

Hajj Stories

Twists and Turns of Plans

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They meticulously planned their life. They were going to get married, work for a few years and save as much money as possible. They were not going to live frugally but they were not going to spend unnecessarily. They were both well educated, had good jobs, loving and supportive families and had a deep love and appreciation of their religion. People will differ in their opinions of whether having children should be postponed until after certain goals are to be reached. They have been on Umrah on three occasions each with their respective families and it was their deep desire to complete the fifth pillar of Islam before what they perceived to be tied down by the restrictions of having to care for the small ones. They planned with good intentions. Plans, however, do not always take human fragility and malleability into account. What was planned and what eventually transpired differed considerably.

She consulted me in Makkah about two weeks before we were all to depart to Mina for the first day of Hajj. Actually, she accompanied an elderly lady from her Hajj group. They were from Canada and happened to share the same hotel as our South African group. They heard that a doctor was available and made

their way to me. The elderly lady was sick but this younger one was coughing incessantly. After I reassured the elderly lady that she will be fine when the time of Wuqoof arrived, I offered to assist the younger one. She initially refused, and I tried gently to convince her that we see her type of condition frequently and know how to manage it. She insisted that she did not need a medical consultation to which I responded that she probably does not. However, some intervention to prevent the debilitating cough would have positive effects. 'I know that the cough leads to bladder instability and then a person needs to take Wuthu again. It can be very inconvenient when in the Haram,' I said.

That seemed to clinch my argument and a few minutes later I had dispensed the medication she required. She was extremely grateful. A few days later she came to see me again. This time around she was much more comfortable and we addressed her concerns around her menstruation. I fully understand that Hajj is a once in a lifetime journey and that ladies want to be able to frequent the Haram as much as possible and try to manipulate their menses so that they do not menstruate whilst on the journey. I could not convince her to just

let nature take its course and adjusted the medication that was prescribed to her in her home country. I warned her however that the medication does not always work as expected. 'Just like the road of life seems to take unexpected twists and turns,' she sighed. Though she outwardly appeared to be very jovial and high spirited, a degree of sadness could be noted to be veiled behind bright eyes.

'I am on Hajj, the greatest journey ever and I am so ecstatic,' she hastily tried to change her train of thought. 'You are on Hajj, and something is clearly bothering you,' I replied. Her gaze dropped and she was silent. There were still two patients waiting and I asked her if it would be in order if I saw to them first and she agreed. About twenty minutes later we resumed our conversation. She was on Hajj. Alone. She was not married. The plans that she made to marry first and save for Hajj just dissipated. 'He changed overnight Doc,' she said, her eyes moistened. 'We have a great

needed to perform Hajj whilst we were still young even though he was the one who first insisted on it and planned for it. I suddenly was the most conservative and old-fashioned person on earth even though in our community I was considered a very liberal revert. I realised that I could not spend the rest of my life with

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him and called off the wedding. Our small community was shocked at my decision and even the local Imam tried to convince me that it was just a phase in the life of a confused and bewildered young man. Doc it was not that I did not try to improve matters. The more I engaged him, the more I realised that materialism was important to him,' she continued.

'I definitely do not live the life of a pauper, but our two visions of the future diverged. I was not obsessed about Hajj, but it was

He is trying to make me feel guilty but I have no regrets,' she answered. I was confused. 'Then why the sadness?' I repeated.

'I really feel sad for him. He introduced me to the beautiful religion of Islam when I met him at university, was there when I recited my Shahada for the first

time and guided me along this beautiful path. I do not feel sad that I have lost a potential husband, I feel sad that he does not want to explore the unbelievably spiritual journey that I am experiencing. He opened a door for me, but now shut it upon himself.' 'The best we can do is to make Duaa for him. What better place than on Arafat?' was about all I could say. She agreed. Our group left Makkah for Azizyah, very close to Mina, whilst her group stayed.



Allah knows what pain each pilgrim bears

public transport system in our city, but suddenly he wanted to buy a car. And not just any car, rather one of those expensive hot hatches that would have required our Hajj savings for a deposit and taken years to pay off. We would not have been able to save for anything else.'

'Then he refused to go for marriage classes and other religious courses we regularly attended. Though he denied it, I knew that he went clubbing. He suddenly could not understand why we

high on my priority list. He suddenly saw it as obligation to be performed before he died, and he planned to live a long, long life. So after I called things off, I planned for Hajj. Family and friends said it was my way of dealing with the break-up. But really Doc, it was not like that. One part of my dreams was coming true, another was by Allah's will altered. I am so glad to be here now,' she added. 'Then why the sadness?' I asked. 'He keeps calling and messaging me saying that I chose religion above him.

Arafat came and went, and I did not see her after Hajj. Two years later I received a mail from her that she is to be married. To him. Allah opened the door that he had shut and according to her he was back to his old Deen conscious self. He wanted to perform Hajj as soon as possible. 'I had only one condition,' she wrote. 'When he goes for Hajj I want to be with.' Insha-Allah, her prayers will be answered.

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