

What Happened to the Ayatollah

A Mystery Solved

by [Paul Martin Freeman](#) (April 2026)



Inferno (Giovanni da Modena, 1410, detail)

The Ayatollah's disappeared:

It's just as all his friends have feared;
But where he's gone to none can tell,
My guess is though it's down to Hell.

He's with his wives and mullah chums:

They're sitting there with burning bums.
He's asking, "What on earth was that
For goodness sake that knocked me flat?"

"It must have been those bloody Jews—
I guess we'll read it on the news.
I really they wish they hadn't come:
It bloody hurts, my bloody bum!"

Just then the demons bring the tea:
It tastes of moldy camel pee.
"Oh dear," he sighs, "not this as well!"
Then notices the roasting smell.

His bum's on fire! It's all ablaze!
He tries recalling happier days;
But sadly, nothing works for him—
Eternity is looking grim!

He pours the tea upon his bum:
Of all his wisdom this the sum.
But then he blames it on the Jews;
And, feeling better, has a snooze.

Now Larijani's all ablaze
And casting round a worried gaze.
He, too, has woken up in Hell
And noticing the funny smell.

But then he tries a cup of tea
And finds he likes the camel pee.
It's actually a nice surprise:
He must be sure to tell the guys!

He's thinking, Hell is not so bad
And starts to feel a little glad.
At least he can't see any Jews;

Then, smiling sweetly, has a snooze

It's getting crowded down in Hell
With Soleimani there as well.
Khatib has joined the three for tea,
Opining on the camel pee.

The demons, though, are quite confused,
And, frankly, not the least amused.
He's telling them it's really sherry,
And now it seems they're feeling merry.

For yes, the chums are getting plastered!
The Ayatollah, too, has mastered
The way to hold his nose and drink
To get around the awful stink.

But worse, they're just about to sing:
The tea's restored their pep and zing!
The Ayatollah's warbling loudly
With all the rest applauding roundly.

He always wanted as a child
When other kids were running wild
To join a choir and sing at mass
And ever virtuous deeds amass.

But sadly, Mum had told him no:
To Sunday school he couldn't go!
So ended up the Ayatollah
And never wore a lacy collar.

But now he has a chance to sing
And wants the whole of Hell to ring
With all the happiness and joy
Inside him since a little boy.

For all those years he'd struggled hard
When by the job so cruelly barred
From spreading love for humankind
And brotherhood for which he pined.

He leads the others by the hand—
By now they're all completely canned—
They frolic up and down with glee:
That truly is a wondrous tea!

Now, so consumed are all with bliss
Some noises off our heroes miss.
The fiends though have a job to do
And sterling efforts must renew.

For Hell, like any place of work,
Requires employees not to shirk
The projects by the boss assigned
Like skiving off when so inclined.

It also frowns on taking home
Assignments then discussed by phone.
They've found this doesn't fill the quota
Nor help the torture one iota.

Just then the trapdoor's opened wide:
Oh heavens no! Where now to hide!
They look aghast with guilt and fear
And pray to quietly disappear.

The Devil's come—he'll make them pay!
They're not in Hell, he screams, to play!
"Get back upon your burning bums!"
His eyes devour the drunken chums.

Dejectedly, they do as told;
Then suddenly they're feeling old.

They blame it on the stupid booze,
And naturally, those bloody Jews.

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Paul Martin Freeman's book of whimsical verse, *A Chocolate Box Menagerie*, is published by New English Review Press and is available [here](#). This poem is from the author's unpublished work, *The Bus Poems: A Tale of the Devil*.

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