

THE STORY OF THE TWO DREAMERS

The Arab historian Al-Ishaqi tells the story of this event:

"It is related by men worthy of belief (though only Allah is omniscient and omnipotent and all-merciful and unsleeping) that a man of Cairo was possessed of ample riches and great wealth; but he was so generous and magnanimous that his wealth passed away, save his father's house, and his state changed, and he became utterly destitute, and could not obtain his sustenance save by laborious exertion. And he slept one night, overwhelmed and oppressed, under a fig tree in his garden, and saw in his sleep a person tripping wet who took from his mouth a golden coin and said to him, 'Verily thy fortune is in Persia, in Isfahan: therefore seek it and repair to it.' So he journeyed to Persia, meeting on the way with all the dangers of the desert, and of ships, and of pirates, and of idolaters, and of rivers, and of wild beasts, and of men; and when he at last arrived there, the evening overtook him, and he slept in a mosque. Now there was, adjacent to the mosque, a house; and as Allah (whose name be exalted!) had decreed, a party of rob-

bers entered the mosque, and thence passed to that house; and the people of the house, awaking at the disturbance occasioned by the robbers, raised cries: the neighbors made a cry as well, whereupon the Wálee came to their aid with his followers, and the robbers fled over the housetops. The Wálee then entered the mosque, and found the man of Cairo sleeping there; so he laid hold upon him, and inflicted upon him a painful beating with *mikrâ'ahs*, until he was at the point of death, and imprisoned him; and he remained three days in the prison; after which, the Wálee caused him to be brought, and said to him, 'From what country art thou? He answered, 'From Cairo.'—'And what affair?' said the Wálee, 'was the cause of thy coming to Persia?' He answered, 'I saw in my sleep a person who said to me, "Verily thy fortune is in Isfahan; therefore repair to it." And when I came here, I found the fortune of which he told me to be those blows of the *mikrâ'ahs*, that I have received from thee.'—

"And upon this the Wálee laughed so that his grinders appeared, and said to him, 'O thou of little sense, I saw three times in my sleep a person who said to me, "Verily a house in Cairo, in such a district, and of such a description, hath in its court a garden, at the lower end of which is a fountain, wherein is wealth of great amount: therefore repair to it and take it." But I went not; and thou, through the smallness of thy sense, hast journeyed from city to city on account of a thing thou hast seen in sleep, when it was only an effect of confused dreams.'—Then he gave him some money, and said to him, 'Help thyself with this to return to thy city.'

"So he took it and returned to Cairo. Now the house which the Wálee had described, in Cairo, was the house of that man; therefore when he arrived at his abode, he dug beneath the fountain, and beheld abundant wealth. Thus God enriched and sustained him; and this was a wonderful coincidence."

(From the *Book of the Thousand Nights and a Night*, Night 351)*