

HAJJ STORIES

SPEAKING TO A LOVED ONE

MAY 2023

'Hey Doc, are you ok?' a friend asked me. I was puzzled. I was feeling, and thought I appeared as well, to be a good specimen of a perfectly healthy human being. I had performed a Tawaaf on the roof of the Ka'baa after Fajr and was settling down for breakfast at our rather luxurious hotel in Makkah. I slept very well the preceding night with no medical emergencies necessitating any interruption to a sound slumber. Physically, mentally, spiritually and from a fitness perspective I was probably on top of the world. Hajj was to commence in about ten days and our group still had three days left in Makkah before we were to move to the suburb of Azizyah. All of us were savouring every minute that we still had left in the Holy City. Yet, though I felt that I was exuding positivity and contentment, someone was asking me if all was indeed well with me.

"He loves with his soul, for that is eternal."

'I am perfectly fine!' I replied. 'And yes, I have no sense of fashion so if my attire seems a mess, well that is me,' I added jokingly. 'I am serious Doc, I thought you were on a different plane. You just asked that gentleman who walked past your table about his health status and asked him to convey your salaams to his wife. That is very odd,' my friend said. I was now really confused. 'What is so odd about that?' I asked. 'He came to consult me yesterday about a medical matter and he mentioned something about his wife, so I think it is just good manners to forward greetings to her,' I explained. 'Doc, you probably did not pay attention to what he said,' my friend replied. 'No man, I try to listen attentively when my patients speak,' I protested. 'Doc, his wife passed away before he embarked on this journey,' my friend stated.

'Now I have to ask you if YOU are ok,' I told my friend. 'The guy spoke to his wife last night!' I added. 'Actually, he said he is going to ask his wife whether he should use the medication I prescribed,' I reflected. I tried to recount the previous evening's consultation. He was my last patient and it was getting close to prayer time. After a brief interaction, I examined him and explained to him that he had bronchitis. He had a lot of green sputum and would therefore need an antibiotic. 'Oh, I don't like antibiotics. Let me ask my wife whether she thinks I should take it,' he replied. I went into my dispensary which was adjacent to the consulting room. I probably spent a minute or two in there before re-entering the consulting room. 'She says it is fine for me to take it,' he smiled.

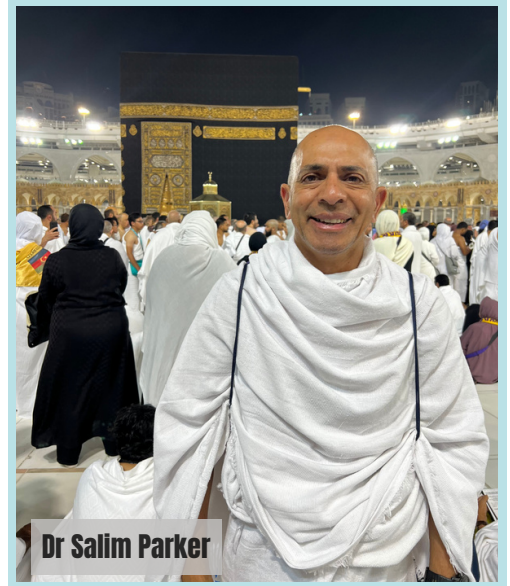
In retrospect I should have been more attentive. He was the last patient before we were to go for prayers and there was no one else around. My door to my small dispensary where my medicines were stored was always open and I would have heard him speaking to anyone. I could not recall any conversation. He was still seated on the examination bed so was unlikely to have moved outside. I would have heard the door to my consulting room open and close if he had to speak to his wife outside. I recalled that his mobile phone was still laying on my desk so it was unlikely that he could have called her. I would have heard the conversation in any case. 'I just assumed he spoke to his wife but now that I think of it, it is very unlikely,' I conceded to my friend. We were both perplexed.

We finished breakfast and I went to my clinic to see patients. He came to see me again for his chest which was now wheezing. I put him on the nebulizer and he felt considerably better thereafter. 'You mentioned that you asked your wife whether you should use antibiotics yesterday,' I said. 'I was told that she passed away,' I added and left it open ended. He gave me a blank stare and did not respond. There were a number of patients that still needed to be seen. 'May I speak to you some time please?' he asked. I indicated that I would want to check him up again and set up a time for that evening after supper when the clinic was normally closed. It was evident that he was very anxious and clearly depressed.



We can speak to anyone when we perform Tawaaf

He came as scheduled late that evening and he was much better. I restricted my interactions to medical matters only until he suddenly said: 'My wife died before we were to depart for Hajj and it was my fault Doc.' I suggested that we walk to the Haram and continue our conversation as we went along. He agreed to that. He informed me that he was happily married for a few years and



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had two children. His one weakness was that he was always busy on his wheeling and dealing whilst conducting his business. 'It was not that I deliberately did not listen to what my wife said Doc, I had so much information overload that I sometimes did not process everything she said. So, I came home one day, without having picked up my one child from a class, which I was supposed to have done,' he told me.

He was on the phone as usual when his wife asked him about their child and he paid scant attention to her. She then left with her car but unfortunately was involved in a car crash before getting to her child. She died on the scene. 'I just never listened or paid attention to her,' he told me. We were by now on the roof of the Haram and below us we could see thousands circumambulating the Ka'baa. 'If I had just listened, just paid a bit of attention, she would have been alive, she would have been here with me. Since her passing, whenever I have to make a decision, I try to connect with her. I try to imagine what she would have thought, said or done and then follow through on that. Most of the time my conversations with her are inaudible to others, but sometimes I verbalise it. That happened in your room yesterday,' he said rather sheepishly.

'Never stop speaking to her. Soon we are going to be Arafat. She made Niyah to perform her Hajj and Allah surely accepts her intention. Rumi once said that he 'loves not with his heart, for the heart can stop beating. He loves not with his mind, for that too dies. He loves with his soul, for that is eternal.' When you are on Arafat, your soul and hers will communicate together with our Creator,' I said. He looked at the crowd busy with their Tawaaf. 'Doc, I know you said that I should rest today. However I want to perform a Tawaaf with my wife now. I promise to take it slowly and easily,' he said. 'I'll join you,' I replied. 'I too never travel alone.'