

Story 1518 (1981 Tape 9)

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by now in his mid-60s

Location: Çıkırıkçı village,
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■ İbrahim /Abraham/ and His Family

İbrahim had an uncle named Acer¹ who was Nimrod's² treasurer. That same Acer made idols representing pagan gods and sold those idols

At the beginning of one year, geomancers told Nimrod that in reading their signs³ they had discovered that during the coming year there would be conceived a child who would grow up to be his enemy. In order to protect himself, Nimrod had all the families in the land separated. The women and children were to remain in the villages and cities, but all of the men were taken to a camp in the mountains where they were kept for the full year. Only Acer, whom Nimrod trusted,

¹Not further identified

²Nimrod is mentioned, just passingly, only thrice in the Old Testament (Genesis 10:9; 1 Chronicles 1:10; Micah 5:6). He is given more space in Moslem myth, and accounts of him have been transmitted in the Moslem oral tradition.

³Remil is a form of numerology used for acquiring information, including information about the future. The practice of remil involves the casting upon the ground of a number of small cubes (like dice). On each of the six sides of each cube there is a letter or number. Whatever letters and numbers face upward after a casting of the cubes supposedly provide coded information to adepts at this kind of numerology. In rural areas of Turkey, sheep knucklebones (aşıklar) are the ready-to-hand cubes which are marked and then used for remil.

Story 1518

was allowed to enter the villages or cities that year. This woman who was to become Ibrahim's mother married Acer during one of his trips to the capital city, and as a result, the Blessed Ibrahim fell into his mother's womb.

When the time came for this woman to give birth to Ibrahim, she was taken to a cave. (Almost all prophets were born in caves. Gabriel brought from Heaven a cradle and all of the other things needed for the care of a baby. Because of their fear of Nimrod, they did not leave that cave for seven years

One day after he had reached the age of seven, Ibrahim said, "Mother, let me go outside and see what the world is like." He went out during the evening and was amazed at all of the bright stars he saw in the sky. "Oh, those are my gods," he said. Shortly after that, the moon arose, and then the stars lost some of their brightness in the presence of this new heavenly body. "Oh, that is so much better that I shall make that my god," he said. At dawn the moon descended and the sun arose. Ibrahim said, "Oh, that is the best of all! That will be my god." But when the sun set and the stars and the moon appeared again, he said, "There must be only one God /Allah/ who has created all these things, and that one Allah I shall worship." From that time onward he believed in only that one Allah

Story 1518

As you know, when he grew up, İbrahim went to Egypt after having survived the bad treatment of Nimrod. Nimrod had thrown him into the fire, but he had survived unharmed. Nimrod had him thrown into the fire at Urfa. Let me tell you why this happened. İbrahim sold idols of pagan gods which had been made by Acer. He sold them for twice the price at which Acer himself had been selling them. Acer had asked for ten liras apiece for those idols, but İbrahim charged twenty liras. He used to drag the heavy idols along the ground, but those who worshiped those idols were offended by this. When they saw him coming with an idol, they would say, "Don't drag him on the ground! He is our god!"

"If he is your god, then buy him," İbrahim would say, and they would then buy the idol from him at the price he asked.

People in that area used to have religious festivals. İbrahim refused to attend one of those festivals, saying, as an excuse, that he was sick. But after the worshipers had left the house of idols, İbrahim went there and smashed all of the idols. Before leaving, he hung his ax across the shoulders of what was left of the two largest idols, idols of two gods named Lati Menet and Uzza.⁴ When the worshipers

⁴Here, as in "Blood Castle" (ATON No. 927), Ali Çiftçi confuses pre-Islamic Arabian mythology. Lat, Manat, and Uzza were the names of three pre-Islamic goddesses. Their worshipers

Story 1518

returned later to the house of idols, they found all of them smashed and lying on the floor. After wondering for some time about who could have done this, they concluded that it must have been Acer's son, Ibrahim. "He is the only one could have done this," they said to one another. They found Ibrahim and took him to the house of idols, where they asked him, "Why did you break our idols?"

"I did not break them," Ibrahim said. "If you wish to find out who broke them, ask your gods to tell you. The ax is still lying among them." They asked their gods this question repeatedly, but of course they did not answer, for they had been made by human hands of wood, stone, gold, and silver. "If your gods do not tell you who broke these idols, then why should I do so?" he said.

They were certain then that Ibrahim was the one who had broken their idols. They tortured him for a long time and then they forced him to carry wood for forty days. But it were among those who objected to the establishment of Islam at Mecca. Apparently in an effort to placate the wealthy merchants of Mecca, Mohammed included in the Koran reference to these "Three Daughters of Allah" as important intercessors between the Deity and man. Criticism of this later induced him to say that Satan had secretly inserted them in the revelation, and so he withdrew all reference to them but the query, "Do you not know of Lat, Mannat, and Uzza?"--Koran, Chap. 53, verses 19-20. See also Holt, Lamton, and Lewis, eds. Cambridge History of Islam, I-A, 37.

Story 1518

was the mule and only the mule that was supposed to carry wood, and so Allah said to Ibrahim's oppressors, "I shall prevent your mules from being able to reproduce." That is why there are so few mules ⁵

Nimrod's people were going to throw Ibrahim into a large fire, but they could not find anyone who was able to do so. Someone said, "Only a person who has committed incest with his sister can throw him into the fire."⁶

As they were about to throw Ibrahim into the fire, the nightingale said, "I shall throw myself into the fire for love of Ibrahim."

When Allah heard this, He said to Gabriel, "Go down there and find out why my creature the nightingale wishes to throw itself into the fire.

Gabriel asked the nightingale, "What is the matter? should you wish to throw yourself into the flames?"

The nightingale answered, "Allah has 1,001 names, but I know only ninety-nine of them."⁷ If He does not teach me the

⁵The biological explanation of the sterility of mules indicates that it resulted from a mismatch of the number of chromosomes between the sire (a horse) and the mother (a donkey).

⁶This could refer to Acer, who was both Ibrahim's uncle and his father, but the idea is not pursued in the tale.

⁷The ninety-nine "names" of Allah can be found listed in several places. See, for example, Denny, Frederick M., and Abdulaziz A. Sachedina. Islamic Ritual Practices (Chapel Hill:

Story 1518

rest of His names, I shall throw myself into the fire with Ibrahim." Allah taught him those other names, and that is why it is only the nightingale that can sing the 1,001 names of Allah.

When Ibrahim was about to be thrown into the fire, the Keeper of Water⁸ said, "O Ibrahim, if you wish, I can blacken this fire."

Then the Keeper of Grounds⁹ said, "O Ibrahim, if you wish, I shall bury each flame under a mountain of soil.

Ibrahim answered these two Keepers, "I do not need thing. Allah who created me will provide enough protection for me."

Allah then gave this order to the Keeper of Water: not allow Ibrahim to burn, but do not use enough water to chill him." Therefore, when they threw Ibrahim into the fire, the flames were all around him, but Ibrahim sat on the grass, and neither he nor the grass was burned

University of North Carolina, 1983), 93-95. The so-called "names" are not really names but epithets, adjectives such as Merciful, Compassionate, and Patient.

⁸Who or what is this force? The narrator calls it, literally, Treasurer of Waters.

⁹Who or what is this force? Again the word treasurer is applied to him, her, or it by the narrator.

Story 1518

Nimrod was watching from his palace the attempt to burn Ibrahim. Watching with Nimrod was his daughter, who fell in love with Ibrahim. She left the palace and went to the edge of the fire. Ibrahim saw her and called to her, "Throw yourself into the fire!"

"It would burn me," she answered.

"No, it will not burn you if you first say, 'For the love of Allah.'"

The girl, whose name was Sara, jumped into the fire and was as unharmed as Ibrahim was. He later married Sara, but after eighty years of marriage, they still had no children. Then Ibrahim was sent into exile in Egypt. The king of that land wanted to have every beautiful woman that he saw, and Ibrahim and Sara had not been in Egypt long before the king saw and demanded Sara. When Sara went into the presence of the king, he stretched out his arms toward her, but when he did so, his arms became paralyzed. This happened three times, and the third time his arms remained paralyzed. The king then said, "I swear that I shall not do any harm to you if you will pray that my arms be cured of paralysis." Sara prayed, and the king's arms became usable again.

As a reward for her prayers, the king gave Sara a slave girl named Hagar.¹⁰ Sara left the palace with Hagar, and when

¹⁰The form of the name used by the narrator is Hacer.

Story

she returned to her home, she gave the girl to Ibrahim. (During the time that Sara was in the palace, Allah had made all of the palace walls transparent, like glass, so that Ibrahim could see all that went on and would not suspect Sara of any wrongdoing.

Some time after this, Hagar became pregnant with Ibrahim's child. But Sara, who had been unable to have a child for eighty years, became very jealous. She said to Ibrahim, "You are to take Hagar to a deserted place and leave her there!"

Ibrahim took Hagar to the place where the Kaaba¹¹ now stands. There was nothing there at that time, neither house nor source of water. Ibrahim left her there and turned to leave, but at that moment Hagar gave birth to Ismail /Ishmael/. She then called out to Ibrahim, "Where are you going? Why are you leaving me here?" But Ibrahim did not turn back, and she could not follow him very far. Fearing that an eagle might carry off the baby, Hagar returned to where Ismail was lying on the ground. To her surprise, she saw water bubbling from the ground near the place where the Blessed Ismail lay. That water came from what is now called the Zemzem water. She built a wall of stones around this spring, and made it the

¹¹The small square building housing the sacred Black Stone within the walls of the Great Mosque at Mecca.

Story 1518

Zemzem Well that we know today.¹² As Hagar and İsmail sat there, birds were attracted by the water and began circling around that valley

Not far from there was a caravan route. Travelers from many places used to travel along that route. One day a caravan came along, and its drivers noticed the birds circling about. They said among themselves, "Birds never remain at a place where there is no water. Let us go and examine that place. If there is water at that place, we shall camp there for the night." These travelers were from Hagar's tribe, and some of them were her relatives. They went and found the woman, the child, and the water. They were the ones who first established a settlement at Mecca.

İbrahim had promised Allah that he would sacrifice to Him his most valuable possession if he were granted a child. When İsmail had reached the age of seven, Allah reminded İbrahim of this promise in a dream. As soon as İbrahim arose, he sacrificed 100 camels. The following day he sacrificed 100 cattle. And on the third day he sacrificed 100 sheep. But Allah reappeared to him that night in a dream and said, "O İbrahim, your most beloved and valuable possession is İsmail,

¹²Pilgrims to Mecca all drink the holy water of the Zemzem Well. They also usually carry bottles of it back to those unable to make the pilgrimage.

Story 1518

and it is he whom you must sacrifice.

Prior to this time Ibrahim had gone several times to see his son. He now went to Hagar and said, "Feed and wash Ismail; then put kohl¹³ on his eyelids and henna on his hands.¹⁴ I shall take him with me to cut wood tomorrow." He did not tell Hagar that he was going to sacrifice the boy.¹⁵

In the morning Hagar fed Ismail, washed him, and combed his hair; then she put kohl on his eyelids and henna on his hands. She then said to the boy, "My son, do not stray away from your father. Large birds or wolves might attack you and eat you if they found you alone." Ibrahim came for Ismail and held him by the hand as he led him toward the woods.

In the meantime, Satan went to Hagar and said, "Why did you let Ismail go with Ibrahim?"

"Why shouldn't I?" she asked.

"His father is taking the boy to sacrifice him."

"Why should he wish to sacrifice him?"

¹³Kohl is a dark eye-shadowing cosmetic used commonly in Middle Eastern and some Far Eastern lands.

¹⁴Henna is a reddish-brown dye used on hands and hair of women for weddings and other ceremonial occasions.

¹⁵The kohl and henna might have led Hagar to infer that Ibrahim was not simply taking Ismail to cut wood. Those two cosmetics are not used for everyday occasions, and they are usually applied to girls or women. In ancient times, animals to be sacrificed were annointed with oil and perfume, and the cosmetic treatment here seems to be parallel to that custom.

Story 1518

"Allah ordered him to do so," answered Satan.

"If it is Allah's order, then let my life be sacrificed also," Hagar said.

Then Satan went to İsmail and spoke privately to saying, "Where are you going?"

"I am going to cut wood with my father," İsmail replied.

"Your father is not taking you to cut wood but to sacrifice you."

"Why is my father going to sacrifice me? Will a father really kill his son?"

"Allah ordered him to do so."

"If that is the case, then let me be a sacrifice," answered İsmail. He then picked up a stone and threw it at the devil, hitting him in his eye. That is the reason that Satan is blind in one eye.

The father and son proceeded to the place near Mecca where pilgrims now sacrifice sheep. İbrahim said to İsmail, "My son, Allah has ordered me to sacrifice you, and this is the time when I shall obey that order."

İsmail said, "Very well, Father, let me be a sacrifice. Tie my hands and my feet so that I shall not struggle and cause you any difficulty. Also put a cover over my face so that you will not lose your will to use the knife when you look upon me.

Story 1518

Strike with the knife so that I shall be killed with one blow without feeling much pain." As İbrahim was about to strike the fatal blow, İsmail said suddenly, "Stop! Cut loose my hands and feet before you strike!"

"Why?" asked İbrahim.

"So that no one will afterwards be able to say that İsmail had become rebellious and had to be bound by his father."

After cutting loose the boy's hands and feet, İbrahim said, "Bismillahirrahmanirrahim"¹⁶ and tried to slash his son's throat, but the knife would not cut the flesh. Three times he tried to slash his throat with the sharp knife, but the flesh was not even scratched. İbrahim then struck a nearby rock with that knife, and the rock was split into halves. knife," İbrahim exclaimed, "you cut that hard rock! Why did you not cut this soft flesh?"

"O İbrahim, Allah ordered me seventy times not to harm İsmail. How then could I cut him?"

At that moment Allah sent a ram to İbrahim. According to one account, this was the ram of the Blessed Moses, and according to a second story it was one of Cain's lambs which had been

¹⁶"In the name of God, the All-Merciful." A shortened form of the expression (Bismillah) is often used in Turkey, sometimes with a strictly religious intention, sometimes more as an appeal for good luck or success in an undertaking about to be begun. In a sense, it says, "I am beginning this venture with the name of Allah."

Story 1518

fed in heaven for 3,333 years. But whoever had been the owner of that ram, it was sent to İbrahim by Allah to be used as a sacrifice in place of İsmail.

Then İsmail stood up and said, "I was generous, for I willingly agreed to be sacrificed for the love of Allah."

İbrahim said, "I was generous, for I agreed to sacrifice my son for the love of Allah."

But Allah said, "I was more generous than either of you, for I saved one of you from the sorrow of losing his child and the other from the pain of the knife."

They then sacrificed the ram which had approached them. If İbrahim had sacrificed İsmail, then every father might have been obligated to sacrifice his own son--and some fathers could not have done that

Sara gave birth to Isaac, and the other prophets came from the line of Isaac. Our prophets came in this order: İsmail, son of İbrahim; Hattan,¹⁷ son of İsmail; Kenan,¹⁸ son of Hattan; Huriş,¹⁹ son of Kenan; Abdülmelik, son of Huriş; Adbullah, son of Abdülmelik; and finally our Prophet /Mohammed/, the son of

¹⁷Not listed in the Encyclopaedia of Islam, where Hattin is listed as the burial place of Prophet Shu'ayb, character in ATON tale 1521.

¹⁸Not listed in the Encyclopaedia of Islam.

¹⁹Not listed in the Encyclopaedia of Islam.

Story 1518

Abdullah. I do not know the other prophets who came from the
line of Isaac