



Chapter VI

Accordingly, Yunus arrived in Joppa (a sea port of the kingdom of Israel, and a part of modern-day Tel Aviv). His injured arm had stopped aching by this time. The captain and the company on *Allah's Ark* earned profound wealth from the profits on maritime trade as well as the passenger shipping, so that they were enabled to provide Yunus with substantial amount of bonus for his journey ahead. (Incidentally, on her return voyage, *Allah's Ark* was loaded mostly with lumber of Lebanon cedar along with accessories of gold, various spices and parchment to be sold mainly in Tarshish, where the prices of them were the highest than elsewhere in the course. Yunus did not approve of their trading in slaves.)

As Yunus went ashore, he wished Allah's blessing upon all the sailors and the passengers on *Allah's Ark*. He took with him an oarsman called Migel, who was also a Hebrew and had been captured by a pirate group, put on sale in Tarshish, and purchased and liberated by the company of *Allah's Ark*. He was a short but sturdy man about the same age as Yunus. The prophet employed him as his guide to Ninuwa, for he had claimed to know the shortest cut to the city, which no one else had ever known. According to him, the shortcut was only useful during the dry seasons for a substantial part of his shortcut would be submerged under water during the rainy season. And the time was now entering one of the dry seasons. So, Yunus decided to take the shortcut with Migel, and promised to pay him the wage daily and give him a bonus when they reached Ninuwa.

After staying at Joppa for two days, during which Yunus purchased enough provision and equipment including an ass in preparation for the inland journey to Ninuwa, they departed the port town with luggage laid on the ass.

At each Israeli town on the way, Yunus was welcomed by the people, for he was a renowned prophet, despite his unbearably fishy smell resulting from the submarine voyage in the whale. He was asked to stay longer by townspeople, but did not spend more than a night at each stop.

One sunny and hot day, he and Migel left a highland town called Bethel, and as they went down to a flat land they came across an old man seated under a leafy terebinth. The man had an ass, which looked as old as he. It appeared the man was too tired to continue his journey, nor was the ass seeming strong enough to continue it either. So, Yunus asked the old man if he needed any help, if he was not hungry or thirsty, and said if so he would give him some food and drink. But, the old man said that he had enough food and water but not the appetite to take any. According to him, his ass had stopped in the shade of the terebinth and would not move ahead, and therefore the old man had gotten down from it and sat in the shade to rest too.

Yunus again asked the old man if there was anything he could do for him or his ass and which way he was going. Then, the old man said that he was a prophet of Allah, and was returning from Judah to his home in Bethel. He had been to Judah on an errand ordered by Allah concerning a certain deceased prophet of Judah. Then, he asked Yunus what he was and where he was going.

Yunus replied that he too was a prophet of Allah, and was bound for Ninuwa to prophesy the destruction of the city and its citizens but for their repentance.

Upon this, the old prophet cried out, "Blessed are you, my brother, for you have a most worthy mission to perform! Of all prophecies, there is none like prophesying against the destruction of the people. How blessed you and your assistant are! You are chosen as saviors of people, rescuing hands of Allah, the Almighty. Hasten to Ninuwa, my sons, and save the citizens by legions, and your reward shall be great!"

Then, Yunus said to the old man with a concerned look, "But you look too weak and pale to get back to your hometown without an assistant. Let us first bring you back to Bethel."

Upon this, the old prophet said, "Never ever do that! Never retreat even a step back, but go straight to Ninuwa, and do not even slacken your pace to look back as you go!"

"The sun is hot and you and your ass do not look strong enough to go up to Bethel," said Yunus. "I can at least have this Migel accompany you until you reach the gate of Bethel, if not your home, how about that?"

"No, my friend, that means a delay for you. You have a mission far greater than my life - a mission I envy more than anything else. The sinful Ninuwans are waiting for you to help them repent from their sins. If I delay your progress a moment I will be damned!" the old man began to cry. "I did a wrong to the deceased prophet from Judah I mentioned and this very situation here reminds me of what I did to him. I brought him back to Bethel when he was going away from it, which proved to be his death. No, my friend, it is better for me to stay here and perish, if it is my doom; I know I deserve it justly. No, never give me a hand and escort me back to Bethel, or you shall have a similar doom as mine, and I shall be doubly damned!"

Then, Migel said to the old man, "My father, we need to rest here for a while anyway. So, let us sit by you and see if we can give you some consolation."

Then, the two sat by the old man and shared him food and drink, but he did not take anything, not even water. Nor did the old man's ass take anything.

Then, Yunus asked the old prophet about the deceased prophet from Judah to whom he had said he did some

wrong. Thus, the aged prophet told the following story:

About a year ago, this prophet from Judah heard word of Allah and went to Bethel to prophesy it. There were many pagan shrines on the hill-tops in and around the city of Bethel, and Jeroboam king of Israel had the people sacrifice to the statues of golden calves enshrined in them, instead of going up to the house of Allah at Jerusalem in Judah. Upon arriving in the city the prophet from Judah came directly to a shrine where the king was practicing a ritual of sacrifice. Then, the prophet cried out and prophesied that a time would come when Allah would have the priests of the hill-shrines sacrificed upon these altars. The king in anger pointed to him from the altar and ordered the guards to seize the prophet. But immediately his hand pointing at him became paralyzed so that he could not even draw it back. The king appealed to the prophet to pacify Allah and pray for him that his hand might be restored. The prophet did as he was asked. Then, the king's hand was restored and was free to move. The king invited the prophet to his home for dinner and a present. But the prophet said, "I will eat and drink nothing, o king, for Allah's command to me was to eat and drink nothing in this paganized place." Then, he left Bethel on an ass. But, sons of the old prophet (who is telling this story) heard about this in Bethel and reported it to his father. Thereupon the prophet rode on an ass and went after the fasting prophet. He found the prophet seated under a terebinth (the same one under which this story is being told). The old prophet found the man weak and starving, for he had not eaten for a long while. So, he asked him to come to his home in Bethel and eat with him. Then, the prophet from Judah rejected the offer, saying to him the same thing he had told king Jeroboam. To this the prophet of Bethel said, "I also am a prophet, as you are, and an angel commanded me by the word of Allah to bring you home with me to eat and drink with me." This was a lie, but meant for the good of the prophet from Judah for he had thought that the prophet would starve to death before he reached the next town on the way to Judah. "Besides," added the old prophet, "we never eat gentile food in my house." The man from Judah went back with him and ate and drank in his house. While they were still seated at table the word of Allah came to the host prophet, and he cried out to the prophet from Judah, "Alas! this is the word of Allah: 'You have defied my word and have not obeyed my command; you have come back to eat and to drink in the place where I forbade it; therefore your body shall not be laid in the grave of your forefathers.'" The following morning, the prophet from Judah left Bethel to go back to Judah on his ass. As he went on his way, a lion met him and killed him, and his body was left lying in the road. The ass was not attacked and stayed with the carcass of its master, while the lion also stood by it. A traveler saw this scene and brought this news to Bethel. When the old prophet heard it, he cried out in tears, "Alas, it is the prophet from Judah who defied the word of Allah, and this is to fulfill the word of Allah which I prophesied to him!" Then, he set out on his ass and found the body of the prophet from Judah lying in the road by the terebinth (the same one under which this story is being told) and the ass and the lion were still standing by it. Thanks to the presence of the lion, the body did not seem to have been touched by any other creature of prey. Then the old prophet got off his ass, lifted the body of the deceased prophet and laid it on the back of the ass of the latter, whereupon the lion left the place. Then he brought the body back to Bethel to mourn over it and bury it. He laid the body in his own grave and he and his sons mourned for him.

The prophet said to his sons that when he died they should lay his bones beside those of this prophet.

The old prophet sighed, rested awhile and continued his story:

One year passed, and the old prophet heard voice of Allah again and followed it, that is, he went on his ass together with the ass of the deceased prophet to Judah to visit the family of the deceased prophet so as to report to them about his death and to restore the ass belonging to the deceased prophet to his bereaved family.

“And, my brothers, here I am, a miserable minor prophet, on my way back from this errand of Allah,” said the old man. “But do not let me keep you any longer for you have a great and urgent errand to run for Ninuwans. I hear they skin war prisoners alive and sacrifice children to ancient gods. Do hurry and stop them from doing evils!”

Yunus and Migel said goodbye to the old man and left there. But when they had gone less than half an hour they came across a strange but familiar scene – a scene they had imagined not long ago. They saw in a distance a lion and an ass standing by the road; soon they also saw a small human body lying between them, partly hidden behind the grass, all of the three flickering and floating off the ground like ghosts. When the two travelers came closer to them, the effect of road mirage disappeared, and they found the human body was blood stained, and it was the body of an old man dead. Yunus wondered if he was not seeing ghosts, for the dead man was none other than that old prophet he had said goodbye to only half an hour ago. While he was wondering about the scene, Migel went and stood by the body, not seeming to be afraid of the lion. Then, he gave the ass food and water and, while it was refreshing itself, he carefully put the body of the old prophet, doubled and well-balanced, over the back of the ass. When the ass finished eating and drinking, it started walking in the road toward Bethel and, seeing this, the lion also left there, slowly walking and ascending toward a distant forest, flickering off the ground. Yunus now knew that what he saw under the terebinth *was* the ghost – the old man and the ass, a doppelgänger in the case of the latter.

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