

HAJJ STORIES

TWO LADIES, ONE HAJJ

JANUARY 2026

I saw her for a bad chest infection in Makkah about a week before the first day of Hajj. She has seen me before on two previous occasions for medically related matters. Her parents passed away when she was a teenager a few years after they had performed their Hajj. 'They never stopped talking about the most wonderful journey that they had ever undertaken and left some money for me for that purpose,' she said with a sad but content hint of nostalgia. 'Make Hajj as soon as you are able to,' was their constant encouragement to me. Hajj is still a week away but already I feel that I have achieved so much after greeting our beloved Prophet (SAW) in Madinah a few weeks ago and now every day standing in front of the Ka'ba. Standing on Arafat on the day of Wuqoof is going to be unbelievable!' she excitedly exclaimed. I completely concurred, but felt saddened by what I knew her life after Hajj would be.

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She married young. Her husband lost his father when he was relatively young, and he was reared by his mother who was by all accounts an amazing woman. His mom held a fulltime job, was a father and mother for her son, was known to be an active community worker, and never refused food to anyone who claimed to be hungry. She dreamed of performing her Hajj one day but never had enough money and it always was out of her reach. 'She is the perfect mother-in-law and I absolutely revere her. I call her Mom,' my patient once told me. Mom unfortunately suddenly developed multiple medical conditions which significantly affected her ability to work and add to her meagre Hajj savings. She was in effect exempted from the obligation of performing the compulsory Hajj due to medical and financial constraints. But that can never douse the desire and longing to set foot on the plains of Arafat.

My patient's husband, on the other hand, had absolutely no desire to perform Hajj. 'You can go if you want to!' he once shouted at her whilst slapping and punching her. His mother constantly tried to stop the abuse, but it would just continue behind closed bedroom doors. She knew that it was unlikely that she and her husband would perform hajj together as a couple, but she initially tried to save some money for Mom to accompany her. Her medical conditions now made it impossible for her to travel. 'I have a little money saved for her Badl Hajj. Does Doc know of anyone who would

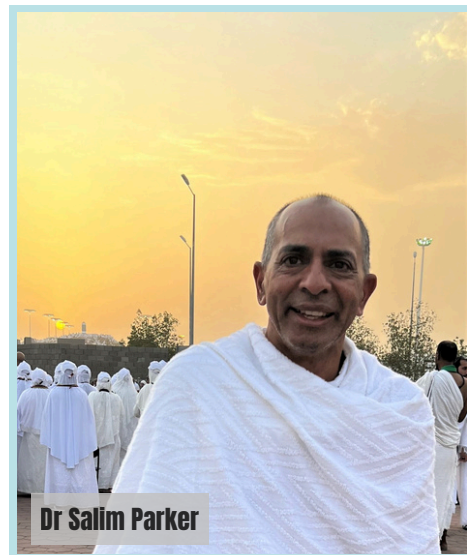
perform it for her for this amount? It would be the greatest gift ever for her if she knows that someone represented her on Arafat,' she said. I pledged to find out.

Later that day I was sitting with a group of fellow Hajj workers. Included in our informal gathering was a Sheigh and an Imam. All of us had performed our compulsory Hajj previously and I was already committed to perform it on behalf of a deceased family member. I enquired about anyone who was willing to do a Badl Hajj. I explained the situation and the first question was about the reimbursement. I mentioned the amount. 'That is way too little, I would want at least three times more,' the Imam said. He was not being greedy, he was merely commenting about the going rate. 'I have one for you,' the Sheigh responded and he and the Imam had a brief chat about it before concluding the transaction which involved the name of the person on whose behalf the Badl Hajj was to be done. I was dumbfounded as I had previously negotiated that deal between a friend of mine and the Sheigh. Now he was forwarding that princely sum to someone else.

We met later. 'I'll do Mom's Badl Hajj,' the Sheigh told me. 'I cannot let such a deserving cause slip by,' he added. I had tears in my eyes. 'You could have earned three times the amount,' I said. 'I am sure I am going to earn more than that in reward,' he smiled. We sorted out the formalities. Later that evening I called my friend to inform him about the changes. I assured him that the Imam was a person of good character. My friend, a wealthy person, was perplexed and I explained what transpired. 'I'll see to it that the Sheigh gets the same amount. Give me a



Sometimes our steps on Hajj reflect someone else's footprints



Dr Salim Parker

day or two,' he said. He was true to his word. Within two days he had sent the money to the Sheigh.

I saw her a day before the first day of Hajj. Her chest infection had resolved, her wish for Mom's Badl Hajj was coming true, and she was still going to return home after Hajj to an abusive husband. 'I have so much to be thankful for,' she said. 'I have two wonderful children, Mom who is making Duaa for me every minute that she is awake, a great network of family and friends, and I am soon going to be on Arafat. 'What about your husband?' I asked. 'All of us are tested by Allah. Maybe he is my test. He seemed at once irritated and intrigued by all who came to greet me, and the physical abuse has decreased substantially,' she replied. She did not mention the verbal barrage of telephonic insults that her roommates could hear that morning when she called him. 'I am going to be on Arafat Doc,' she smiled.

She greeted me on Arafat. I saw contentment and knew that this was what she was dreaming for all her life. I made Duaa that Arafat would be the answer to her one calamity. 'Thank you for arranging the Badl Hajj for Mom, I know she is with us here, and I cannot thank Sheigh enough for accepting such a small sum. I would have been honoured to perform Mom's Badl Hajj myself in a year or two's time, but we know that with the quota system that is very unlikely to happen in her lifetime. Now she can be informed as and when the rituals on her behalf are being done,' she said. The Sheigh had instructed me not to divulge the sequence of events to her. 'There are so many good people like you. Mom and the Sheigh on this earth,' I said. 'Maybe it will rub off on your husband,' I added.

We met about five years later. Mom was recalled by Allah. 'She used to tell me that she would not blame me if I divorced her son. But I was seeing changes in him since he realised that me and Mom were blessed with Hajj. He realised that our hearts were content no matter what obstacle life put in our paths. He is not perfect, but he is at least showing interest in his Deen. He regularly goes to mosque, takes part in gatherings with the abuse virtually non-existent. Maybe if he loves Allah, he would be able to love me and our children,' she said. Her children were doing well and had arranged for her and her husband to perform Umrah. 'You have walked many miles already, maybe this will be his first very small steps.' I replied.