



Stories from the Hijaz

THE MAKKAH CHRONICLES



Hajaratul Aswad, the Black Stone

SALIM PARKER

IT seems a mere stone, tucked away in the south-eastern corner of the Kaabah, and currently encased in a silver frame yet, it has immense significance.

Also known as the Black Stone, it has been reported by Ibn Abbas, in a hadith that some scholars regard as authentic that: 'The Black Stone came down from Paradise and it was whiter than milk but the sins of the sons of Adam turned it black.' (Tirmidhi).

Every tawaaf commences and ends there, with pilgrims all trying to either kiss it, touch it or grasp sight of it when they make istilaam at the beginning of the tawaaf or each time a circumambulation brings them in front of it. Most can merely raise their hand when they reach that point, an act that is perfectly acceptable as well.

Some historians mention that when Nabi Ibrahim (AS) was finishing the construction of the Kaabah, they needed one rock to complete it. He asked his son, Ismail (AS), to look for a rock, which he duly set out for. When he returned he found that Nabi Ibrahim had already placed a rock in the particular position. He then asked his father: 'O father, where did you get this rock?'

The response was: 'Archangel Jibreel brought it to me from the heavens.' Very few historical records refer to the stone up till the time when Muhammad (SAW) was about 35-years-old, five years before the revelation.



The Hajaratul Aswad is believed to be a stone from Heaven. It was originally a complete stone but due to various historical incidents, now consists of eight pieces of varying sizes that have been cemented together and encased in a silver frame. Most pilgrims will try to kiss the Hajaratul Aswad at least once when on pilgrimage.

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The Kaabah was damaged by a severe flood, and during the reconstruction phase, there was disagreement about who would put the Hajaratul Aswad back in its original place. A civil war was about to break out as the tribe of Quraish could not decide about this. One of the families of Banu Abdu'd-Dar brought a bowl full of blood and all the tribes inserted their hands in it, which meant that they had made up their minds to fight one another. However, one of the elders, named Abu Umayya Ibn al-Mugheera, instead asked

Quraish to agree on the judgment of the first person to come through the Bani Shaibah gate, and they all agreed to abide by this person's ruling.

As Allah willed it, the first to come through this gate was the Prophet Muhammad (SAW).

He put the Black Stone in the middle of a piece of cloth, and asked a representative of each tribe to hold one of the edges of the cloth and raise it close to its place. The Prophet (SAW) then picked it up with his own hands and placed it in its original place.



After the Kaabah was damaged by a flood, the Hajaratul Aswad had to be replaced in its original position. Prophet Muhammad (SAW) prevented a war by advising the Quraish on how to replace it.

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This was how the Prophet (SAW), in effect, prevented a war from breaking out among the Quraish, by a supreme demonstration of wisdom.

There are many hadiths that refer to how the Prophet (SAW) made istilaam.

Jaabir ibn Abd-Allah is reported by Bukhari to have stated that when the Messenger of Allah (SAW) came to Makkah, he kissed the Black Stone corner first while doing tawaaf, and did raml (slow jogging) in the first three rounds of the seven rounds of tawaaf, and for the next four rounds walked.

In Sahih Muslim, Naafi men-

tioned: 'I saw Ibn Umar touch the stone with his hand then he kissed his hand. I said, I have never ceased to do this since I saw Muhammad (SAW) do it.'

Abu Tufayl said: 'I saw the Messenger of Allah (SAW) performing tawaaf around the House, touching the corner (where the stone is) with a crooked staff which he had with him then kissing the staff.'

Bukhari reported that Ibn Abas said: 'Muhammad (SAW) performed tawaaf on his camel. He would say 'Allahu Akbar' when he came to the corner where the Black Stone is and point to it.'

Bukhari reported that Umar came to the Black Stone and kissed it, and then said: 'I know that you are only a stone which can neither bring benefit nor cause harm. Were it not that I had seen the Prophet (SAW) kiss you, I would not have kissed you.'

The Hajaratul Aswad was originally a complete stone but due to various historical incidents, now consists of eight pieces of varying sizes that have been cemented together and encased in a silver frame. The silver frame was first made by Abdullah bin Zubair (may Allah be pleased with him) and replaced by later khalifas as the need arose.

The Hajaratul-Aswad was taken from Makkah in 317 after Hijrah, around 930 AD, by invading Qarmatian armed forces.

It is reported that they ransacked Makkah and desecrated the Well of Zam-zam with the corpses of Muslim pilgrims. The Black Stone was carried away to their base in Ihsaa, in Bahrain. During that time, pilgrims touched the empty space where the Black Stone was supposed to be.

Many attempts were made to convince the Qarmatians to return the Black Stone, and even monetary incentives were offered. The stone was kept there for 22 years before it was finally returned to its rightful place, where it still currently rests.

Every tawaaf – which consists of walking around the Kaabah seven times – starts and ends at the Hajaratul Aswad, the Black stone. Although people clamour to kiss the stone, when the Haram is crowded, it suffices to raise the right hand in the direction of the Black Stone as one passes it.

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