2808 - Difficulties of Hajj

the question

What difficulties are there for a Muslim performing the Hajj?.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

The difficulties may be summed up as follows:

1 – Obtaining the visa, because of the large numbers of pilgrims and the small number of visas allocated.

2 – Tawaaf (circumambulation) around the Ka’bah, when there are many people doing Tawaaf and there is too much crowding, especially at the Black Stone. Hence the people should not push and shove in order to kiss or touch the Black Stone, because that may cause harm that is greater than the reward for doing this action. Similarly the Muslim should choose a suitable time for Tawaaf, when it is less crowded and he can do the act of worship in the required manner.

The scholars have issued fatwas indicating that it is permissible to do tawaaf on the upper floors of al-Masjid al-Haraam (the Grand Mosque in Makkah), even though that is difficult, because of the greater distance involved – but it is more conducive to performing the act of worship as it should be done, as the Muslim can avoid the pushing and shoving and the bad consequences that may result from that.

3 – Sa’ee between al-Safa and al-Marwah (running between two hills in Makkah called al-Safa and al-Marwah). The same may be said concerning this as was said above concerning Tawaaf, although the place is smaller than the place for Tawaaf. The Muslim can also do Sa’ee on the upper floor to avoid the crowding on the lower floor.

4 – Standing in ‘Arafaah, where all the pilgrims gather together at one time in one place, then all

they move on at the same time. This is where most people experience difficulties, whether it is in the standing or when moving on.

5 – Muzdalifah. The difficulties may stem from the absence of services that are available in other places, the most important of which is toilet facilities.

Hence pilgrims are advised to eat and drink little in ‘Arafaah and Muzdalifah and on all the days of the Hajj in general, so that they will not need to relieve themselves, then find it difficult to find a suitable place, so they will have problems.

6 – Stoning the Jamaraat (stone pillars representing the devil). This is the most difficult ritual in terms of crowding, and at this time the ignorance of many people becomes manifest when they push and shove their brothers and when they stone the Jamaraat from afar with large rocks that cause harm and injury to their Muslim brothers; some of them are so ignorant that they throw shoes and pieces of wood!

Hence we advise the pilgrim to avoid the time of peak crowding, which is the forenoon of the first day of Eid, and the time of Zuhr prayer on the other days of al-Tashreeq (the three days following Eid), and to stone the Jamaraat at night when the crowding becomes far less, and he can also remember Allaah in a calm manner. The scholars have issued fatwas stating that the time for stoning the Jamaraat lasts from after the sun passes the meridian (which is when the time for Zuhr prayer begins) until Fajr (dawn), so there is no need to go at the time when the people gather and cause harm to oneself and others and not be able to focus properly when doing this act of worship.

7 – In Tawaaf al-Wadaa’ (Farewell Tawaaf), when the pilgrims try to leave early to return to their families, so almost all of them gather at the same time, which causes difficulty and harm to them, whether that is in going to the sanctuary, when doing Tawaaf itself or when leaving Makkah.

Hence we advise pilgrims to delay this ritual until the third of the days of al-Tashreeq and not to be in a hurry. They will earn a greater reward than those who hurry, and they will avoid the intense crowding in Tawaaf al-Wadaa’.

This is a summary of the difficulties that the pilgrims encounter. The wisdom of Allaah dictates that the rituals should be performed in that land where there is little vegetation, and which is very hot, for great reasons, one of which may be so that Allaah may distinguish His slaves from one another, for no one responds to the call of truth except one who is sincere in his intentions towards his Lord.

We should realize that these difficulties do not prevent the Muslim from performing this act of worship which Allaah has enjoined in His Book and on the lips of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him). The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) has told us that the reward will be commensurate with the degree of difficulty; the more difficult it is, the greater the reward will be.

It was narrated that the Mother of the Believers ‘Aa’ishah (may Allaah be pleased with her) said: “I said, ‘O Messenger of Allaah, the people are going back having done two pilgrimages (Hajj and ‘Umrah), and I am going back having done only one (Hajj – i.e., because her period had come).” He said, ‘Wait, and when you become pure (i.e., when your period ends), go out to al-Tan’eem and enter ihraam from there, then meet us at such and such a place. But it (i.e., the reward) is commensurate with the expenses or hardship involved.”

Narrated by al-Bukhaari, 1695; Muslim 1211

Al-Nawawi said:

The phrase “But it (i.e., the reward) is commensurate with the expenses or hardship involved” indicates that the reward and the virtue of an act of worship increases the more effort and spending is required. What is meant by hardship is the type of hardship or spending that is not blameworthy or beyond the acceptable limits set by sharee’ah.

Sharh Muslim, 8/152, 153

Al-Haafiz Ibn Hajar commented on these words by saying:

That is undoubtedly correct but this is not always the case. Some acts of worship may be easier

than others but they may be of a higher status and bring a greater reward because of the timing, such as spending the night of Laylat al-Qadr in prayer in contrast to spending the other nights of Ramadaan in prayer; or because of the place where they are done, such as praying two rak'ahs in al-Masjid al-Haraam in contrast to praying many rak'ahs elsewhere; or financial acts of worship (i.e., spending for the sake of Allaah) where some acts are of a higher virtue than others; or physical acts of worship such as fard (obligatory) prayers in contrast to naafil (supererogatory) prayers, although the naafil prayer s may be greater in number and more recitation of Qur'aan may be done therein; or a dirhams of zakaah in contrast to spending large amounts in voluntary charity. This was pointed out by al-'Izz ibn 'Abd al-Salaam in al-Qawaa'id, where he said: Prayer was the delight of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) but it is difficult for others, but the prayer of others, even though it may be difficult, cannot equal his prayer at all. And Allaah knows best.

Fath al-Baari, 3/611

And Allaah knows best.