



Adventures
of Yunus, a
Prophet of
Allah

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Adventures of Yunus, a prophet of Allah (finale)

Chapter VIII

Yunus remembered that money was needed to enter the city and that he was penniless; but he dared to proceed, for he believed he could go through the gate if it was the will of Allah the Almighty.

As he climbed the passage that led to the nearest gate of the city, a group of soldiers on horses came out of the gate at a trot and stopped Yunus. The captain of them asked him, "Is it peace?" They had seen Yunus in armor and carrying the handsome lance and thus thought him a herald from a foreign nation. Yunus replied, "Do you call it peace while Allah the Almighty sends me in armor and armed with a weapon?" Upon this, one of the soldiers recognized him and said to the others that he was none other than Yunus, the prophet now respected among Ninuwans. They promptly offered to escort him into the city. Yunus followed them while the citizens watched on the walls, admiring the lance and the armor. At the gate Yunus was disarmed, and the citizens were happy to discover that it was Yunus, and welcomed him, for they were now mostly repentant and had been desiring to meet him again. Only Yunus's repugnant smell prevented them from approaching too close to him.

His camel, ancient lance and armor were sold by auction and he gained no less than seven silver coins for them, five for the lance, one for the armor, which was incomplete, and one for the camel.

He was thus able to buy new things to replace his worn-out things such as sandals, clothes and sheepskin bag. He also purchased medicines to heal his swollen left foot. His hair and beard were overgrown and he had them trimmed. But no perfume or the like he purchased could deodorize his repulsive fishy smell.

Citizens wanted him to restart prophesying in public, which he refused, and he declared that he would never say a word of his prophecy until he could find his family safe and free. Citizens promised to find them for him.

He went back to the hermitage, which had been preserved in honor of him, only to find that it was newly occupied by a wooden carved image of himself, standing on a wooden pedestal. Some followers already had deified him and were accepting offerings to the idol. Yunus burnt the statue and the pedestal as soon as he could make fire in the garden. He declared that there is no god but Allah.

Soon the citizens came to notice that his left foot was swollen and colored in purple, a mark that was often found with a person attacked by a kind of giant fish that lived in rivers and lakes in the district, and together

with his fishy smell coming from his whole body, they concluded and rumored that the prophet had been swallowed bodily by the great fish. This rumor spread quickly.

Thereupon crafts men started making and selling charms, mascots, reliefs, and small dolls of Yunus accompanied by a big fish. In the market places, the puppet shows featuring the prophet to perform how he was swallowed by the big fish, preserved therein, and spewed therefrom over the dry land, became the most favorite among the adults as well as children. Wealthy parents bought for their children the set of dolls of Yunus and the fish monster to play with, and thus a new kind of idol worshipping spread among younger generations. Yunus of course detested this, and never told about the truth of his fishy smell.

Yunus shut himself up in the hermitage and did not meet the citizens, who would gather and chant his prophecy in front of the closed door. They played musical instruments and many danced to entice him to come out. They brought food and drink for him. However, the prophet did not even show himself through the door. Then, the number of the crowd decreased gradually until there was scarcely anyone to pay visit to the prophet.

No report on whereabouts of Yunus's wife and son was brought to him. Nor any slave declared that he or she was a family member or a relative of Yunus's. The prophet did not hear from the Ethiopian eunuch either. But after Migel's mysterious disappearance, he was not much surprised at this. For he thought, "One comes like a wind and disappears like another."

Yunus became dejected, and got thinner, for he refused to eat anything offered to him as a living god. Herbs and figs he could get from his small garden were all that he ate. He thought he would allow himself to starve and die when these ran out. He was well acquainted with the painfulness of hunger, but the pain assailing his heart from the loss of his family was too greater than that.

As the prophet had alienated himself from the public, the people began to be disillusioned about him and forget about their repentance, and they resumed worshipping other gods and bowing down before idols. They began neglecting words of Allah. Soon they relapsed into even deeper corruption than before, and resumed their evil practices. There was violence at every street every day. The aftermath of the locust storm was also overwhelming people's faith to Allah.

Meanwhile, a boy, the youngest of the baker's sons, who used to deliver in turn to Yunus the bread rationed by the king for the prophet, was now an apprentice to his father, and was learning how to bake bread worthy of being served on the royal table. He came to know that the prophet of Allah had returned to the hermitage about the time people stopped gathering in front of his hermitage, and now he started visiting him again alone, bringing with him some bread each day, although the order for this placed by the king long ago had long been

cancelled. In fact the boy was not even ordered by his father. He did this out of his own wish. He earned the bread by helping his father. It was not until many days later that Yunus would come to know about this generosity of the boy. He had thought that upon his return to the city, the king had restarted rationing him the bread.

The boy was a quiet, shy, slightly-retarded child of fourteen, and he never talked to a stranger. When he first saw and heard Yunus recite his prophecy on one of the days the prophet was yet prophesying in Ninuwa, his heart was struck by the prophet. He instantly adored him and thereafter would follow him wherever he went whenever he was free to do so. He had learnt to sing the prophecy himself too, and in fact it was the only song he could sing. Although he could not recite the prophecy properly, he could sing it reasonably well.

So, he had been eager to meet the prophet again, and as soon as he learnt that Yunus was back at home, he went to see him, hoping to hear him chant the prophecy again.

When he visited the hermitage, with a loaf of bread he had made, for the first time since the prophet's return, Yunus recognized the boy and accepted him together with his bread into the hermitage. But now Yunus had sworn not to chant his prophesy, and he would not do so even for this boy. Nevertheless, the boy continued to visit him with bread, and soon this boy became the only consolation to the prophet. The boy together with his bread gradually caused the prophet to regain the wish to live. Unlike others the boy scarcely cared the bad smell of the prophet.

The boy visited the prophet almost every day after his early morning work as apprentice. Soon Yunus got so fond of him that he found himself tending to be depressed during the days when the boy did not show up, and he had a feeling that when he was thus depressed the boy was too.

On such rare days when the boy did not come, the prophet would become concerned and go out and walk up the street by which the boy would always show up, to see if any trouble might have happened to him. In most instances, it was found on the day after or so that the boy had to run on an extra errand or he had been ill. But on one occasion, the prophet found the boy crying on the street and learnt that he had been robbed of his bag, in which the bread for Yunus had been. From then, Yunus would walk out before the boy's usual arrival time so as to meet him halfway to make sure he was not harassed by any trouble. Yunus would also walk with him on the boy's way home from his hermitage, for the public security had been worsening.

Thus, the two were often seen to walk together, sometimes arm in arm, along the streets that connected the hermitage to the boy's house. They parted when they came in view of the boy's house, and then the prophet would go in search for his family till sunset. He would go to places where he had been informed that slaves were at work.

One day he went into the famous hanging garden, which was one of the architectures constructed by the Ninuwans, resembling pyramid tiered with five terraces, each carrying artfully planted orchards of various leafy trees and flowers of seasons. In all seasons the plants grew so thick that the garden looked like a real hill when seen from afar, and in fact it was even greener than natural mountains and hills in the area, for rain was rather rare there. So, it has been wondered how the hanging garden could remain so thick in green throughout the year. The only clue we have is the king's euphony:

*From above,
the canal water runs
into my pleasure garden;
fragrance in every walkway...
Like a squirrel I pick fruit of delights...*

Historians and archeologists contemplated how it was done. A most recently proposed theory is that Ninuwans had invented the Archimedean helical screw pump far earlier than Archimedes did, and that the pump was used to transport the canal water to the top of the garden. However it may have been done, the evergreen hanging garden must no doubt have convinced enemy nations that the city was invincible against sieges.

In the afternoon of a day when it was open to the citizens, Yunus entered the garden. (The king had opened the garden to the public only after the revolution of the city caused by the heavenly phenomenon which occurred following Yunus's denouncement of and departure from the city. Hence, this was Yunus's first visit to the garden.) The day was sunny but the air was cool and nice.

Yunus walked about the garden, wondering how the garden had survived the attack of the locusts and retained green plants. Many adults were taking siesta in the shades. Children were playing – some climbing trees and others on swings. Several young men were running up the slope competing who would reach the summit first. A man was playing the flute, for which Ninuwans were famous.

Yunus sat to rest on the lawn in the shadow of one of the piers of an aqueduct to listen to the music. Although in shadow, the ground was unusually warm, even warmer than the air. He wondered where this warmth came from.

He heard from above a sound of water running in the conduit. The aqueduct was made of red bricks. Ivies climbed the piers, even up to the conduit of the aqueduct. The small leaves of the ivies were flickering the sunlight as the winds vibrated them. Water was sprinkling from the conduit. Yunus saw that there were thin

vertical slits at intervals between the bricks, which formed the walls of the conduit, and through the slits water was spilling out.

He opened his mouth to drink from the sprinkling water, but a brisk wind fetched and sprayed the water far and wide and a rainbow stood. He stared at it and marveled that however swiftly the spray flew and danced, the thin transparent rainbow stayed fixed in the air.

“Ah, Rainbow!” he sighed. “You come like a phantom and fade out likewise – so faint are you! Yet you never allow anything to budge, vibrate or discolor you! How I wish I were as steadfast as you are!”

Curious to know where the water was coming from, Yunus went up along the aqueduct, which encircled the garden spirally, and he reached the summit terrace. Standing high in the middle was a handsome white statue of the queen for whom the king had built the garden.

The queen was a daughter of a king in a country far away and full of natural beauty, and was married to the king of Ninuwa for the sake of convenience between the kings. She disliked Ninuwa and one day broke wind in the presence of the king, her husband, who asked her what she had meant by that. She replied, “I want a favor from you. You have taken me to live in this dry Ninuwa. I desire you to give me a pool in a garden where I can swim without being seen by anybody, and at night only exposed to the moonlight.” Hence the hanging garden with a secret pool was built.

A path paved with bricks went round the statue, and this path together with the statue formed a sundial. The circular path branched radially into four directions equiangularly, and that path which branched from behind the statue led to a wooden door made in a high brick wall. There were two aqueducts, including the one Yunus had walked along, and they penetrated the wall and were seen no more from the terrace.

As he approached the wooden door, whose edges were overlaid with copper plate, he could hear a sound of water splashing. Yunus tried to open the door, but it was locked. But immediately he heard dogs barking and whining happily and scratching the door from the other side. Then the door opened and an officer ushered him in. There were two watch dogs and their keen noses had not failed to catch the appetizing smell from Yunus, and they had thought that a dog’s meat man had at last arrived, and thus urged the officer to open the wooden door. Yunus’s horrible smell then urged the officer back to his position.

Yunus saw a large copper basin steadied on a raised mound. It was round in shape, the diameter being about six meters, and the height about three meters. It reminded him of the Sea of bronze in the holy temple in Jerusalem, which was supported on the backs of twelve bronze oxen facing outward and which the priests used to wash their hands and feet. But this basin here was steadied by being partly embedded in the raised

mound, and had two lips which were diametrically opposed to each other and from which water was continuously streaming into the upper ends of the two aqueducts, respectively. Four male slaves at the top of a flight of stone stairways made to the mound were busy pouring water from wooden buckets into the basin; they were receiving laden buckets from the ends of four rows of male slaves, who were standing sideways and passing the buckets up the stairways. The emptied buckets were passed backward through another four rows, which consisted of women, old men, and children. They were all sweating heavily. Somehow the area was even hotter than other areas of the garden. Several overseers, including the one Yunus had already met, with a whip were watching the slaves lest they neglect the work.

Yunus, followed by the dogs, walked up the steps formed integrally to the wall and stood on top of the wall. He found that the rows of the slaves extended down into a slanted tunnel with steps. Occasionally steam vapor puffed out from the gape of the tunnel. He also sensed a smell of burnt coal. It was now apparent that huge amount of water was being boiled at the bottom of the tunnel in the garden, from which the steam was coming. "No wonder," he pondered, "the ground is warm everywhere. The garden must be quite hollow inside with tunnels, and the earth must be being watered with the steam from inside! It is also possible that the smell of the burnt coal together with this warmth might have somehow repelled the locusts from the garden."

He moved to a position from which he could see deeper into the tunnel, in which the overseers were holding torches for illumination. Then, he saw, through the vapor, a round white water pool into which water seemed gathering from all directions, some flowing from the walls around and some streaming from a conical stalactite-like formation hanging from the middle of the unseen ceiling, and the other raining from the said ceiling. The wall beyond the pool, which was the only wall he actually could see, was sloped such that it indicated that the room was shaped fairly like a funnel with the constricted bottom being the pool. Four large slaves standing knee-deep in the pool, which was entirely lined with white tiles and sufficiently wide for the four to work without touching each other, were scooping the distilled water with buckets and passing them upward through the four rows of the other slaves to the two-lipped basin for irrigation of the surface of the garden. It was apparent that the tunnel was unbearably hot inside, for overseers came out occasionally, wiping their face and necks with cloth. Then, an old man was carried out and left lying on the ground.

Yunus went down the wall and stood by him so that his shadow shaded his pale face from the sun. To his surprise, he knew him: he was a dove-raiser who lived in his hometown. Yunus had loved to see the man's birds released from the cages and an aviary to form a flock and circle the sky of his town. He still remembered a summer day many years ago when his parents took him to the man's house to buy a dove for him to sacrifice. Young Yunus was showed in his yard and was taught about the difference between turtle-dove and pigeon. "Now," he thought, "he too was brought here as a captive and what a hard work he has been forced to perform!" Yunus then thought this man would know about whereabouts of his family. He called him by his name, but he was unconscious.

Then, Yunus heard a sound of a wooden bucket crash and clatter in the tunnel followed by a crack of a sharp whipping; and a high-pitched scream of a girl echoed in the tunnel. Yunus ran and wanted to go into the tunnel but was stopped by the overseers. The prophet shouted angrily into the tunnel, and called the names of his wife and son. His loud voice echoed and quieted the whipping and the girl's cry, but there was no response to his calling.

Expelled from the backyard, Yunus went down the hanging garden along the aqueduct which was not the one he had followed up previously.

The aqueduct led him down to an artificial waterway, which was not very wide and was barely holding two boats abreast. One boat was full of coal, and the other was empty. A row of slaves were passing buckets full of cinder, which was thrown into the empty boat; a man started sprinkling water over it and vapor rose. The emptied buckets were then filled with the coal from the other boat and were put on the bank.

Yunus walked alongside the waterway, which extended straight in a forest. Soon he came across a row of many female slaves carrying a jar on their heads. Strong smell of hot coal tar attacked his nose. He could not find his wife among them.

Coming out of the forest, he found the waterway branched from the canal, where he used to labor as a slave. Many people were bathing and/or washing clothes. He rested on the bank. From there he could see dark gray smoke puffing from a thick chimney of red bricks rising high from the forest at the foot of the hanging garden.

People at the canal were busy washing and bathing. Some washerwomen were talking to each other loudly and they were complaining the smoke and the soot of the burnt coal, which came occasionally toward the canal bringing with it the smell of sulfur, and made them feel sick and stained the laundry. He learnt from their talk that the coal was burnt only on the days the garden was open to the public. He also heard them say that there was a secret white pool in the garden and it was used by the royal family and their guests for bathing, and that on certain special nights of moonlight it was monopolized by the queen.

Yunus searched for his wife and son among the people on the canal. He went home as the sun set alone.

Now, one day, Yunus came to learn that the bread the baker's son had brought him was not from the king but was a treat of the boy himself. As soon as he met the boy thereafter he tried to pay him from what little he had; but he faced the boy's strong refusal, which he felt was even stronger than his refusal to prophesy in Ninuwa. The prophet promised to the boy that he would never mention it again, but that he would always

thank Allah for the boy's kindness.

Yunus taught things to the boy whenever they were together, in his hermitage or on the streets. He taught who Allah was. He taught how to pray to Allah. He taught why one should not pray to idols, the sun or the moon. (The boy's family was moon worshippers and he loved to watch the moon; he would not miss a moon even at daytime when it was in the sky.) The prophet taught him some basic arithmetic and astrology. He taught him how to play the tambourine. Then, he talked about his adventures. How he was swallowed by the white whale; about the dry sloped corridor in the sea with high transparent walls, which were broken by the whale. He also told him how he could bravely avoid the attacks by the sharks; and about the godly ship, which brought him to the Mediterranean Sea. He described how fish fell like hailstone from the sky when he was starving in the ship, and how he could convert pirates to merchants. Then he talked about his trip through Israel and how he grew up there when he was a child, and then how he prophesied a future of his country for the king unmistakably when he was a young man. But the baker's boy was most amused and laughed loudest when he heard the prophet explain how he sucked warm milk directly from an udder of the she-goat; the boy never got tired of hearing about this scene and would demand to hear it again and again. Soon Yunus too came to sense how funny he really looked then, and would burst out laughing as heartily as the boy did.

The days went by and Yunus's fishy smell weakened day by day. One day, when the boy had gotten fifteen years old a few days earlier, he handed the prophet a roll of bread shaped like a new moon, and said, with some difficulty but with elation, that for the first time his bread, made in the same shape and baked from the same dough as the one he had just given Yunus, had been served on the king's table the day before, and that he had been told by a royal steward that the king's daughters had asked for more. This made Yunus very happy, and he cheered the boy, saying "My son, I am very proud of you! I wish you will have many greater successes! My petit maestro, let's celebrate and thank Allah!"

Then the following day Yunus heard voice of Allah: "Yunus, why do you not prophesy? Can you not see the city is corrupt and full of violence? You are deemed a failure. So, be informed that your days are numbered. So are the days of Ninuwans. I have allowed them to live in consideration of their repentance, which has proved passing. After all, they are not changed and I hear a great outcry over Ninuwa again. Their sin is very grave."

"Alas, my Lord Allah, the Most High!" responded Yunus, "I know I am a failure. But please do not hasten to annihilate Ninuwans yet. I, your servant, am ready to die any time you choose. But if only for the boy – the youngest of the sons of the baker's, your another servant – if only for him, please do not hasten the day of your punishing Ninuwans. Please do not let him die yet, but allow him to reach his old age. So, I beseech you to allow the Ninuwans, however evil they may be (they destroyed my family), to go on living many more days and years if only for the sake of the blameless poor boy!"

“Not many days or years, Yunus, but only a while. Go and prophesy, then, and keep prophesying and keep living a while longer.”

Yunus sat on his knees in jubilation and thanked Allah, the Creator. Then, people of Ninuwa began to see the prophet and the baker’s boy prophesy everywhere every day, rain or shine or even snow, the boy occasionally playing the tambourine and dancing. A rumor arose that Yunus healed a blind man in a street. So, crowds began to collect and follow the couple as they prophesied. Their harmonized singing voices were pleasant to listen to, the melody was attractive, and the rhythm went light; but the words were threatening:

"Incline your ears, o fellow citizens
Of Ninuwa, and hear the words of Allah.
Decline from evil, o fellow inhabitants
Of Ninuwa, and beg pardon of Heav’nly Papa.
Or our days will be numbered on His File,
Whereupon, alas, we can live but a while!"

The End

[All the characters and matters in this book are fictitious and there is no more than remotest relation between the characters, organizations, and places appearing herein and those that really exist.]

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