

Getting Gyped in Jumu'ah Prayer

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O you who believe! When the call is proclaimed to prayer on Friday (the Day of Assembly) hasten earnestly to the Remembrance of Allah and leave off business (and traffic): that is best for you if you but knew! And when the Prayer is finished then may you disperse through the land and seek of the Bounty of Allah: and celebrate the Praises of Allah often (and without stint): that you may prosper. (Quran 62:9-10)

The *Jumu'ah* prayer is obligatory on Muslims. Although some may think that it consists of only two *rikahs*, actually listening to the *Khutbah* is part of the prayer. In a way, four *fard rikahs* of *Zohr* prayer are replaced by the *Khutbah* in two sittings and two *rikahs* of prayer. While growing up in Pakistan, the *Jumu'ah* prayer I was familiar with consisted of three parts. It started with long speeches in the local language and lasted for about an hour. It was followed by a five to seven minute *Khutbah* in Arabic and concluded with two *rikahs* of prayer. We were told that angels stand at the gate and enter the names of those coming to the Masjid in their register, but when the *Khutbah* starts; they fold their register and listen to the *Khutbah*. We were also told that the people going in the first hour get the reward of a camel, in the second hour the reward of a cow, in the third hour the reward of a lamb, in the fourth hour the reward of a chicken, and in the fifth hour the reward of an egg. In other words, if we entered the Masjid after the start of the *Khutbah*, our name would not be entered in the register and we would not get the reward of an egg either. We were also told that we must follow proper etiquette during the *Khutbah*. We must sit as if we are sitting in prayer during 'Qa'dah and look straight at the Imam. We were not even supposed to say Salam to others, shake hands, or fiddle with any thing. In order to get full credit for the *Jumu'ah* prayers, I made sure that I made it to the Masjid before the start of the *Khutbah*. It insured my entry into the register of the angels and the reward of at least an egg. If I made it earlier for the reward of a camel, a cow, a lamb, or a chicken, I did not mind dozing off, but made sure that my posture during the *Khutbah* conformed to the etiquettes to get proper credit. It was not that difficult to maintain such a posture for about five to seven minutes.

Ever since I immigrated to the USA, I have seen a different format practiced here. Though the *Khutbah* that we have to listen to is in English, it lasts for between thirty minutes to an hour. I find it almost impossible to maintain the required posture for such a long duration. Since the *Khutbah* has to be delivered while standing, staring at the Imam for such a long time gives me cramps in my neck. Since speeches are mostly dry and monotonous, I find it hard to keep myself awake during the *Khutbah*, though I feel fresh after the nap when the *Khutbah* ends.

Normally it takes about fifteen minutes for me to come to the Masjid, another fifteen minutes to go back to work. I need at least ten minutes to socialize. Since I have only an hour for lunch, that leaves me with twenty minutes for *Jumu'ah* prayer and that is only if I gyped my employer and made my *wudu* at work. Assuming that the Imam will be kind on us and finish the two *rikahs* in five minutes, I can only afford fifteen minutes for the *Khutbah*. With a thirty minute to an hour long *Khutbah*, I am neither getting any reward, not even that of an egg, nor any credit for *Jumu'ah* prayer, because I usually arrive at the Masjid when the *Khutbah* is already well underway. Even once in a while when I succeed in getting to the Masjid before the start of the *Khutbah*, I still get gyped. Since

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most of my friends do not know about the etiquettes of the *Khutbah*, they will come, sit next to me and extend their hands for a greeting. If I do not extend my hand in return, they will label me as rude and impolite and if I do then I will loose the credit for *Jumu'ah* prayer. I am doomed if I do and doomed if I do not.

According to the scholars, the duration of the Prophet^{SAW}'s *Khutbah* took about the same time, it took him to recite *Surah Al-Mursalat*. That should not take more than fifteen minutes. I have tried to convince the Imams to shorten their *Khutbah*. Their response has been that this is the only time they get an audience and they could not let them off the hook in just ten to fifteen minutes. Since our Imams cannot shorten their *Khutbahs*, at least they can adopt the Pakistani format for *Jumu'ah*. Let them give as long of a speech as they want. I will not mind if they start right after Fajr and continue till *Jumu'ah* time. But deliver a short and sweet five to seven minute *Khutbah* in Arabic as they do in Pakistan. This will allow us to get our name entered in the angel's register and we will also allow us to follow the proper etiquette for the *Khutbah*. Please do not tell me: "No, no brother, the *Khutbah* has to be in English so that we can understand what is being said." Well, if understanding is a requirement for our worship, then why not offer the two *rikahs* in English also?

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 degrees in Chemical Engineering and Chemistry and has Professional Engineers license from the State of Texas. His e-mail address is mnajawaid@yahoo.com.