



Stories from the Hijaz

THE MAKKAH CHRONICLES



Arafah: the pinnacle of Hajj, and the bountiful Mercy of Allah SWT

DR SALIM PARKER

IT is a small granite hill only about seventy metres high, on the plain of Arafah, which is about 20 kilometres southeast of Makkah.

Mount Arafah is also known as Jabal Rahmah (Mount of Mercy). On an ordinary day it would be indistinguishable from the other hills in the area, save for manmade structures and symbols.

On the day of Wuqoof, the most important day of Hajj, it is blanketed by a uniformity of ihraams that transforms the normally deserted landscape into a rich tapestry of humanity, all beseeching their Creator for His infinite forgiveness.

The flowers and plants that blossom seemingly overnight after sudden rains in arid areas cannot ever compare with the majesty and magnitude of the transformation seen on Arafah on one day.

Abdu Rahman ibn Ya'mar reported: I witnessed the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, while people came to him to ask about the Hajj pilgrimage.

The Prophet (SAW) said: 'The Hajj is itself Arafah.'

'Whoever reaches the night of Arafah before the rising of the sun at dawn the following day has completed his pilgrimage.'

It is common knowledge that 'Hajj is Arafah', and if anyone does not reach Arafah by the stipulated time, the Hajj is not consid-



ered valid and will have to be repeated the following year.

Each and every other ritual can be delayed, can be done by proxy, can be repeated within a day or two or can have a penalty paid for if omitted or incorrectly performed.

Regardless how long the pilgrims stay in Makkah, if they miss that single day, they

have missed the whole Hajj.

Arafah is mentioned in the Quran in Surah Baqarah: 'It is no crime on you if you seek of the bounty of your Lord (during pilgrimage). Then when you pour down from (Mount) Arafah, celebrate the praises of Allah at the Sacred Monument, and celebrate His praises as He has directed you, even though, before

(Left) Jabal Rahmah, the Mount of Mercy. On no other day does Allah forgive as many of His subjects as on the Day of Arafah.
Photo SALIM PARKER

this, you went astray.' (2:198)

It is also on this day of which, as reported by Abu Ad-Darda, Prophet Muhammad (SAW) said: 'On no other day does Shaitaan feel so belittled, humiliated and angry as he does on the Day of Arafah.'

Mankind strayed during the time of Adam and Hawa.

Before that event, they were admitted to Paradise after being created by the will of Allah.

There they could live the dream of all human beings, on one condition: they could not eat the fruit of the forbidden tree.

'O Adam! Dwell you and your wife in Paradise and eat both of you freely with pleasure and delight of things therein as and wherever you will but come not near this tree or you both will be of the wrong-doers.' (2:35)

Shaitaan, who refused to prostrate in front of Adam despite Allah commanding him to do so, was adamant that he would lead Adam and Hawa astray.

Shaitaan was of the firm belief that he, being created from fire, was superior to Adam, who was created from clay.

Allah said: 'Then get you down from here. It does not behove you to be arrogant here so be gone.'



Jabal Rahmah, on Arafah, seen from the parking area. In the foreground are a few drinking fountains and the ground is paved. The long poles that look like uncovered umbrellas are mist sprinklers utilised on the Day of Wuqoof.
Photo TOYER NAKIDIEN

'You will be among the humiliated.' (7:13)

But Shaitaan wanted to influence our forefathers negatively and told Adam and Hawa: 'Your Lord did not forbid you this tree save you should become angels or become of the

immortals.'

And he swore by Allah to them both (saying): 'Verily, I am one of the sincere well-wishers for you both.' (7:20-21)

As the years went by, Adam and Hawa



(Above) Looking across the plain of Arafah, it is surprising to see how 'modern' the area is with drinking fountains, ablation blocks, tarred roads, a hospital, a paved area and lots of greenery.
Photo TOYER NAKIDIEN

were preoccupied with thoughts of that tree. One day, they decided to eat of its fruit.

They forgot that Allah had warned them not to approach it and that Shaitaan was their sworn enemy.

Islam stresses that they were both tempted and that both ate of the fruit of the forbidden tree.

Allah tells us: 'So he [Shaitaan] misled them with deception.' (7:22)

Allah also said: 'Thus did Adam disobey his Lord, so he went astray.' (20:12)

They immediately repented and begged Allah for forgiveness.

Shaitaan never repented, unlike our ancestors. 'Then his Lord chose him, and relented towards him, and He guided him.' (20:122)

Adam and Hawa were sent from Paradise to earth.

There is no textual or narrative evidence as to where on this earth they descended to. Some say that Adam was placed in India and Hawa in Jeddah.

Others say Adam was put on Safa and Hawa on Marwah.

There are many scholars who say that Arafah was the place where Adam and Hawa met once again when they were sent down to

reside on earth.

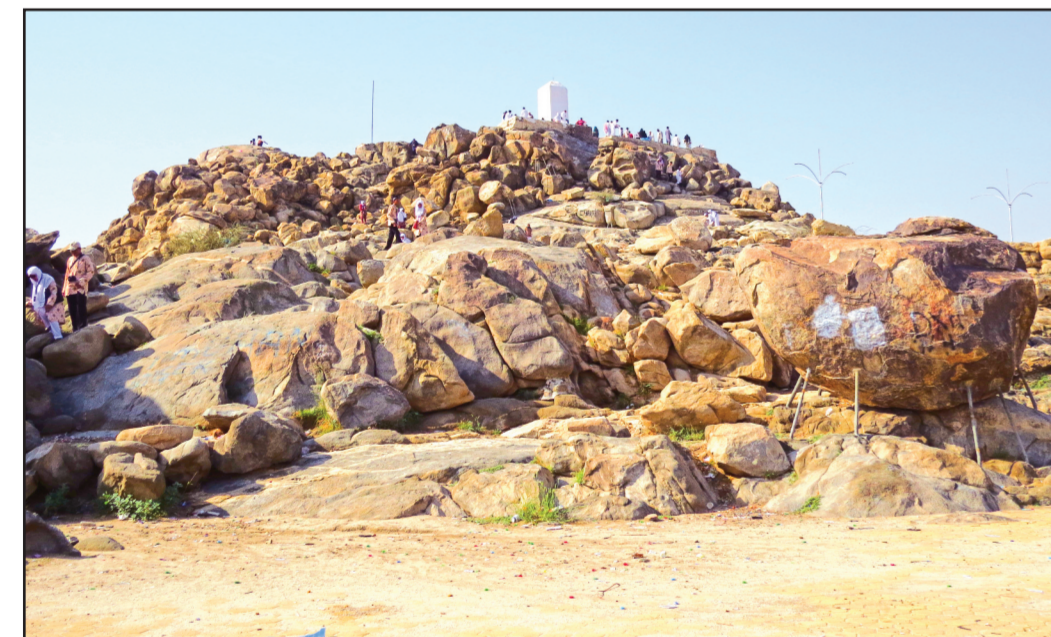
They came down on two different spots and wandered on this earth but eventually were able to meet and recognise each other on this plain. 'Arafah' here means 'to get acquainted'.

Arafah is considered, in this case, the meeting place where our ancestors were reunited and got to know each other again.

'On no other day does Shaitaan feel so belittled, humiliated and angry as he does on the Day of Arafah.'



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The one side of Jabal Rahmah (photo above, left) is still rugged and unpaved, with a few metal supports to prevent huge rocks from being dislodged. On the other side of the mount (photo above, right), the ground is paved and a flight of concrete steps make access to the top quite easy.
Photos TOYER NAKIDIEN



(Above) A pilgrim takes the opportunity to read a few Quranic verses while standing on Jabal Rahmah, the Mount of Mercy.
Photo TOYER NAKIDIEN

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info@aljazeeerah.co.za www.aljazeeerah.co.za

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