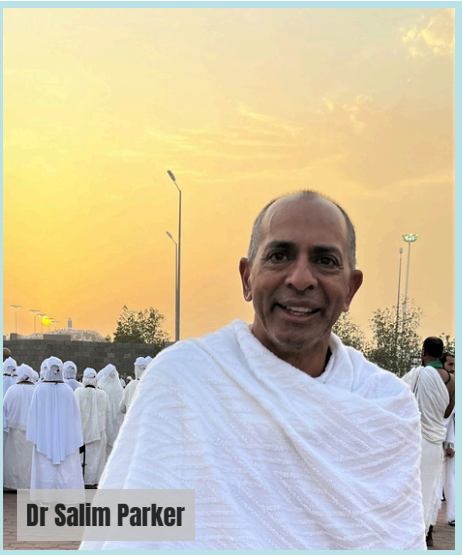
HAJJ STORIES

STRANGERS NO MORE

OCTOBER 2026



Two men standing close to each other at a graveyard, just before the deceased was to be lowered six feet below the surface. Complete strangers, they have never seen each other before. Both had tears imperceptibly starting to be drawn by life's gravity dawn their cheeks. Yusuf* was crying for a man he has known all his life and was no more. He was standing in front, right next to the bier. Adam* cried for a man who never was and never will be in his life. He discretely placed himself towards the back of the congregation. Soon the deceased would be covered by earth; his thoughts, secrets and knowledge forever buried under soil and in his soul. Yusuf and Adam were so different, and yet were shedding tears for the same person; their father.

'Who am I to judge my father's actions?'

'Who am I to judge my father's actions?' Yusuf said. We were sitting on the roof of the Haram in Makkah. We had just completed a Tawaaf and were looking at the thousand circumambulating the Kabbah on the Mataaf, the ground floor. Hajj was a few weeks away. I first met him when he consulted me in Madinah about a week previously about his medical conditions. This was followed by another one once we arrived in Makkah. He clearly needed to talk, but my time was limited during my clinic hours due to the volume of patients. Hence I suggested that he join me late that evening for a Tawaaf and then we could continue our conversation.

'Adam, your father had passed away. You must go to his funeral,' his uncle said. The words were commanding and decisive. Adam looked perplexed. According to his deceased mother his father was long gone. It was then that he realised that the long gone his mother referred to was not that he died, but that he was not part of their lives. She refused to talk about him, and on the few occasions that he enquired, she gestured that he was 'long gone.' He was raised in a loving and supportive family, with his uncles providing paternal roles. One uncle in particular was his father figure, and it was he who was now revealing the demise of his father. 'Your mother made us promise that we'll never talk about your father, but your brother called to say that I should inform you,' his uncle added. Adam was startled to hear that he had a brother.

'Doc, I did not even know that I had a brother,' Yusuf said as we sat drinking Zamzam and watching groups of pilgrims entering and exiting the Mataaf areas below. 'The first time I heard about it was about a week before my father passed away. He was terminally ill, his body riddled with cancer. He wanted me to know about his past, something he was not proud of. He did not elaborate, but mentioned that I have a brother, and that that it is my duty to ensure that he gets his inheritance as prescribed by Islamic rules. He added very little additional information and I had to frantically ascertain facts from family members, who were all reluctant to provide input. One of the first questions a close learned friend asked was whether my brother was born out of wedlock, in which case he could not inherit,' Yusuf added.

'Your father was a good man Adam,' his uncle said. 'However, he had a weakness, and when your mother found out about it, she divorced him. You were about a year old at that time. She remained bitter for the rest of her life and, because we are a very influential family, we ensured that he would permanently be out of her, and in effect, your life. She found no solace in her Deen and would never entertain any attempt by your father to contact you. When you left for Hajj prior to her passing away, she did not want to embark on her mandatory pilgrimage with you. I have not been in contact with your father, but I have heard that since his divorce he did not gamble even once. I'll go with you to the funeral.'

'It was quickly very evident that my father was indeed married previously and that my brother was entitled to inherit. In fact, my mother, who is very well versed in our Deen and who was aware of the existence of my sibling, was adamant that I should respect Allah's law,' Yusuf continued. It was not difficult for him to find out more about his brother, but he was unable to reach him easily. This was the days preceding easy mobile connectivity. He did get hold of his uncle who in turn informed Adam. 'I saw Adam standing at the far end of the graveyard. I wanted to call him and was also hoping that he would come forward on his own. I just did not have the courage to say or do anything. In fact when we were to lower my father's body into the Qabr, I was hoping that we both would be gently lower him into his final resting place. But I said nothing and he stayed where he was.'

Adam stayed till the final prayers were recited. Flowers were put on the grave, and family and friends started greeting each other. He joined, greeting fellow congregants. He by now was aware who Yusuf was, as everyone milled around him. Yusuf instinctively knew who Adam was even though he was initially standing towards the far end of the graveyard. It was eerie how they both had their father's sharp physical features. Then they were face to face. Siblings, meeting for the first time, yet sharing genes since they were born. 'Salaam brother.' A common greeting amongst Muslims in any public setting. It is not known which brother said it first. They may even have uttered it together. They embraced, one that lasted much longer than the preceding ones. What only some knew previously was now going to be public knowledge. Their lives, kept apart for so long, was now going to be intertwined forever.

'This was about three months ago Doc,' Yusuf continued. 'I had already planned to come for my Hajj and had matters to see to. I also had so many visitors that I barely could make time for Adam, who frequently was at my place in the evenings and served my guests, as well as relating his own wonderful Hajj experience. I mentioned the inheritance issue to him, and he said it can wait until after I returned. After all he had already inherited me and that was the greatest gift as far as he was concerned! Both of us knew that the legal process would take months to resolve, and I am now sitting here with you knowing that I have no immediate obligations,' he concluded.

I saw him once more the day before the first day of Hajj. He apparently tried to get hold of me on Arafat, but that year was medically taxing and not only had I to see patients in different tents, but also in different camps. I met him at the airport just before we departed for our home countries. 'Doc, I have to inform you of the Duaas I made on Arafat. I want to come back soon. Adam wants to come back as well. Our father and my mother never set foot on the plains of Arafat. Adam will come on his mother's behalf, hoping to soften her heart, and I will represent our father, asking our Creator to forgive his sins,' he said. AllahuAkbar!!



Who knows what is occupying the mind of the individual pilgrim.

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