

وَلِلّٰهِ عَلَى النَّاسِ حِجُّ الْبَيْتِ مَنِ اسْتَطَاعَ اِلَيْهِ سَبِيْلًا وَمَنْ كَفَرَ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَنِيٌّ عَنِ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ¹

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ - رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ - قَالَ سَمِعْتُ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ أَىِّ الْأَعْمَالِ أَفْضَلُ قَالَ " إِيْمَانُ بِاللّٰهِ وَرَسُولِهِ " . قِيلَ ثُمَّ مَاذَا قَالَ " جِهَادٌ فِي سَبِيلِ اللّٰهِ " . قِيلَ ثُمَّ مَاذَا قَالَ " حَجٌّ مَبْرُورٌ "²

My Dear respected ‘Ulamā, elders, brothers and sisters listening at home, Assalāmu ‘Alaykum Wa Raḥmatullāhi Wa Barakātuhu. I begin the in the name of Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى, Lord of the Worlds and sending Peace and Salutations on our beloved Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ.

The months of Ḥajj are now upon us. Many people will have already left for the blessed land whilst others will be leaving very soon. The topic for today is what advice can we give to those who are going to perform Ḥajj so they can make the most out of their journey. For those who are not going, there are also lessons for us to learn.

Correct our Intention

First and foremost, as with every act of worship. We must correct our intention. We must ask ourselves, why are we going for Ḥajj? who are we doing it for? Who do we want to please? No act of worship is accepted unless it is exclusively for the pleasure of Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى. In the Verse I recited in the Khuṭbah, Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى tells us:

وَلِلّٰهِ عَلَى النَّاسِ حِجُّ الْبَيْتِ مَنِ اسْتَطَاعَ اِلَيْهِ سَبِيْلًا وَمَنْ كَفَرَ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَنِيٌّ عَنِ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ³

“As a right of Allāh, it is obligatory on the people to perform Ḥajj of the House - on everyone who has the ability to manage (his) way to it. If one disbelieves, then Allāh is independent of all the worlds.”

From this Verse we can see, our intention should be, we are going for Ḥajj to fulfil the command of Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى to visit His house and fulfil an obligation which is only due upon us once in a lifetime. We are doing it for Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى and we only want to please Him.

¹ Sūrah Āl-‘Imrān Verse 97

² Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 1519

³ Sūrah Āl-‘Imrān Verse 97

In the same way, before any act of worship, let us correct our intention. All the acts of worship we do, whether this is praying Ṣalāh, fasting, giving in charity, reading the Qur'ān etc. should all be for the pleasure of Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى

Set your House in order before you go

When we go for Ḥajj we leave behind our family and friends, our work, our home etc. If we were not to return from the journey, have we set our house in order before we leave? Have we left behind an Islamic Will? Have we settled all the debts we need to repay? Have we asked forgiveness from all those we have wronged before we go on the blessed journey?

In the same way, there will come a day when we leave our family and friends, our work, our home and everything else permanently, when the time arrives for us to make the transition into the hereafter. We must think, if we were to leave the world today, is my house in order? If not then take the steps necessary.

Be Thankful

Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى has chosen the pilgrims to come and visit His house. This is an amazing honour, and all the pilgrims should be extremely thankful of Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى to have given them this opportunity of a lifetime.

Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى tells us:

وَإِذْ تَأَذَّنَ رَبُّكُمْ لَئِنْ شَكَرْتُمْ لَأَزِيدَنَّكُمْ وَلَئِنْ كَفَرْتُمْ إِنَّ عَذَابِي لَشَدِيدٌ ⁴

“(Recall the time) when your Lord declared, “If you express gratitude, I shall certainly give you more, and if you are ungrateful, then My punishment is severe.”

Many people spend their whole lives without having gone for Ḥajj even though they had the means to go. We must be thankful, even with our shortcomings Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى has given us the chance to fulfil our obligation.

The lesson for us is to be thankful for all the favours and bounties Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى has given us and continues to give us each and every day. And if we are thankful, Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى will give us even more.

⁴ Sūrah Ibrāhīm Verse 7

Please the Creator and not the Creation

There are some people who like to share every part of their journey with all their friends and followers on social media. Be it through WhatsApp statuses, Facebook updates, Instagram posts etc. Imagine the first time a person walks into Al-Masjid al-Ḥarām, they have a phone in their hand and recording the journey. Imagine the first time they lay eyes on the House of Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى is not with their own eyes, but through the screen on their phone? Imagine doing the Ṭawāf with their phone held up high recording so they can post it on their status. Imagine going to perform Salām for the first time to Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ and rather than have Ṣalāt and Salām on our lips, we are filming a live commentary of the experience? What will the mindset be of such a person? What are they trying to achieve when they are doing this? Will they even be praying and focusing on one of the greatest and most virtuous acts in their lives.

Do not waste your time and do this. Ḥajj is a journey of Love, between a slave and his Master, and the slave at all times should be trying to please and make his Master happy with his actions. Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى is watching us, we do not need to show others, rather we should have the mindset that Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى can see everything and is watching us.

A lesson for all of us, is that in all acts of worship, we do not need to show others or inform others. Going back to the original point, in this way a person's intention could change and rather than please the Creator, the act is done to please the creation.

Do not be Obscene, Sin or Quarrel

Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى tells us in Sūrah al-Baqarah:

فَمَنْ فَرَضَ فِيهِنَّ الْحُجَّ فَلَا رَفَثَ وَلَا فُسُوقَ وَلَا جِدَالَ فِي الْحُجِّ⁵

“So whoever undertakes Ḥajj in them (the months of Ḥajj), there should be no obscenity, and no sin, and no quarrel in the Ḥajj”

When a person undergoes the journey of Ḥajj, it will be full of tests. There maybe many situations where things do not go as planned, or there are delays, or there are issues with other people who are travelling with you or other Ḥujjāj as well including your own spouse. Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى tells us three things in this Verse.

⁵ Sūrah al-Baqarah Verse 197

1. There should be no obscenity. Meaning a person is not allowed to have intimate relations with their spouse or even speak any obscene talk.

In many act of worships, even those things which are normally lawful are made unlawful as they disturb the nature of worship. For example, in Ṣalāh, we are not allowed to eat or drink as it will disturb our Ṣalāh. In Ḥajj, the pilgrim is wearing the sheets of Iḥrām, showing Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى that they have given up all forms of pleasure and desires for the sake of Him. If a person then goes ahead and involves themselves in obscene talk, this is in contradiction to their claim.

2. There should be no sin. The pilgrim must be aware at all times, that no sins are carried out in any of their forms. Sins of the eyes, of the ears, of the mouth, of the limbs etc.
3. There should be no quarrelling. There will be situations where you will see things you do not like, people might push in front of you in queues to get onto transportation, or to get through security, or to get food. There might be some pushing and shoving. There might be instances where other people may even take exception with you. At all times we must experience patience and ensure we do not get into any quarrels with anyone, including our own family members as well.

The lesson for us here is that this advice is general for us to stay away from all things which are obscene, sinning and quarrelling, at all times.

Supplicating Properly

When we go for Ḥajj, there are many moments, opportunities and places where supplications are accepted. When we see the Ka‘bah for the first time, after completing our 2 Rak‘ah after the Ṭawāf, when drinking Zamzam, during Sa‘ī when we reach Aṣ-Ṣafā and Al-Marwah, on the day of ‘Arafah, etc. We need to understand that supplication is not merely memorising some du‘ās and then reciting them. How many of us even know what we have asked for? Supplicating is not saying but asking.

If you learn the meaning of the Du‘ās you are reciting then focus on the meaning when asking. If you have a book of supplications which has the translation, then look at the translation. Make du‘ā in your own language so you know what you are asking for and learn the etiquettes of Du‘ā as well. One du‘ā you can make at all these places, is to say that whatever supplications for good our Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ made at this place and all our pious predecessors made, I ask for them as well, and whatever bad Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ and our pious predecessors sought refuge from in these places, I seek refuge from them as well.

Please remember all our brothers and sisters all around the world, especially those in Palestine. Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى is the only One who answers.

The lesson for us all here is to reconnect with Allāh سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى through our supplications. Let us ask from the bottom of our heart when making Du‘ā. Do not make it a mere act which is done at certain times, rather du‘ā is the essence of worship and a means to ask for all our needs.

Set yourself Prayer Goals and stick to them

Ḥajj is a very social journey. It is the largest gathering where people from all over the world will congregate in the special places. You will meet new people at all turns in your journey. There will also be lots of distractions when you arrive. Shopping malls, restaurants, people going to visit their friends, trips to new places, the list goes on.

One thing we must remember here is that Ḥajj is an act of worship. Every second we are on this journey is rewarding and worship. We need to utilise this time to the maximum. Spend the time you need to, in carrying out your necessities, however, do not waste time. We need to ensure we do not get carried away in long conversations, useless debates, long shopping trips and entertainment.

A way to ensure your time is well spent is to create a prayer timetable and stick to it. This will help ensure you maximize the reward you can attain on this journey. Some of the advice are as follows:

1. Read all Ṣalāh with congregation in Al-Masjid al-Ḥarām and Al-Masjid Al-Nabawī
2. Read your Sunnah and Nawafil in addition to your Farḍ, as these are also very rewarding
3. Set yourself a goal of completing one complete recitation of the Qur’ān in the days of Ḥajj, as well as one in Makkah and one in Madīnah. Use your time while travelling to also read the Qur’ān.
4. Set yourself a target of completing a certain number of Ṭawāf each day.

عَنِ ابْنِ عَبَّاسٍ قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ
مَنْ طَافَ بِالْبَيْتِ خَمْسِينَ مَرَّةً خَرَجَ مِنْ ذُنُوبِهِ كَيَوْمِ وَلَدَتْهُ أُمُّهُ⁶

Ibn ‘Abbās رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ narrated that Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ said, whoever performs 50 Ṭawāf of the House, will be free of his sins like on the day his mother gave birth to him.

5. In Madīnah, go to present Salām to Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ regularly and spend time in sending Ṣalāt and Salām to him.

⁶ Jāmī‘ al-Tirmidhī 866

6. During the days of Ḥajj in Minā, spend time learning about the rites of Ḥajj, engaging in Dhikr and recitation of the Qur'ān, keeping the Talbiyah on the lips as well in the times required.
7. Learn about the Sirah of Rasūlullāh ﷺ and spend some time in visiting the places of significance and understanding the importance of those places.
8. Spend time inside both Masājid and in Al-Masjid al-Ḥarām, try and pray inside the Ḥaṭīm if possible.
9. In Al-Masjid al-Nabawī, book a slot for visiting the Rawḍah and learn about the significant places inside.

The lesson for us, is that each of our days should also follow a timetable, focusing on fulfilling our obligations to Allāh ﷻ like praying our 5 times daily Ṣalāh, in the Masjid for men. Spending time in the day in the recitation of the Qur'ān, in supplication and learning about Islām, to increase our understanding and make us better Muslims.

Ensure we read our Sunnah and Nawāfil. How many people now do not even read the Sunnah. Are we not needy of reward? Do we think we have enough so our scales will weigh heavy on the day of judgement? We should grasp every opportunity of doing good and earning as much reward as possible as none of us know what our condition will be on the day of judgement.

Help others on the Journey

The journey of Ḥajj is undertaken by people from all backgrounds and all walks of life. There will be the young fit and healthy, whilst other will be older and less able. There will be people who are able to purchase whatever they want whilst others will be on a limited budget.

Whenever an opportunity arises to help someone else, then help them. This could take many forms. It could be helping someone with the rites of Ḥajj if they need to know some information which you know. It could be physical help; you see someone struggling to push someone in a wheelchair and you give them a hand. You help someone who is lost find their way. You see a lost child and help them find their parents. It could also be buying food for other people in your group and even a cup of tea for a stranger. These acts will Inshā Allāh be greatly rewarded by Allāh ﷻ.

There is a wonderful story narrated in Faḍāil Ḥajj by Haḍrat Shaykh Zakariya رَحِمَهُ اللهُ about the Saint Rabī' ibn Sulayman رَحِمَهُ اللهُ. He was travelling for Ḥajj and saw a woman cutting off pieces of meat off a dead mule. He followed her to her home and found that there were four young girls who were literally staring to death. When he asked about them, he found out that they were from the family of Rasūlullāh ﷺ. They had not eaten anything for four days and were forced to eat carrion due to fear of starvation.

Rabīʿ رَحِمَهُ اللهُ returned with tears in his eyes and informed his companions that he would not be continuing his journey for Ḥajj and decided to return home. His companions tried their best to change his mind, but he could not be persuaded.

Rabīʿ رَحِمَهُ اللهُ purchased some food and clothes and gave them to the family as well as a sum of money. Rabīʿ رَحِمَهُ اللهُ remained in Kūfa and the rest of his companions proceeded for Ḥajj. When they returned he went out to meet them and requested their Duʿās. They were surprised when they saw him and said they had seen him in ʿArafah, Mina, Makkah and Madīnah.

One of the pilgrims gave him a bag and said that he had given him the bag in Madīnah as a trust after visiting the blessed Rawḍah. On the bag was an inscription saying, “Whoever deals with us, shall profit.” Rabīʿ رَحِمَهُ اللهُ had never seen the bag before but he took it home. That night he saw Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ in a dream. Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ said he was pleased that he had assisted the family and asked Allāh سُبحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى to reward him more than his kindness. Allāh سُبحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى in turn ordered an Angel to perform Ḥajj in his place and gave him 600 gold coins in exchange for the 600 silver coins he had spent on the family. When Rabīʿ رَحِمَهُ اللهُ woke up, he found the 600 gold coins in his bag.

What an amazing example of the reward a person can get by helping others.

The lesson for us is that, in the same way we should help others at all times. This could be physical help, financial help or even just supporting someone by being there for them and giving them the correct advice.

عَنْ أَنَسٍ عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ " لَا يُؤْمِنُ أَحَدُكُمْ حَتَّى يُحِبَّ لِأَخِيهِ مَا يُحِبُّ لِنَفْسِهِ ⁷

Anas رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ narrates that Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ said, “None of you believes until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself.”

Respect the Sanctity of the Ḥaram

Allāh سُبحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى has created the Ḥaram different to all other places on this earth. There are special rules and regulations which must be followed once inside the blessed sanctuary. In the same way the reward is increased, if anyone commits any sins, this also weighs heavier. We must ensure we respect the sanctity of the Ḥaram at all times. Ensure our conduct is civil at all times, especially when inside the Masjid.

⁷ Jāmīʿ al-Tirmidhī 2515

When visiting Al-Masjid al-Nabawī, be conscious of the fact that Rasūlullāh ﷺ is there. When presenting our Salām, our heart must be focussed on Rasūlullāh ﷺ rather than recording the whole experience. Approach the Rawḍah with full humility and humbleness with the thought that we are coming in front of the best of all of the creations of Allāh ﷻ. The one who will intercede for us on the Day of Judgment. The one who the people will finally go to on the Day of Judgment and Allāh ﷻ will only start the Judgement after his intercession.

In the same way, we must respect the sanctity of our Masājid and learn about the etiquettes of visiting them.

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ " أَحَبُّ الْبِلَادِ إِلَى اللَّهِ مَسَاجِدُهَا وَأَبْغَضُ
الْبِلَادِ إِلَى اللَّهِ أَسْوَاقُهَا ⁸

Abū Hurayrah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ narrates that Rasūlullāh ﷺ said, "The most beloved of all places to Allāh ﷻ are the Masājid and the most disliked are the Markets."

Do not make our Masājid places where the world is discussed, rather make it a place where we remember Allāh ﷻ.

Come back a changed person

Allāh ﷻ is always presenting us with opportunities to change our lives for the better. When we go for Ḥajj we are in an environment which is conducive to worshipping Allāh ﷻ. We go to the Masjid and read 5 times a day in congregation. We spend time in Ṭawāf, performing the Sa‘ī, going to all the Mashā‘ir, special places of Ḥajj with only one thing on our mind which is to please Allāh ﷻ. The sisters will all be covering their heads. The men will be walking around with dishevelled hair and dusty sheets. The temporary nature of this world and the worthlessness of the material becomes apparent. Allāh ﷻ gives us the opportunity to become better and we become better.

The test begins when we return to our homes and families. Are we the same as we were when we left or has something changed. Have we tried to change? Are we now reading our Ṣalāh regularly 5 times a day, in the Masjid for men? Have we now started to adopt the Sunnah of Rasūlullāh ﷺ in our dress and appearance. For sisters, have we now started to cover our hair and wear the Ḥijāb? Are we longing to go back to the Ḥaramayn and experience the extreme closeness to Allāh ﷻ and Rasūlullāh ﷺ. Are we making more of an effort in fulfilling the

⁸ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 671

obligations of Allāh سُبحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى or are we still the same? Each person knows the true answer to this question deep inside.

The lesson for us is that every day is an opportunity for us to change. Allāh سُبحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى in His ultimate wisdom gives us chance after chance. How many of us take these chances and how many of us do not? Take them before it is too late.

Ḥajj was the final pillar of Islām, made obligatory late on during the life of Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ. He performed the farewell Ḥajj a few months before he passed away. It was the culmination and completion of Islām, the religion which is perfect in every way.

For those who are fortunate to have been chosen to go, treasure each moment of the journey and use it to become a better servant of Allāh. Immerse yourself in the sacred surroundings and fill your heart with the love of Allāh سُبحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى and Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ. Be thankful and use this journey as a focal point in your life for positive change. When you return, encourage others to go and also fulfil their obligation. When they see you have changed for the better, Inshā Allāh it will be encouragement for them as well.

May Allāh سُبحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى accept the Ḥajj of all those who are going. May He forgive the sins and mistakes of the pilgrims and give them the opportunity to please Him in the way He should be pleased. May He give them an opportunity to return to His House and give all those who have not already been an opportunity to also fulfil their obligation.

May Allāh سُبحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى through the supplications of the pilgrims bring peace into the world and relieve the suffering of our brothers and sisters all around the world, especially in Palestine. May Allāh سُبحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى protect the Ḥaramayn Sharifayn and Al-Masjid al-Aqsā’.