

Sunni by Day, Shia by Night

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May 21, 2011

Living in Pakistan, with it being close to the equator, I had no problem praying my five prayers according to the Sunni tradition. The Isha prayer in summer would conclude around nine. I would hit the sack by ten, would get plenty of sleep, and would be fresh in the morning. Even in winter, the sun would not set till around seven, we would get plenty of time to space Zohr and Asr prayers. Praying in the States has become a yo yo game for me. The Isha prayer time in summer does not start till around ten, which means I cannot go to bed until eleven. I usually get up tired in the morning and yawn all day. In the winter, the time between Asr and Maghrib is so short, by the time I reach home, it is already Maghrib. Somehow I end up missing Asr prayer completely.

Our scholars are of no help either. Since most of them have parachuted from overseas into the mosques and have never held any regular job, they do not understand the complexity of making wudu, praying, and being fully functional at work. For them it is simply a matter of telling my boss that it is time for my prayer. You spread your prayer rug in his office and say Allah-o-Akbar. Doesn't the US constitution give us the freedom to practice our religion anywhere and anytime I want, they ask. According to them why should we be so concerned about the sensitivity of Western culture regarding washing our feet in the sink? It is all a matter of freedom to practice our religion.

Once I asked a scholar who was talking about the importance of fasting in the month of Ramadhan, what should a welder do? His response was he should fast like the rest of us do. After all don't the farmers back home (India/Pakistan) work all day in the sun and still fast. I said you are talking about people who work in 90 to 100 degree temperature, the welders work around thousand degree temperature. If he fasts, he will die out of dehydration. He responded that he should take one month of vacation. I told him that he will then be on vacation without pay for the rest of his life. He responded that he should find a different job. I guess Islam and welding do not mix.

I requested another scholar who used to give long Friday sermons if he can shorten his sermon so that I would not be late for work. His response was the same: This is the only time I have the attention of the faithful. Tell your boss it is time for your prayer. After all doesn't the US constitution give us freedom to practice our religion anywhere and anytime I want.

I asked one scholar who never started prayer on time about the importance of punctuality in Islam. His response was: "There was no clock at the time of the Prophet^{SAW}, I am not obligated to follow the clock."

Having no recourse, I have devised my own solution. The Shia jurisprudence allows for praying Asr prayer immediately after Zohr prayer and Isha prayer immediately after Maghrib prayer. Thus in the summer, I keep my Sunni garb on during the day, but put on the Shia garb after sunset and offer Isha at a time which does not mess up my sleep. In the winter, I keep my Sunni garb in the night, but put on the Shia garb after having lunch. This allows me to and pray Zohr and Asr prayers with a convenient spacing without missing my Asr prayer. I have thus become Sunni by day and Shia by night during the summer and the reverse in winter. Please don't ask me what I do when Ramadhan falls

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during the summer. By having the Shia garb on during the night, I do not have to pray Traweeh, which does not end till midnight. But I never wear the Shia garb in Muharram. I would rather pray Isha around ten in the night, instead of flogging myself.

About the Writer:

The writer has authored "Secrets of Angels, Demons, Satan, and Jinns – Decoding their Nature through Quran and Science," "Atom to Adam – How, When and Where in the Light of Quran, Bible and Science (A Study of Human Origin)," and "Hunting to Cloning – Unearthing Civilizations through Quran" published by InstantPublisher.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 has written quite a few Islamic satires and poems. He is a Chemical Engineer and possesses Bachelor and Master of Science degrees in Chemical Engineering and has Professional Engineers license from the State of Texas. His e-mail address is mnajawaid@yahoo.com. Many of his writings can be viewed at MahmoodJawaid.com.