



# HAJJ AND THE COMFORT ZONE

## HAS HAJJ BECOME EASIER?

A common discussion amongst Muslims is whether Hajj has become harder or easier over the years. Certainly, more facilities, the use of technology and better transport routes have made this obligation easier for devout Muslims. On the other hand, the huge number of Muslims attending Hajj every year has made the Pilgrimage a testing affair. Many Muslims are resorting to spending thousands of pounds to create ease during the trip, like closer hotels and special transport arrangements.

The reality is that Hajj has always been difficult. It has never been easy. Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was asked what Hajj is. In his response, he simply said,

The leaving of adornment  
and sweat.<sup>1</sup>

الشَّعِثُ وَالتَّفِيلُ.

So the Messenger ﷺ acknowledged this pillar of Islam is not completed without considerable effort, perspiration and difficulty.

On another occasion, some Muslim women asked for permission to perform Jihad in the path of Allah, like the men do. He did not permit them and instead said,

Your Jihad is Hajj.<sup>2</sup>

جهادكنّ الحج

This also indicates that Hajj cannot be easy, and that it has always had an element of difficulty attached to it.

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1 Tabrizi, *al-Mishkat al-Masabih*.

2 *Al-Mishkat al-Masabih*.

## MORE DIFFICULTY = MORE REWARD

Yet here lies the beauty of our religion. Allah the most-Merciful gives us ample reward for every good act that we perform. He never gives one unit of reward. One simple act will warrant at least ten units of reward. However, Allah offers even more reward when circumstances are more difficult to act upon Islam. When an act of worship becomes harder, then the reward from Allah also increases considerably. For example,

- i. When a person has to do ablution in difficult conditions (like with very cold water), then Allah forgives some of his sins and raises his ranks.<sup>3</sup>
- ii. Not everyone lives near the mosque. For those who live far and hence put in more effort, Allah grants a larger reward. In fact, for every step a Muslim takes, there is an extra reward.<sup>4</sup>
- iii. Undoubtedly, some find the Qur'an harder to recite than others, like non-Arabs for example. Because some find it more difficult, there is extra reward. The Prophet ﷺ said,

The expert reciter will be  
among the noble scribes  
of the angels. And the  
one who stutters and for  
whom it is difficult will  
have double the reward.<sup>5</sup>

الماهر بالقرآن مع السفرة الكرام البررة  
والذي يقرأ القرآن ويتتعتع فيه وهو  
عليه شاق له اجران

- iv. Muslims who hold tight onto their faith in an indecent, sinful climate will undoubtedly reap a much greater reward than those who reside in more religious surroundings. This is purely because greater effort is required to safeguard one's faith.

On this basis, Hajj is an act of devotion that carries a reward beyond measure. All the rituals in Makkah require huge spiritual and physical force. The Pilgrimage is a test of one's perseverance, faith, strength and devotion. No act of Hajj can

3 Sabih Muslim.

4 Sabih Muslim.

5 Forty Hadith on the Quran, p. 21.

be completed within one's comfort zone. Allah knows this and so He offers the ultimate prize for our efforts, the forgiveness of our sins like the day our mothers gave birth to us,

Whosoever performs Hajj  
for the sake of Allah,  
and [during it] he does  
not indulge in indecency  
and does not sin, then  
he returns home [free  
from sins] like the day  
his mother gave birth to  
him.<sup>6</sup>

من حج لله فلم يرفث ولم يفسق رجع  
كيوم ولدته أمه

#### CONCLUSION

Most Muslims who have completed the Hajj will undoubtedly mention the struggle associated with it. But they will also mention the pleasure, peace and sense of accomplishment they earned with this great worship. Perhaps these two points are interrelated; that we tend to find greater inner satisfaction in acts that require more effort and ones that take us outside our comfort zone. There is no greater joy for a woman than the birth of her child. Yet this is preceded by nine months of hardship. The *huffaz* (memorisers of the Qur'an) find immeasurable joy in completing the Qur'an in *Salah al-Tarawih* during Ramadan. Yet this is also the hardest thing they do. Islam loves strong Muslims, ones who can step outside their comfort zone. And it is such harder acts that bring more pleasure and inner content, and a much larger reward from their Merciful Lord.

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