

- Statement: Practices and rituals are ways Muslim adherents demonstrate their beliefs  
“And proclaim that the people shall observe Hajj pilgrimage” Quran chapter 22 verse 27. Hajj refers to the 5 day annual pilgrimage undertaken in the last month of the Islamic calendar *Dhul-Hijjah*. Hajj is an important ritual in Islam as it is the fifth pillar of faith, and one which allows Muslim adherents to express their beliefs.

On the 8th of Dhul-Hijjah before embarking upon Hajj they must enter a state of purity known as *Ihram*. This involves males wearing two sheets of unstitched white cloth around their waist and upper body and females wearing ordinary clothing that complies with Islamic dress code. Then the intention to perform Hajj is declared. The state of *Ihram* symbolises the equality of all people on the Day of Judgement which fulfils the belief in the *Akhira* or the Afterlife.

Upon arrival to Mecca, the pilgrims circumambulate the Kaaba seven times in a counter clockwise direction, this is known as *Tawaf*. The Ka’ba is a holy shrine dedicated to Allah and by doing *Tawaf*, Muslim adherents are coming together in unity and submitting to Allah demonstrating their acceptance of *Tawhid*, the Oneness of Allah.

Then pilgrims must run between the hills of *Safa* and *Marwah* seven times. This is done in commemoration of prophet Abraham’s wife’s journey to find water for her son *Ishmael*, which was given to her by the angel *Gabriel*. This practice shows a Muslim adherents belief in the *Mala’ika* or Angels.

Pilgrims then depart to a city located 8km away called *Mina*. They remain here until sunrise of the following day, engaged in prayer.

The second day consists of travelling 13 km further to the plains of *Arafat*. Pilgrims will reach here around noon and remain until sunset in a contemplative state. They will beg for forgiveness, repent for past sins and offer supplications. This rite is known as *Wuquf* or ‘standing before Allah’, and is one of the most significant aspects of Hajj. The begging for forgiveness is a sign of submission to Allah which reinforces their belief in *Tawhid*.

After sunset, the pilgrims will leave to *Muzdalifah*, an area located between *Arafat* and *Mina*. At *Muzdalifa* pebbles are gathered to be used in the rituals of the following three days. The prayers of *Maghrib* and *Isha* are offered in conjunction and pilgrims will sleep on the ground under open sky.

The third day of Hajj begins with *Ramy al-Jamarat* or the symbolic ‘Stoning of the Devil’. Located in *Mina* are three pillars called *Jamarat* which represent Satan. Seven pebbles collected from the day before at *Muzdalifah* are hurled only at the largest of the *jamarat*. This rejection of Satan shows that Muslims are accepting Allah and embracing the

notion of Tawhid.

This day also happens to be the beginning of Eid al-Adha and animals are slaughtered in commemoration of the story of Abraham being ordered to slaughter his son Ishmael. This story is mentioned in the Books revealed by Allah .Therefore, this reaffirms the belief in rusuluhu as the emulation of Prophet's actions is important in Islam and also in Kutub'ullah as it is necessary to believe in all revealed books by Allah.

Following the sacrifices, males must shave their heads and women must cut the tips of their hair, this rite is known as Halak and is once again a symbol of the equality of all people in the afterlife. Another visit is made to the Ka'ba and a single tawaf is performed known as Tawaf al-Ifaadah. This Tawaaf is undertaken to show a Muslim adherents belief in and love for Allah.

The following fourth and fifth days follow the same process of Stoning the Devil however this time all three pillars have stones hurled at them.

Before sunset on the fifth day, pilgrims will return to Mecca. However, before leaving a final set of Tawaf is done called Tawaf al-Wadaa which means 'to bid farewell'. This concludes the Hajj and pilgrims are free to return home.

The Hajj is extremely important as it has its own chapter in the Qur'an called 'al-Hajj' which gives a detailed description of the ritual. The Qur'an being the direct will and word of Allah means that Muslims must observe this holy ritual to fulfil their belief in the Kutub'ullah. It is also believed that Hajj was not only performed by the prophet Muhammad but also by prophets before him such as Abraham, and to imitate the actions of Prophets is considered desirable in Islam.

In Conclusion, the Hajj is a ritual in Islam which allows Muslim adherents to demonstrate their beliefs and reaffirm their faith in Allah. It expresses the belief in Tawhid, Mala'ika, Rusuluhu, Kutubullah and al-Akhira.

Thank you