



Adventures
of Yunus, a
Prophet of
Allah



Chapter VI

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On his way to Ninuwa, Yunus did not fail to visit Samaria hoping to meet his family. But there he could not meet them; his relatives told him that his wife and son had been taken to Ninuwa as captives during an attack a couple of years earlier. Accordingly, Yunus again declared he would not prophesy for Ninuwans, nor that he would help Ninuwans avoid their destruction. But, nonetheless he and his guide Migel hurried toward Ninuwa so Yunus could find and rescue his family as soon as possible.

Despite his impatience, it took them much longer to reach Ninuwa from Joppa than his voyage from America to Joppa. Soon after departing Samaria, they were attacked by bandits on horses, and lost most of their belongings. Yunus could only keep the ass and the emptied sheepskin bag. He became penniless and said to the companion that he could no longer pay him wages and that he could only give the ass to him. The guide agreed to accept the ass as the complete payment for his guiding him through to Ninuwa. Thus, from there Migel rode the ass and Yunus walked.

The next day Yunus bathed in a lake to cool and wash his body, but a large fish came to catch him. It started swallowing his left foot. Yunus yelled out for help to the companion, who jumped in the lake and dragged the prophet ashore together with the fish. He hit the fish's head with a stone and let it give up Yunus's leg. They killed and cut it into pieces, and cooked and salted the meat. Moreover, Migel singled out the fish's gall bladder and preserved it for medicine in Yunus's sheepskin bag. The fish meat lasted a couple of days and prevented the two travelers from starving. However, Yunus's left foot, which had been swallowed by the fish, began to swell, was not healed even by the medicine.

Then, they met a caravan, consisting of twenty-odd men, bound for Ninuwa and were recruited in it as Migel knew the better way to Ninuwa. The caravan's chieftain lent them a camel and provided free meal to them; so Yunus rode the camel while Migel was on the ass, in the forefront of the caravan, guiding it. However, as they were traveling on a flat highland, a tornado rose from lowlands and passed by them with a sandstorm. The path they were taking were soon hidden by the sand brought and left by the storm and they were lost. Then, the tornado turned back and approached them again; so they hurried down in a valley to avoid it. They pitched tents firmly and waited for the storm to pass over them. Only after sunset the storm was gone. They came out of the tents and found the landscape around was changed and the path and the rocks by which they had come down the valley were seen no more. They decided to stay there for the night.

During that night, Migel observed the stars and found out which valley they were in and in which direction they should go. Thus, the next morning at dawn they traveled downstream the dried sandy river of the valley.

As they went half an hour, they came across a ruin of what seemed to have been an ancient fortress of some bandit group. Migel said he had never heard of such a fortress existing there. Actually, the ancient fortress had been buried under sand for ages but was exposed as the tornado of the day before, which crossed the valley there, took away the sand covering it. The tornado also took away enough sand from the bottom of the valley so that a river bed was exposed and a new stream began to flow alongside the ruin. The caravan stopped there to take enough water for the men and the camels.

Hoping to find valuables in it, some men of the caravan entered the fortress through a dilapidated wooden gate made in the wall, but found themselves in a single relatively narrow passage, which was walled on both sides and about fifteen meters long, and at the end of which it separated into two passages at right angles to the right and left, each passage being of the similar make as the first passage. The walls of the passages were made of stones and too flat to climb.

The sun rose high enough to reach the bottom of the valley and showed it clear to the men entering the fortress that they had stepped into a maze. The chieftain of the caravan ordered that they should be careful and should not go deeper into the maze lest they be lost in it. But already some were entrapped in it and by attempting to return to the gate, went farther from it, if not in direct distance.

A search was made to rescue them. Two rescuers were sent, one to the right and the other left from the first fork of the passage, each one tied to a long string so they themselves would not get lost. When they found a lost one, they sent him back along the string. Those rescued did not fail to bring back things of value such as a handsome sword and armors which they found lying on the passages of the maze. (Weapons, armors and stones had been placed on top of the walls [by the ancient inhabitants of the fortress] ready to be used when intruders entered the maze. But most of them, heavier ones, had been blown down from the wall while the lighter ones together with the sand were pulled away from the fortress by the tornado that passed there the day before.) Now, a few intruders had gone too deep for the rescuers' strings to reach and they were shouting. One was saying he had come to a shrine in a small plaza and found in the shrine a golden statue of calf; another was saying he had reached a storehouse full of ancient goods. This triggered the caravaners one after another to rush in the maze following the strings, for the voices sounded or echoed as if the lost were only a few steps away.

Thus, the caravan was trapped in this ruin, and it appeared it would be a long while before all the men in the maze could come out of it and resume their journey to Ninuwa. So, Yunus and Migel, eager to reach Ninuwa

as soon as possible, said to the chieftain of the caravan, who was the only one of the caravaners that resisted the temptation to rush into the maze, “Please call your men to come out soon and continue our journey, or we shall have to go without you.”

To this, the chieftain replied, “Yunus and Migel, my friends, I am not their commander. I am only authorized to judge when a dispute arises among them such as about which member is the right owner of a property. If one wants to leave the caravan he can do it anytime freely, and he can rejoin us anytime he wishes. And it appears they are now more inclined to stay here rather than going to Ninuwa, for we seem to be able to gain more wealth here than at Ninuwa far from here. You may stay with us here or leave us and continue your trip to Ninuwa.” To this the prophet and his assistant said they would not stay with the caravan.

So, the chieftain continued: “If you will go, you may need some weapon during your long lonely journey; so take with you some which my sons found here. You can also pick some armors too. And that camel,” he said to Yunus, “the one you have been riding. You will need that too. It’s also a present from us for your precious help to bring us to this ancient ruin.”

By then the caravaners inside the maze seemed somehow to have reached the plaza or the storehouse, respectively, for they were heard praising the golden statue of calf or the various precious items they had come to possess.

Migel went into the maze and took the right fork of the passage and went as far as the lifeline string could guide him. Then, he shouted into the passage beyond the end of the string, “Fellows, are you not going to Ninuwa?!”

To this the caravaners only laughed. Migel continued, “Then, we will leave you here, for we must go to Ninuwa without any more delay. But you ought to come out of the maze before dark, if you can, and stay in the tents, or vultures and nocturnal animals may come to devour or take away your precious food stock, without which you cannot survive in the wilderness. Remember, this place is in the valley with a live stream. Animals would smell the water and come down after dark to drink and they may even enter the maze and harm you.”

To this a voice of one man came, saying, “We have a wealth of weapons here and shields too to fight animals. As for food, we can hunt and eat them.” It appeared from his manner of speech that they had also found wine, for this man was obviously drunk and had become over-optimistic.

Then, Yunus, who had come to the end of the other lifeline string said loudly, “My friends, remember that you are yet in the midst of the wilderness too, a great maze created by Allah, where no wealth can buy you an

escape. How can you hope to go out of the wilderness without the help of Migel, the only person among us that can lead us without going astray. Follow our advice and try to come out as soon as you can!”

Then, the occupants of the maze were heard to start discussing among themselves and even quarreling. Some said they should try to get out of the maze immediately for now; others said they would be safer in the maze; to which one said the maze was open to attacks by vultures; then another said there were enough room in the storehouse to hide from the vultures; still another said that if they covered their bodies in armors and had a sword or the like, they could defend themselves against the animal attacks. Then, the discussion died away and the men seemed to have resumed their contest of plundering the plunder of the ancient plunderers.

So, Yunus and Migel went out of the maze and started preparing for departure from the camp. Meanwhile the chieftain brought the camel laden with armors to them. But, at that moment, a shout was heard from the maze, saying, “It’s me that found the calf you are holding! So it’s mine and you better give it to me now!” And to this the accused one shouted back, saying an opposite thing. Similar quarrels followed as to who the right owners were of certain respective things. At this the chieftain ran into the maze, although Yunus tried to stop him. The chieftain put a coin at each corner where he turned, after he had passed the end of the lifeline string, so as to show himself later which turns he should retrace to come out of the maze.

A few vultures came and started circling above the fortress. Then, the clamor in the maze was hushed by a howling of a wolf far away. After a moment or two, sounds of men running and shouting and crying started. Soon, sounds of metals hitting upon metals started with shouts and groans. The turmoil continued and pitiful voices of “Help me!” echoed. Then, only groans and crying were heard. Migel and Yunus finished packing, but lingered to see if anyone would come out at the gate, until when the valley was wholly in the shadow of the sun. Then, Yunus collected wood pieces which had been parts of the gate and put them at the foot of the gate and made a bonfire there so as to show the caravaners where the gate was as well as to prevent animals from entering the maze at least for a while after their departure.

Then, a sound of a slow foot step approached out of the maze. The prophet said, “I am here. Come out, my friend.” But no voice came to him. Then, a man appeared in the passage ahead of Yunus. The light of the bonfire showed that the man was the chieftain and he was holding a statue of golden calf in his folded arms. He was oddly aslant forward. Yunus ran to him. The caravaner said nothing and, handing the statue to Yunus, fell with his face on the ground, when a handsome lance, thrust deep in his back, flung up behind him. He was dead. The calf was heavy in the hands of the prophet although it was small.

Yunus, looking at the statue of calf, said to himself, “Ah, how strange it is that only the golden calf that cannot move a step could come out of the maze intact!” Angrily he threw it in the bonfire, added more wood to it, and saw the calf melt down onto the ground.

Migel and Yunus dug a hole and buried the body of the chieftain together with what had been the golden calf. “Indeed,” said Yunus, “greed provides no escape for those indulging in it.” “It’s a maze in which,” added Migel, “all are possessed by their own possessions.”

Then, the two men called into the maze and asked if anyone was trying to come out; but no reply came from the darkening maze, which was now loud with the noises of the vultures fighting for corpses.

After availing themselves of some of the food stock left by the caravaners, the two, now both in ancient armors, left the camp, Yunus on the camel, holding the lance upright in his right hand, and short but sturdy Migel on the ass, inspecting the stars for navigation. The new moon rose above the valley ridge, and its sharp light together with the starlight showed the two travelers the beautiful dune ahead, on which the elongated pale shadows of them were cast.

On the next day they reached another valley where the shortest cut Migel had mentioned started. This passage mainly consisted of a dried river in the bottom of the valley. So they went down to the floor of the valley and traveled along the dried bed of the river downstream. Thus, having arrived in the area familiar to Migel, they now traveled only daytime.

At a place Migel halted his ass, and pointed to a pit and said to Yunus, who was following him on the camel: “From here, you should never step aside the path I am taking, for there are plenty of pits like that one in this valley. They are bitumen pits, and many are hidden under plants or sand surface. Once a person falls in a deep one, it would be most likely the end of him for usually it is impossible to pull the body out of the sticky bitumen or tar. Only if the pit is shallow you may be rescued.” He also said that owing to this dangerous passage, people had avoided entering this valley.

Migel, although he had knowledge of many of the risky points in this valley, borrowed the lance from Yunus to sound the path to avoid the pits, just in case.

When they came to a turn of the valley, they saw a bird of prey circling above; then, they heard a pitiful crying of an animal. They went round the turn and found that it was a mountain cat trapped in a large pool of tar. In front of its blood-stained mouth was a dead body of its prey, a horned deer, more than two thirds of which was submerged in the tar. The cat was trying hard to pull its legs off the tar, but the more it stirred the deeper it sank. Then, the bird of prey swooped down and landed on the bloody carcass of the deer. “Aha!” Migel said, “here comes another to perish.” The cat growled to scare away the thief; the big bird tried to fly away but already its talons were dipped in the tar and could not be taken off. Migel said, “They will all perish. If not from drowning, from starvation.”

Thus, Yunus went with much care following Migel closely until they came out of the valley of tar before dark.

The next day, another great storm came and this time it was a storm of locusts, which lasted nearly a week. They could not see more than several meters ahead even at daytime. But, Yunus and Migel kept going on slowly but steadily along the wadi, for the guide could know which way to go when the wadi branched into two ways or so. When they ran out of food, they caught and burnt the locusts and ate them. As for water, if they dug the dry bed of the wadi to make a hole with a sufficient depth, and waited long enough, they could acquire some water in it.

When they came out of the valley the wadi disappeared, for the sand carried here by the sandstorm had buried it and there was no water to drink. The swarms of locusts had devoured all the vegetation that grew in the wilderness. The locusts rested on the bodies of the two travelers but thanks to the armors, they were not so much harassed by this. However, the flying insects sprayed dark liquid in the air as they flew, and Yunus got it in his eyes repeatedly and it kept hurting his eyes. Finally Yunus came to lose his eyesight and asked the companion to stop.

Migel inspected his eyes, and found they were covered with a white film; he took out the gall bladder from Yunus's sheepskin bag and squeezed some of the pasty material from the bladder onto the tip of his left forefinger. Then, he spat on it and kneaded it between the forefinger and the thumb. When the paste became fluid enough, he applied it to Yunus's eyes. In several minutes, the white film on his eyes hardened and warped and came off the eyes, whereupon Yunus recovered his vision. Now, however, they decided to camp there until the locusts were gone.

Then, on the next morning Yunus was awakened by the braying of the camel and saw through the crowd of the locusts, which had gotten much thinner now, a green hill in a distance. It had a truncated pyramid-like shape with a dazzling white statue standing on top of it. Yunus knew what the hill was. It was the famous hanging garden of Ninuwa. It was only about a couple of kilometers from where Yunus was. It was strange that only the garden maintained the greenery despite the attack of the locusts.

“Migel!” shouted Yunus, “we are already at Ninuwa!” But then he found the ground on which his companion had been sleeping was vacant. Nor could he find the ass. They seemed to have gone away while he was asleep. He was left with the camel, which he had planned to give Migel as the bonus when they got to Ninuwa. There were not even foot steps to show which way they had departed.

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