

STARRY, STARRY NIGHT

Before and after my birth, my father and mother worked in Saudi Arabia, being employed by ARAMCO. I was born November 1, 1949, at 13:57 Apparent Solar Time. The place of my birth being Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. Here is the story I was told by my father as to my birth when I turned 13 years old.

My father had spent the day inspecting a new section of oil pipeline. He was returning home and noticed that a large sand storm was up ahead and quickly approaching. He knew of a small oasis ahead and decided to park the car near the date palms. Speeding up, he shortly arrived at the oasis. As he parked his car, he saw that three camels secured in the date trees.

He parked the car and saw three Bedouins seating around a campfire and drinking cups of kawa (Arabic coffee). He approached them and requested, in good Arabic, permission to join them.

The three Bedouins stood up as he approached. One, extending his right hand, greeted my father with the traditional "As-Salamu-Alaykun."

Too which my father, shaking hands, replied, "Wa-Alaikum-Salaam." He shook hands with the two other gentlemen and sat down to the campfire.

The Bedouin who first spoke sat across from my father. He broke the desert silence saying, "We have been waiting for you since midday. It is us who rose the sand storm between you and home. It will be here shortly."

The Bedouin to the right of my father handed him a cup of unsweetened coffee and a small brass plate with dates. Taking the coffee, my father said, "shukran."

The elder Bedouin continued, "Friend Iidghar, my brothers and I are holy men living in the desert distance from here. Six months ago, I noticed an unusual conjunction of the planets with some background stars. I noticed such to my two friends here, who are very accomplished readers of the sky. After much discussion, we came to the conclusion that Allah the Merciful was going to bring an Angel to earth in a human body. For all of us know that Mohammed was the last prophet and no more shall be given to the world."

My father drunk his coffee and ate his dates while the elder Bedouin continued.

"Friend Iidghar, in our dreams, Gabriel, came to each of us and told us where to find the father of the Angel to be born. He who was to be known as 'the Reminder of Truth. And so Gabriel told all three of us where to find you, friend Iidghar."

My father knew not what to say and so remained silent. The brother to his left continued, "This child will be born on your day, November 1, 1949, 2 hours after the sun reaches its peak in the sky. You shall name him, Mikaeel. Though, he be sent by Allah the Merciful, he must be

raised without religious upbringing so he will not fall prey to prejudice in any path to the Lord. His teachings will encompass all paths to the One Godhead and discredit none.

“But, I have more to relate. Before Mikaeel leaves this Kingdom, Allah the Merciful shall reach out His Hand and touch his servant’s heart infusing it with the Divine Fire of Righteousness. Your son will begin to burn from inside out and experience a near fatal fever, but he shall not die for he is well loved by Allah. This is a Sign so you shall not forget. No more can I tell you.”

Soon they found themselves surrounded by the sand storm, but in the oasis it was calm. My father told me later that he was most amazed. He had heard of such tales, but he had thought such to be myths of the desert.

My father said he was told many things by the holy men, but, was prohibited from telling me. So what I tell you, is what was told me. Nothing more. The story stands alone for I cannot verify it. But, it does seem to fit my life in many ways. You, the reader, shall have to judge based upon what is in your heart.

I can tell you that before I left Saudi, my mother told me that I had suffered a severe sunstroke when I was fourteen months of age and nearly died of a normally fatal temperature. She told me that the doctor at the clinic thought I was going to die or be neurologically compromised. The first did not happen, but the latter???