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# The Origins of HAJJ



Hajj, or the **"Major Pilgrimage,"** is a major act of devotion in Islam, known as the fifth foundational pillar of Islam. Every adult Muslim who has the physical and financial ability to perform Hajj, is commanded by God to do so. Many of the rites performed during the Hajj and much of its story can be traced back to the Messenger Abraham and his son, the Messenger Ishmael. Abraham lived in Babylon, modern day Iraq. After his people rejected his invitation to Islam and the exclusive worship of the One True God alone, he was exiled from his homeland. It was during this time of migration that Abraham met Ishmael's mother, accepted her into his family, and Ishmael was born. God then instructed Abraham to leave his newborn son and his mother in the barren desert valley of Mecca.

We will look at the origins of Hajj in the chronological order they take place during the lifetimes of these three individuals, as opposed to the way Hajj is performed today.

# Speed Walk and Zamzam

After Ishmael and his mother Hajar were left by Abraham, Hajar called out to Abraham, asking why he was abandoning them. Abraham did not reply. Hajar asked if this was God's command to him, to which Abraham replied in the affirmative. Hajar stated that in such a case he should go, as God would never abandon them.

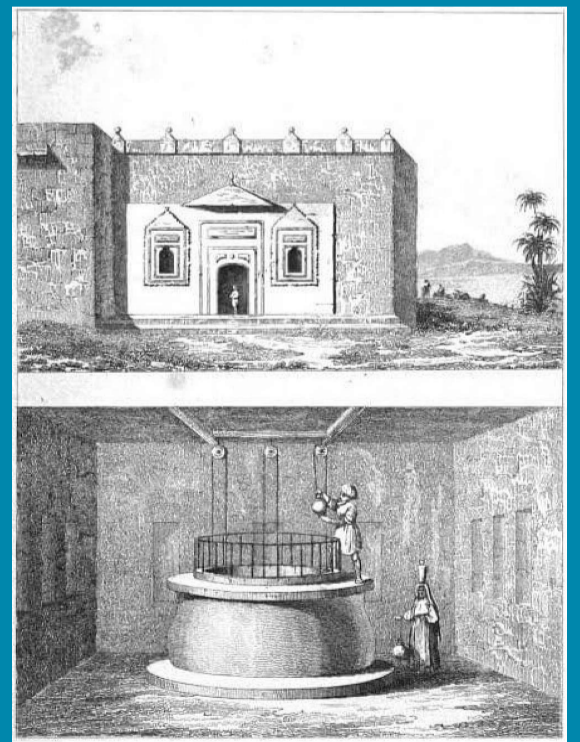
Soon after, Hajar ran out of the few provisions of food and water that she was carrying. There was no one around, no water source and no food to be found. Ishmael began to cry from hunger. Hajar saw two mountain hills nearby. She thought they would make good vantage points from which to see around the whole valley and perhaps, find water. She went to the closest one first called Safa and climbed it. Not seeing anything, she decided to go to the other one.

From her vantage point above Safa, she could also keep an eye on Ishmael at the bottom of the valley, but as she descended from Safa, she could not see him, so she began to sprint until she was ascending again and able to see him. The second hill was Marwa. Hajar did this trek seven times. This is why today the pilgrims perform what we call the Speed Walk (Sa'i) between these two hills.

On the seventh occasion, Hajar saw commotion where Ishmael lay, and water spouting from close by, dug by the archangel Gabriel. She rushed to him and found water. She gathered the soil around it in order to keep it contained and to save it, fearing that there was only a small amount of water there.

This spring of water is Zamzam.

It is a blessed water, and one that the pilgrims drink from as they perform their rites.



# Ritual Slaughter & Stoning

When Ishmael grew up to be a young boy, Abraham saw a dream that he was slaughtering his dear son Ishmael. Since the dreams of the Messengers of God are true revelation from God, Abraham intended to fulfil this dream and obey His Lord, in spite of his great love for his son. Abraham told Ishmael that he had to slaughter him. Ishmael surrendered to God's will and told his father to carry out what he was inspired to do. What is more, he assured his father that he would endure and persevere.

**"O my son! I have seen in a vision that I offer you in sacrifice: what is your view!" (The son) said: "O my father! Do as you are commanded: you will find me, if Allah so wills, one practicing patience and constancy." (37: 102)**

Abraham led his son to a place a few miles away called Mina. This is where the pilgrims today spend the majority of their time during the Hajj. In Mina, Satan appeared before Abraham three times, telling Abraham that he should spare his son and disobey God. Each time, Abraham picked up pebbles and threw them at Satan, chasing him away. It is in those three places that the pilgrims stone the three pillars during Hajj.

Abraham set his son Ishmael on the ground, raised his knife and was ready and committed to slaughter him. At the last moment, God stayed his hand and replaced Ishmael with a ram that was slaughtered instead. This is why today, most pilgrims offer a ritual sacrifice as part of the rites of their Hajj.

“So when they had both submitted their wills (to God), and he had laid him prostrate on his forehead (for sacrifice), We called out to him ‘O Abraham! You have already fulfilled the vision!’ - thus indeed do We reward those who do right. For this was obviously a trial- And We ransomed him with a momentous sacrifice.” (37:103-107)

# Building the Ka'ba

When Ishmael had grown into an adult and married, Abraham returned with another command from God. This time, God had commanded Abraham to raise the structure of the Ka'ba, and Abraham needed Ishmael's help to do so. Together, father and son built the Ka'ba. Ishmael would bring the stones and bricks to his father, and Abraham would build the Ka'ba. As the structure rose, Abraham used a rock to stand on in order to reach the higher parts. That rock is known as the Station of Abraham, and the pilgrims use it as a marker to offer a two-unit devotional after the circumambulation of the Ka'ba.

Throughout the construction work, both Abraham and Ishmael constantly invoked God and asked Him to accept their efforts. Once the structure was complete, God ordained that this House of His was a place of worship that should always be cleansed and purified. Thus, the circumambulation of the Ka'ba (Tawaf) became an integral part of the Hajj rites.

As you can see, many of the major rites involved in the Hajj pilgrimage can be traced back to the story of these three amazing individuals, the Messengers Abraham and Ishmael, and Ishmael's mother, Hajar. May God reward them, protect them, and bless them for their dedication and sacrifice.



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