

Story 926 (1981 Tape 8)

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Location: Çıkırıkçı village,
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Date: June 1981

The Snake and Prophet Mohammed

Six hundred years before the time of the Prophet Mohammed, a snake spoke to Prophet Jesus. The snake said, "There are places called Mecca and Medina, and I want to know where those places are. Can you tell me about these places?"

Prophet Jesus asked the snake, "What would you do with such information?"

The snake answered, "I have heard of a person named Mohammed. I shall go there and look for Mohammed

"But there will be 600 years between you now and Prophet Mohammed when he comes," said Prophet Jesus

The determined snake said, "I don't care. I shall go there and await him, whether that takes 600 years or 1,000 years."

Prophet Jesus then explained to the snake how he should go in order to reach Mecca and Medina. The snake then crawled to Saman Mountain¹ and waited 600 years in a cave in that mountain for the coming of Prophet Mohammed. He had been told

¹In Hatay Province, a few miles southwest of Antakya.

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that Prophet Mohammed would come to that very cave

While Prophet Mohammed was fleeing to Medina,² accompanied by Caliph Ebu Bekir and Caliph Ali,³ Ali often slept in Mohammed's bedroll. He did this so that anyone who tried to kill the Prophet would be deceived and kill him instead. When ~~Allah~~ God observed this, he said to his angels, "Would you give up your life for someone else?"

"No, we could not do that," they said

"Go and watch my Caliph Ali," said God. "He puts himself in the bed of the Prophet Mohammed, saying, 'If they want to kill someone, they can kill me.'"

But God had been watching them even before they had fled Mecca. On the evening they were to leave, God had appeared to Prophet Mohammed and said, "Recite the ninth verse of Yasin chapter 7 of the Koran 7,⁴ and then take a handful of

²This was the famous flight (Hegira) from Mecca to Yathrib, later known as Medina, the City of the Prophet. Very unpopular at Mecca, Mohammed was the object of an assassination plot. Learning of this plot, he fled to Medina in 622.

³Ebu Bekir (Abu Bakr) became the first Caliph and Ali the fourth Caliph (successor) to the leadership of Islam after the death of Mohammed. At the time of this action neither could have been called Caliph, for Mohammed was alive and would live for some time to come; furthermore, at this time no successor had yet been chosen.

⁴The Yasin is the thirty-sixth sura or chapter of the Koran.

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soil and sprinkle it on the main street of Mecca. Everyone will then fall asleep, and you will be able to escape unnoticed." It was thus that Prophet Mohammed and Caliph Ebu Bekir and Caliph Ali were able to run away. And then they went to the cave in the side of Saman Mountain.

After they had entered the cave, God caused a great sandstorm to arise. It drifted sand that closed the mouth of the cave. Then a black bush sprang up before the mouth of that cave. A pigeon built a nest in that bush and hatched her eggs there. A spider spun a strong web across the mouth of the cave, and that spider said to the pigeon, "No one in the entire world can break my web!"

The snake which had been waiting for 600 years for the arrival of the Prophet Mohammed made seventy holes through one of the inner walls of the cave. He said, "I have made seventy holes so that I will be sure to be able to see the holy face of the Prophet Mohammed. Even if they seal many of these holes, there will surely be one left through which can see his face."

When the three men arrived at the cave, Caliph Ebu Bekir was worried that poisonous insects might come from those holes and sting the Prophet. He therefore took off his clerical gown,⁵

⁵The narrator here used the word lata, a special clerical gown once worn by Moslem theologians and high-ranking Moslem religious leaders.

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tore it into strips, and stuffed those strips into the holes to plug them. Since he had only sixty-nine strips, one hole remained unplugged.

When they lay down to sleep, Ebu Bekir placed his heel over that one unplugged hole in order to seal it off. But snake was desperate to see the holy face of Mohammed, and to do so now, it bit Ebu Bekir's heel. It bit out a piece of flesh the size of a bird's egg. Prophet Mohammed's head was lying on the lap of the older Ebu Bekir as they slept. When the snake bit Ebu Bekir's heel, the Caliph did not want to move lest he awaken the sleeping Mohammed, but the pain of his heel was so great that tears flowed from his eyes

When some of these tears dripped on the face of the sleeping Mohammed, he awakened. Seeing Caliph Ebu Bekir weeping silently, he asked, "Why are you crying?"

"That snake bit my heel," Ebu Bekir answered.

When Prophet Mohammed rubbed the bleeding heel with spittle, the wound was healed at once. He then asked the snake, "Why did you bite the heel of Ebu Bekir?"

"My dear Resullah,"⁶ said the snake. "I was told 600 years ago that someday I would see your holy face here, and that is the reason I came to this cave. I waited 600 years

⁶ Resullah means the last messenger of Allah. In the Moslem world Mohammed is always viewed as the last of the Prophets.

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to see your holy face, but Caliph Ebu Bekir plugged all of the holes I had made for observing you. The only hole that I could open was the one covered by his heel, and that is the reason I bit his heel. I did not mean to hurt him. I wanted only to see your face clearly.

Prophet Mohammed then stroked the snake's back, and snake began to smell clean and fragrant. They say that there are still certain kinds of snakes at Medina that have a very fragrant smell