

Play on Negus, the King of Ethiopia

Narrator: Salamun alaykum

We are here to narrate to you the events that took place in the court of king Negus of Abyssinia when the Muslims migrated there.

After the Prophet (s) began to preach Islam openly, the Muslims were persecuted by the Makkans. Things became so bad that the Prophet (s) advised some of the Muslims to migrate to Abyssinia because of the wise and just ruler Negus. The Prophet (s) told them:

If you travel to Abyssinia it will be very beneficial for you, because on the account of the presence of a mighty and just ruler, nobody is oppressed there and the land of that country is good and pure. You can live there till Almighty Allah provides you relief.

There were two migrations to Abyssinia. The first group had ten people. Then another group went, under the leadership of Ja'far bin Abu Talib. The second group also took women and children. Now there were 83 Muslims in Abyssinia.

Umm Salamah, the wife of Abu Salamah, who later married the Prophet (s), was among these migrants. She said: When we settled in Abyssinia we found ourselves under the protection of the best patron. We did not meet with any trouble or hear bad words from anybody.

When the Quraysh of Makkah heard about the peaceful life of the Muslims in Abyssinia, they were very disturbed. They did not want Islam to be successful and were afraid that Negus would accept Islam. They decided to send representatives to the court of King Negus. Two representatives were sent, Amr bin Aas, and Abdullah bin Rabiyyah. They took gifts for the King, and prepared to tell him of the foolishness of the Muslims and how wrong they were. They also planned to meet the ministers first and tell them of their plan so that the ministers would support them in the court of Negus.

The following scene will show you what happened in the court of King Negus after the representatives of the Quraysh had talked with the ministers and presented their case.

Scene: Court of King Negus

Negus is seated on a throne, with his ministers behind him. They have their holy books in front of them.

The representatives of Quraysh enter. They greet the king and present him with gifts.

King: It is so good to see you , Amr.

Amr: these gifts are for you, dear king.

King: your generosity is overwhelming

Amr: you deserve much more...O honorable ruler of Abyssinia. Some foolish young men of Mecca are trying to propagate a new religion which is not like our religion or the one of their ancestors. They have taken refuge in your country and they will begin to cause trouble for you like they did for us. Let us do the favor of taking them from you.

(the Ministers murmur in agreement, but signs of anger appear on the face of the king)

King: I can't just hand over those who have sought refuge in my country. These people seem peaceable enough to me.

Narrator: An emissary is sent to tell the Muslims to come to the court of King Negus. Ja'far bin Abu Talib is their leader.

(the Muslims enter the court, looking worried. Ja'far is calm and confident)

One of the Muslims (in a low tone): What are you going to tell the King?

Ja'far: Exactly what the Holy Prophet (s) told me.

King: Why have you adopted a faith which is not like our religion or like the one of your ancestors?

Ja'far: dear King...

Minister (1): Bow to the king!

Ja'far: we bow to no man sir, only to our God.

Amr: see your honor! Anarchy already!

King: I let it pass, continue..

Ja'far: not very long ago we were ignorant people and worshipped idols. We always indulged in wretched deeds. We had no respect for our neighbors. The weak and the helpless were oppressed by the strong. Then a person rose from amongst us, who had a very pure and brilliant past. He rose up and invited us, under the commandment of Allah, to worship the One and only God, and declared the worship of idols to be despicable. He also ordered us to return the things entrusted to us by others, to avoid impurities, to behave well with our kinsmen and neighbors and to shun bloodshed, unlawful contracts, false evidence, taking away the property of orphans, and mistreating women.

He ordered us to offer prayers, to fast, and to pay taxes on our wealth. We have believed in him and occupied ourselves with the praise and worship of Allah, the One. We consider that which he declared lawful to be lawful. But the Quraysh have behaved with us cruelly, they have tortured us day and night so that we might abandon our faith, revert to the worship of stones and idols and do all sorts of evil deeds. We resisted them for some time till our energy was exhausted. Despairing of our life and property, we have taken refuge in Ethiopia to save our faith. The fame of the justice of the ruler of Ethiopia attracted us like a magnet and now we too have faith in his justice.

(The King is visibly moved, tearful)

King: what does your book say?

Narrator: Ja'far bin Abu Talib read verses 16-26 of Sura-e-Maryam.

(Bismillah...)

King: what he is saying Amr, is the gospel of Jesus.

Amr: no dear king! They do not respect your religion! They say that...that...that Jesus is not the son of God but merely a man!

Ja'far: of Jesus, we say what our prophet said to us that he is the servant of God, and his prophet. He was the spirit and word of Allah with which He blessed Maryam.

King: what we believe, and what you believe are like two beams of light, separate, yet coming from the same source. You may live here as long as you like.

(to Amr): and you, Amr, take your gifts and return to Mecca.

Narrator: After several years, the Prophet of Allah migrated from Mecca to Medina. In the seventh year after Hijrah, the Prophet asked Ja'far to return with to Median with the Muslims. The Prophet met Ja'far after the battle of Khayber and was overcome with joy at seeing his cousin. The Prophet (s) told him: "I don't know for which thing I should be more happy – whether for meeting you after so many years, or for the fact that Allah has opened the forts of the Jews for us through the your brother Ali. Then he said: I would like to give you a gift today. The people thought he would give some material gift, but the Prophet (s) taught him a prayer which later became known as the Prayer of Jafare Tayyar.

This was only the beginning of the spreading of the Message of Islam. As the Prophet received revelations and more people were guided, he sent missionaries to different tribes and rulers to propagate the true word and the message of Allah (s.w.t.).