

HAJJ STORIES

YOU'RE REPRESENTING ME

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'I must stay to be with you,' he told his father who was bedridden in an intensive care ward in Cape Town. He went to visit his father at least twice a day. He tried to chat to him even though they were separated by multiple monitoring machines, numerous lines that entered his father's body at various points sustaining him with vital fluids and medications, and masks and tubes. He felt that his father was deteriorating despite the latter thinking that he was improving. The father was excited every time he saw him, even though he knew that they would soon be separated. The son was fearful that his dad would be recalled by Allah. The father wanted the younger one to leave the shores of South Africa. He wanted him to travel to Saudi Arabia. 'Son, you are going to represent me on Arafat, you are going to perform my Hajj on my behalf, so please go,' he pleaded.

The son had performed Hajj previously when he was still a student and was to accompany his wife as her Mahram for this particular year. His father never had the opportunity financially to undertake

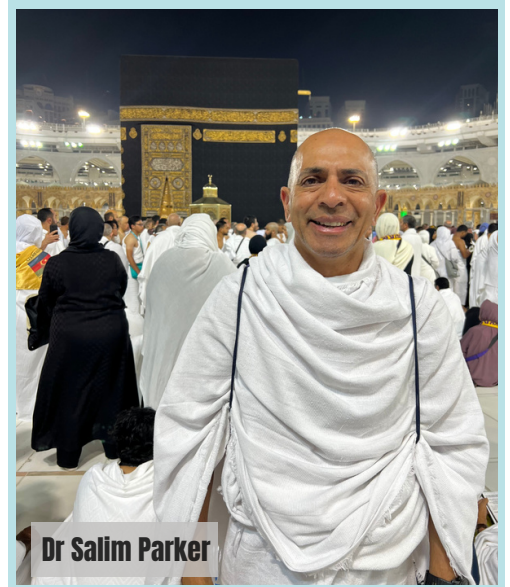
up the shortfall in the father's cost. Though his health was not good when they did their booking, it was still possible for his son to transport him in a wheelchair. Many assured them that it would absolutely not impact the quality of his Hajj, only his physical movements may be affected but his reach to his Creator will be unaffected. They started greeting family members and friends before Ramadan already and his strength seemed to improve with each and every visit to someone who already performed Hajj. He was emotionally and spiritually uplifted and it seemed that the adrenalin rush empowered him to some extent physically as well. The family was really looking forward to making Duaa for him when he departs from his house. But Allah planned differently.

" 'I am on Arafat!' the father said from his hospital bed in Cape Town."

A week before they were due to leave for the Holy Land he suffered a massive heart attack. He was hospitalized and was unlikely to be discharged within two weeks. His condition also made it extremely unsafe to travel within the next few weeks. He would definitely not be able to perform Hajj. I know of many extremely sick people who were blessed with being able to perform the most important journey in the life of a Muslim. The yardstick we use is that they should be able to travel safely to and from the destination. Medical facilities were as good, if not better, in Makkah as it is at home. In his case the journey itself was considered dangerous and he accepted that he would be unable to go that particular year. 'Your life is more important than the journey,' the doctors advised him. In fact, whilst in hospital it was feared that he may not even survive the episode.

'You have performed Hajj before,' the father reminded his son. 'Physically I am not able to go but spiritually I want to stand on Arafat. Would you perform my Hajj on my behalf?' he hesitantly asked. He was not aware that his son was planning to perform Hajj on behalf of his mother. Even though she performed Hajj as a teenager and was of the age and womanly development where the pilgrimage was compulsory, she felt that she was immature at that time. In her private discussions with her son, she shared her concerns that her Hajj was not performed in the perfect manner that she would want to do it if she could go now. She doubted that she would ever go again and requested her son to complete the rituals under her name and he agreed.

He himself doubted whether his first Hajj, which he completed as a student barely into his twenties, was accepted as correct by our Creator



Dr Salim Parker

and dearly wanted to relive the journey in a much more conscientious manner. He and his mother met one of their Sheikhs. 'It is sinful to think that Allah will not accept anyone's Hajj if the intention to perform it correctly was made,' he said. 'On the Day of Arafat Allah's mercy is limitless on his subjects pleading for forgiveness to their Creator,' he added. 'What about transgressions committed

after returning from Hajj, will it not be required to stand on Arafat to ask for forgiveness for those sins?' the son asked. 'Hajj is a once in a lifetime debt owed to Allah. Prayers, whether it is in worship, thanking for all good that happened and asking to be forgiven for sins is a lifelong continuation,' the Sheikh concluded.

There was not much to think about thereafter. He realised that the best place that he could make Duaa for his parents, the place that it was most likely to be accepted, and where he would be as close to his Creator as was humanly possible, was on Arafat. His father was still critical but stable when he left the shores of Cape Town. He still felt hesitant to leave his father in hospital in Cape Town but he knew that he was travelling with his blessings, encouragement and Duaas. He would don his Ihram in his father's name but he was to be physically present himself in the Holy Land. He was truly going to represent both his parents and himself. Whilst in Makkah in the weeks preceding Hajj, he had enough time and energy to perform a number of Umrahs on behalf of his parents.

I met him on Arafat. He informed me that his father had some deterioration in hospital and he video called him at about the time of Wuqoof. 'I am on Arafat!' the father said from his hospital bed in Cape Town, his face gleaming. 'Insha-Allah I will be physically there soon,' he added. 'Labaaiki!' he proclaimed. He proclaimed firmly that he was here with us on the vast plains. He never reached there as he passed away a few weeks later. But for those few moments that I saw him on the phone, he was truly present with us. At that moment we all felt that his Hajj was indeed accepted. Allah knows best.

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We may be physically be on Arafat, yet our Ihram may be donned in the name of someone else.

the most important journey of his life. He was the constant provider in his household and his income covered the bare necessities of a large family. His wife was blessed in that as a teenager her parents took her along when they fulfilled the fifth pillar of Islam. She however always put some money away for them to perform Hajj. With the advent of the accreditation system, she realised that she was unlikely to ever perform Hajj again and reserved the accumulated money solely for his prospective journey. For decades it was never really enough and his health also started deteriorating. The plans had to be adjusted somehow and their children were all consulted.

The father was to travel with his son and daughter-in-law initially, with the children making