



Wellington Islamic Centre

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Hajj - Bound for Baitullah

The season of *Hajj* is here once again. All praise be to Allah, worthy of worship and all glory and greatness.

The would-be pilgrims are readying themselves to respond to the call of Almighty towards the holy lands and sacred sites.

Geared up with *tawakkul*, armed with *du'a*, powered by something between fear and hope, and motivated by the need to please Allah, the only excess baggage they carry are those of sin and remorse with a nervous hope to disencumber it all on arrival.

Each a drop in the sea of humanity converge from every direction and far corners of Allah's earth on every mode of transportation available, to witness and be part of this extraordinary event where there is no place for a prince or a pauper but a place for the honoured human who accepts the truth.

The pilgrims literally walk in the very footsteps of great prophets including the beloved Prophet Muhammad *SAW*, the

Sahabah, the learned and pious, and so many great men and women from throughout our history.

As the material comforts distance themselves, and patience appreciates in value, the pilgrims can realise another realm of reality. Standing in the plain of *Arafat*, the spiritually charged atmosphere is indescribable, a numinous calm and serenity descends, the hearts are cleansed and softened with mercy, and the eyes deluged in awe and hope, it leaves a lasting impression and is unforgettable for anyone who has experienced it.

Those fortunate enough to exercise due care in discharging all the rites and rituals correctly without tainting their journey with anything undesirable can come away clean and pure. The beloved prophet *SAW* described their renewal from *Hajj* to be as pure as they were the day their mothers gave them birth.

It is a dream of every Muslim to be *baitullah* bound in *ihram* audibly chanting *Labbaik Allahumma Labbaik...*

Hilal, Eid Salah, Qurbani/ Udhiya, Cost

Information about *Eidul Adha*, approximately three weeks away, will be made available to the community via announcements and notice boards in due course.

People are requested to liaise with their local Islamic Centres for further information. It is recommended to make arrangements for *Qurbani/Udhiya* as soon as the provisions are made available.

FIANZ has already made announcements on how it plans to organise *Udhiya* this year. People are requested to contact their local Centre for further information and arrangements.

IMAN Presentation on Hajj and Umrah

As in previous years, Sheikh Amir will be conducting a programme about *Hajj* and *Umrah*. The programme is scheduled as follows:

Day: Saturday 28 September

Time: 4.30pm

Venue: Wellington Islamic Centre

This presentation is highly interactive and is made using maps and photographs as well.

People are invited to attend this programme to learn about *Hajj* and *Umrah*. People will be able to ask questions and clarify their understanding in what to do at every step of the way in this journey.

HISTORY OR HISTORIOGRAPHY?

By Haji Abdullah Martin Drury

The study of the past is a fascinating one.

The Holy Quran instructs us to examine the past, to learn lessons from the achievements and failures of prior centuries and folk. In Surat Ar-Rum, verse 9, Muslims are admonished :

“Have they not travelled through the earth and observed how was the end of those before them ?”

A similar sentiment is articulated clearly in Surah al Fafir, verse 44; Surat Ghafir, verses 21 and 82; Surat Al-'An'am, verse 1; Surah Yusuf, verse 109; and Surat Muhammad, verse 10. Furthermore in Surat 'Ali 'Imran, verse 137 we read :

“Similar situations [as yours] have passed on before you, so proceed throughout the earth and observe how was the end of those who denied..”

The failure to study History properly then is an aggressively bad idea that contradicts instructions from the Almighty. However when approaching History and Historiography in particular, there are two basic conceptual rubrics a wise and pious reader should be alerted to.

The first is the academic issue of whether History (as an intellectual discipline) is an Art or a Science. In most English speaking societies History is relegated to “the Arts”. In most continental European lands (France, Germany, Russia, etc.) it is regarded as a Science. This is problematic. Is History really an Art ? This implies a degree of subjective evaluation, personal interpretation and creativity (especially in the writing process) that many will find discomforting. On the other hand is it

truly a Science ? Are there really inscrutable, inescapable and unchanging “laws” of History like Newtonian Physics or such, that cannot be altered or influenced by humanity itself ?

The second visceral challenge for the thinking reader is the age old question of whether History is linear or cyclical. If History is “linear” then the lines are clear cut : World War One began and ended in 1914 and 1918 for example. Simple. Or is it ? The spark that triggered the war (the assassination of the heir to the Austrian throne) was of course part of a wave of political murders, communal massacres, military and naval invasions and manoeuvres, and revolutions, that rambled across the Balkans, eastern Europe and Anatolia from about 1908 to the mid 1920s. This makes the demarcation between the start and end of the “world” war more obscure and comes back to the earlier point of subjective evaluation. The cyclical argument is that History occurs in discernible patterns : World War Two was a reflection of World War One, which was a reflection of the 1870 war between the French and the Germans, and so forth. This is also highly popular but misleading : are the cycles of History really that clear cut and unavoidable?

A final point about our comprehension of History and Historiography is worth elucidating here : the reader. The reader invariably brings to the text their own personal understanding of the text, the vocabulary, the imagery, the socio-politics and so forth. The reader brings his or her own edu-

cation, social class and sometimes even race and religion, to their comprehension of the past and to accounts of the past. Historiography is essentially the principles and theory of historical writing (and indeed the history of historical literature !). In fact the dictionary defines Historiography as “writing of history based on the critical examination of sources, the selection of particulars from the authentic materials, and the synthesis of particulars into a narrative that will stand the test of critical methods.” Over the past few decades there has been a gradual shift in History (study and teaching) away from traditional accounts emphasizing diplomatic, economic or political events and issues (lists of dates, battles, kings and queens !). Instead there has been an increased focus on social, societal and cultural research.

A failure to grasp these salient points will make a History book remind the reader of the smell of pet shops. The historical truth, naturally, lies somewhere in between these axioms - Art or Science, Linear or Cyclical - but the wise reader will bear these issues in mind when approaching any History.

RECOMMENDED READING : E.H. CARR “WHAT IS HISTORY?”



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