



Ḥajj is an invitation from the Lord of all the Worlds to visit His Sacred House and an opportunity for us to correct the shortcomings and faults we find in our lives. All intending pilgrims should be focused on the great journey that awaits them and prepare for it as best as possible. In addition to the essential task of learning the injunctions of Ḥajj, there are a number of other points that should be given special attention by all those who are about to become the Guests of Allāh ﷻ.

1. Sincerity

Intending pilgrims should examine their intentions and ask themselves why they are going for Ḥajj. Rasūlullāh ﷺ said:

'Actions are only according to intentions.' (Al-Bukhārī, Muslim)

If one's intention is correct and sincere, the deed is accepted, but if it is incorrect then the deed does not receive acceptance. Regarding the intentions for Ḥajj, Rasūlullāh ﷺ predicted:

'Near to Qiyāmah, the affluent of my ummah will perform Ḥajj merely for leisure whilst the middle-class of my ummah will perform Ḥajj for the sake of trade, the scholars will perform Ḥajj for show (and ostentation) and the poor will perform Ḥajj in order to beg.' (Kanz-al-'Ummāl)

We need to examine our intentions. We should not be going just to appease relatives and friends who keep 'pestering' us to go or because we desire the title of Ḥājī. Our sole intention should be to please Allāh ﷻ who created us and who

granted us the health, wealth and opportunity to visit Al-Makkah Al-Mukarramah and to fulfil His Command. Moreover, we have to endeavour to maintain this sincerity all the time whilst performing the rites of Ḥajj and after we return, until our last breath.

2. Tawbah

As we are to acquire a unique proximity to Allāh ﷻ and be His guests of honour, it is inappropriate to go as offenders, guilty of disobedience. Therefore the next task for us is to make tawbah (repent) from all sins, major and minor. Perform two raka'āt nafl ṣalāh with the intention of repentance and make sincere tawbah from all past sins. Regardless of whether sins relate to the Rights of Allāh ﷻ or the rights of His creation, or whether they relate to the realm of akhlāq (moral conduct), 'ibādāt (worship), mu'āmalāt (transactions) or mu'āsharah (social interaction), tawbah is necessary in each case.

There are certain preconditions for tawbah: For those sins which only violate the Rights of Allāh ﷻ, such as drinking alcohol, fornication, gambling, failure to perform ṣalāh or give zakāh etc., there are three conditions. The first condition is immediate abstention from such sins. Secondly, there must be regret in the heart for having committed these sins; a feeling of remorse about disobeying Allāh ﷻ who brought us into existence when we were nothing. Thirdly, there must be a firm intention never to engage in those sins again in the future.

If a sin also involves violation of the Rights of Allāh's ﷻ creation, e.g. defrauding someone, slander or backbiting, then in all such cases a fourth condition will also have to be met. It will be necessary to make amends to the person whose rights were violated, e.g. if someone's

wealth was misappropriated, it will have to be returned or forgiveness sought. If the violation was such that it cannot be compensated for materially, forgiveness must be sought from the victim and his displeasure must be abated.

When a servant fulfils all these conditions, then, as appears in a ḥadīth:

'A person who repents from sin is like one who has no sin.' (Ibn Mājah, At-Tabrānī)

True tawbah results in a commitment to perform the five daily ṣalāh and to complete any qaḍā ṣalāh, to discharge zakāh on time and to settle any past zakāh and to fulfil the obligation of qurbānī and to pay ṣadaqah for previously missed uḍḥiyah (qurbānī). If we have oppressed or wronged someone, we must seek their forgiveness; if we have defrauded or usurped somebody's wealth, we must return it; if we are on bad terms with somebody, we must reconcile our differences.

The reason behind meeting people before departing for Ḥajj is just this; that we ask for forgiveness and reconcile any disputes that may exist between us. Superficially saying, 'Forgive me,' is not enough to secure forgiveness, we have to genuinely make an attempt to please the person whom we have wronged. Nowadays, we go to meet and seek forgiveness from those whom we are on good terms with and where there is no real need to seek forgiveness, yet we do not go to see and make peace with those with whom we have some quarrel.

3. Trust in Allāh ﷻ

A further point worth addressing is the anxiety felt by those intending to go for Ḥajj. There are two reasons for this: firstly, the quite natural apprehension of travelling to a foreign country,

and secondly, the negative comments made by those who have been to Ḥajj before. It should be understood that throughout the whole journey of Ḥajj, inshā'allāh you will witness 99% comfort and a mere 1% of difficulty. Shayṭān however, in order to ruin our 'ibādah, makes us look only towards the 1% so that upon our return, we complain about the difficulties encountered in the sacred places and spoil our Ḥajj. The consequence of such disrespectful talk is that other servants of Allāh ﷻ become discouraged from performing Ḥajj.

The reality is that every journey has its hardships, even travelling to the airport involves discomfort and inconvenience. Rasūlullāh ﷺ commented:

'Travel is a portion of suffering.' (Al-Bukhārī, Muslim)

The journey of Ḥajj is long, with approximately two to three million people from all over the world congregating at one specific place. Often they all flock to one place at one time to perform the very same 'ibādah! Organising for such an event is beyond the capacity of any organisation/government, it is only possible through the Power of Allāh ﷻ. In such circumstances, the minute amount of inconvenience we may encounter is totally insignificant; the sheer bliss of just casting a single gaze at the House of Allāh ﷻ outweighs all the difficulties.

Therefore pilgrims returning from Ḥajj are requested to only relate the positive and complimentary tales of their journey and to forget any negative experiences. Relating negative experiences is a Shayṭanic ploy designed to ruin the reward of our Ḥajj. And if, due to our stories of hardship, someone decides against going for Ḥajj, we may be held responsible.

So those going for Ḥajj, and in particular those going for the first time, should pay no attention to the tales of others. The journey of Ḥajj is a comfortable one, free of any threat, where everything is available. Of course, being a journey, it has some inconveniences, as do all journeys, but we should place our trust in Allāh ﷻ and remove all anxieties from our minds.

My late respected father, Hāfiẓ Ibrāhīm Dhorat ﷺ, used to say a wonderful thing to those intending to go for Ḥajj. He would say, 'When we go to visit somebody and become their guest, we do not need to worry about our sleeping arrangements or meals etc. Our host takes full responsibility for us and repeatedly asks us our preferences and if we need anything, we simply request it from our host. Now when this is our state of affairs when our host is a human, is it conceivable that when we go as guests of Allāh ﷻ, the Creator, He will not fulfil our needs?'

So we need to realize that during Ḥajj we are the guests of Allāh ﷻ. And if we do experience any inconvenience, we should think that Allāh ﷻ is making us go through some minor problems in order to wipe out the mountains of sins we have committed in the past and to save us from the eternal troubles of the Hereafter.

4. Selection of Travelling Companions

When selecting travelling companions, care should be taken to choose pious and righteous people, possibly people who have performed Ḥajj before. If it is possible to travel with a pious scholar, then all the better. The group should not be too large and fellow travellers should be like-minded, able to get on with, assist and serve each other without considering it a burden. Experience shows that during Ḥajj, if people of dissimilar temperaments travel together, some

disagreement or other always crops up. Obviously Ḥajj is a journey in which rancour and bitterness are to be avoided. It has been seen that friendships that develop during Ḥajj remain lifelong as do hostilities. Accordingly, our companions should be pious people, who will prompt us when we are neglectful and make us incline towards Allāh ﷻ, the Ākhirah and the successful accomplishment of our goal.

5. Avoid Unnecessary Luggage

Another point to remember is to avoid taking along unnecessary items. This will make the journey easier, particularly at customs, and whilst travelling to and fro between the airport and hotels. Everything is available at our destination and can be purchased when needed. Essentials to take along are necessary clothing, toiletries, etc. Generally, people take along many superfluous items from home and then end up going through hardship because of them.

6. Refrain from Unfounded Customs

During the time leading up to departure, we must refrain from all disobedience to Allāh ﷻ, including those customs and traditions which displease Him. We do many things just because others do, e.g. inviting lots of people for a meal before going for Ḥajj. It should be remembered that whatever act is done merely for show incurs the displeasure of Allāh ﷻ, not His Pleasure.

Should someone give an invitation out of affection, which is accepted out of affection, then it will be a rewarding deed. If however, one feels compelled to offer an invitation because other relatives have done so, then the act of inviting is just for show and devoid of any reward. Furthermore the intending pilgrim, having been invited by so many people, feels obliged to ar-

range a meal for them too. Thus, just before setting off on his blessed journey, the intending pilgrim hires out a hall and invites lots of people to a function resembling a wedding party in its extravagance. There is no need for such formalities and excesses. We should beware lest the burden of sins we already bear prior to going for Ḥajj is added to by such behaviour.

7. Acquire and Study a Book on Ḥajj

Every intending pilgrim should acquire a book on Ḥajj in the language he is most comfortable with. The book should not be too brief nor should it be overloaded with masā'il and it should be written by an authoritative and experienced 'ālim. Repeated study of this book, preferably under the supervision of a reliable 'ālim or muftī, will ensure a firm grounding in the method of Ḥajj. And whatever is not clear should be clarified again with a qualified authority.

8. Study 'Virtues of Ḥajj'

The masā'il of Ḥajj can be acquired through the above method, but to give life to the rites of Ḥajj and to endow them with their true spirit, 'Virtues of Ḥajj' should be studied carefully. It should also be taken along and read during the journey of Ḥajj.

An essential read for all intending pilgrims: How to Perform Ḥajj, 'Umrah, Ziyārah and Useful Advice for Travellers to the Ḥaramayn by Shaykh Mawlānā Muhammad Saleem Dhorat ḥafīẓahullāh.

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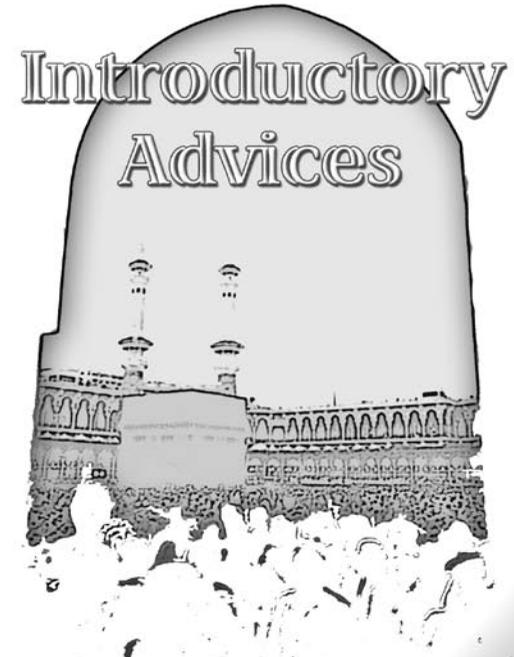
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Before Ḥajj

Introductory Advices



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