

HAJJ STORIES

NEW LIFE IN FRONT OF THE KAABA

JUNE 2025

“She is going to be my wife one day,” he said to himself. At that point in his life everyone would have considered it a teenage infatuation. He literally saw her for the second time in his life only. They have never been introduced to each other nor ever spoken. Their eyes met fleetingly once a day before when she exited the hotel foyer as he entered. She swiftly looked away and he also went along his merry way. There were no violins playing in the background, no sudden increase in his heart rate or any of the romance novels’ flowery imagery. Nothing more would have probably come of it than that chance exchange of a glance. Fate however can let paths cross again in unpredictable ways with unexpected resultant consequences. Sometimes it truly leads to a bed of roses which dwarfs any niggling thorns, whilst at times it can result in rocky strewn roads to traverse. For them, well, they are still smelling the roses.

‘He entered their house, entered her heart, and a year later entered into Nikah with her.’

It was the second time that he saw her which convinced him that she indeed was his future life partner. It might not even have occurred if he was not late, as usual. Till today he can still hear his mother castigating him for his poor discipline and adherence when it comes to time. He was always the last to leave for mosque when the Athan, the call for prayer, sounded. His family would leave way before he did. Sometimes his mother would wake him from his deep slumber, sometimes his father would literally pull him out of bed, even if it was midafternoon. Then he still needed to get dressed appropriately, take ablution in preparation for the prayer and probably hunt for his sandals that he kicked off somewhere. According to him, once he was awake, he always made a concerted effort to get into the mosque and made a mad

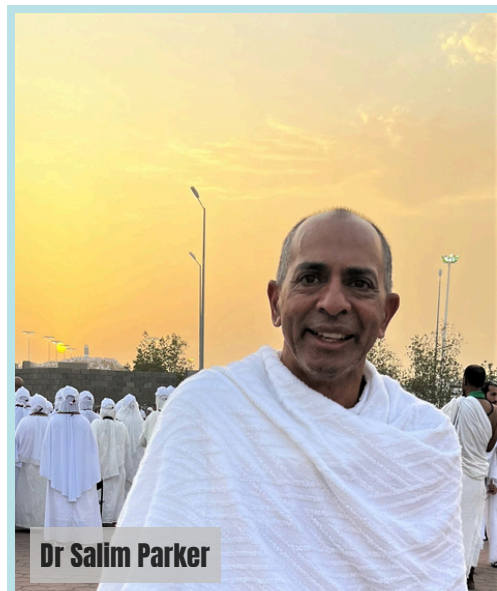
dash to join all the others in the compulsory prayers. He tried to enter a building through a gate that he normally saunters through, but it was already closed. He darted to the next gate but that was closed as well. Of course, as Muslims we can make the Fard prayer anywhere inside or outside a mosque as long as we stand behind the Imam. However, there was one Masjid where a Muslim wants to be as close to the front as possible. One that is really the centre of our spiritual daily universe at least five times a day. He was accustomed to facing the Kaaba for many of his prayers and even at his young age, he was acutely aware that he was indeed blessed to be in Makkah and have this opportunity. He managed to find an open gate and just as the attendees rose to start the prayer, he saw the Kaaba. That is when he saw her again.

In the Haram in Makkah there are dedicated sections

for ladies. Unlike smaller mosques where ladies are always accommodated at the back, in the Haram these specific areas are scattered throughout, and he happened to be virtually adjacent to one of these areas with her standing right at the end. For some reason she, for less than a second, looked in his general direction before the prayers started. He knew that she did not notice him but he was mesmerized. After the prayers ended, he looked out for her but the vast crowds, by then, made it virtually impossible. It was about ten days before Hajj was to start and the crowds were swelling considerably on a daily basis. He knew that he would see her again as they were staying in the same building not far from the Haram. He rushed back, determined to see her.

This was in the first year of this century when families could still perform Hajj without having to apply first and waiting on an accreditation list. He, who had just finished high school, was there with his parents and three younger siblings. He later ascertained that she was an only child, a year younger than him, and was there with her parents and paternal grandparents. Their building housed a few hundred pilgrims from different groups and that probably accounted for the fact that they did not meet previously. He reached their hotel and sat down in the foyer, waiting for her to arrive. She soon came, with her whole family. He pretended to be busy and merely greeted the family as they passed him. She did not even look at him, though both males returned his greetings. The next few days the same foyer greetings recurred and on occasions he had a few interactions with her father but never with her.

Two days before Hajj, he saw her going to a shop on her own. He greeted her and told her that he was going to marry her one day. She gave him a horrified



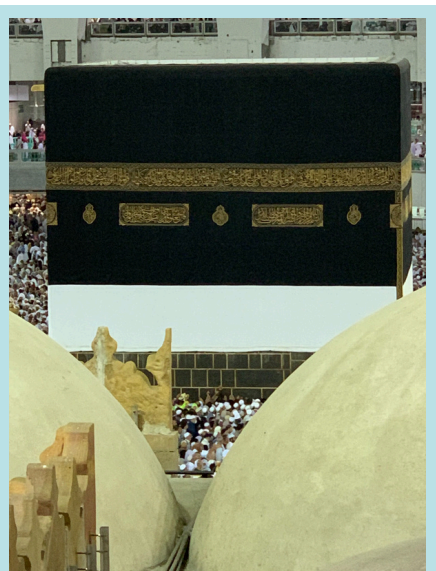
Dr Salim Parker

look, then giggled at his madness and walked away. They were in the same camp on Mina and Arafat, but he hardly caught sight of her. He made earnest Duaa on Arafat that this particular wish of his would materialize. Late that afternoon he informed his father about it. The latter smiled and informed him that sins on Arafat are forgiven if the repentance is sincere. Duaas are accepted, again if they are sincere and accordance with the tenets of Islam. In his heart he knew what he was asking. His father told him that they’ll discuss it when they get home. After Hajj they returned to their hotel for a few days and he somehow managed to get a few words in with her father.

On their return, his father told him to go visit the girl’s family, but only after receiving permission from her father. His family lived in a small town outside Cape Town, and he first called her father to ask him if he could come, the answer being in the affirmative. He took some chocolates for the father, a few flowers for the mother and for her on his first visit. ‘So you are the guy who said you are going to marry her!’ her father beamed as he welcomed him. He sheepishly entered their house, and over time entered her heart, and a year later entered into Nikah with her.

‘I am fascinated by your story,’ I smiled. This was twenty years later, and this couple came for their required Umrah vaccines to my rooms. Accompanying them were their two children, a boy aged eighteen and a girl of sixteen. ‘It will be our first time back to Saudi and we really want to introduce our children to the Holy Lands, relive our amazing time in Makkah and show our children where we first met,’ he said. ‘They talk about it all the time, like it was yesterday,’ their son shrugged. ‘The time I saw your mother looking at me with the Kaaba right behind her was a defining moment in my life,’ he said. ‘Now I’ll have the two of you standing with her in front of it. We can even take a selfie or ask someone to take a photo of all four of us!’ he dreamed aloud. ‘Allah will surely fulfill your Duaas,’ I reassured him.

I received a call a few weeks later from him. They had the most spiritually uplifting journey with the family bonding even closer than before. ‘By the way Doc,’ he added. ‘My son saw this girl in the Haram.....’



Sometimes much more is seen than the Kaaba