

Hajj Stories

No Reason to Part

September 2019



Dr Salim Parker

‘I have been accredited for Hajj this year,’ he told me. He spoke matter of factually, as if he was referring to the weather. No excitement was visible in his demeanour, none of the ecstasy and elation that invariably accompanies the news that the invitation to be the Guest of Allah has been extended. The vast majority of Muslims would never be able to receive this privilege, and of those who were honoured, very few would ever be able to repeat the journey. This was one journey that must be planned and performed to as near to perfection as was humanly possible. The news was extended a few months before the Hajj season so that prospective Hujjaaj could commence advanced preparations. I was puzzled. He would always ask me about my multiple journeys to the Holy Land and previously spoke of the intense desire to fulfil the fifth pillar of Islam. ‘What’s wrong?’ I asked. ‘I was planning to get divorced,’ he replied.

I waited for him to continue. I was well aware of his previous promise to his wife that he

would accompany her on the most important journey in the life of a Muslim. She has dreamt and aspired for this journey for a very long time. ‘I am uncertain of what to do Doc,’ he said. We are definitely going on Hajj this



Duaas continue and Allah’s Mercy extends beyond the borders of Arafat

year, there is no doubt about that. I must set my mind about what I am going to do. I cannot ever deprive her of this journey. That means I must divorce her now so that her Idah period will be over by Hajj time and she would be able to travel. We’ll

have to sort out the travel logistics then. She’ll have to travel with a group of ladies or family members of hers. In fact my sister will also be going, so she will have some familiar people with her,’ he said. I marvelled at the irony that his sister, who would no longer have any relation with his wife if he proceeded with his intention, was to be her companion. ‘I’ll join a group of men, I assimilate easily,’ he added. I knew his social nature would endear him to any group that he found himself in.

‘Why are you planning to get divorced?’ I asked. ‘We just drifted apart Doc,’ he replied. ‘There is nothing wrong with her, we seem to have started to live separate lives. Yes, we eat at the same table, share the same bed, marvel and stress about our children and talk of our common household expenses. However there is not the intense bonding that we had before. Our relationship is more business like, more matter of factually getting through the chores of married life,’ he said. ‘Do you have someone else that you plan to marry?’ I asked quite abruptly. ‘No!’ he said. ‘Absolutely not! I just thought I’ll start living my own life. I’ll still see to my responsibilities and would never neglect my family.’ Then

he uttered perhaps the most telling words: ‘Doc, I don’t think I have real reasons to divorce.’

They had lovely children. He had no real reason to terminate his marriage. ‘Why can’t you stay married until Hajj is over?’

I asked. I explained to him that it would be unfair to proceed as the emotional, social and also physical turmoil on his wife would be the complete opposite of the normal preparations. She would not be able to take part in the Cape Town tradition of going to greet her family and friends a few months before Hajj as her Idah period would confine her to either her home or workplace. I have met plenty of people who were utterly content with all the obstacles that Allah tested them with. Here however it was in my friend’s hands to determine the course of events, to be in charge of their own destiny. I knew how much Hajj meant to him and from what he told me was sure that it meant as much if not more to his wife.

‘What better time can there be to reflect than during Hajj?’

Doctors as a rule talk of different options and the benefits and disadvantages of all approaches. ‘I am speaking now as a friend,’ I said and freed myself from all shackles that alluded to any semblance of rationality and balanced views. ‘Divorce needs sound reasons,’ I stated more than suggested. ‘Hajj may be a debt that we owe to our Creator and the mere presence on Arafat and the completion of the prescribed rituals should settle that debt. That is one level of looking at it. Look at it at a higher level and Allah assures us that if Hajj is performed correctly we’ll return as free of sin as new-born babies. Take it to a higher level and the spiritual benefits that would lead to a deeper understanding of our religion starts blossoming. Under the circumstances it would not be justified to plunge your wife and family into the abyss of uncertainty. Her Hajj would be one of questions and seeking answers. Go as a married couple and seek guidance.

What better time can there be to reflect than during Hajj?’

The serenity and tranquillity of Madinah was going to be their first port of call and I could not imagine a more appropriate place to start contemplating. The circumambulation of the Holy

Kaba’a was to follow a few weeks later and there is no better place to pray for our children and family as a couple. Finally there would be the Wuqoof on Arafat, when we ‘ll be closer to our Creator than at any other time or place. Of course deep down in my soul I was hoping that they would discover each other again. Islam frowns upon unnecessary separation but permits divorce if all attempts at reconciliation has failed. It should then be enacted in a spirit of kindness recognising each other’s frailties. After some added discussions he promised to do much soul searching. A couple of days later I spoke to him. He has agreed not to proceed with the divorce. Hajj for both of them was going to take precedence.

I met him after Hajj and he raved about his experience, describing it as even more spiritually uplifting and humbling than he had anticipated. He and his wife now had a much more honest relationship but it was not the same as before. He definitely was not planning to divorce anymore. ‘Allah knows best,’ I said. As much as we hope for it, it is just reality that certain cycles do not coincide with the one we want. Their relationship was improving at a much slower pace that the apex at Arafat that I prayed for.

I met him just prior to my departure the following year for Hajj. He expressed his desire to once again be honoured to grace the plains of Arafat and reiterated how blessed I was to be afforded the opportunity to undertake the journey again. Matters between him and his wife were now much improved. ‘Insha-Allah, I’ll make duaas at every opportunity that I get for the two of you,’ I said. On Hajj we are promised that our sincere Duaas are listened to by our Creator. We are however not assured when they will be answered. Perhaps their time has come now, even though it was a year later. Allah knows best.

salimparker@yahoo.com