

Hajj Stories

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Waiting at the Gates of Jannah.....

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‘There are two events in my life which happened exactly as I anticipated,’ he told me. ‘The first was my Hajj and it feels that I had a premonition about how I would experience it. I anticipated the tents on Mina, the amazement of being on Arafat and the unbelievable crowd that were all there reaching out to their Creator.’ I recalled him and his very bubbly wife very fondly during that particular Hajj. Their infectious enthusiasm lifted the spirits of many and their unbridled joy for being on Hajj was screened back to South Africa during interviews. I thought that their Hajj was as perfect as humanly imaginable and that they were as sin free as

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a new born child. Spiritually they were at the Gates of Jannah when their Hajj was surely accepted.

‘The second event was the birth of my daughter,’ he continued. ‘Her birth, her time with us as her parents and her passing away a mere fifteen minutes later was as if I knew how the sequence of events was going to happen. Insha-Allah, she’ll wait for us at the Gates of Jannah.’

The Friday before Hajj commenced that particular year I went to the Haram as it would have been the only Jumuah I would have been able to perform there. He stayed with the rest of the group in Azizyah, a suburb very close to Mina where all pilgrims converge to on the first day of Hajj. He suffered a severe asthma attack and by the time I got back from the Haram he was struggling to breath. There was plenty of life sustaining oxygen all around him, but he was unable to get it into his lungs and exhaling the suffocating stale air. There was a lot we could do and after a while, but what surely felt like an eternity to him, his pale bluish skin colour returned to normal and he started to breath deeper and more relaxed.

The episode worried him and he expressed his fears about the days ahead. ‘Am I going to be fine for the days of Hajj Doc?’ he asked with a measure of concern. ‘I’ll make sure that you get reach Arafat even if I have to carry you along the way!’ I laughed noting his very stout and heavy frame. We as doctors put him on high doses of steroids and he literally performed his Hajj on steroids exuding boundless energy, enthusiasm and deep appreciation for the fact that he could stand on the plains of Arafat with his wife. The two of them planned their Hajj, but he was worried that illness might have scuppered their plans. We all know that Allah is the ultimate planner and their Hajj, in his words, was exactly as he envisaged.

I was in frequent contact with them upon our return to South Africa and made a point of visiting them whenever I was in their town. I looked forward to the meals that we were to share, the memories that we shared and especially the company that we kept on creating. When their first child was born, their happiness knew no bounds and my visits extended to beyond mere Hajj memories. About a year later they informed me that she was expecting their second child and initially the pregnancy proceeded normally. However, the scans started revealing some concerns. There were some slightly abnormal readings which necessitated further tests and more frequent follow ups. They consulted specialists and it soon became evident that their baby was having problems and that there were problems with the development of the baby’s lungs. The mother was nourishing her baby with oxygen rich blood in her womb, but as soon as their child was born, the baby would have to breathe on her own. With little or no lung capacity, survival would have been virtually impossible without surgical intervention.

They consulted widely and spoke to medical specialists, religious scholars and close friends. All the time she knew that she was carrying her child in her womb, spending days, weeks and finally months cocooning, protecting, nourishing and loving her baby. The medical fraternity could not advise more than just to wait and see what happens. Hajj was approaching and I mentioned to the husband that I was going soon to join the millions that would were blessed with an invitation by our Creator. ‘I want to go on Hajj again; I need to go,’ he told me. We both knew that it be difficult to get a visa as he was on Hajj a few years previously but this did not deter him. He approached the embassy but it was soon evident that his pleas were to be futile. I went. They were in my prayers when I made my ta-waafs, when I stood on Arafat and whenever I made duaa.

Upon my return, they kept me informed of her pregnancy’s development. Their baby was growing very slowly in the womb and other developmental issues were noted. A week before she was due to give birth her husband called me to inform me of more concerning news. Tests have by now revealed that their baby had a chromosomal abnormality that was incompatible with life. Their baby was growing and developing, albeit slowly whilst in the womb but would not be able to survive in the demanding outside world that required breathing, sucking and crying. In his own words he knew exactly what to expect. Even though everything proceeded as predicted, a human being can never ever be ready to bring a child into this world knowing that very soon after that they would have to let go of their beloved baby.



Some are blessed to have their children with them on Arafat; others know that their children are waiting for them at the gates of Jannah

She gave birth to an absolutely normal looking child. Their daughter, they told me, resembled her father. She still fully stretched out her arm after coming into this world. He immediately made the Athaan in her one ear and the iqama in the other. He was extremely nervous but accomplished what he set out to do. They named their daughter after one of our Prophets’ mother. Both parents realised that their daughter was getting progressively weaker and weaker. There was nothing even our advanced medical science could do.

Their daughter was born sin free, just as we all hope to be after standing on Arafat. Allah blessed them with precious time together. They told me that they went into the labour ward as two people and returned as three after the birth of their first child. Now they went in as three as their son accompanied them and still returned as only three. He held his daughter as she was giving her last few gasps. Then she was not there with them anymore. She was waiting somewhere else. Waiting for them at the Gates of Jannah.

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