

Oh, What A Ramadhan Night

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It was one of the Sundays in the month of Ramadhan. The mosque was full of people. I went through the crowd hugging and kissing. Trust me, at our mosque, we are all straight people. We only exchange hugs and kisses to show our brotherly affection. Notice I did not say sisterly love. No we don't hug ladies. They are precious. We are very warm hearted people. We get very excited and give a hard squeeze while hugging. Sometimes I even hear my ribs crackling. We do not want to break our sisters' bones.

After a heavy meal, while I was still sipping tea, the *Muezzin* (prayer caller) called the *Adhan* (prayer call). I gulped the leftover tea and headed to the prayer hall. These prayers in the month of Ramadhan are really long, lasting almost two hours. I do not mind the obligatory prayer, which is short and takes only about five to seven minutes. It is the *Traweeh* (night vigil prayer) that I dread. It almost takes two hours and consists of twenty sets, each set lasting for about five minutes. During these prayers, Hafiz Saheb recites a portion of the Quran at a pace to finish the whole Quran in thirty days. While the pious ones go for the whole twenty sets, I usually opt out after eight sets.

As I was getting out of the mosque, I was greeted by a friend at the door. Even as we were exchanging hugs and kisses, he said, "By the way there is a live snake behind your back."

That scared the living daylights out of me. I jumped about five feet in the air hitting the ceiling and then fell back in his laps. Although I was in a compromising posture, it was better than landing on the snake. In that case, instead of me writing this story, someone else would have been writing my obituary. I shrugged his arms off and recomposed myself. A big crowd had gathered around the snake. On one side there was a group of children and on the other side there were some thoughtful men. There were no ladies in the crowd. Some were giggling and peeking through a glass window. It was not the life insurance they were hoping to cash in. We carry auto insurance, medical insurance, home insurance, but not life insurance. We have a covenant with Allah (God) that if we take care of our calamities in our life, He will take care of our families in our death. The ladies were just playing smart. They wanted the men to do the dirty work. In all of this the poor snake was all coiled up in a corner.

When my panic subsided, I joined the men. One of them, an electrical engineer, asked, "Jawaid Saheb, you have written three books, tell us how should we handle this snake."

I replied, "I do have written three books, but they are on Jinns, Angels, Satan, Demons and Adam. I do not know anything about the snake. All I can tell you if the snake is a Jinn or not. Who knows the snake could be on a mission here to trick the super pious ones who were busy praying twenty sets of *Traweeh*. After all it was Satan, a Jinn, who, in the form of a serpent, tricked both Adam and Eve."

He asked "Okay tell me if it is a Jinn."

It was important for us to find out if it was a Jinn. If it was a Jinn and we killed it, there was a strong possibility that one of the kin of the dead Jinn could possess the killer in

Oh, What A Ramadhan Night

revenge. Having no experts among us who could communicate and negotiate a deal with the Jinns, we did not want to take any chance. I asked him if he had a flash light. He did happen to have one and flashed it on the snake. The snake did have a thick shadow. The Jinns do not have an obvious shadow.

I gave my verdict. It is not a Jinn. Being an Engineer, I believe in checking and double checking. So I asked everyone to close their eyes for five minutes and recite '*aoodh billahi minash Shaytan ir rajeem*' (read to drive off Satan) to give the snake, if he was a Jinn, an honorable exit by dissolving back in air. When we opened our eyes, the snake was still there. It did not disappear. Now I was hundred percent sure. I gave my final verdict that the snake can be killed. I am sure the snake was not happy with my verdict. He probably wished if he could become a Jinn, he would take possession of me. But my verdict did give comfort to the crowd. Having been assured that there would be no revenge coming from the Jinns; they were ready for the great kill.

Since our community consisted mostly of professionals, we had all kinds of doctors. They could fix almost anything, even a plugged heart, but had no expertise in killing snakes. I asked the doctor who was an expert in resuscitation, if he had any action plan.

He said: "We are the healers, not the killers. I am just going to watch. Yes, only watch, just in case someone needs resuscitation."

The electrical engineer said: "I can run cables to help jump start the heart."

The kidney expert standing next to him responded in a soft voice: "Usually it is the kidney that fails after resuscitation. I will take care of dialysis."

One of the brothers was on his cell phone explaining what was going on. I thought he was talking to CNN. But when no TV camera showed up after ten minutes, I realized he was obediently explaining to his wife why he was late coming home.

While I was assessing the situation, one brother (in order to avoid loading our brains with all the names, we call our mosque mates brothers and sisters) brought a broom. I thought, cleanliness being half of being Muslim, he wanted to clean the floor before making the big kill. It reminded me of a scene I witnessed in Saudi Arabia. When some one is found guilty of murder, they bring the person in the main square, broom the place of execution, place a cardboard on the floor, make the person prostrate on the cardboard and chop his head. Since the cardboard soaks all the blood, there is no need to wash the floor. I assumed this brother had witnessed the same execution and wanted to follow the same procedure for the snake. It turned out he wanted to kill the snake with the broom. I started laughing.

I said: "Give the snake a break. He may not die with your stroke, but will die out of shame that you did not consider him worthy enough to use some lethal weapon."

He abandoned the idea. Being an honorable gentleman, he did not want the snake to die in shame.

Another brother came out of the mosque with a floor duster. Again the same answer. He wanted to kill the snake with the duster.

Oh, What A Ramadhan Night

I said: "While you will be squeezing the snake with the duster, he may think that you are patting him and want to adopt him as his pet. He may then crawl on to your hand and kiss your face."

The brother with the duster started shivering and abandoned the idea too. While his duster was still shaking due to shiver, another brother showed up with a garbage can with a lid in his hand. He wanted to trap the snake inside the garbage can. He thought the snake could be herded like a sheep into a pen. He did not know that being a reptile the snake can only fight or take flight. There is nothing in between for him.

While the brother was still toying with the garbage can, Maulana Saheb came out of the mosque. He was six feet tall, had twelve inch long beard dyed with henna, had rosary in one hand and *Miswak* (twig) in the other hand. (People who fit this profile we call Maulana Saheb). I knew he usually stayed for twenty sets. But I guess the greasy food created enough turmoil in his stomach that he gave up after twelve sets. Upon being told of the snake, he jumped and took ten steps back, away from the snake. While combing his beard with his finger and cleaning his teeth with *Miswak* (twig), he asked for a long garden hose. Luckily we had a hundred feet long skinny black hose. Maulana Saheb, after putting his *Miswak* (twig) and rosary in his pocket, handed one end of the hose to some youths. After reciting the three *Quls* (the last three chapters of the Quran, recited to ward off evil), he breathed on them and instructed them to point the hose towards the snake. He then grabbed the other end and went all the way to the far end of the mosque. He then started reciting the three *Quls*. After each recitation, he would blow air into the hose. I asked him why he was doing that.

He replied: "I am trying to drive off the demons (bad Jinns) from around the snake. I do not want them to give bad ideas to the snake."

His solution was to calm the snake down before the big kill. It was supposed to work like anesthesia before a big operation. It seemed to be working. As long as he would blow air into the hose, the snake would lie still. When he would take a break to catch his breath, the snake would toss and turn. While he was reciting and blowing air into the hose, some of us went inside the mosque to search for a lethal weapon.

Maulana Saheb had been reciting and blowing for about half an hour. We had not found the lethal weapon yet. He was running out of breath and started sweating. He took his cap off and started waving it in front of his face to dry his sweat. This gave the demons enough time to slip in and incite the snake for some action. It started moving. The crowd started running. Maulana Saheb being on the other side of the wall did not know what was happening. He was still waving his cap. The snake started following the hose. It probably thought that the hose was his dad and wanted to give him a hug. Before Maulana Saheb knew it, the snake was staring at his face from about five feet. He probably thought that Maulana Saheb was welcoming him with his waving cap. Maulana Saheb froze and fainted with his cap in his left hand and the hose in his right hand. Luckily, by this time a dentist brother had found a shovel. He ran at a lightening speed and took a strong swipe at the mouth of the snake. Now it was the snake's turn to freeze in its tracks. In fact it was dead. If there was anyone who had the skills to do this job, it had to be our dentist brother. Having to gaze into the mouth day in day out, he knew exactly where the snake's mouth was and he went straight to it.

Oh, What A Ramadhan Night

Maulana Saheb was still lying on the ground. He even got some squirt from the kill. Now that we needed our Resuscitation expert, he was nowhere to be found. Luckily we had his cell phone number. As it turned out, he had taken refuge on top of a tree. After being assured that the snake was dead he came down. Actually we had to send him a live picture of the dead snake on his cell phone. He was now all pumped up to show his expertise. He tried to resuscitate Maulana Saheb to no avail. He was great in jump starting the heart, but not the brain. Maulana Saheb was too precious for us to let him go. He was one of the icons and life of the mosque. Most important of all he was a great fundraiser. Finally we sent an SOS to Hafiz Saheb (person who had memorized the whole Quran). He had just concluded the *Traweeh* prayer. He came right away and started reciting Yaseen (36th Chapter of Quran recited on a person who is in life-death situation) on Maulana Saheb. His recitation worked. Maulana Saheb came to senses. But seeing the black hose on his stomach, he fainted again. Probably he thought the hose was the snake. Hafiz Saheb again started reciting Yaseen, but this time after removing the hose, and Maulana Saheb came back to his senses for good.

Since the *Traweeh* had finished, the crowd had now swelled considerably and even included some sisters. They all gave a thundering applause to the dentist brother and carried him on their shoulders and danced around the snake. They, on the spot, gave him the title of the Incredible Hulk.

About the Writer:

The writer has authored “Secrets of Angels, Demons, Satan, and Jinns – Decoding their Nature through Quran and Science,” and “Atom to Adam – How, When and Where in the Light of Quran, Bible and Science (A Study of Human Origin),” both published by InstantPublishers.com (<http://instantpublisher.com/>) and “Lessons from the Qur'an,” published by Ta-Ha Publishers (<http://www.taha.co.uk/>). These books are available from Amazon.com (<http://www.amazon.com/>) and Ta-Ha Publishers (<http://www.taha.co.uk/>), respectively. He has also published many essays on religious issues in the Charleston Gazette, West Virginia and written quite a few Islamic satires. He is a Chemical Engineer and possesses Master of Science degree in Chemical Engineering and has Professional Engineers license from the State of Texas. His e-mail address is mnajawaid@yahoo.com.