

**Hajj** is one of the five duties of worship that a Muslim has to perform as a part of his observance of Islam. It is obligatory on every adult Muslim in their lifetime if they are financially and physically capable to undertake this journey.

To go on a pilgrimage is a tradition in all religions. Human beings have through all times been searching for their origin, closeness to eternity, something that is holy for them. A place where the border between the earthly and the heavenly reality is thinner than any other place, a location that tells about the divine presence in the existence or a place that has a unique meaning in the life of individuals. Thus the goal is the most important on a pilgrimage; the path is only a means for arriving at the place.

The Holy *Qur'an* explains:

“And pilgrimage to the house is duty upon mankind owed to God for whoever can find a way there” (The Holy Qur'an 3:97) “And [mention] when We made the House a place of return for the people and [a place of] security. And take, [O believers], from the standing place of Abraham a place of prayer. And We charged Abraham and Ishmael, [saying], "Purify My House for those who perform Tawaf (circumambulation) and those who are staying [there] for worship and those who bow and prostrate [in prayer]. (2:125)



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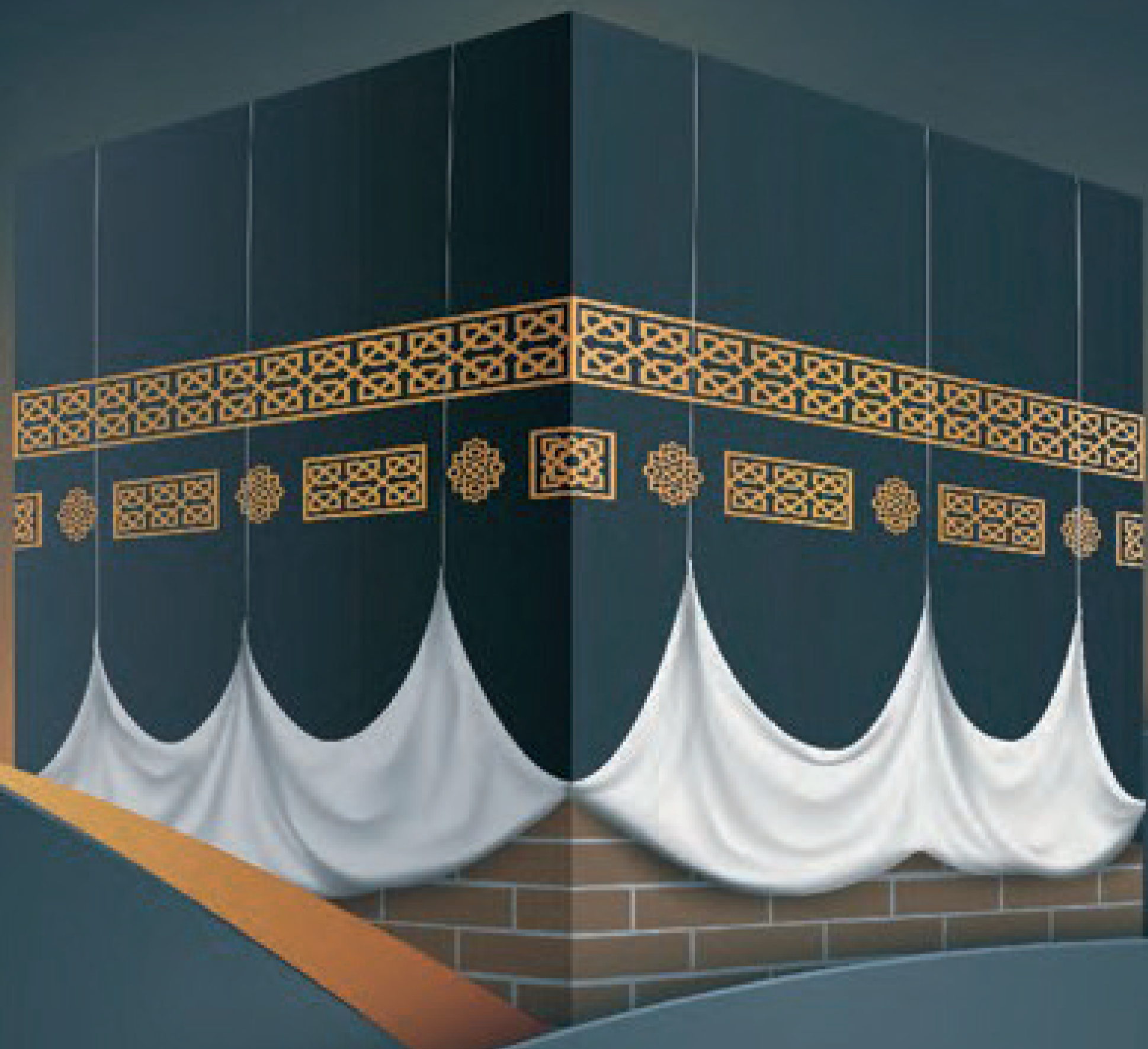


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**And** [mention, O Muhammad], when We designated for Abraham the site of the House, [saying], "Do not associate anything with Me and purify My House for those who perform Tawaf (circumambulation)."

For the establishment of a system, communal gatherings are very important. It is interesting to note that the Qur'an introduced a system of consultation, as stated in 42:38, and a gathering at a time in human history when the world was in the grip of kingships and the commoners were made to believe that the kings were "God's gift to Mankind" and when the divine right of kings was commonly accepted. From the local congregation of prayers to the universal congregation of Hajj, Islam improvised human interaction with the purpose to establishing the just and fair divine system with a view to solving the problems for humankind.

One of the most important means to achieving this change is self reflection. Hajj is the universal gathering of the Islamic world, and is held in the centre of the world Kaaba, in Makkah, so that solutions to their collective problems are sought in the light of the divine revelation. In this way this nation is able to see the benefits with their own eyes.

The Holy Qur'an further elucidates:

"Behold, the first House (of worship) established for humankind is the one at Bakkah (Makkah): it is full of blessing and a centre of guidance for the whole world" (3:96)



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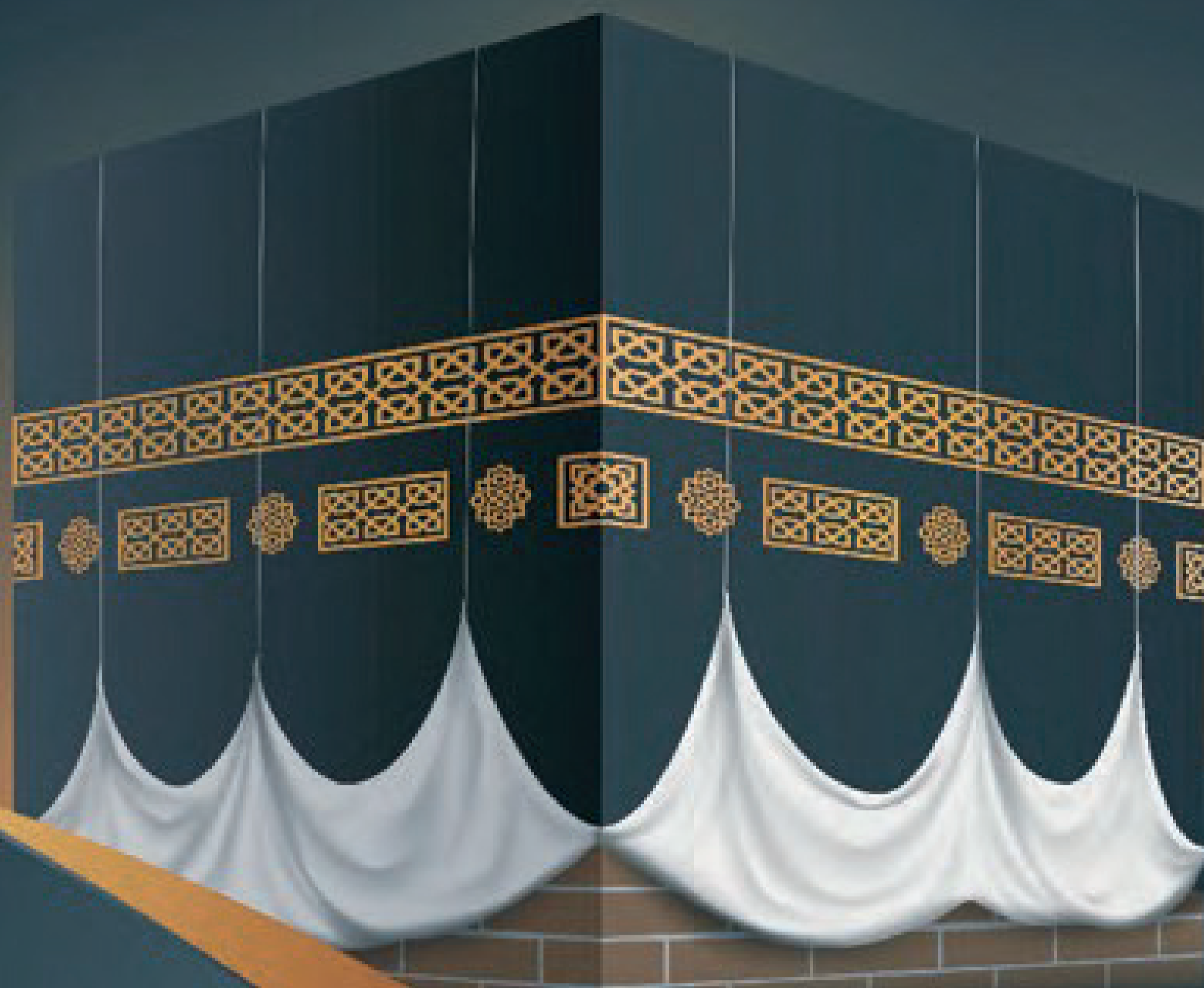
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**The** purpose of this centre, the Kaaba, has been mentioned as a source of guidance for all humankind and not doing mere ritualistic rounds of this house! Even during the pre-Islamic era - the Age of Ignorance in Arabia - this sanctuary enjoyed such veneration that even those who thirsted for each other's blood saw their enemies in the sacred territory but dare not attack them.

Martin Lings has rightly pointed out:

*"It is not only a journey in space to the centre towards which one has always turned one's face in prayers, but also a journey in time far back beyond the missions of Muhammad, Jesus and Moses"*

The Bible testifies that Jerusalem was built by Solomon more than four and a half centuries after Moses (see 1 Kings 6: 1), and that it was during his time that the worshippers of the One God began to pray towards it (1 Kings 8: 29-30). It is established by traditions from numerous sources which are undisputed throughout Arabia, however, that the Kaaba was re-constructed by Abraham who lived some eight or nine centuries before Moses. That the Kaaba was older than the Temple of Jerusalem is beyond dispute.



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## History of the Hajj

Four thousand years ago the valley of Makkah was a dry and uninhabited place. Islamic sources relate that Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) was instructed to bring his wife, Hajira (Hagar) and their child Prophet Ismail (Ishmail) to Arabia from Palestine under the command of God Almighty in contrast to the Christian belief that he did so to protect them from the jealousy of Ibrahim's first wife Sarah.

The Holy Qur'an quotes the event:

"Our Lord! I have made some of my offspring settle in a barren valley near Your Sacred House! Our Lord! I did so that they may establish Prayer. So make the hearts of people affectionately inclined to them, and provide them with fruits for their sustenance that they may give thanks" (14:37)

God instructed Prophet Ibrahim to leave them on their own, and he did so, with some supplies of food and water. However the supplies quickly ran out and within a few days Hajira and Ismail were suffering from hunger and thirst. In her desperation Hajira ran up and down two hills called Safa and Marwa trying to see if she could spot any help in the distance. Finally she collapsed beside Ismail and prayed to God for deliverance.

Ismail struck his foot on the ground and this resulted in a spring of water to gush forth from the earth. Hajira and Ismail were saved. Now that they had a secure water source they were able to trade water with passing nomads for food and supplies. After a while, Prophet Ibrahim returned from Palestine to check on his family and was amazed to see them running a profitable well.



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## History of the Hajj

This story has been given considerable mention by Prophet Muhammad peace be upon him, in one of his narrations:

Ibrahim (Abraham) brought Hajira and their son Prophet Ismail (Ishmail) while she was suckling him, to a place near the Kaaba ... During those days there was nobody in the city of Makkah, nor was there any water ... he made them sit over there and placed near them a leather bag containing some dates, and a small skin bag (leder) containing some water, and set out homeward.

Ismail's mother followed him saying, 'O Ibrahim! Where are you going, leaving us in this valley where there is no one'... She repeated that to him many times, but he did not look back at her.

Then she asked him, 'Has God ordered you to do so?' He said, 'Yes!' She said, 'Then He will not neglect us', and returned ... while Ibrahim proceeded onwards, and on reaching Thaniya where they could not see him ... raising both hands, Ibrahim invoked God saying the following prayers 'O our Lord! I have made some of my offspring dwell in a valley without cultivation... in order... that they may offer prayer perfectly. So fill some hearts among men with love towards them, and provide them with fruits, so that they may give thanks.' (14:37).



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## History of the Hajj

Ismail's mother went on suckling him and drinking from the water (she had). When the water in the leder had all been used up, she became thirsty and her child also became thirsty. She ... left him ... and found that the mountain of Safa was the nearest mountain to her on that land. She stood on it and started looking at the valley keenly so that she might see somebody, but she could not see anybody.

Then she descended from Safa and when she reached the valley, she tucked up her robe and ran in the valley like a person in distress and trouble, till she crossed the valley and reached Marwa mountain where she stood and started looking ... but she could not see anybody. She repeated that (running between Safa and Marwa) seven times." Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said 'This is the source of the tradition of the walking of people between them (i.e. Safa and Marwa).

When she reached Marwa (for the last time) ... she saw an angel at the place of Zamzam, digging the earth with his heel (or his wing), till water flowed from that place. She ... started filling her skin bag with water with her hands ... Then she drank (water) and suckled her child.

They (had been) in the lower part of Makkah where they saw a bird that had the habit of flying around water ... They sent one or two messengers who discovered the source of water. So they all came (towards the water).... Ismail's mother was sitting near the water. They asked her, "Do you allow us to stay with you?" She replied, "Yes, but you will have no right to possess the water." They agreed to do that. She was pleased with the whole situation...."



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## History of the Hajj

The personality of Hajira which emerges from the traditions narrations of Prophet Muhammad PBUH, is that of a woman of exceptional faith, love, fortitude, resolution and strength of character. Once she hears from Prophet Ibrahim that it is God's command that she and her infant son should be left in the desert, she surrenders spontaneously and totally to be God's will, (saying) that she is "satisfied to be in the hands of God" who will never neglect her.

Once out of water she undertakes a massive search for help. Her refusal to give up, to keep running and looking and praying demonstrates her determination to fight for her beloved child's life to the last bit of her own strength. Finally, her faith and effort are rewarded and Archangel Gabriel appears to guide her to the spring of Zamzam, which enables her not only to save her own and her son's life, but also to attract the people of the tribe of Jurhum into becoming her companions and partners in creating a prosperous settlement.

She raises her son to become a God-conscious man, loved and admired for his many qualities, who becomes his father's chosen partner in re-building the first House of God in Makkah. While Prophet Ibrahim is regarded by the Islamic tradition as God's mighty Prophet who was 'Muslim' in every sense of the word, Hajira is viewed as the staunch believer who became a pioneer leading the way to the establishment of a new civilisation.



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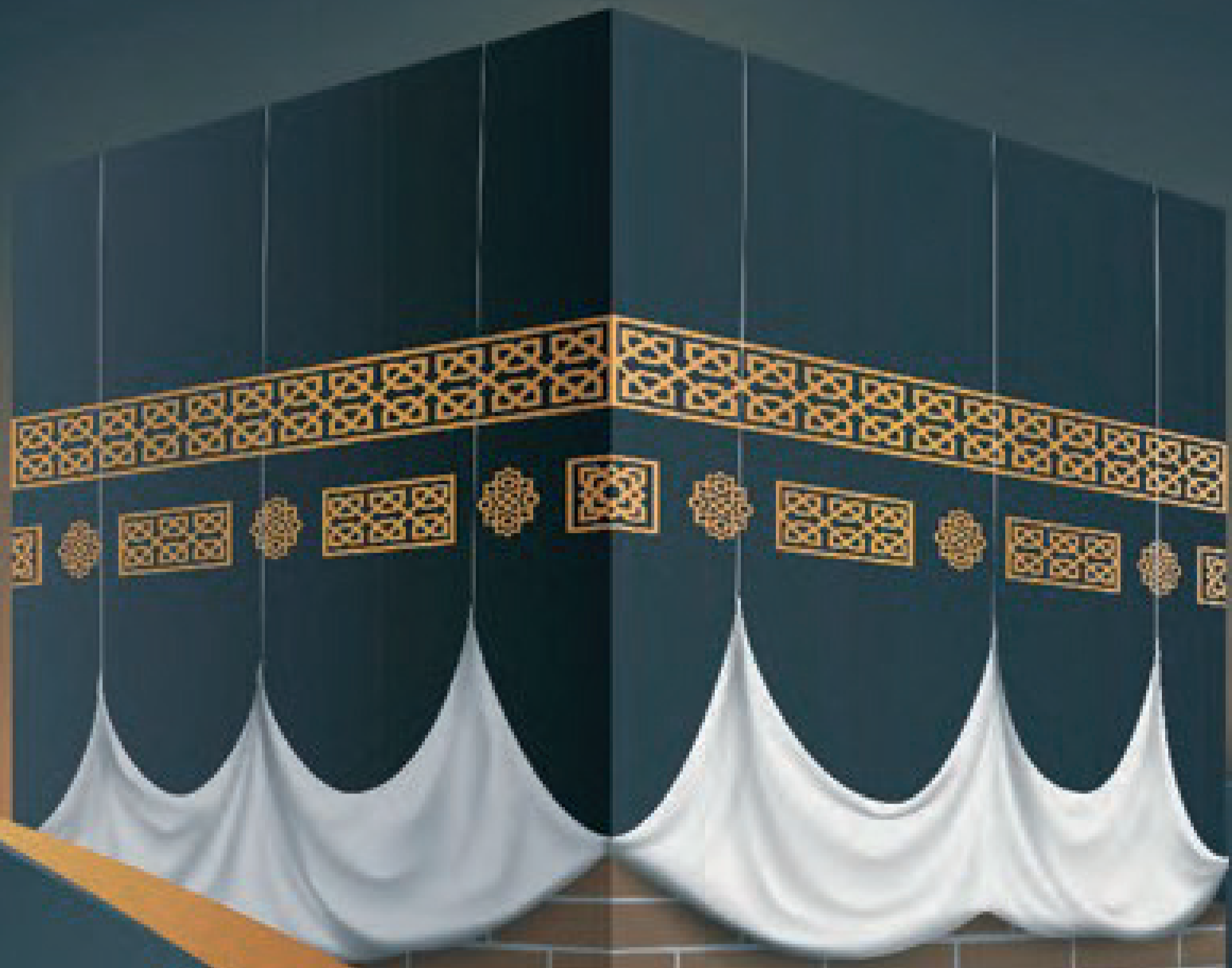
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## The Pilgrimage



## Purpose of Hajj

Let's look at the aims and purpose of Hajj, spiritual aspects that the pilgrimage reminds us:

Once a year, Muslims of every ethnic group, colour, social status, culture & gender gather together in Mekka and stand before the Kaaba praising God together in an amazing show of unity and uniformity. The visitors participating in this great event are considered to as 'Guests of God'.

During the Hajj the guests perform acts of worship and they renew their sense of purpose in the world. The slogan or the chant that every person performing the Hajj is:

"I am here now, O God, I am here, there is no partner unto You. I am here (with you). Definitely praise and glory is yours (for You). All Dominion belongs to you, you have no partner at all".

This prayer, slogan, chant, message and expression captures the very essence of Hajj! A person performing Hajj is essentially giving up all forms of authority, control and dominion with the aim of renewing his relationship with his Creator.

The Prophet Muhammad PBUH prescribed this prayer as the only prayer for Hajj. He also mentioned that the essence of performing Hajj is the sitting within the valley of Arafat. Both these aspects bring home the purpose of Hajj being to reflect on and contemplate the relationship that each individual has with his Creator and what areas that need spiritual improvement.



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## Purpose of Hajj

The pilgrim's are pouring their hearts out when they declare, I am here my Lord with all my iniquities and weaknesses, with all my sins and inabilities, with all my heart and soul, with all my body and mind. I am here to give back the power and authority over my whole life - in all aspects to you - the aspects that I was obedient and the aspects that I was ignorant about. It all ceases now that I am in your presence and I renew my pledge with you, for here I am with all my heart to be your servant and to serve you alone - with no partners - worldly or heavenly, material or spiritual, imaginary or presumptuous. I dissociate myself from all forms of idolatrous thoughts, views and actions-making the obedience sincere and exclusive to you!

The whole purpose of gathering everyone in a single sheet of unstitched cloth and making them sit on a hill is to reinvigorate the sense of reflection in them. A person performing Hajj and aspiring to benefit from it is required to willingly give up all claims of power and authority and restore them to their rightful owner - God Almighty. All forms of kingdoms, fiefdoms, rulers and kingship are melted away and a sense of equality, similarity and oneness of humankind is established. All forms of distinctions and discriminations that divide humankind and are a cause of much mischief on earth are all expected to be abandoned along with the glamorous clothing of all sorts.

A person performing this spiritual journey is expected to emigrate from a lifestyle of wantonness to a life of tranquillity and contentment. He / She is expected to learn the lessons of piety, sacrifice, struggle and kindness toward fellow humans. Hajj is not about completing a set of rituals in a defined manner but is a journey towards God, our Loving Creator, with a sense of commitment to change our lives for the better.



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# Hajj



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## Global Unity

Hajj is a beautiful scene of the unity of all believers regardless of their classes, backgrounds, cultures, or languages. It's a scene worth watching and experiencing. Muslims from around the world, rich and poor, stand as one community wearing two pieces of white cloth, manifesting the fact that God only sees what is in the hearts. No one is higher in status in the sight of God except by virtue of good deeds.

Hajj unites the hearts and gathers them to obey God, be sincere to Him, follow His injunctions, and abide by His commands and prohibitions.

Hajj is a symbol of unity, because Hajj brings about a unique uniformity of clothing, deeds, rituals, direction faced by all and the places they visit. No one is made to feel better than anyone else, king or slave, rich or poor, are all the same. Everyone dressed in same simple yet elegant attire indistinguishable from each other!

Unity of purpose, unity of feelings, unity in rituals, unity in words and unity in actions. "People come from Adam, and Adam came from dust. No Arab is superior to a non-Arab and no white man is superior to a black man, except in terms of piety (taqwa)."  
(Prophet Muhammad PBUH)



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