

Hajj: A Lesson in Humility

Looking around, I saw faces from every corner of the globe.

Ask anyone who's gone to [Hajj](#) what lessons he or she learned, and you'll receive a multitude of answers.

My own Hajj taught me a number of lessons, but perhaps one of the things I most remember about it was how humbling an experience it was.

I remember noticing almost immediately upon arriving in Makkah the sheer number of people and thinking, "all these people here to worship Allah?"

Right away I felt humbled, realizing that there were so many like me. I remembered the verse from chapter Al-Hadeed:

{Compete with one another to achieve forgiveness from your Lord and to reach Paradise, which is as vast as the heavens and the earth, and is prepared for those who believe in God and His Messenger. This is the blessing of God and He grants it to whomever He wants. The blessings of God are great.} (57:21)

Looking around, I saw faces from every corner of the globe. Some of them looked comfortable in their surroundings; others seemed very out of place.

I remember watching two older men, speaking a language unfamiliar to me, attempting to get on the escalator to go to the second floor of Al-Masjid Al-Haram. They seemed surprised; like it was something they were unaccustomed to using.

I realized that there were parts of the world where people lived very differently than I did. Remote villages where maybe the luxuries I took for granted were not even available. I was humbled by that thought, and felt the list of things I should be grateful for was very long.

I also remember one night in Makkah that my husband and I were a little late to isha prayer. We were late because I had stopped to buy a small prayer rug from a store just outside Al-Masjid Al-Haram. I was very excited about my purchase. I didn't want to carry around a large prayer mat, and this tiny one fit perfectly rolled up under my arm.

The Haram was already overflowing, as a majestic voice came over the loud speaker making the iqama (call to prayer). I found a place to pray outside one of the grand doors of the actual masjid next to a frail, old woman.

The marble floor beneath our feet was hard and cold. I unrolled the miniature prayer mat that I had just bought and laid it out horizontally so that it would accommodate both our foreheads when we came to the ground in prostration. The woman, surprised, looked up at me and smiled.

Everything came to a stop as we began to pray. Millions of people were in that space, but as we went into prostration, you could literally hear a pin drop. It seemed even the air we breathed was in submission to the One who had brought us together in this Holy place, during such a blessed time.

After the prayer had ended, I sat, side by side, with the old woman, supplicating to Allah. The woman seemed so at peace as she remembered her Creator. After a few minutes, she shifted her weight on the floor, seemingly uncomfortable on the hard ground.

I looked at her hands. Her wrinkles were especially deep, and seemed to tell of a life of hardship. Yet her smile was so big and sincere, when she smiled at me I felt as though we knew each other from long ago. I felt like we were sisters.

After a few moments, she folded up the prayer mat in front of her and gave it to me. I gestured to her, “Here,” I said. “You take it.” I could tell she didn’t speak a word of English, and the answer she gave in her mother tongue was unintelligible to me.

“For you.” I said again, handing her the small prayer mat. There was no carpet as far as I could tell in the masjid, and the ground was always very hard.

She seemed reluctant to take it, but I insisted. Then, finally, she accepted my gift, her eyes glistening, almost in tears. She patted her heart with her hand, a sign of appreciation. I felt so grateful to have been able to make her happy, but at the same time, I felt so small. What was this small deed compared to the hardship this woman may have endured throughout her life? Where did my [good deeds](#) stand compared to her patience? I was, again, very humbled by my thoughts.

The crowd around us was shifting and it seemed we needed to move to make way for those exiting the masjid. I went one way, and she went another, like two drops in an ocean of people worshipping Allah. We were ultimately part of the same body, and for a few moments, standing side by side, we felt it.

It is humbling to feel like we are just one among millions of Allah’s servants, but it can also be a source of strength to realize we belong to such a massive whole. Despite our differences, we are all connected by our belief in Allah. Despite our humble beginnings, we are all dignified by our worship of Him.

Hajj helps us realize this. It exposes our fragility and reemphasizes Allah’s greatness. It teaches us lesson after lesson, and if we humble our hearts to Allah, we will better appreciate every one of them.

This Hajj season let us reflect on the lesson of humility—for it is by the Grace of Allah that any of us is able to do anything at all. Let us also remember to compete with one another to achieve Allah’s forgiveness. As one scholar put it: “Let us be like clouds, bringing rain and goodness wherever they go, and like the sunshine, bringing warmth and life to all that it touches.”

May Allah enable us to do so that we may ultimately be invited into His Paradise.

By Marwa Abdalla