

King Jahangir and the baby

A Muslim story

Key ideas: wisdom, love

Jahangir was a wise and fair king. He was well loved by the people in his kingdom. Everyone knew that Jahangir would listen to their problems, no matter how small. Outside his palace there was a special bell, with a great, thick rope. Anyone who wanted to talk to the king could simply come to the palace and pull on the rope. Jahangir would hear the bell, and come to listen.

One fine sunny day two women arrived at the palace. They wanted the king's wise advice, so they pulled on the bell. Neither woman looked very happy. One of them was carrying a small child. The other woman was crying. Both told King Jahangir that the baby belonged to them.

The women stood before the king, hoping he would make a decision. But the king could not make a decision straight away. Either woman might be the baby's mother. Both of them looked very upset.

King Jahangir thought for a while. Then he sent a servant to bring a sharp knife. 'I will settle the problem. I shall cut the baby into two pieces. Then you can have exactly half each.' One of the women began to cry and sob. She came and knelt before the king. 'Please do not cut my baby in half. Give him to the other woman, only do not harm him.'

The King now knew the answer to his problem. He said to the woman who was kneeling, 'It is easy to see that you are the baby's mother. Here, take your baby. Keep him safe.'