

Islam – hajj

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Hajj Overview oPilgrimage is the supreme prayer for forgiveness of sins committed and the ultimate preparation for eternity oPilgrimage rituals which must be performed, eg circumambulation of the Ka'ba oThe rites of the Hajj symbolise the essential concepts of Islam and commemorate the trials of the Prophet Ibrahim and his family oHajj: The annual, week-long pilgrimage to Mecca (in modern-day Saudi Arabia), which is the fifth pillar of faith and is therefore an obligation as it is prescribed in the Qur'an.

The complete Hajj occurs two months and ten days after Ramadan ends and culminates with ' Id al-Adha (the Festival of Sacrifice). olhram: The white garments are symbolic of humanequality and unity before God, since all pilgrims are dressed similarly. Money and status are no longer a factor for the pilgrims— the equality of each person before God becomes foremost. oBefore they leave they must pay their debts, provide for Hajj and provide for any family that may be left behind. oThe rituals occur in and around Mecca. Before commencing Hajj or entering the holy area of Makkah the pilgrims must prepare themselves for the physical and spiritual journey ahead. This includes

- Formal washing of the complete body
- Making intention
- Putting on the clothing consisting of two seamless pieces of white cloth for males. Females can wear what they like, provided it is modest and covers body.
- Attaining a state of Ihram, a state of purity, peace and honesty > refraining from sex, flirting, lustful thoughts, wearing shoes or socks. Reciting a prayer that the Hajj is for Allah alone > “ here I am responding to your call O Allah. I am responding to your call. ”

oThen begins the physical journey of the pilgrim in Makkah. One that will take several days to complete. Significance oMuslims believe that the rites of Hajj were

designed by God and taught by the Prophet Muhammad. oThe Hajj is designed to develop God consciousness and a sense of spiritual rebirth. oIt is also believed to be an opportunity to seek forgiveness of sins accumulated throughout life. Prophet Muhammad had said that a person who performs Hajj properly ' will return as a newly born baby [free of all sins]'. oIt is also an opportunity for Muslims from all over the world to come together to worship the One God. How Hajj Expresses the Belief of Islam oIncorpoates and expresses all the main articles of faith of Islam (beliefs about Allah, his messengers, Muhammad, the Qur'an, angels, Adam and eve the devil, life, death and the Day of Judgment to come. oTradition has it that Adam and Eve were forgiven by Allah near Mount of Mercy.

In gratitude Adam built the first Ka'ba but this was washed away in the great flood. oIn the Qur'an there are many references to the Hajj and pilgrimage is mentioned many times. In fact Sura 22 is titled Al-Hajj •“ Proclaim the pilgrimage to the people. They will come to you on foot and on every lean camel, they shall come from every deep ravine” Significance of Hajj for the individual and the community o' The reward for an accepted Hajj is nothing less than paradise' (Hadith) oMakes present the central beliefs of a muslims religion. It is an obligatory pilgrimage oThey get to see the very places where the Prophet Muhammad lived and to walk in his footsteps is inspirational and strengthening to faith oAn opportunity for spiritual rebirth and the removal of sins, to start again and ' return like a newborn baby' (Hadith) oThe rejection of Satan by stoning the three pillars is a physical act that reinforces a spiritual and psychological commitment to reject evil both now and into the future oThe pilgrims state of Ihram is one of purity and humility.

Here they are at peace with Allah, with themselves, with other Muslims and with all of creation. This memory will stay with them and they will try to recreate this in their everyday lives. Within Hajj the unity and universality of Islam are highlighted and strengthened. Hajj is the largest annual peace gathering in the world with over 2 million people gathering each year to pray together and be at peace with each other and with creation. Hajj reminds all Muslims of the Day of Judgement when all will assemble and be judged on their intentions.

Conclusion Islam, the world's second most followed religion can be summed up in the two sentences: 'There is no god but God' and 'Muhammad is the messenger of God'. Everyone and everything depends upon Allah and it is through the guidance of the Qur'an and the example set by the Prophet's life that Muslims cultivate an understanding of God and surrender themselves to the will of God. The relationship between the individual and God and with the community is expressed in the living out of the five pillars and following Shari'ah.

Throughout its history, there have been shifts in how Islam views significant people and schools of thought, and the modern world has brought new challenges to Islamic jurisprudence in regard to ethical issues. Muslims living in Australia have not always found it easy to 'live out' their religion according to Shari'ah and have had to confront misconceptions about their beliefs and practices. Today, however, the practices of Islam are a normal part of Australia's religious landscape.