

Hajj Stories

Tomorrow May Never Come

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‘You are being irresponsible,’ my wife was told. This occurred more than twenty years ago when we excitedly announced that we have the means to answer the call made thousands of years ago by Nabi Ebrahim (RA). We were going to perform our obligatory Hajj! ‘You have two small children and your absence may negatively impact them,’ the stern advice continued. We listened to every piece of advice and this one was the only negative one. Pilgrims from Cape Town carry the hope of those who pray to stand on Arafat one day, the memories of those who have been blessed with an accepted Hajj, and the Duaas, greetings and messages of those who deep down know that they will never reach the Holy Cities of Makkah and Madinah. Though only the Hujjaaj physically depart our shores, the entire community embarks on a journey.

The Muslim community is unique at the southwestern tip of Africa. Extended families are the norm, and most children have many father and mother figures. We knew our children were going to be in the best care and in fact they commented that they were more spoilt than they ever were by their grandparents and

uncles and aunts whilst we were away! ‘You are going on the most important journey of your life; we are honoured to be the custodians of your children and affairs whilst you are joining millions of others. Please do not worry about anything,’ was the unanimous departing message. We were truly blessed by a wonderful extended family and support structure. Even our work situations were more than covered.

As the saying goes, the rest is history. We had the most wonderful of journeys. Our families shared our journey via telephone and we were in constant communication with our children. Hajj evoked a deep love for Makkah and Madinah, and a few years later we could take all three of our children with us for Hajj. I am convinced that the unique circumstances of our first Hajj opened up pathways for me to return for the journey for twenty consecutive years. We could also as a family accompany my parents for Umrah one year. Now, nearly twenty years later we all yearn to set foot there again and my now adult children are constantly saving to visit the City of Peace and circumambulate the Kaba’a.

Over the years I was consulted by a number of new parents who have been accredited. A breastfeeding mother of a six-month old baby was adamant that Allah’s invitation must be accepted, and she meticulously prepared not only for her four week absence from her offspring, but also for her presence on Arafat. Immense pressure was put on her to postpone her journey, but both

postponing their journey for the next year when their baby would be bigger. They were too positive in their outlook.

I remarked on the similarities that we experienced during our obligatory Hajj. ‘You are going to miss your children more than they are going to miss you!’ I joked in all seriousness. I added that our children are always in

lions of others, started descending from the vast plains of Arafat with the fervent hope that Allah has forgiven our sins and blessed us with an accepted Hajj. The rain had stopped by then and we had soft gentle rays of the sun smiling down at us as it spread its warmth from above Jabal Rahmah, the Mount of Mercy.

The following two years no one

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sets of her children’s grandparents encouraged her to go. I left the choice up to her and she decided to go. I explained that I just actively encouraged a lady with breast cancer to postpone her journey as she needed immediate curative therapy. Postponing the therapy would have led to the irreversible spread of the cancer. The preservation of life supersedes any obligation, we explained. This lady postponed and could undertake the journey the following year cancer free.

The year before the COVID outbreak we had a pre-Hajj fitness programme. A young couple with small children were part of this group and we all admired their dedication. They often would bring their baby who was less than a year old along on the fitness walks, sometimes being pushed in a pram and sometimes being carried on the back in a baby carrier. ‘You are having the perfect Hajj preparation,’ I remarked to the husband when he walked. ‘On the five days of Hajj you’ll be carrying all your requirements in your backpack. As a fit young man you most likely will also assist the elderly by pushing them in their wheelchairs,’ I said. ‘I am really looking forward to this journey,’ he smiled. He and his wife had a well-established extended family and their children, including the baby, were going to be in very safe and capable hands. I never asked them whether they ever considered

our hearts and they are always with us every step that we walk on the sacred journey. He and his wife were fit and healthy and on our journey I had very little interaction with them and cannot recall asking them about their children whilst we were in Makkah and then Madinah. They were going to be part of our walking group from Arafat to Musdalifah and then Mina and met up with him just after Wuqoof, the pinnacle of Hajj.

‘I cannot believe that we are all here,’ he said. ‘Allah has truly blessed us all. We experienced the rain just now and we still have time left to get as close to

outside of Saudi Arabia was permitted to perform Hajj. I knew of at least one person who postponed his journey for a year who passed away. Then we received the tragic news that this young father passed away from a sudden unexpected medical event. His wife, children, family and fellow travellers were shaken by the news that this very affable person was no more.

I recalled the last time I spoke to him which was on the last day on Mina. ‘I miss my children, but I am so glad we have performed our Hajj. This journey awakens your inner soul,’ he told me. He had his time on Arafat and Mina.



Only Allah knows for whom the sun would set soon

our Creator as possible,’ he added. ‘Make the most of the time, for this time will never come again,’ I replied. For us workers there is always enough time to perform the essentials of Hajj, and never really enough time to do all that we intended to. But we are in Ihram on Arafat and that is more rewarding than additional hours can achieve. Later he and his wife joined our group before sunset as we, with mil-

If he did not embark on the journey that year, he would never have set foot in Saudi Arabia. I thought back to all those years when my wife and I decided to follow our teacher’s advise that once you have the financial means to perform Hajj, do not delay. Learn the rituals, learn as much as you can, but do not delay.

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