



# Stories from the Hijaz

## THE MAKKAH CHRONICLES



# Jabal Noor: where revelation first occurred

**SALIM PARKER**

JABAL Noor, the Mountain of Light, is one of the most famous mountains on earth.

Though it pales in significance as far as height is concerned (it is only 640 metres high compared to Table Mountain's 1 085 metres) its historical importance diminishes the dizzying height of Mount Everest to much less than the smallest anthill.

It is from within one of the caves on this mountain that illumination emanated whose radiance was to bring enlightenment, freedom for the oppressed, rights for women, consideration for the poor and orphans, and guidance for all of humankind.

The first revelation of the fastest growing religion on earth was on this mountain. It led to prayers five times a day, compulsory congregational prayers once a week, fasting from dawn till sunset for a month, paying zakaah once a year, and performing Hajj once in a lifetime. It was the pathway to a complete way of life of Islam, the religion of peace.

Jabal Noor is situated a few kilometres north of the Haram in Makkah. It is not part of Hajj or Umrah but due to its close proximity to the Haram and the Hajj sites of Mina and Arafah, it is always on the itinerary of all pilgrims.

Some, due to ill health or other reasons, travel to the base of the mountain and from there attempt to imagine the mountain during the time of the Prophet (SAW).

Jabal Noor looks different to the surrounding mountains. Its unusual summit resembles one mountain on top of another. Its location at that time made it a very lonely place and it is difficult to comprehend why anyone would want to undertake the still arduous journey from Makkah to there. There is no immediate water source close by, and, other than a few thorn shrubs, no vegetation.

All Muslims want to be as close



The shape of Jabal Noor resembles a mountain on top of another.

Photo SALIM PARKER

to their history as possible and that is why the mountain is a very popular place of ziyarah, of visiting. The roads leading to the mountain are invariably clogged, and just walking from the parked vehicles to the base is a very steep climb. Many do not even get to this point.

From the base, unlike the time of the Prophet (SAW), there are now more than a thousand steps leading to the top of the mountain. This cement and concrete pathway is constantly worked on by an array of unemployed labourers

who, along with a number of beggars, invariably get rewarded by climbers.

The climb is not easy and even a fit, young man can take up to two hours to get to the top. The large number of pilgrims trying to reach the summit leads to the walkway being frequently clogged.

Temperatures can regularly reach close to 50° Celsius in Makkah's summer. Most pilgrims then attempt to climb the mountain a few hours before the first morning prayers and are then rewarded with witnessing the sunrise from there.

Many elderly pilgrims are absolutely determined to get to the top of the mountain and get to the cave where the first revelation took place. They inevitably reach there, even after having stopped frequently along the way.

These days, there are a number of areas to rest and to buy refreshments along the pathway. The satisfaction evident on especially the elderly after having followed in the footsteps of their beloved Prophet (SAW) to the top of the mountain is truly a sight to behold.

There has been a number of controversies associated with visiting the mountain. There have been a number of injuries when visitors fell, and it is conceivable that people can even die while trying to climb. There is also a view that pilgrims indulge in prohibited acts, such as associating partners with Allah when in the cave and thus acts like these should be strongly discouraged.

Many fatwas have been passed indicating that climbing Jabal Noor and visiting the cave is not a Sunnah as it was not done by the Prophet (SAW) during His Farewell Pilgrimage (when he was

very close to it) and was not done by the Sahabah (Companions) nor the caliphs who succeeded him.

The authorities have previously strongly discouraged visits to Jabal Noor but never banned them.

This was exacerbated in April 2018 when a decision was taken to ban all visits.

The religious authorities acknowledge that there is nothing wrong with visiting any religious site not prescribed as Sunnah if the intention is to observe and learn, and not to worship it.

They, however, used the possi-

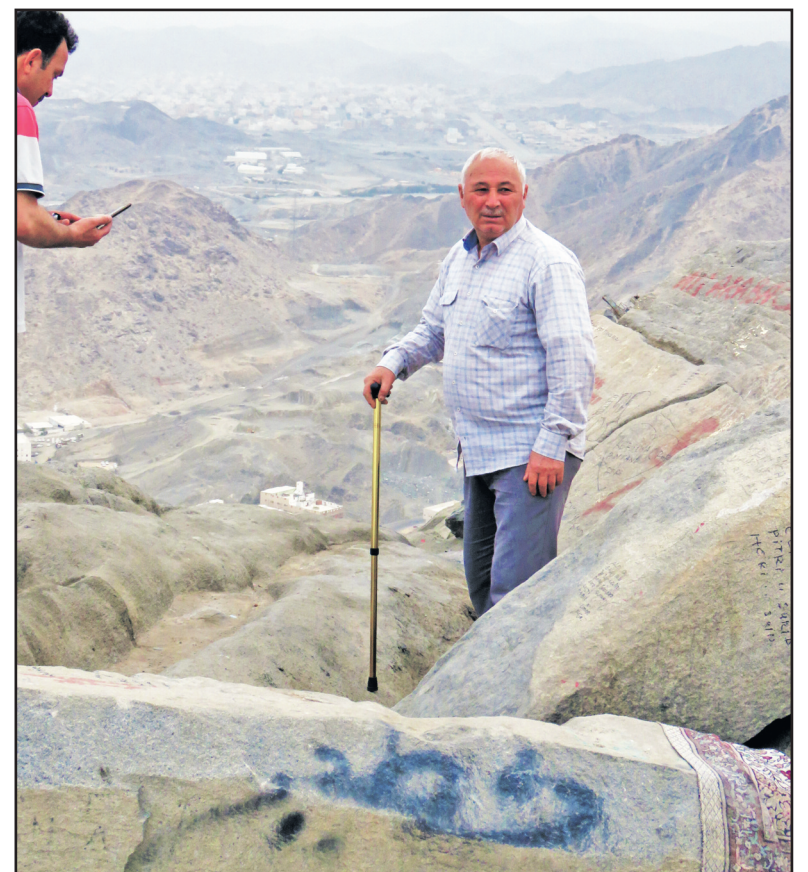
bility that some may perform acts of shirk as justification to ban everyone, even those who merely want to be present in the same space, and walk on the same soil that their beloved Prophet (SAW) did.

In July, 2018, the ban was lifted and pilgrims could again ascend Jabal Noor, the Mountain of Light, to witness the place where the first verses of the Quran were revealed to Nabi Muhammad (SAW).

Allah wa'Alam.  
Allah knows best.



Age is no barrier when it comes to following the path of Nabi Muhammad (SAW).  
Photo SALIM PARKER



The joy of reaching the summit of Jabal Noor knows no bounds.  
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