

# HAJJ STORIES

## HAJJ, AND OTHER MIRACLES

JULY 2023

'If all the water in the oceans was ink, it would still not be enough for me to write about my wonderful Hajj experience,' he beamed. 'Everything worked out as I hoped,' he added. He planned, and of course Allah is the ultimate planner, and the plans intersected perfectly to leave him with a deeply fulfilling Hajj. We were sitting in his lounge in Cape Town a few days after he returned from his journey. Through the window we could see the rays of the late afternoon sun affectionately hugging Table Mountain before being gently tucked into the western horizon. He had picked up an infection after completing his obligatory journey and though physically slightly frail, he was transmitting the radiance associated with those who have fulfilled the ambition and yearning of all Muslims. I have often been amazed by the uniform demeanour of returning Hujjaaj, with their enthusiasm reminding me of soft pockets of gold coloured light gently bouncing between playful angels.

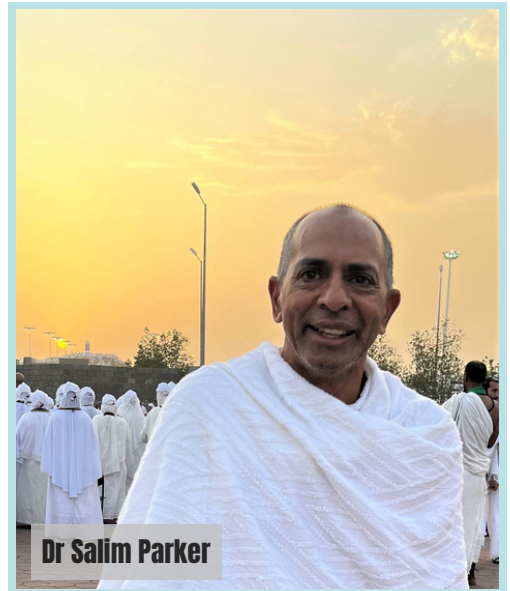
Yet it nearly did not happen. He took me back to what went through his mind a mere two years previously. 'Hajj is the fifth and final pillar of my Deen. I could afford it previously, but Allah tested me with unforeseen financial circumstances. I was healthy enough to have performed it, but life's numerous obstacles somehow delayed it. It was my one unaccomplished mission in life, and I had to repay my debt to my Creator before Allah recalled me. I also needed to repay all my other financial obligations. I needed to live. I needed to survive this calamity that has struck not only me but the world at large.' These were his thoughts two years previously when he was in hospital with multiple tubes and machines keeping him alive. It started off as a dry cough and a bit of fever and muscle aches. It progressed to shortness of breath and rapid breathing. It seemed that he could not get enough oxygen into his body, and he soon needed to be assisted by machines to help him breathe.

inhabitants ill prepared for it from an immune resistance point of view, but the medical fraternity was also in effect really battling to understand this novel virus. It behaved differently and unpredictably. Many patients initially started with minor symptoms which appeared to settle after about a week and a false impression of recovery was created. Then, without reason, some simply deteriorated. The breathing rate increased, and a simple test reflected oxygen deprivation in the lungs. This oxygen hunger led to increased workload on the muscles and we as doctors tried to assist by giving high flow rate oxygen via a mask. Sometimes even this was not enough, and some patients unfortunately could not keep up with the high demand on their bodies and needed to be intubated and in effect the ventilators did their breathing for them.

***"Soft pockets of gold coloured light gently bouncing between playful angels"***

He had planned to perform Hajj many moons previously. Some financial matters cropped up and he landed up with substantial debt. He was hospitalized by the COVID-19 virus nearly ten years after he was initially accredited to perform Hajj. Whilst on death's door he was determined to settle all debts and then proceed to descend from Arafat as free from earthly shackles as a newborn baby. Allah was infinitely merciful, and he survived. The disease affected his lungs and he had limited breathing capacity. It also affected his knees and upper leg muscles, and he was forced to perform his five daily prayers seated in a chair. He settled all his external debts, even two that he remembered incurring fifty years previously and which the affected parties long forgot about. In fact, one returned the payment to him as a contribution towards his Hajj expenses. He just had one debt remaining: the Hajj obligation to his Creator.

He was informed that a fitness programme existed preparing pilgrims for the physically demanding part of Hajj and he and his wife were very enthusiastic participants. We were all aware of his limited lung capacity and thought of initially starting him on a very limited walking course. However, he surprised us by being able to keep up with one of the groups and we formed part of a large walking family. We noted the gradual improvement in his effort tolerance, and with infective and enthusiastic encouragement from the coaches, he could comfortably keep up with the rest of the prospective pilgrims. In fact, he was so determined to be in optimal health that he even pitched once whilst having a chest infection and we doctors had to in effect force him to sit out that session. He let us know in no uncertain terms that in his opinion we were depriving him of a vital part of his preparation!



**Dr Salim Parker**

He was as well prepared as anyone ever could be when he left South Africa. Madinah was an absolute dream as well as the subsequent time spent in Makkah and Azizyah. His health was of no concern all the time. He always had to sit on a chair whenever he had to perform salaah. He had constant knee pain and upper leg pain, stiffness and discomfort that reminded him that he was not a spring chicken anymore. He has heard that the ablution facilities were not the greatest during the five days of Hajj and was apprehensive about it even though many told him that he will somehow cope. On the first day on Mina he tried to visit one of the western high toilets but could not use them as they were extremely filthy and blocked. He entered one of the eastern flat ones and to his surprise managed with some discomfort but not much pain.

Much later that same evening his faithful chair broke. He was worried how he was going to be able to perform his salaah. His group left early the next morning for Arafat and he somehow made his morning prayers on a chair that he borrowed from a kind fellow pilgrim. The time of Zawaal arrived and he stood in prayer beseeching his Creator for forgiveness and for health. The call for the combined prayers of Thuhr and Asr was made, and he joined the congregation. He looked around for a chair but there was not even one available. Every pilgrim knows that they most likely will only perform Hajj once in their lifetime. They will only stand once in their life on Arafat. They would shorten and combine Thuhr and Asr on the plains of Arafat only once in their lives. He had no choice but to join the congregation without a chair.

'Doc, when I had to prostrate, I felt nothing. I had no pain in my knees or upper legs. Maybe a bit of stiffness but that was probably due to not using the muscles. On Arafat I could complete my salaah without any chair or assistance. Since the time of Wuqoof embraced me, I have till this day never used a chair again,' he informed me. There were tears filling his eyes as he related his story. I was only informed of this miracle back here in Cape Town. However I remember greeting him on Arafat. All of the Hujjaaj exuded radiance of deep inner contentment and happiness. He also did. 'Doc, I am here, I am on Arafat,' he told me. 'Labaik!' He had truly arrived.



**On Arafat Duaas are surely accepted by our Creator**

The COVID-19 pandemic was indeed unprecedented in the lives of the current generations. Not only were most earthly human