

The crying camel

A Muslim story

Key ideas: kindness to animals, responsibilities

It was very hot day. The people who lived in the city of Medina were trying to find somewhere to keep cool. There were many beautiful gardens in the city with tall, shady trees where people came to sit and find shade. They talked. They sipped refreshing drinks. They told stories and they laughed.

The Prophet Muhammad was walking in one of the gardens. He loved to walk under the trees where it was green and cool. He liked to think quietly as he walked. He smiled at the people he knew as he walked along.

While he was walking, Prophet Muhammad heard a strange noise. It sounded like someone crying. It sounded like someone howling. It sounded like someone was very upset. As he came closer to the crying and howling, the Prophet could see it was not a sad person at all. It was a sad camel.

Muhammad felt very sorry for the camel. It was tied to a post, out in the sunshine. It was very hot, and looked very thirsty. Tears were running down the camel's cheeks and its fur was very wet. No one seemed to notice the camel's howls. Muhammad stroked the camel, and it became calmer. After a while the howls became grunts and the grunts became snorts of pleasure. The tears stopped running down the camel's cheeks. He knew Muhammad was his friend.

Muhammad became angry. He strode along the pathways calling, "Who owns this camel?" At last a voice said, "I do," and a man stepped out from under the shade of the biggest tree in the garden.

Muhammad looked at the man. He was not hot. He was not thirsty. He was not thinking about his camel. Muhammad spoke quietly. As Muhammad spoke, the camel owner's head began to droop. He realised what he had done. Muhammad reminded him that the camel was one of Allah's creatures. The animal worked hard for the man, carrying heavy loads and travelling to places far away. Muhammad reminded the man that he should take great care of the camel in return for its hard work.

The camel owner felt very bad. He had been cool, comfortable and happy while the camel was hot, bothered and upset. His behaviour had even upset the Prophet Muhammad. He was so ashamed. From that day on he looked after his animals with great care, and always made sure they had enough to eat and drink the camel never cried again.