

THE HAJJ - THE PILGRIMAGE (PART 2 OF 2)

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Description: Hagar and her boy child Ishmael and their role in the rites of hajj.

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The Kaaba is a special place. We commemorate Abraham and his son's faith and surrender. We also celebrate Mother Hagar's love. Mother's love is the highest form of selfless human love. Hagar typified this love so well. She combined this love with her unshakable trust in God. Abraham was instructed to bring her and her infant son Ishmael near the mound that was once the Kaaba. In this desolate place with nary a single soul and nary a water source, he left them with a leather bag containing some dates, and a small water-skin containing some water, and set out homeward. Ishmael's mother followed him saying, "O Abraham! Where are you going, leaving us in this valley where there is no person whose company we may enjoy, nor is there anything (to enjoy)?"

She repeated that to him many times, but he did not look back at her. Then she asked him, "Has Allah ordered you to do so?"

He said, "Yes."

She said, "Then He will not neglect us."

What an exemplary Trust in their Beloved God! They knew that the Causer of all Causes will provide. He is Eminently Resourceful. Ishmael's mother went on suckling Ishmael and drinking from the water (she had). When all water ran out, she became thirsty and her child also became thirsty. She started looking at Ishmael tossing in agony; she left him, for she could not endure looking at 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 the Marwa mountain where she stood and started looking, expecting to see somebody, but she could not see anybody. She repeated that (running between Safa and Marwa) seven times. God loved this selfless display of motherly love so much that every pilgrim to His Holy House must proceed 7 times between the Twin Peaks of Safa and Marwa.

When she reached Marwa (for the last time) she heard a voice and she asked herself to be quiet and listened attentively. She heard the voice again and said, "O, (whoever you may be)! You have made me hear your voice; have you got something to help me?" And behold! She saw an angel at the place of Zamzam, digging the earth with his heel till water flowed from that place. She started to make something like a basin around it, using her hand in this way, and started filling her water-skin with water with her hands, and the water was flowing out after she had scooped some of it. This wonderful gift of God hasn't stopped yet. Hundreds of Millions come every year and take gallons and gallons of the Holy Water with them and still the small well never goes dry. Mecca is a special place.

In celebration of the two momentous events in Abraham's family, we are reminded that Allah's Will always work for our highest good. In the end, it all worked out for Abraham's family and in the end if we trust Him everything will work out for us too. From Him have we come and to Him shall we return!

Kaaba is a special place. It is overwhelming to be in company of 3 million brothers and sisters in faith, all enshrouded in humble whites. The highest kings to the humblest of laborers are dressed alike. They stand shoulder to shoulder, they run side by side and they greet each other the greeting of peace. People of all races intermingle as co-equals. Black, white, yellow and brown all come together in harmony before their Beloved. In this searing passion for the Loved One, there is no distraction. He Alone Matters! It is wonderful to lift one's face and see one's Qiblah face-to-face. All their lives 5 times a day they turned their faces to their Qiblah, the Holy Kaaba, and now they see it right in front of them in all its majesty and glory. They savor the sweetness of coming Home all the while exclaiming *Labbaik Allahuma labbaik, la sharika laka labbaik, Labbaik Allahuma labbaik*. I have come, my Lord, I have come. No one participates in Your Divinity (so I have nowhere to come but You). I have come." I have come, my Beloved. I have come.

We circulate around the Holy Kaaba proclaiming all the while our Arrival. Circling around the earthly shadow of the Pole, we are reminded to keep our Beloved at the Center of our lives. We are reminded to keep Him in front of our lives and in center of our existence.

Accept the Hajj of all our blessed Muslim brothers and sisters who are given the grace of your Presence in Your Exalted House. Give us the Grace to one day be able to come visit You. O Allah, there is no one worthy of Love, Worship and Surrender but You. Allow us to love you, worship You and submit to Your Presence and to Your Wish and Will. Amen!

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