

# The Fifth Pillar: Hajj

Exhort all men to make the pilgrimage. They will come to you on foot and on the backs of swift camels from every distant quarter . . .

Then let the pilgrims spruce themselves, make their vows, and circle the Ancient House. Such is Allah's commandment.

— (Koran, Surah 22, The Pilgrimage)

*Hajj* is the pilgrimage to Mecca which every Muslim is expected to make at least once. A pilgrimage is a journey to a sacred place or shrine. Unlike the other four Pillars, the Hajj can be skipped if it involves great hardships.

Over two million Muslims journey to Mecca each year, and each worshipper must follow certain guidelines. First, the men are expected to shave their heads and wear a piece of white garment around the waist and over the shoulder. Women wear the clothing of their native countries, though they must keep their heads covered at all times.

First, the pilgrims walk counter-clockwise seven times around the Ka'bah, either kissing or touching the stone. Next, they run seven times between the hills of As-Safa and Al-Marwah. This action is symbolic of Hagar's search for water and the miracle of the well, Zamzam.

After spending the night at the village of Mina, pilgrims take the next step, the *wukuf*, together. They meet at the plain of Arafat, about six miles from Mecca. From noon to sunset, they pray quietly. Next, they climb a small mountain called the Mount of Mercy, and they ask God's forgiveness for their sins. They spend the night at Muzdalifah.

Afterwards, they return to the village of Mina where the ritual of "stoning the devil" takes place. Followers gather pebbles which they throw at three pillars. This is symbolic of Abraham throwing stones at the Devil who had disturbed his prayers. On the tenth day, animal sacrifices—sheep or goat—are carried out. Finally, the pilgrimage again goes seven times around the Ka'bah.

Muslims conduct a four-day celebration upon returning home from Mecca. The *Eid al-Adha*, or Festival of Sacrifice, marks the end of the pilgrimage and acknowledges the great accomplishment. Now the male pilgrim has the right to call himself a *hajji* while the woman is called a *hajjah*.

## Following the Route of the Hajj

Here is a list of the seven stages of the Hajj. On the following page, identify the correct stage in the diagram by writing in the corresponding number.

1. Walk counter-clockwise seven times around the Ka'bah.
2. Run seven times between the hills of As-Safa and Al-Marwah.
3. Stay overnight at the village of Mina.
4. Hold all-day prayer at the Plain of Arafat.
5. Spend the night at Muzdalifah.
6. Return to Mina for ritual of "stoning the devil".
7. Complete seven more circuits around the Ka'bah.