

Hajj Stories

Love and Honour

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Dr Salim Parker

‘You must be relieved,’ she was told. ‘I mean you cared for your bedridden mother for nearly six years and had to postpone your and your mother’s Fard Hajj all that time. I remember we booked together all those years ago and I was sad that we could not travel together when your mother had a stroke and could not even dress unaided. I made lots of Duaa for you whilst I was in Makkah and Madinah that you will one day be able to undertake this journey. Now you finally have the opportunity to stand on the plains of Arafat. ‘Of course I am as sad as you that your mother has passed away but now you are at least not burdened with having to care for her and at last you can move on with your life,’ the friend continued. The two have been good friends for a long time but since *Hawa’s mother had a stroke, their interactions reduced considerably.

Hawa looked puzzled. ‘I don’t understand what you are saying,’ she said. Her friend tried to elaborate on the fact that Hawa’s life was in effect on hold for more than five years. She gave up her job in order to be able to be available when her mother needed her. The family rallied around them with support, and her de-

ceased father left enough means for them to afford a carer to assist, but as an only child much was left in her hands. She turned down a marriage proposal as her suitor was not keen for her to spend much time with her mother. There were many social activities that she simply reduced her participation in considerably. Her weekly hike along the scenic Cape routes were undertaken once every few months, and her attendance at theatres, which she absolutely loved, were very few and far between. Most of her time was spent at home either caring for her mother or praying for her.

‘It was never a burden,’ Hawa said. ‘It was an absolute honour and privilege. I know some thought that I put my life on hold but really, it was a new phase in my life, just like a matriculant going to college or someone getting married enters a new phase in their lives. When I brushed her long hair I fondly remembered how she lovingly used to do mine when I was even in my teenage years. She used to gently put each strand into place with time seemingly suspended. I am indeed absolutely privileged to have been with her. She was physically unable to take care of

herself but there was nothing wrong with her amazing mind and wit. She encouraged me to go back to work and be more outgoing but I grew so much just from being in her company. She reminisced about my younger days and how she had a complete life. Complete in all respects except that she never performed Hajj,’ she added.

Hawa’s story was shared by her friend with the Sheigh accompanying her Hajj group. We were sharing a hotel table in Makkah about two weeks before Hajj was to start. The Sheigh asked what her plans were for the future. ‘As soon as I return from Hajj I am going to apply to perform a Badal Hajj on behalf of my mother. She was so keen and ready to perform her Hajj but suffered a stroke in the year we were supposed to go,’ she replied. The Sheigh indicated to her that she would most likely not be able to do so in the foreseeable future. I added that because of the quota system and only a limited number of South Africans being able to

and she will be rewarded,’ the Sheigh reassured her. ‘I know, but I really want to fulfil her wish,’ she replied. ‘We need to honour that mother for bearing and raising such an amazing daughter,’ the Sheigh told me later. ‘Even if the authorities consider her case sympathetically within the next ten years, the fact that she is a young lady hav-

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ing performed Hajj already will be held against her. Even if she gets married, she would not be permitted to accompany her husband whilst a man who has performed Hajj before may accompany his wife who is performing Hajj for the first time,’ I said. I recalled the case of a man who exploited this system by accompanying different sisters for three consecutive years. ‘We must do something,’ the Sheigh persisted. And he stuck to his word.

He, like many others, was performing a Badal hajj on behalf of someone. We were of the privi-

Arafat. The Sheigh informed Hawa about the offer and explained in detail why it was unlikely that she would not be likely to undertake the journey on her mother’s behalf in the next decade at least. She gladly accepted.

‘It will not cost you a cent,’ the Sheigh informed her when she enquired about the cost. ‘No, no,

my mother set aside money for her Hajj and it was intended for that purpose,’ she protested. She ironically knew of the worker who volunteered his time to serve the Hujjaaj and was on unpaid leave. ‘Justice has to prevail,’ she said and the Sheigh concluded a mutually beneficial contract which the volunteer reluctantly accepted. It was truly a win-win situation.

The Day of Arafat came. Hawa was initially with a group of ladies but at the time of Wuqoof found a spot where, though in the



On Arafat she knew that her mother was standing with her

go annually for their once in a lifetime journeys, preference will always be given to those on whom the journey is obligatory. That number was already running into the tens of thousands and the living will also be given first option.

‘I’ll just wait,’ she smiled. We knew that it was practically not going to be an easy Badal Hajj to perform even in the following ten years. Her Niyah, her intention will be accepted by Allah

leged workers and a few students who were on Hajj before. He related this story when a group of us were talking about logistics. ‘Please inform her that I’ll be honoured to perform her mother’s Badal Hajj,’ one of the workers immediately said. ‘I have not been requested to do it for anyone yet this year. I do not want anything for it,’ he added. He was not well off but was honoured to be again given the opportunity to be on the plains of

company of millions collectively, she was alone. Alone to atone, alone to be a close to her Creator as was humanly possible and alone to reminisce about her life. Yet she was not alone as her mother’s presence was there, smiling and comforting. Both could in unison say “Labaik!” Both were there. For us on Hajj life is good. At the time of Wuqoof life is great. Allahu Akbar.

salimparker@yahoo.com