

# Bahlul and the Judge of Baghdad

Persian Folk Story

A man from Khorassan was traveling to Mecca for hajj. He arrived at the gates of Baghdad. He had two bags full of gold coins. He took some of the gold to pay his travel expenses and entrusted the rest to the Judge of Baghdad to keep safe for him.

After his pilgrimage, the man returned to Baghdad and he went to the Judge's home and got his two bags back. When he went outside and opened the bags, he saw that both bags were full of dried dates instead of gold coins! He immediately returned to the Judge's house and said, "Ay Judge! I gave you two bags filled with gold coins, but you returned to me two bags filled with dried dates!"

The Judge said, "I think that you stole the coins or got them from other devious means and for this reason God has changed them into dried dates!"

However much the man insisted for his gold, it was of no use and the Judge had his servant toss him from the house.

Upset and crying, the man was wandering the area when Bahlul saw him and asked why he was so upset. The man explained everything to Bahlul.

Bahlul said to him, "Come to my house for a few days to see what I can do for you". The next day Bahlul changed his old clothes for new, beautiful robes, and went to the Judge's house. The Judge looked at Bahlul with surprise. He had never seen Bahlul with such beautiful clothes! With a respectable, polite voice Bahlul said, "Judge, I am now wise and I would like to use your library!"

The Judge was very pleased and said, "Of course Master Bahlul, my library is at your service! By the way, now that you are a wise man, I would like to send my two sons to you to teach!"

Bahlul agreed and from that day on, the two young sons of the Judge would go to Bahlul's house and he would teach them. At the same time, Bahlul built a plaster statue of the Judge in his spare room and every day would place two bowls of honey next to it. Bahlul would

have two baby bears enter the room and they would go to the statue of the Judge and sit next to him and joyfully eat the honey. One day after lunch when the children wanted to go home, Bahlul took them and locked them in his basement.

The sun set and the Judge had become worried that his children had not returned. He sent his servant to Bahlul's house and Bahlul showed him the two little bears and said, "Look, the Judge's two sons are very mischievous and however much I tell them the lesson is done and they must return home, they don't listen!"

Astonished, the servant returned to the Judge's house and he told him what had happened. The Judge's officials went to Bahlul's house, grabbed him, and they took him to the King. The King sat on his throne and asked Bahlul, "Where are the Judge's children?"

Bahlul answered, "They have changed into two baby bears! If you don't believe it, order your guards to bring them here. I promise that when they see their father, they will recognize him and go to him!"

Everyone was surprised. The guards went to Bahlul's house and brought the bears to the King's castle. Without any awareness of the others in the castle, they ran straight to the Judge and sat next to him. The Judge became angry, turned to Bahlul and yelled, "How is it possible that two children can change into two baby bears?"

Bahlul answered, "In a city where two bags filled with gold can suddenly change into two bags of dried dates, two children can with ease turn into the shape of two bears!"

The Judge realized the situation and all the spectators understood the thievery and crime of the Judge.

The Judge realized he had been disgraced and yelled, "You got me Bahlul! Tell the man from Khorassan to come and get his coins back!"

The King turned to Bahlul and said with a smile, "Well done Bahlul, you are indeed very wise and intelligent!"