

# The Quran and its Message

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سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ

Salamun Alaikum (Peace be upon you)

## KISSING THE BLACK STONE - VENERATION OR AN IDOLATROUS PRACTICE?

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The ritual of kissing the Black Stone (Arabic: Al-Hajr al-Aswad) or any narrative that even so much as mentions the Black Stone is **not** found **anywhere** in the Quran. The origins of such a practice are only found in [Islamic secondary sources](#).

Many pilgrims wrestle and often fight to find a way to kiss the Black Stone during their circuit of the Ka'aba. This often results in extreme forms of pushing and shoving, a struggle which leaves some suffocated and at times injured.

The following video provides an example.

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_embedded&v=hE\\_8gCj2Blo](http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=hE_8gCj2Blo)

If a Muslim pilgrim is asked as to why they feel it necessary to kiss the Black Stone, or acknowledge it by the palms of their hands on each circuit of the Ka'aba, the answer is usually supported with a reference to Prophetic practice (sunnah). When a further enquiry is made as to the reason why the Prophet venerated the stone so much so as to kiss it, the question is usually met with silence.

[Islamic secondary sources](#) do indeed provide many historical claims with regards the Black Stone, but belief in these narratives are limited to the trust one places in the veracity of these sources. [Islamic secondary sources](#) such as Ahadith were only canonised centuries removed from source and **are not contemporaneous** to the ministry of Prophet Muhammad. (pbuh)

Ahadith are in the main **oral narrations passed on from one person to another and codified centuries removed from the event they intend to capture. Whether these have been faithfully captured over such a significant period of time is a matter of trust, not contemporaneous evidence.**

On the other hand, the Quran remains the only source contemporaneous to the Prophet's ministry.

Whether the practice of kissing the Black Stone was actually a ritual performed by the Prophet **cannot** be confirmed from the Quran.

Furthermore, whether this practice was performed by the Prophet or one that was later invented or reintroduced within the first century of Islam by those converts who were reluctant to forgo their pagan rituals and then given support by later Hadith **can also never be proved**.

The Quran claims to be a fully detailed explanation (Arabic: fassilat 41:3; 11:1), the perfect guidance (Arabic: hudan 2:2), a clear convincing proof (Arabic: burhan (4:174), the ultimate scale (Arabic: mizan 42:17; 57:25), the discernment between truth and falsehood (Arabic: Furqan 25:1, 2:53), an evidence absolutely clear (Arabic: bayyina 20:133) and a clear explanation of all matters (Arabic: tibiana lekulli shayin 16:89). Yet, it provides **absolutely no mention or support** for the practice of kissing the Black Stone.

An interesting Hadith is worth noting which is usually cited as support for this practice.

**Narrated 'Abis bin Rabia:**

**'Umar came near the Black Stone and kissed it and said "No doubt, I know that you are a stone and can neither benefit anyone nor harm anyone. Had I not seen Allah's Apostle kissing you I would not have kissed you." [1]**

Other similar narratives are found on the authority of others.

What is absolutely clear from this particular Hadith is the fact that even Caliph Umar was completely oblivious as to **'why'** the Prophet had kissed the Black Stone. His sentiments with regards the veneration of an object not being able to benefit or harm one are mirrored by a similar argument made by Prophet Abraham (pbuh) to his pagan forefathers and community.

Whether extreme veneration can be considered a form of worship is not the focus here. However, what is questionable is the practice of showing **any form of veneration** to something which can neither benefit one nor harm one.

**021:66-67**

**"He (Abraham) said: What! do you then worship, besides God what brings you not any benefit at all, nor does it harm you? "Fie upon you, and upon the things that you worship besides God! Have ye no sense?"**

An important question arises. Did Caliph Umar understand the spirit of Islam better than Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) who himself was told to emulate the ways of Prophet Abraham (pbuh) (16:123)?

Was Caliph Umar better aware of the general sentiments imparted by Prophet Abraham (pbuh) than Prophet Muhammad? (pbuh)

**Or is a more significant question**, was this a practice that the Prophet **never actually performed** but was invented after his demise and then later given sanction and legitimacy by projecting a Hadith back as a saying of a companion?

The Quran provides **detailed information with regards Hajj rituals** (e.g. 2:125; 2:158; 2:189; 2:196-203; 3:96-97; 22:26-37; 48:27). It even includes guidance with regards the nature of expiation if certain Hajj rituals are not followed (2:196). It provides details of what is prohibited and what is acceptable in a state of 'Ihram' (Note this is a state and not necessarily a reference to a particular garb). (5:1, 5:95) However, one finds no mention of a Black Stone.

The affiliation of pagan Arabs with stones is deep rooted and this can indeed be attested by the Quran.

#### 005:003 (Part)

"Forbidden to you... that which is sacrificed on stone altars (Arabic Nusubi)..."

#### 005:090 (Part)

"...Stone altars (Arabic: Ansabu) ... (are an) abomination from (the) work of Satan..."

(Please refer to the full verses, only crucial parts of the verses have been cited for brevity).

Please note the Arabic word 'Ansabu' which is elaborated in the lexicon excerpt below.

verse cited in art. مور.] — Also, **النَّصَابُ** *Certain stones which were set up around the Kaabeh, over which it was customary for the name of some deity to be pronounced in the killing of animals (يُهْلُ عَلَيْهَا), and upon which victims were slain in sacrifice to another, or others, than the true God: (ISd, K:) pl. of نَصَبٌ, as عُتَقُ is of عُتَاقُ; or of نَصْبٌ, as أَقْفَالٌ is of قُفْلٌ. (TA.) — نَصَبٌ, as occurring in the K̄ur, v. 4, signifies An idol; or a stone which the pagan Arabs set up, to sacrifice, or slay animals, before it, or by it, and which became red with the blood: (K̄t:) or pl. of نَصَابٌ, and signifying idols.*

## FINAL THOUGHTS

Practices that are not sanctioned by the Quran but are legitimised as having a religious connotation must be seriously questioned in light of God's scripture. Kissing the Black Stone or showing any form of veneration to it is no different.

Otherwise, (we) Muslims would appear no different from others that simply follow their religious doctrines blindly as inherited by their forefathers whom Muslims are usually found to criticise. Muslims have been given clear guidance from the Quran. They have been granted the faculties to ponder, think and analyse. The instruction to research and reflect is clearly given by the Quran (Tadabbur).

### 004.082

“Why don't they research (**Arabic: Yatadabbaruna**) the Quran? and if it had been from someone other than God, they would surely find many discrepancies / contradictions in it!”

Alas, very few wrestle with the Quran's verses to understand what God has actually said to them. Most, sadly uncritically follow the opinions of men, many of which follow their own sects and creeds simply passing on the baggage of non-Quranic theology from generation to generation.

Is the kissing of a stone object or any form of such veneration really in line with the spirit of the Quran and monotheistic belief that demands worship of an unseen God? Or is this a Pagan practice that has been legitimised in the name of Islam?

This is something seriously worth pondering.

### 007:016-17 (Part)

“...I will certainly lie in wait for them in Thy straight path. Then I will assault them from before them and behind them, from their right and their left: Nor will you find, **in most of them**, gratitude (for thy mercies)”

### 004:118-119 (Part)

“...and he said “Most certainly I will take of Your servants an appointed portion: **I will surely mislead them, and I will create in them false desires; I will order them to slit the ears of cattle, and to deface the creation of God...**”

### Related Articles:

- (1) [How the Quran describes itself](#)
- (2) [The 'Lost' Months of Hajj](#)
- (3) [The Seven Circuits of the Ka'aba](#)

- (4) Zam Zam Water
- (5) Superstitions - A Satanic Weapon
- (6) Satan's Guile
- (7) Did Prophet Abraham <sup>(pbuh)</sup> Really Send His Wife Hagar and Son Ishmael <sup>(pbuh)</sup> Away Alone to a Barren Land?
- (8) The Hajj According to the Quran

## REFERENCES

[1] SAHIH BUKHARI, Volume 2, Book 26, Number 667, University of Southern California Center for Muslim-Jewish Engagement [online], Translation available at <http://www.usc.edu/schools/college/crcc/engagement/resources/texts/muslim/hadith/bukhari/026.sbt.html#002.026.667> [Accessed 26th July 2011]

[2] LANE. E.W, Edward Lanes Lexicon, Williams and Norgate 1863; Librairie du Liban Beirut-Lebanon 1968, Volume 8, Page 2800

Highlights marked in red on the lexicon excerpt are my own insertions. They have no bearing on the original text other than they emphasise relevance to the topic at hand. These are merely illustrations and have solely been utilised for educational and explanatory purposes.

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