

The voice that enlightened



'I REALLY wish you were on Hajj with us,' I said.

There are certain constants in our lives on Arafah, Mina and Makkah that, if not present, lead to a sense of incompleteness. Perhaps we are not aware of some uniqueness and only realise its value when its not there.

'Insha Allah, make duah that I will be there next year,' he responded.

I believe that I am not irreplaceable, that if, one day, I cannot accompany pilgrims on the ultimate journey in the life of a Muslim, there will be someone much more competent to be honoured with the privilege.

However, there are those whose influence and Allah-bestowed gifts

are so unique that their absence will be permanently evident. He was one of those irreplaceable influences in all spheres amongst the Muslims of Cape Town and beyond. I reminisced about the effects he had during Hajj.

Most of the hujaaaj had gone to sleep after the Fajr prayers. It was the second day of Tashreeq, the second day of pelting, when we were all going to cast pebbles at the effigy of Shaitaan in order to show our rejection of his attempts to lure us away from the commandments of Allah.

We were going to follow in the footsteps of our forefather, Nabi Ibrahim (AS). The hujaaaj were tired, a number of them had just finished their compulsory tawaaf

and had struggled their way from Makkah to our tents in Mina.

Arafah was a few days past already but it was still blazing in our hearts, minds and souls.

In one corner of our tent, a voice could be heard reciting. It was soft so as not to disturb those in desperate need of a few winks. It was melodious so it soothed the mind. It was inspiring so that many sat up and listened. And it was inviting so that by the time he reached the third, well known surah, virtually everyone was reciting along. Shaikh Fuad Isaacs was at home, and his voice was at ease in the valley of Mina, just as it was on Arafah.

When he started reciting Surah Al A'la, the sounds reflected the radiance in his voice. There was the evident love for the words of our Creator Most High that stirred all of us to listen, to wish that it would not stop and want us to find out more.

Unbeknown to him, someone had switched on the sound system and this had stirred many in the surrounding tents to realise that there were blessings and rewards in listening to the wonderful words of the Glorious Quran recited by an absolutely perfect practitioner of the gifted art.

The flaps of the tent we were in kept opening as more and more pilgrims from adjacent tents entered and, soon, everyone was sitting up and listening. The passages between the tents were lined with those who could not enter, and many braved the already blazing sun as they stood and listened intently. He did not merely recite, he had the uncanny ability to touch your inner, deeper being.

A week earlier, this unbelievably gifted person was still carrying bags for hujaaaj from one building to another. He slaved away for hours with the manual duties, then, in the hotel corridor, explained some of the finer details about the rites of Hajj to an enquiring pilgrim, and followed this by escorting an elderly gentleman to a shop to buy a sought after present. Thereafter, he sat and recited from the Quran with a few youngsters, to honour a promise that he had made. He had



The late Shaikh Fuad Isaacs, accepting a plaque in recognition of his 25 years of service as imam at Masjidul-Quds, in Gatesville, Cape Town. The plaque was presented to him by co-imam, Shaikh Abduragmaan Alexander (right) on Friday, March 23, 2018, after Jumuaah. Photo SATAAR PARKER

sprained his back but this did not deter him from continuing in his multiple and diverse roles.

He had refused to take an injection for the pain, and whether he was just scared or intolerant of it led to much teasing from my part. Whom he was very evidently intolerant of were those who abused their parents, spouses, children and the downtrodden.

He would merely verbalise his thoughts when witnessing oppression and his known martial arts training and immense physical presence made him such an imposing figure that, in his presence, issues were speedily resolved.

The pilgrims in the group would clamour to perform tawaaf with him or be in a group led by him. He would teach easily and would always emphasise that tawaaf and Hajj was an immensely personal experience.

He used to remind us that of the many duahs our Beloved Prophet (SAW) clearly made when performing tawaaf, only one was documented in the Hadith.

He urged all to pray whatever was in their hearts and not to rely on him to take the lead. During the sa'ee, he would lead the group, assist in pushing the elderly in their wheelchairs, and encourage the fostering of bonds between all.

Arafah was special when he made the closing duah, his voice the apex of an emotionally charged day. Yes, Arafah is between Allah and all of His subjects, individually, however, certain duahs, rendered by the most melodious of voices, soothing in its tone and yet startling in its clarity and power of reach, paves the way for ease of communication with our Creator.

His duahs touched the essence of our souls, reminding us of our beloved parents, irrespective of whether they were in their physical or recalled abodes, and asking for our blessings to be extended to all those who merely dream of one day touching the soil of Arafah.

Many of the group waited for him at sunset when he announced that he would walk to Musdalifah and from there to Mina, and they duly set off with him leading with 'Labaik!' He was fit, knew the area like the palm of his hand and shepherded his group with the utmost ease.

The world is poorer without Shaikh Fuad Isaacs. We heard him raise his voice when necessary when he admonished an abuser. However, the vast majority will remember him expanding the words of the Quran into the rhythmic and melodious wonder of Allah's revelations.

At his janazah, I overheard someone fondly recalling him reciting at the name-giving ceremony of a baby. Another spoke of listening to him at a nikah, still another mentioned that he had recited at a janazah. His presence has been heard, seen and felt across the full spectrum of life.

Someone mentioned that if we go for Hajj again, we should play a recording of his Quranic recitation. Many of us will not need that. If we are ever gifted another occasion to stand on Arafah, all we need to do is to close our eyes and stretch our hands towards the heavens.

The words of the Quran through his voice will forever be echoing for us there, reminding us that someone of his calibre comes along once in a lifetime and we should cherish what he has enriched our world with.

Shaikh Fuad Isaacs (aged 57) served as imam at Masjidul-Quds, in Gatesville, Cape Town, for 25 years. In recognition of his years of service, the masjid board gifted him an Umrah earlier this year. Allah SWT recalled his soul on Friday morning, Safar 9, 1440/ October 19, 2018, after a short illness.

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Arafah was special for those who heard the late Shaikh Fuad Isaacs make the closing duah, his voice the apex of an emotionally charged day. Yes, Arafah is between Allah and all of His subjects, individually, however, certain duahs, rendered by the most melodious of voices, soothing in its tone and yet startling in its clarity and power of reach, paves the way for ease of communication with our Creator. Photo ESA ALEXANDER