



# THE PILGRIMAGE OF ISLAM

Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri



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## Book Description

The rite of pilgrimage has played a central role in spiritual traditions since earliest times. For fourteen centuries, Muslims have undertaken the pilgrimage and today it is the world's largest annual spiritual gathering.

*The Pilgrimage of Islam* is a lucid exposition of the *Hajj*, the journey to the House of God, the *Ka`bah*, which is situated in the heart of the sacred city of Mecca. One of the five pillars of the Islamic faith, the *Hajj* is obligatory on all Muslims who are able to undertake the journey at least once in a lifetime. The Prophet Muhammad's original *Hajj* is described, upon which the present-day pilgrimage is based, and a step by step account offers the reader a rare insight into the inner meaning of the outer rites of the *Hajj*, for ultimately, the physical journey to Mecca is also a spiritual pilgrimage to the knowledge of God.

## **About the Author**

Acknowledged as a master of self-knowledge and a spiritual philosopher, Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri's role as a teacher grew naturally out of his own quest for self-fulfillment.

He travelled extensively on a spiritual quest which led to his eventual rediscovery of the pure and original Islamic heritage of his birth, and the discovery of the truth that reconciles the past with the present, the East with the West, the worldly with the spiritual – a link between the ancient wisdom teachings and our present time.

A descendant of five generations of well-known and revered spiritual leaders, Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri has taught students throughout the world for over 30 years.

He is a gifted exponent of how the self relates to the soul, humankind's link with the Divine, and how consciousness can be groomed to reflect our higher nature.

The unifying scope of his perspective emphasizes practical, actionable knowledge that leads to self-transformation, and provides a natural bridge between seemingly different Eastern and Western approaches to spirituality, as well as offering a common ground of higher knowledge for various religions, sects and secular outlooks.

He is a prolific author of more than thirty books relating to the universal principles of Islam, the Qur'an, and its core purpose of enlightenment.

## **Acknowledgements**

The author wishes to express his gratitude to Jerry Mikell (Hajj Ahmad) for his tireless research and compilation of the manuscript, and to Christopher Flint for his fine editing of the text.

## **Editor's Note**

Pilgrimage is a perpetual impulse in man, a journey out of the realm of ordinary experience to the realm of the sacred. The intention of performing any pilgrimage may differ, as may one's concept of what is sacred. The primal impulse to perform pilgrimage is love of the Divine Being and to draw close to Him, as well as to those whose intention is religious merit. It even attracts those whose intention is travel and adventure.

The strength of this impulse is so great that it must find an expression. We find its materialistic manifestation, therefore, in the form of vacations or holidays. People carefully prepare themselves for these journeys, working all year and saving enough money to travel away from their homes. They leave the realm of their ordinary experience, and journey to beach resorts and other sites of natural beauty, or travel to foreign lands and tour historical sites and tourist attractions. These journeys assume an aura of sacredness.

The sacred places of religions and cultures whither men have made pilgrimage, throughout time and across cultures, had a connection either with divine prophecy or with primitive belief in spirits and the unseen forces that shaped the physical universe. Striking or unusual landscapes, springs, waterfalls, caves and volcanic craters brought to mind the merging of divine forces and the physical realm. Some places that were associated with specific legends became sites of pilgrimage: for example, the Homeric Greeks were said to have heard the voice of the Delphic Oracle speaking from a steaming fissure in the ground. A famous center of medieval pilgrimage in Ireland was a multiple cavern on an island in Lough Derg, mysteriously reputed to be the physical entry into purgatory and eventually Paradise. Glastonbury became an early site of Christian pilgrimage in England because of its association with numerous legends.

The pilgrimage rites that different religions and cultures practiced, and in some cases continue to practice, were meant to accentuate certain aspects of man's life-experience. In this way he had the opportunity of becoming more fully aware of himself in relation to his culture and religion. The form of the Pilgrimage of Islam, on the other hand, actually microcopies the universal experience and man's unique position in it. The Pilgrimage of Islam is ancient, Abrahamic in

lineage, and thus can be traced back at least 4,000 years. Islamic traditions exist which actually ascribe its origin to the appearance of man on the planet. In this book we shall examine the Pilgrimage of Islam. We shall gain familiarity with the historical context of its origination, see how it was obscured during a time of ignorance, and how it was finally revived in its pristine form by the Prophet Muhammad. We shall examine thoroughly the rites of the Pilgrimage and also its inner meanings. Our intention is to place before the reader a document that will provide knowledge of this inexplicably profound journey.

## Introduction

### *The Hajj*

Alone, out of all the major pilgrimages of history, the *Hajj* survives with its vitality unimpaired. The great Christian pilgrimages like Santiago are but memories; they have vanished with the passing of the Age of Faith, leaving churches and chapels to mark a route once annually traversed by thousands. These forlorn remnants remind one of the visitors in Philip Larkin's "Church Going":

Bored, uninformed, knowing the ghostly silt Dispersed . . .

The silt to which the poet refers is the dimension of the numinous, the inherent sacral nature that sets off certain places on earth, putting them into a category apart. The practice of pilgrimage roots in the notion of inherent sacrality, which accounts for the universality of pilgrimage, for, to date, no religion has been discovered free of these elements. Sanctity attaches to specific places in consequence of something decisive having happened there, e.g. the Buddha Gaya, near Benares, scene of Gautama's enlightenment, Jerusalem, the scene of Jesus' miraculous resurrection, or Bethlehem, that of his equally miraculous birth, Canterbury as the scene of the holy archbishop's martyrdom. The site of martyrdom becomes a martyrdom (*mashhad* in Arabic) attracting pilgrims in its own right, the way pilgrims gravitate towards the scene of Hamza's martyrdom at Uhud. For pilgrimage to be set in motion an initial impulse is needed, be it an apparition or a decisive event like the birth of a religious figure, producing a *mawlid* the same way martyrdom produces a *mashhad*. Almost invariably, the sacrality of site manifests itself in secondary phenomena like induced ecstasy, or healing, or psychic phenomena like levitation (which may be witnessed at the Mawlid of Sayyid Ahmad al-Badawi at Tanta).

Pilgrimage is popular and collective; it climaxes in a moment of collective emotion, producing *communitas*, a heightened awareness of fellowship, but always involving transcendence. The physical goal, and the scene of these phenomena, is located on the threshold of the spiritual. The journey thither is a preparatory purification, preparing the pilgrim for this encounter with another

dimension. The other world is encountered on the boundary of the mundane. Pilgrimage therefore corresponds to a deep spiritual hunger present in all of us, offering the possibility of transcendence to those who might not otherwise experience it. This, together with its gregarious nature, accounts for the popularity of pilgrimage in all cultures.

Pilgrimages are hereditary, spiritual property passing not just from one generation to another but from one tradition to another. When one religion supplants another, frequently it inherits its predecessor's sites of pilgrimage, making the ritual and symbolic content difficult to read. Sometimes this happens more than once. In Islam, it happened twice, as Abrahamic sites and rites were perverted to non-monotheistic usage to be reclaimed later by Islam. When this happens, the site witnesses a purification of accretions (Qur'an 17:81). Vandalization of holy sites can lead to desacralization, total as at Canterbury after Henry VIII or partial as at Jannat al-Baqi' at Medina under the Wahhabis. Throughout history, iconoclasts have tried to suppress pilgrimage, and governments fear it because of its popular character and the irrepressible manifestations to which it can give rise. Foci of pilgrimage are also liable to shift under the impact of political or economic change: the Papal monarchy diverted Christian pilgrimage from Jerusalem to Rome; in Islam, `Abdul Malik built the Dome of the Rock on purpose to attract away pilgrims from Mecca.

Islamic pilgrimage shares with other traditions, the basic features of the phenomenon like intention or consecration, separation, passage, sojourn (at the shrine), deconsecration and, pervading all, *communitas*, whereby the individual becomes aware of his place as part of a larger unit, a social body transcending frontiers not only of space but of class, culture and language. On return, the reintegration of the pilgrim into the community from which he temporarily separated is enriched by the *communitas*, which alters his perception of himself, his family, his nationality and his relations for all of them. Islamic pilgrimage exhibits all of these characteristics to a very marked and unusual degree.

Politically, *Hajj* constitutes the annual congress (*majlis*) of all Muslims, since *Hajj* is the nearest the believers come to a single corporate presence in one place. The close association in common purpose of peoples of diverse origins and backgrounds promote not only spiritual uplift but they also promote solidarity. Whilst medieval Christian pilgrimages like Canterbury or Glastonbury



promoted national unity, the *Hajj* promotes international unity. The equality of believers before God is visibilized in the uniformity of the dress worn, the *ihram*.

Spiritually, the outward journey to Mecca prefigures the inward journey towards the heart, with gnosis (*ma`rifah*) as the goal. Mecca is both location and spirit. Above the visible Ka`bah are eight other invisible Ka`bahs disposed along a single axis around which the entire cosmos rotates. Above the last of these Ka`bahs is the Throne of God, or “primum mobile”. The act of *tawaf*, performed counter-clockwise, in the direction of the cosmic dance, would make of the Ka`bah an *axis mundi*, if it were not one already. Thus the Ka`bah represents the point of rotation of the spiritual universe. It also forms the intersection of two planes, the vertical plane of the spirit and the horizontal one of phenomenal existence. The *qiblah* axis used in prayer and which determines the orientation of all mosques is the horizontal plane, and the cosmological axis of which the Ka`bah is the visible point is the vertical one. Prayer can be construed as use of the horizontal axis to relate oneself to the vertical plane of the spirit. Thus *salat* and *Hajj* form but two aspects of a single reality, two ways of apprehending the Reality (*al-Haqiqah*). Of the Five Pillars four – *salat*, *siyam*, *zakat*, and *Hajj* – are peripheral to the central one – *shahadah* – but between *salat* and *Hajj* there is convergence. The Muslim Ummah as a middle nation (Qur’an 2:143) focused on the *qiblah* relates to this focus in various ways: daily in prayer, posthumously in burial, and, once at least in life, in *Hajj*. The *qiblah* is therefore the Ummah’s center of gravity since it is in relation to this point that the whole Ummah is balanced.

The centrality of *Hajj* is not only cosmological but legal. Canonically, *Hajj* ranks as *fard*, and specifically as *fard `ain* (individual’s obligation) as opposed to *fard kifaya* (collective’s obligation) but differs from the other Pillars in that this particular *fard* is consequent on one’s having the means. Islam recognizes different classes of pilgrimage. These are *ziyarah*, *Hajj* and *Umrah*. *Ziyarah* (visitation) is the only respect in which Islamic pilgrimage corresponds to the pilgrimages found in other traditions; *Hajj* and *Umrah* have no correspondence elsewhere but are peculiar to Islam. *Hajj* is *fard*, *Umrah* is Sunnah and *ziyarah* is neither, albeit meritorious. The addition of Medina to the *Hajj*, though standard practice, falls into the category of *ziyarah*.

The rites of *Hajj* are essentially Abrahamic, being a re-enactment of certain events in the life of the Prophet Abraham decisive for the subsequent course of monotheism but endowed with fresh

significance in virtue of their ritualized incorporation in Islam. In considering *Hajj*, we have to assess both the Abrahamic core and its Muhammadan transformation, which subsumes and completes the Abrahamic component, Muhammad's resumption and extension of these rites being a fulfillment of prophecy (Qur'an, 2:127-9).

The occurrence and recurrence of events in specific localities endow the localities with a significance beyond the merely phenomenal. This numinosity pervades the entire area where the events occurred. Mecca and its environs can best be understood as a sort of divine theater where the encounter between God and man took place. Each rite is tied to a particular locality. The *sa'i*, which commemorates Hajra's anguished search for water, is performed at the *mas'ah* between the two hills of Safa and Marwah. The *jarm* (lapidation) at Mina commemorates the points at which Satan successively appeared to tempt Abraham. Both relate to the prophecy of the birth of Muhammad in the Qur'an, 2:129. The Qur'an (2:158) refers to Safa and Marwah as *sha`a'ir*, signs or evidences attesting to what had taken place in that area, making Mecca the scene of divine action. Zamzam is a third.

All of these localities represent incidents or stages in the unfolding of God's salvific plan, whereby man is rescued from the effects of the Fall (*al-hubut*) through divine intervention (*huda*). Had God not intervened twice, first when the infant Ishmael was dying of thirst, and again when the adolescent Ishmael was about to be sacrificed, there would have been no Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.), since Kader (*Kaider* in `Arabic) the Prophet is the lineal descendant of Ishmael through Kaider. God's plan would have been thwarted and salvation (*najat*) from the consequences of the Fall would have been wrought by other means; the entire course of human history would have been different. Thus Mecca is, historically, the most important place on earth.

The ordained rites (*manasik*) are both Abrahamic and Muhammadan, but just as Muhammad (S.A.W.) resumes and completes the work of Abraham so the Muhammadan component is by far the most important. This explains why this particular component, the *wuquf* at `Arafat, constitutes the sole essential rites of the pilgrimage without which the performance of the *Hajj* is invalidated. The *wuquf* is also a commemoration, in this instance of the Farewell Sermon which the Prophet preached from atop the Mount of Mercy and of the descent (*tanzil*) in the middle of that sermon of the crucial revelation in verse 5:3 of the Qur'an.

The Muhammadan dimension of *Hajj* is not limited to the all-important *wuquf* at `Arafat but to other innovations, all introduced during the Farewell Pilgrimage. It was now that the Prophet substituted a purely lunar calendar to regulate the liturgical year and abolished the intercalation (*nasi'*), which had corrected the discrepancy between the lunar and solar calendars. The liturgical year focuses and heightens the sense of *communitas*, for the climax of that year, the *`Id al-Adha*, or the Feast of the Sacrifice of Abraham on the 10th of Dhu 'l-Hijjah, coincides with the corresponding rite in Mina on that day. This makes all Muslims spiritually present along with the Hujjaj in Mecca at that moment, so that Muslims, wherever they be, at that moment form a single communion. The celebration of *`Id al-Adha* merely reproduces locally what Muslims are doing in the vicinity of Mecca that same day, so that *salat* and *Hajj* coincide.

This relates directly to the political dimension of *Hajj*. It is said correctly that Islam is the most political of all religions, which is only what one would expect since Aristotle defined man as a political animal. Thus, throughout history, the *Hajj*, properly understood, is both popular assembly (*majlis*) and a forum for the interchange of ideas. It was at Mecca during *Hajj* that Amir `Abdul Qadir, the national hero of Algeria, and Shamwyl, the national hero of the Caucasians, met to plan the Islamic resistance in the 19th century. In Islam it is neither possible nor desirable to disentangle the religious from the political or the cultural from the economic.

The importance of the diverse aspects of *Hajj* is reflected in the diversity of effect the institution had on all who took part in it. Pilgrimage routes traverse the Muslim world, from Scutari on the Asian side of the Hosphorus, through Anatolia and Syria to the Hijaz. Another caravan came from Iraq, and a third from Yemen; another route was travelled by the North African pilgrims, whilst finally there was the ocean route from the Far East. Monuments all over the Muslim world attest to the religious and economic importance of the pilgrim traffic; the Selimiye in Damascus is only the most beautiful of the facilities provided by a beneficent administration for the comfort as well as the safety of the pilgrims. The facilities included rest houses, fortresses and assembly points. The reason the square in Scutari is so gigantic, relative to the size of the city, is because this was where the annual *Hajj* caravan formed up. At a later stage, the construction of the Hijaz railway (opened 1908) was but an updating of this route. It also formed the lifeline of the Ottoman Empire, and this overlapping of function merely reproduces an aspect of the Pilgrimage

that was always present – the economic, for trade routes and pilgrimage routes converged, diverged and coincided.

The *Hajj* has been described as ‘the most important agency of voluntary, personal mobility before the age of the great European discoveries,’ one which ‘must have had profound effects of all the communities from which the pilgrims came, through which they travelled, and to which they returned.’ (Encyclopedia of Islam, 2nd ed., part *Hajj*). People, particularly the merchant class would avail the opportunities offered by the pilgrimage to defray in whole or in part the expenses of the journey for themselves and their families. Everyone returned spiritually benefited, provided his intention were pure at the outset, but many also profited intellectually. Nor were these effects confined to scholars. The transformative effect of *Hajj* on societies even a few of whose members went on pilgrimage is something that would be difficult to overestimate. Both the almoravid and Almohad revolutions in North Africa were brought about by *Hujjaj* who realized the religious backwardness of their own societies through coming into contact with Islam elsewhere. The British recognized the dangers of such enlightenment, and in some places, notably Nigeria, went to extraordinary lengths to restrict the number of pilgrims leaving the country so that the Muslims would be left in benighted darkness.

Today the *Hajj* has increased in quantity but declined in quality. Formerly scholars would spend years on *Hajj*, not only sojourning in the Haramain but stopping off at centers of learning enroute; sometimes a pilgrim would be so taken with a teacher’s teaching that he would break his journey and stay on, picking up the next year’s caravan. Since traders and pilgrims made used to the same routes, the merchant class also benefited from chance encounters. The *Hajj* was a vehicle of cultural diffusion, helping to bind disparate parts of the Muslim world into a single cultural imperium. Since *‘Umrah* in Ramadan is particularly meritorious, people would arrive in Mecca during Ramadan and stay on for Dhu ‘l-Hijjah, thereby performing both *‘Umrah* and *Hajj*. As scholars from different parts of Dar al-Islam were brought together in the act of pilgrimage, a process of cross-cultural fertilization took place.

## Preface

The path of Islam has its origin and roots in the rise of Adamic consciousness. From the dawn of humankind and throughout its history, the practices and rituals of Islam have evolved and developed, as revealed to the numerous prophets and messengers who brought about successive changes.

The practices and laws for the wayfarer were finally completed as a total code of conduct by the last messenger, Muhammad, and preserved in the Qur'an and the prophetic teachings. The Qur'an tells us that the purpose of creation is to adore, worship and submit to the loving Creator by total surrender. No lasting contentment or satisfaction can be obtained except through this unific path.

To arrive at an inner state of pure surrender and freedom, outer practices and rituals are observed. To pray and supplicate, to retreat in meditation, to give alms to share and care for others, to restrain one's self by fasting, to go on pilgrimage and to visit places which are conducive to spiritual uplift, to uphold goodness and to renounce evil, and to live fully within Islam and to protect it – all are within the original blueprint of human consciousness. All of these practices are fundamental, primal expressions of the spiritual and social facets of human nature. If we observe closely, we will find these practices reflected in the habits and traditions of tribes and societies everywhere from time immemorial.

Prayer, for example, if not offered in sincere supplication, can be reduced to a simple cry for material help, and if giving becomes self-gratifying, it enhances the ego rather than reduces it. If fasting is performed simply as abstention from food, its benefit may only be dietary, and if the pilgrimage loses its spiritual and social content, it becomes simply a form of folkloric pageantry.

The present work is an attempt to show the outer practices and inner meanings of the journey of the *Hajj* in Islam. Its intention is to present an integrated picture of the entire pilgrimage. This work is a companion volume to a book on fasting which is to be published in the near future. We hope this work will be of benefit to all who are interested in Islam original.

Although the section on rituals is based on the Ja`fari school of thought which is only very slightly different to the other four schools of Islamic thought, the rest of the book is of a universal nature.

## **Section One: The Pilgrimage Before Islam**

### ***Pilgrimage in Different Religions and Cultures***

Many religions and cultures have practiced a form of pilgrimage. Although Islam has been the only spiritual discipline in which pilgrimage has been considered an obligatory rite, the practice of pilgrimage existed among other major religions such, as Judaism, Christianity, Buddhism and Hinduism. We shall briefly explore the practice of pilgrimage in these religions and a few other cultures, in order to place the pilgrimage of Islam within a wider context.

#### **Pilgrimage among the Jews**

The Jews came to Palestine to visit places associated with Biblical events. Also, in Judges 21:19, there is a reference to the festival of Jehovah, which took place annually at Shiloh, to the north of Bethel. This festival is called in Hebrew the *hag*, a word which is almost identical to the Arabic word for pilgrim (*hajj*). Once the Tabernacle had been installed, the pilgrim sacrificed and prostrated at the shrine. In more ancient times, only the head of the family participated in the activities, while in later times the whole family took part.

In the seventh month of the Hebrew year, pilgrims went to Jerusalem to celebrate the Festival of Tabernacles. They shaved their beards, wore ragged clothes and brought offerings and incense. The Book of Psalms contains songs sung by the pilgrims to celebrate their visit to the Temple in Jerusalem.

#### **Pilgrimage among the early Christians**

The Christians also visited Palestine to see places associated with Biblical events. An account exists from a Christian woman named Egeria who lived around 400 AD. She tells of her pilgrimage to Palestine and the sites she visited. The central devotional practice that she and her group performed was to read the passage of the Bible relevant to each site they visited. A pattern

of public worship developed which was associated with these sites during the reign of Constantine in the early fourth century.

### **Christian centers of pilgrimage in Europe**

Certain centers of pilgrimage had developed in Europe by the early fourth century. The bones of Peter and Paul were enshrined in Rome, as were the graves of the many Christian martyrs who died under Roman persecution. The shrines of lesser pious people and martyrs appeared all over Europe, and people visited these sites in anticipation of blessings. It became a custom, and in 787 AD a church decree, that every church should have some kind of relic associated with a saint or martyr. A trade in ‘the limbs of martyrs’ had begun, as St. Augustine of Hippo reports in 400 AD. To explain the resultant flood of articles, it was widely believed that all relics possessed the miraculous power of self-multiplication. The test of popularity as to whether a particular site became a constant place of visitation was whether the relics had the power to perform miracles. Those that were reputed to have this power enjoyed a steady stream of visitors.

Besides Rome, there were only a few other places in Europe that enjoyed international popularity. After Rome, there was Santiago de Compostella in northern Spain, where in 816 AD the body of St. James was said to have been miraculously rescued from the waves of the Atlantic. There was a popular shrine in France, another in Germany, and a third in Italy, in addition to the famous Canterbury Cathedral in England.

In Britain the veneration of wells was also common, and many of these sites became places of visitation for a great number of people, particularly those who sought healing from some disease or physical ailment. These wells often derived their fame from the fact that some pious person baptized converts there in the early days of British Christianity. Many, however, derived their popularity from pre-Christian legends and were rededicated by missionaries for the baptism of converts.



### **Pilgrimage among the Buddhists**

Reincarnation being central to Buddhist belief, the Buddhist is anxious to achieve as many pious acts as possible in order to break out of the cycle of rebirth. Pilgrimage is considered one such pious act. As in the Christian tradition of visiting sites associated with the life of Jesus, Buddhists travel to important sites connected with the Buddha's life. These sites are grouped into three. The first group comprises the places of the Buddha's birth, of his enlightenment, of his first sermon and of his death. The second group consists of six places which he visited, while the third consists of places which are associated with Buddhist culture.

Tibetan Buddhism, mixed with ancient Shamanistic beliefs, is known as Lamaism. Pilgrimage is a practice among the Tibetan Buddhists, and since its beginnings the essential element seems to have been the act of circumambulating the person or place which the pilgrim wishes to honor. During the rite of circumambulation, the person or place is kept on the right-hand side of the pilgrim.

### **Pilgrimage among the Hindus**

Pilgrimage in Hinduism is an ancient practice, and there are numerous places throughout India which attract millions of people. Some places draw people from all over the country, and others largely from neighboring cities, towns and villages. Hindus perform pilgrimages to earn religious merit, to fulfill vows towards the solution of a problem, and to expiate ritual impurities.

Most of the sacred sites lay either on riverbanks, at confluences or on the coast. The value of water as a purifying agent was important in locating places of pilgrimage. The word commonly associated with visiting these places means 'undertaking a journey to river fords,' and great emphasis is laid upon ritual purification by bathing.

An interesting point related to Hindu pilgrimage strongly indicates that the roots of Hinduism were originally monotheistic. The famous epic known as the 'Mahabharata' describes a grand tour of the entire country of India, listing many places of visitation; virtually every site is devoted to Brahma, the Creator, and there is no mention of the other prominent deities such as

Siva, Vishnu and Krishna, nor of icons or temples to these deities. Bhardwaj, in ‘Hindu Places of Pilgrimage in India’, says, ‘The kind of theistic worship we find in India today must have been totally lacking.’

One form of pilgrimage is to visit a monastery and go around its environs, prostrating oneself at every step. The pilgrim is not allowed to halt for food or rest, otherwise he loses the benefit of his pilgrimage. His body must be fully stretched out in front of him, with his hands joined. The pilgrim makes these prostrations even if it is raining, snowing or very cold. Older pilgrims and women with children may simply walk around the monastery, telling the beads of their rosary or turning the prayer-wheels they hold in their right hands. Some pilgrims, when journeying towards a shrine, prostrate themselves the entire way; they protect their faces with a board so they are not bruised by the continual contact with the ground. Each time their forehead touches the ground, they mark the spot, get up, place their feet on this point and extend their body again until they reach their destination. One particular sanctuary lies at the top of a peak. There is an arrangement of chapels at each floor, linked by wooden ladders from which chains hang. The pilgrims climb the peak by clinging onto these chains.

Pilgrimage in Tibet is beset with difficulties, and generally involves crossing harsh and treacherous terrain. Because of the dangers, people usually travel together in large groups. Sometimes rich people pay others to make the pilgrimage for them; they may also pay for poorer people to make the pilgrimage, as an act of merit. All classes of people make the pilgrimage, including brigands who hope to win forgiveness for past sins. There are always many beggars who live around the shrines and avail themselves of the generosity of the pilgrims.

### **Pilgrimage in China**

The Confucian mandarins considered pilgrimage to have within it an element of disorder and danger to the state. They did not like the peasants leaving their lands, considering the practice potentially harmful to the country’s agriculture. Hence it was not a particular feature of religious practices in China, although it was widespread among the Buddhists there.

Mountains were the main places of pilgrimage in China: originally the mountain was seen as an intermediary between the heavens and man. Five official sacred mountains existed in China, the most important of which is called Ta'i Chan. The time for pilgrimage was in the spring. In ancient Chinese tradition, the Emperor had to make pilgrimage to certain sacred mountains; he was considered the son of the heavens, and thus possessed a divine mandate as an intermediary between the heavens and man. He was expected to rule society according to the laws of the universe, and his mandate had to be renewed with every new dynasty. It consisted of a double sacrifice; one at the foot of the mountain, and one at the peak.

Pilgrims organized themselves into societies, each member contributing to a communal fund. Generally the pilgrims set out on foot at the beginning of the year, the group leader carrying a flag with the group's place of origin and other details. Pilgrimage was often made on behalf of a sick person who could not make the journey.

The temple at the summit of Ta'i Chan is difficult to reach, and so pilgrims who climbed the eastern peak rested the night in order to view the sunrise the following day. The lights which appeared during the night at the top of the sacred mountain were considered to be a manifestation of a celestial force. Pilgrims believed that watching these lights assured one of divine benevolence.

### **Pilgrimage in Japan**

Both Buddhists and Shintoists perform pilgrimage in Japan. One of the most frequent circuits of pilgrimage is the visit to the 88 sanctuaries of Shikoku. Pilgrims are most numerous here in March and April. The majority make a single complete tour of the sanctuaries, although some do it several times. In principle, the pilgrimage is made on foot.

One of the objectives of pilgrimage in Japan is to compel the rich, even if it is only once in their lives, to beg. The inhabitants of the villages through which the pilgrims pass believe it assures the well-being of their ancestors to give small quantities of rice or money to the pilgrims. It is considered obligatory for the people to tend to any pilgrim who falls ill, and if a pilgrim dies while in someone's care, then that person must pay for his burial. In return, he keeps whatever

possessions the pilgrim had. The Japanese pilgrim retains the robe he wears on pilgrimage, as this will later serve as his funeral shroud. The hat and cane are also kept, and they are placed on his tomb.

Each pilgrimage has its own characteristics. The pilgrimage to the isle of Sado requires the pilgrim to ask for alms from a strange house two or three times a day. In the region of Shimane, alms must be sought at least seven times a day, each time from a different house.

Generally, the Shintoists in Japan concentrate on making pilgrimage to one sacred place at a time, while the Buddhists perform a circuit. However, there is one Shinto custom whereby 100 temples are visited in a certain order, and a card is left at each temple in ordered to affect a cure for a sick person.

### **Common Features of Pilgrimage**

Certain common features exist among the various types of pilgrimage we have just surveyed. They include the following:

1. The significance of water by the site of a sacred place or shrine. It is important as a means of purification, both for purposes of ablution and for curing the sick.
2. The ancient origin of many sites of pilgrimage. Newer faiths build their temples and shrines in places which have been venerated since pre-historical times.
3. Difficult access to the sacred places, requiring the pilgrim to make a long and arduous journey.
4. The need to sacrifice as part of the rites of pilgrimage. This includes offerings of food, flowers, and small amounts of money or similar tokens.
5. Physical obeisance at the shrine, and in some cases on the road towards the shrine.

6. Making the pilgrimage on foot.
7. A special mode of dress. This dress is often preserved as the pilgrim's shroud.
8. Belief that objects left in a sacred place will become impregnated with divine energy.
9. Importance of mountains as places of worship.
10. The benefits of staying up all night at a sacred place.
11. Certain times of the day, and dates in the lunar calendar, especially the full moon, are considered more auspicious for pilgrimage.
12. Certain foods are prohibited during the pilgrimage.
13. Abstention from cutting the hair or nails, as well as from sexual relations, during the time of the pilgrimage.
14. The more removed the rites of pilgrimage become from their original purity, the more likely is the growth of an avaricious priest class and superstitious practices.
15. The place or person honored is usually kept on the right-hand side of the pilgrim while he circumambulates that place or person.

### **The Pilgrimage of Islam**

As we stated earlier, the Pilgrimage of Islam fully symbolizes the universal experience. The analogies are numerous. For example, an essential rite is circumambulating the Ka`bah counterclockwise, as the planets revolve around the sun. The Ka`bah geometrically represents a cube, and symbolizes the four dimensions as well as the four basic elements: fire, water, earth and air. This circumambulation is circular in shape, while the prayer at the station of Abraham represents a vertical line. Going between the two hills of Safa and Marwah represents a horizontal line. The pilgrim sets out from the Ka`bah to the plain of `Arafat, travelling beyond

the boundaries of the Sacred Precinct. The meaning of this action is that he has travelled beyond the confines of the cosmos to stand upon the vast, solitary plain of Arafat, the plain which symbolizes divine knowledge. Then he returns to the confines of the Sacred Precinct to stone the pillars, which represent the attachments of creational existence, attachments that distance him from divine knowledge. Finally, he returns again to circumambulate the Ka`bah, back to the cosmic, orbital movement, but this time with knowledge beyond the time and space dimension of the cosmos.

### ***From Adam to Abraham***

The Ka`bah is the oldest sacred sanctuary on earth of which there is historical record. The Qur'an says,

Most surely the first house appointed for men is the one at Bakkah [Mecca], blessed and a guidance for the nations. (3:96)

The Ka`bah predated the Prophet Abraham, who unearthed the foundation and rebuilt the House upon it.

And when Abraham and Ishmael raised the foundations of the House: Our Lord! accept from us; surely Thou art the Hearing, the Knowing. (2:127)

The oldest extant history of Mecca, 'Reports About Mecca', which was written by Muhammad al-Azraqi approximately three centuries after the Prophet Muhammad's death, contains information on the origin of the Ka`bah which most of the latter historical texts rely upon extensively. He traces his information to reports from certain companions of the Prophet Muhammad, who all relate that the Ka`bah is linked to Adam. There are different versions of the specific details of the original construction of the Ka`bah, but all contain common, basic information.

An example may be found in tradition from Ibn `Abbas, the Prophet's cousin, who said that Adam travelled until he arrived at Mecca, where he built the Ka`bah with angelic inspiration and assistance. Later, the flood of Noah swept away the physical structure, which was later raised by Abraham and Ishmael. Ibn `Abbas also alluded to the inward meaning of the Ka`bah, mentioning that there is another House like the Ka`bah which is directly under God's Throne. He said that if this House fell, it would fall upon the Ka`bah of earth. In other words, the physical Ka`bah of form is an emanation of its archetype in the spiritual world. This will be further discussed in another chapter.

Another tradition says that Adam merely erected a tent to serve as the Sacred Sanctuary; around which he would walk while praying. When he died, his sons constructed the House from clay

and stones. This Ka`bah remained until the flood of Noah swept it away. It is said that after the flood of Noah, there was a red heap upon the spot where the Ka`bah had been. The people who repopulated the area used to come and worship there until Abraham rebuilt the Ancient House.

### **Abraham settles Ishmael and Hagar**

The great prophet Abraham was born approximately four thousand years ago, according to historical sources, in a place called Ur, which is located in what is now known as Iraq. The Qur'an speaks much about him, as does the Bible. He was the greatest revolutionary being to come forth since the prophet Noah. Both came with the message of unity and truth which was inimical to the vested, materialistic powers of their respective times.

As a young man, Abraham spoke out strongly against the idolatry in which his people were immersed, and physically destroyed their idols to prove his point. The power elite of the society in which he lived subjected him to torture by fire, from which he was miraculously saved. He then left his homeland and travelled to Egypt, and later to the land now known as Palestine.

Abraham had no children until he was 88 years of age, at which time Hagar bore him Ishmael. When Ishmael was still a suckling child, Abraham took him and his mother out of Palestine and eastward toward the Arabian Peninsula, according to what had been revealed to him. Gabriel would appear periodically, and Abraham would ask him if he should stop at the particular point they had come to. Finally, upon reaching the Valley of Bakkah, where there rose a mound of reddish sand, Gabriel told him to stop. Here in the desolate valley Abraham left Hagar and his infant son Ishmael, setting them under a thorn tree near the mound. At that time Mecca was desolate. No one lived there and there was no water. Abraham abandoned the mother and the child in this place. He left them a bag of dates and a leather bottle of water and went away. Hagar ran after him and said, 'O Abraham, where are you going, leaving us in this desert, a desert where there is no one and nothing?' She repeated these words but he did not turn back. Then she asked him 'Has God commanded this?' Abraham answered, 'It is God's command.' 'Then He will not desert us,' Hagar responded.

The Qur'an reveals that upon leaving Hagar and Ishmael, Abraham said,



O our Lord! surely I have settled a part of my offspring in a valley unproductive of fruit near Thy Sacred House, Our Lord! that they may keep up prayer; therefore make the hearts of some people yearn towards them and provide them with fruits; haply they may be grateful. (14:37)

### **Zamzam and the Arrival of the Jurhum**

Hagar suckled her child and gave him small sips of water until the water was gone. She and Ishmael became extremely thirsty and he began to cry. Hagar thought her infant son would die. Unable to bear the sight, she went to the nearest hill, Safa, and climbed to the top. She looked down into the valley to see if there was anyone there, but saw no one. Desperately determined, she descended from Safa and set off across the valley to another hill about a quarter of a mile away, called Marwah. She climbed Marwah and once again searched across the wilderness. Again she saw no one. She returned to Safa and again to Marwah, going back and forth a total of seven times. When she ascended Marwah after the seventh time she heard a voice within her saying, ‘Listen.’ She heard it again and said, ‘You whom I hear – if you can, bring help.’ Then beside her appeared an angel, who directed her to the spot where Ishmael was. Then the angel struck the ground and water appeared. Hagar hurriedly dug a depression at the spot so the water would not escape.

Hagar and Ishmael continued to live by the well called Zam-zam. Now the Jurhum, a tribe of Yemeni origin, had come from the north across Mount Kada, and made camp in the lower part of the Meccan valley. One day a group of them were travelling in the desert when they saw a bird, or a flock of birds, whose habit it was to circle above water. According to what they had previously known, there was no water in the valley, so they sent a scout to see what was there, and he returned with news of water. The Jurhum came and found Hagar and Ishmael. They asked if they could use the water and Hagar granted them permission. They began to settle in the area and sent messengers to their people, who also began to come and settle.

## **Ishmael in the Bible**

Hagar and Ishmael remained in Mecca until their deaths; Ishmael grew up among the Jurhum, speaking their language and marrying one of their women, while we find references to Ishmael in the Bible, as follows:

And God heard the voice of the lad; and the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven and said unto her, What aileth thee, Hagar? fear not; for God hath heard the voice of the lad where he is. Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him in thine hand; for I will make him a great nation. And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water; and she went, and filled the bottle with water, and gave the lad drink. And God was with the lad; and he grew, and dwelt in the wilderness, and became an archer. (Genesis 21:17-20)

Also we find that the Bible connects the Ka`bah to Ishmael:

Blessed are they that dwell in Thy House; they will be still praising thee.  
Blessed is the man whose strength is in Thee; in whose heart are the ways of them.  
Who passing through the valley of Bakkah<sup>1</sup> make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools.

(Psalm 84:4-6)

## **Abraham Visits Ishmael**

Before building the Ka`bah, Abraham visited his son Ishmael on several occasions. When God took the covenant with him, which included the circumcision of all males, Ishmael was also circumcised: this meant that Abraham must have visited him in Mecca. Also, the Qur'an mentions Abraham's vision, in which he was ordered to sacrifice Ishmael:

. . . O my son! surely I have seen in a dream that I should sacrifice you; consider then what you see. He said: O my father, do what you are commanded;

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<sup>1</sup> Heb. *Baka*.

if Allah please, you will find me of the patient ones. So when they both submitted and he threw him down upon his forehead, and We called out to him saying, O Abraham! you have indeed shown the truth of the vision [...] and We ransomed him with a great sacrifice. (37:102-7)

Al-Azraqi relates on the authority of Ibn `Abbas that Abraham came from Syria to visit Ishmael when the latter was grown up and married. When Abraham arrived at his son's house he found Ishmael's wife, who had never met him. (Ishmael was probably out hunting.) The woman was rude and inhospitable to Abraham, so he asked her to mention to her husband, upon his return, that an old man of such-and-such a description had come to visit and passed on his greetings. He asked her to give a message to her husband that he should change the threshold of his house, for it did not please him. When Ishmael returned he asked if anyone had been to see him, and his wife replied that there had been someone, and described Abraham to her husband. Ishmael asked if the man had left any message, and she related what he had said. Ishmael said to her, 'You are the threshold of my house, so return to your family.' He returned the woman to her family, and remarried.

Sometime later Abraham returned to visit his son. Once again, he came to Ishmael's house while he was out. This time, however, he found a different woman, whom he duly greeted. She returned the greeting and asked him to partake of food and drink. Abraham asked her what she and her husband normally ate and drank. She replied that they ate meat (which Ishmael obtained by hunting) and drank water. Abraham asked if they ever had grain or anything else, and she replied that they did not. 'Then may God bless you abundantly with meat and water!' Abraham said. Upon leaving, Abraham asked that she mention him to her husband and deliver the following message: 'I found the threshold of your house good, so keep it!' When Ishmael returned she gave him the message, and he knew that his father had come once again and was pleased with his new wife.

### **The Ka`bah is Built**

When Abraham received the revelation from God to raise the foundations of the Ka`bah, he went to Ishmael and found him sitting under a large tree in the area of Zamzam. When Ishmael saw

him, he got up and greeted him with love and respect, as is proper when one greets one's father, and Abraham returned the greeting, as one greets a son. They sat together under the tree and Abraham said to Ishmael, 'Oh Ishmael, God the Exalted has given me a command.' 'Then you must obey your Lord,' Ishmael replied. 'Will you help me?' asked Abraham. When Ishmael said he would, Abraham said, 'My Lord has commanded me to build a House for Him.' Ishmael asked where, and Abraham pointed to the mound, that was higher than its surroundings. They excavated the gravel, and when they reached the original foundation of Adam, a cloud came directly over the spot to indicate the dimensions of the structure. Abraham dug the earth according to the cloud's shape, in order to build on the original foundation. Once he finished digging, the cloud disappeared. Then Ishmael brought large stones from the surrounding area, and Abraham built the walls of the structure. When he had reached a certain point, he asked Ishmael to find a stone to place there, so that people would know where to begin circumambulating. So Ishmael went to the mountains in search of a stone. Gabriel came to him with the Black Stone, which had been carried to and deposited upon the mountain of Abu Qubays by the flood of Noah. The stone was originally white, and gleamed lustrously.<sup>12</sup> 'Where did you get this stone?' Ishmael asked him. 'From Him who has no need of your building or mine,' Gabriel answered. The stone was put in its place, and when Abraham reached a point where he could reach no higher, Ishmael brought him a large rock, so he could stand upon it to lay the upper level of the walls. This rock is now located at a spot called 'the Station of Abraham', and contains his footprints embedded in it.

When Abraham completed building the Ka`bah, Gabriel approached him and ordered him to go around the House seven times, kissing the Black Stone during each round. Upon completing the seven rounds, Abraham and Ishmael made two cycles of prayer at the Station of Abraham.

And when We made the House a pilgrimage for men and a place of security, and [He said,] appoint for yourselves a place of prayer on the standing-place of Abraham. And We enjoined Abraham and Ishmael saying: Purify My House for those who visit it and those who abide in it for devotion and those who bow down and those who prostrate themselves. (2:125)

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<sup>2</sup> According to Islamic tradition, the Stone turned black as a result of being touched by so many people.

And when We assigned to Abraham the place of the House, saying: Do not associate with Me aught, and purify My House for those who make the circuit and stand to pray and bow and prostrate themselves. (22:26)

### **The First Pilgrimage**

The Angel Gabriel showed Abraham all the ritual practices of the pilgrimage. When they entered Mina, Satan appeared to Abraham at the place which later became known as the pillar of stoning, 'the Pillar of `Aqabah'. Gabriel ordered him to stone Satan which Abraham did with seven small stones, so that he disappeared. Then Satan appeared again at another spot close by, which is called 'the Middle Pillar'. Again Gabriel ordered that the figure be stoned, and again Abraham did so. Satan disappeared, but then reappeared for a third time, at the place called 'the Lower Pillar'. Abraham hurled seven more stones at him and he disappeared, nor did he reappear again. Then, when the angelic presence, Gabriel, had finished teaching him the ritual practices of the Pilgrimage, Abraham was commanded to inform other people:

And proclaim among men the Pilgrimage: they will come to you on foot and on every lean camel, coming from every remote path. (22:27)

Upon the completion of the Pilgrimage, Abraham prayed for the security of the Ka`bah:

And when Abraham said: My Lord, make it a secure town and provide its people with fruits, such of them as believe in Allah and the last day. He said: And whoever disbelieves, I will grant him enjoyment for a short while, then I will drive him to the chastisement of the Fire; and it is an evil destination. (2:126)

When Abraham died, Ishmael inherited the legacy of prophecy from him and carried on with the ritual practices of his father:

And mention Ishmael in the Book; surely he was truthful in his promise, and he was an apostle, a prophet. And he enjoined on his family prayer and almsgiving, and was one in whom His Lord was well pleased. (19:54-5)

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*Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri*

Offers a comprehensive selection of Islamic teachings arranged according to topics dealing with belief and worship, moral, social and spiritual values.

### **The Wisdom (Hikam) of Ibn `Ata`allah: Translation and Commentary**

*Translation & Commentary by Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri*

These aphorisms of Ibn `Ata`Allah, a Shadili Shaykh, reveal the breadth and depth of an enlightened being who reflects divine unity and inner transformation through worship.

### **The Inner Meanings of Worship in Islam: A Personal Selection of Guidance for the Wayfarer**

*Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri*

Here is guidance for those who journey along this path, from the Qur'an, the Prophet's traditions, narrations from the *Ahl al-Bayt*, and seminal works from among the *Ahl al-Tasawwuf* of all schools of thought.

### **The Lantern of The Path**

*Imam Ja`far Al-Sadiq (Translated By Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri)*

Each one of the ninety-nine chapter of this book is a threshold to the next, guiding the reader through the broad spectrum of ageless wisdom, like a lantern along the path of reality.

### **The Pilgrimage of Islam**

*Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri*

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### **The Sayings & Wisdom of Imam `Ali**

*Compiled By: Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri*

*Translated By: Asadullah ad-Dhaakir Yate*

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This workbook explores the entire cosmology of the self through time, and maps the evolution of the self from before birth through life, death and beyond.

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*Shaykh Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani*

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## ***Autobiography***

### **Son of Karbala**

*Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri*

The atmosphere of an Iraq in transition is brought to life and used as a backdrop for the Shaykh's own personal quest for self-discovery and spiritual truth.

## ***Health Sciences and Islamic History***

### **Health Sciences in Early Islam – Volumes 1 & 2**

*Collected Papers By: Sami K. Hamarneh*

*Edited By: Munawar A. Anees*

*Foreword By: Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri*

*Health Sciences in Early Islam* is a pioneering study of Islamic medicine that opens up new chapters of knowledge in the history of the healing sciences. This two volume work covers the development of Islamic medicine between the 6th and 12th centuries A.D.