

Story 2120 (1988 Tape 16)

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A Camel Ride to Immortality

Although the camel was a well-known animal in many parts of Turkey, it was little known or completely unknown in some northern provinces. One day, however, a camel arrived in Erzincan. I do not know why it went there. Had it carried a load of freight there or had it been brought there to be slaughtered? Whatever had caused it to come there, the camel was a strange sight to residents of Erzincan. They asked themselves, "What strange kind of creature is this?"

As the camel stood in the marketplace, curious people gathered around this giant animal. Among the crowd a man named Hasan was the most curious. He began to examine the camel. He observed how tall it was. When it picked up a mouthful of food from the ground, it lifted it halfway to the sky before it actually ate it. He was amazed at the general appearance of the camel, for it had a strangely shaped body.

As people stood about staring at it, the camel sat

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down. Hasan then touched the fur and the hide of the camel. Then he climbed upon its back and sat in its saddle. When the camel arose, Hasan was lifted so high above the other people that he felt like a king, sitting on his throne. He felt that to complete his royal appearance, all he needed was a cigarette in his mouth. He took out a cigarette and prepared to light it. In those days there were neither cigarette lighters nor boxed matches. People made fire by striking together flint and steel, letting the sparks produced in that way fall upon some very dry tinder. Hasan took these implements from his pocket, and after two or three attempts, he managed to light his cigarette. But in the process of doing this, he let fall on the camel's back a piece of burning tinder. When the animal felt this tinder burning its back, it began turning around and around, and then it started running wildly. Hasan shouted at the camel and tried to slow down its flight, but his efforts actually caused the creature to run even faster. All that Hasan could do was to grasp the saddle more and more tightly as the speed increased.

As the camel raced along, Hasan felt certain that

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sooner or later he would be thrown from its back and killed. Noticing some crows flying above them, Hasan decided to give them a message to deliver to his wife. He shouted to them:

Hey, crows! Inform my wife of this.

Hasan now rides a creature wild

That carries him to Judgment Day

Inform my Fatma of the wish

Which I'll not live to plead from her.

Ask her to pardon me and make

Helâl all she has done for me.¹

¹Helâl/Haram--Muslim religious concept. That which is helâl is that which is permissible according to canonical law. That which is haram is forbidden. There is no obligation or restriction or penalty for doing or taking what is helâl, but there will be a penalty on Judgment Day for one's doing or taking what is forbidden. To accept something from a donor can be helâl; to take it or steal it is haram. To do anything morally or religiously improper is haram. Dying or endangered people often declare helâl anything they have given or done for another person, so that No. 2 will not go to Judgment indebted to another (which may be considered haram unless declared helâl by the benefactor).