you have not really taken your garments off.*

*When you perform major ablution, if this purity does not cleanse the spiritual impurities and illnesses from your heart, you have not really performed an ablution.*

*When you enter the mosque in Mecca, if you do not promise to leave the unlawful things and everything which takes you away from Allah, then you have not really entered the mosque.*



*When you sacrifice an animal, if you do not sacrifice your desires and will for the pleasure of Allah, then you have not really sacrificed an animal.*

*When you throw stones at the Devil, if you do not stone the ignorance and hesitations hidden in you and if it does not achieve knowledge in you, then you have not really soned the Devil.*

*As a result of your visit, have the Divine blessings increased in you and has your soul filled with peace and happiness? Because in a prophetic saying it is noted that:*

*“Pilgrims are the guests of Allah the Almighty. It is a requirement upon the Host to offer things to His guests.” If you have not recognized these offerings, then you have not really visited (those sacred places) ...”<sup>10</sup>*

What Shibli (May Allah Bless his Secret) tries to express is the duty to obey the following Divine order:

**“Perform the pilgrimage and the visit (to Mecca) for Allah...”** (al-Baqara 2; 196)

10 See Ibn Arabi, *Al-Futuhat al-Makkiyyah*, ed. by Osman Kahya, Cairo, 1986, X, 133-38

The most valuable gifts, which pilgrims can take to their home towns, should be the beauties of these sacred places and the morality of the righteous believers who already live in accordance with such beauties.

One day Pakistan's spiritual architect Muhammad Iqbal visited the pilgrims recently returned from Medina and asked them the following exemplary questions:

*“You have visited Medina. With what kind of spiritual gifts from the markets of Medina have you filled your hearts? In time all your material gifts, the capes, the rosaries, and the prayer rugs will be worn down and disappear. Have you brought any spiritual gifts from Medina which will never get old and disappear?”*

*Is the submission and trustworthiness of Abu Bakr (May Allah Be Pleased With Him), the justice of Umar (May Allah Be Pleased With Him), modesty and generosity of Uthman (May Allah Be Pleased With Him), and the knowledge and bravery of Ali.) among your gifts? Are you going to be able to give the excitement of the age of happiness to the Muslim world, which suffers from numerous hardships?”*

**May Allah the Almighty bestow upon us to be properly enlightened by the spirituality**



**of these two sacred places! May He bless us to perform our pilgrimage with a sensitive and soft heart! May He accept and make our acts of worship praiseworthy that we performed and will perform in accordance with these principles!**

**Amin!**





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