Al-Hajj al-Mabroor

Alhamdulillah, after performing the obligation of Hajj, the pilgrims have now returned safely back from the ‘Ancient House’ (al-bait al-atiq) in Mecca to their homes and families.

According to the Qur’an, “…Pilgrimage to the House is a duty owed to Allah by all who can make their way to it…”(Aal ‘Imran, 3:97). According to a hadith narrated by Abu Hurairah (RA), the Prophet (SAW) said, “The Umrah to the next Umrah is a kaffarah (expiation) of all sins one commits between them, and an accepted Hajj (al-Hajj al-Mabroor) is a supreme action, the reward for which is paradise.”

There is a particular significance to each of the modes of worship in Islam. The significance of establishing Salah (prayers), for example, is to remember Allah (SWT). “…And establish salah to remember Me” (Ta Ha, 20:14). The significance of observing Siyam (fasting) is to cultivate taqwa (God-consciousness) in oneself. “O you who believe, fasting is prescribed for you, as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may be conscious of God” (al-Baqarah, 2:183). Likewise, the significance or essence of Hajj is making sincere repentance to Allah (SWT) and seeking His forgiveness. Abu Hurairah (RA) narrates: “I heard the Prophet say, ‘Whoever performs Hajj and does not commit any Rafath (obscenity) or Fusooq (transgression), he returns (free from sin) as the day his mother bore him’.”

It is unfortunate that there are some people who turn these modes of worship into mere rituals. Circumambulating the Ka’bah for instance or running between the hillocks of Safa and Marwa or performing other rites and rituals of Hajj do not have any deep meaning with such people. Consequently, the conditions of their lives do not change for the better even after their Hajj. As for those pilgrims whose attitude, conduct, lifestyle, and relationship with their creator and His creation show a positive transformation after the pilgrimage, they are the ones insha’Allah, who are blessed with the rewards of an accepted Hajj. Just as Salah prevents one from indecency and wrongdoing, and connects one to Allah (SWT), and Siyam makes one more mindful of Allah (SWT), so should Hajj reconnect one with one’s creator. If these ends are not achieved through these modes of worship, then all the hardships endured in performing these acts of worship are in vain. Analogically, just as the efficacy of a medicine becomes known when a sick person is healed, likewise, an accepted Hajj manifests itself in the change that takes place in the condition of the pilgrim to an extent that is pleasing to Allah (SWT).

Where is the iman (faith) we profess? We are over a billion and a half. Almost one out of every four humans on the earth is a Muslim, but what is our say in our own internal affairs, what to speak of international affairs? In a hadith narrated in the Musnad of Imam Ahmad, the Prophet (SAW) said: “A time will come when the nations (of the world) will surround you from every side, just as people invited to a feast gather around the main dish. Somebody asked, ‘O Messenger of Allah, will it be on account of our being few in number at that time?’ The Prophet (SAW) replied, ‘No, you will be plenty in numbers but you will be scam (layer of foul or extraneous matter that forms on the surface of a liquid); like the scam of flood water. Allah will extract from the hearts of your enemies their fear and He will cast wahn (feebleness) in your hearts. Someone asked the Prophet, ‘What does wahn mean?’ The Prophet said, ‘The love of the dunya (the world) and the dislike (fear) of death.’” The Muslim population of the world is huge. Yet, our lives and our sensitivities do not count for much. It is other nations that are respected, revered and feared. Indeed our hearts have rusted. The Prophet (SAW) said, “The heart gets rusty like iron gets rusty.” When the Prophet (SAW) was asked how it could be cleansed, his reply was, “Reciting the Qur’an and remembering death.” As Muslims we understand that death means returning back to Allah (SWT). “We belong to Allah and to Him is our return” (al-Baqarah, 2:156). But do we find ourselves in a state that when we die, Allah (SWT) is pleased with us and we are pleased with Him and that we are among those about whom Allah
In contemporary times, despite the edge the disbelievers have over the believers in terms of leadership, power, wealth, status, civilizational dominance etc, yet we have something matchless and supremely precious that they do not have, and that is the Qur’an—the verbatim word of Allah (SWT) that is replete with Divine guidance. This Book is a panacea for all maladies and a mercy for the believers. “We send down the Qur’an as healing and mercy to those who believe” (al-Isra’, 17:82). Those who hold on to it and lead their lives according to it are guided to the straight path (al-Sirat al-Mustaqim).

Each one of us will be called upon individually by Allah (SWT) on the Day of Judgment. “You have come to Us all alone just as We created you at first…”(al-An’am, 6:94). And all of us will be questioned about the bounties that we were blessed with during our transitory stay on the earth. “Then you will be questioned, on that Day, about the blessings” (al-Takathur, 103:8). “And as for him who has iman (faith) and acts rightly, he will receive the best of rewards…” (al-Kahf, 18:88). As for those who have knowledge of the guidance and yet choose to go astray, Allah (SWT) says, “Have you seen him who takes his whims and desires to be his god — whom Allah has misguided despite his knowledge, sealing up his hearing and his heart and placing a blindfold over his eyes? Who then will guide him after Allah? So will you not pay heed?” (al-Jathiya, 45:23). On the Day of Judgment, such a person will lament: “If only I had not been given my record. And that I had known nothing of my account! If only death had really been the end! My wealth has been of no use to me. My power has vanished” (al-Haqqah, 69:25-29).

In Surat Maryam, Allah (SWT) talks about the later generations of Bani Israel who neglected prayer and were driven by their own desires, as a consequence of which they were doomed to meet perdition (19:59). Looking at the present state of affairs of the Muslim ummah, it appears that we are in the shoes of the ummah of Bani Israel described in this ayah. Is there a way out to extricate ourselves from this predicament? The next ayah gives us a glimmer of hope when it says, “except for those who make tawba (repentance) and have iman (faith) and act righteously. They will enter the Garden and they will not be wronged in any way” (Maryam, 19:60).

Repentance, revitalization of faith, and renewal of covenant are the three things that need to be done by Muslims individually and collectively in order to mend matters and emerge successful both in this life and the next. Hajj epitomizes all these three aspects beautifully. Interestingly enough, IONA’s slogan is “Repentance, Revitalization of Faith, Renewal of Covenant.”

How can one know whether one’s Hajj is accepted or not? Among the signs of an accepted Hajj are:

You should feel that Allah (SWT) has accepted your Hajj. This feeling should be embedded in your psyche. This is only possible when your intention of performing Hajj is solely to fulfill this Islamic obligation for the sake of Allah (SWT) and not just to earn the title of Hajji or Hajjia or for any other purpose.

You should feel more pious upon your return; more conscious of your Lord, through your thoughts and actions. You should notice a positive change in your attitude after your return from repentance and seeking forgiveness from Allah (SWT).

You should have forgiven those who have wronged you in return for God’s forgiveness of your sins except those who have oppressed you or others unless they give up their oppression.

You should do Kathrah al-Istighfar i.e., seek Allah’s forgiveness abundantly and repeatedly, not only through saying astaghfirullah (I seek forgiveness from Allah) but by actually refraining from all prohibited and detestable acts mentioned and explained in the Qur’an and the Sunnah.

You should do zikr (remembrance of Allah). The best zikr is to recite the Qur’an on a daily basis. The morning and evening azkar (supplications) prescribed in the Prophetic traditions should also be practiced regularly. Such supplications which the pilgrims would have heard chanted day in and day out during the Hajj by their group leaders, companions and others should be done with persistence. Doing this strengthens our relationship with Allah (SWT) and brings us closer to Him.

You should increase your supererogatory prayers (Nawafil), especially the Tahajjud (the late night prayers) and strive to perform them regularly. A hadith reported by Tirmidhi says, “You should get up at night, because that was the practice of the righteous before you. It is a means to get closer to your Lord. It is expiation for your past sins and a protection from (SWT) says, “Return to your Lord well pleased and well pleasing” (al-Fajr, 89:28); and about whom Allah (SWT) says, “Allah is pleased with them and they are pleased with Him” (al-Baiyinah, 98:8).
future mistakes.”

You should stay away from laghw (vain and frivolous matters). The Qur’an says, “The believers have indeed attained true success: those who, in their Prayers, humble themselves; who avoid whatever is vain and frivolous” (Al-Mu’munun, 23:1-3). A person returning from Hajj should not only avoid what is laghw as it neither benefits him in this world nor in the hereafter but should be focused toward al-akhirah (the hereafter). Indeed, Allah (SWT) makes a way out for the pious and righteous believers for all matters that pertain to this duniya (world). The Qur’anic ayahs such as “Allah will find a way out for him who fears Allah” (Al-Talaq, 65:2) and “Allah will create ease for him who fears Allah” (Al-Talaq, 65:4) are sufficient to make us understand this proposition. According to Al-Hasan al-Basari (may Allah have mercy on him) Hajj Mabroor means to return with an attitude of abstinence of this world and a desire for the hereafter. This can be understood from the Qur’anic ayah, “As for those who were led to the Guidance, Allah increases them in their guidance and causes them to grow in God-fearing” (Muhammad, 47:17).

You should refrain from disobeying Allah (SWT) at all costs and control your passions and base desires so as to be able to stand up and fight your biggest enemy - Satan. “…Satan indeed is an open enemy to mankind” (Al-Isra, 53:17). At the same time, you should strive to obey Allah (SWT) at all times, not allowing a single sin to be recorded by the angel on your left while keeping the angel on your right busy in recording your good deeds.

You should show goodness to people at all times. According to a hadith, the Prophet (SAW) when once asked as to which people were dearest to Allah (SAW) replied that they were those who were most useful to other people. You should make a concerted effort to keep on increasing your knowledge of the Islamic faith. “O my Sustainer, cause me to grow in knowledge” (Ta Ha, 20:114).

You should strive in the path of Allah (SWT) by participating in Da’wah activities and outreach programs. Of course, this should be started with one’s own family members. “O you who believe! save yourselves and your families from a fire whose fuel is men and stones…”(Al-Tahrim, 66:6).

May Allah (SWT) accept the Hajj of all the Hujjaj; accept their tawaf, their sa’y, their sacrifice, their rukuos, their sujood, and their dua’s. May Allah (SWT) forgive our sins and help us to turn to Him by making us better Muslims and better believers. Allahumma Ameen.

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