

Story 1842 (1984 Tape 6)

Narrator: Ali Çiftçi, farmer; by this time he was in late 60s or early 70s

Location: Çıkırıkçı village, Sarıkaya kaza, Yozgat Province

Date: March 1984

Helpful Animals Aboard the Ark

Noah lived for 950 years, and during that time he converted many people to the Moslem faith.¹ Those who opposed his efforts to make such conversions captured Noah, wrapped him in felt, and beat him. They said, “You are trying to lead us off the true path, the right way.” (They thought that they already knew the right way.) It is said that his abuse from those people caused him to suffer and cry a great deal. It was because of that that they called him Noah, though his correct name was Şakir.²

¹Moslems usually make all of the prophets of the Bible Moslems retroactively. Inasmuch as they consider almost all benevolent characters in the Bible prophets, they thereby create scores of “Moslems” who lived 600-2,000 years before the birth of Islam!

²There is no obvious reason why the word Nuh (Turkish for Noah) should suggest suffering. Nor have we found any authority for the claim that his name was ever Şakir. It appears neither in the Encyclopaedia of Islam nor in al-Tabari’s Universal History.

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Noah took aboard the ark two of each kind of animal, but more than that number of rats crowded aboard. This presented a problem that could be dangerous to that ship. Rats like to gnaw, and if they gnawed holes in the hull, then that ship might sink. Noah said a prayer in which he asked Allah what to do about this situation. Allah spoke to Noah, saying only, "Stroke the back of the lion."

When Noah stroked the lion's back, the lion coughed—hik!—and a cat dropped out of his nose. The cat caught all of the extra rats and cleaned out the place on the ark where they had gathered. Noah was so pleased with the cat's work that he stroked its back, and that caress became a kind of blessing, for ever since that time cats have always landed on all four of their feet. No matter how it may fall or be thrown, a cat never strikes its back against the ground.

Soon after the ark began to float, another problem arose. The accumulation of excrement from all the animals aboard began to create a stench that was intolerable. Again Noah asked Allah what should be done about this problem. Allah answered, "Stroke the back of one of the elephants."

When Noah did as he had been ordered and stroked the back of the elephant, the elephant coughed—hik!—and a pig dropped from its

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tail. The pig at once began to eat the excrement. It ate all of the filth in the ship and made it clean.³

[Ahmet Uysal: “I once heard that the snake also did something beneficial on the ark. It was said that a rat had actually chewed a hole in the hull of the ship, allowing water to enter. The snake stuck its tail in the hole and kept the water out. Is that part of the ark story?”]

Narrator: “Yes, it is. —Your mentioning the snake reminds me of a different story about a snake. It is not part of the account of the ark.”]

³Inasmuch as there was aboard the ark a pair of each kind of animal, there was no need to have a cat and a pig produced by divine intervention. Nevertheless, the incidents involving the lion and the cat and that of the elephant and the pig have been incorporated in the ark legend from very early times. The historian al-Tabari (839-923) included that material in his Universal History. See English translation of al-Tabari's work (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), Vol. I, p. 375.