

## **The Story of the Baby Camel That Was Looking For Its Name**

A long time ago, Mother Camel gave birth to a baby camel in the middle of the Arabian desert. During the day, temperatures climb very high in deserts, and there is a lot of sand, which gets very hot, too. Maybe it was the heat that made mother camel refrain from giving her cub a name. Or maybe she was thinking of something else: I believe she wanted the baby camel to find a name that fit its needs.

Consequently, the baby camel set out on a quest for its name. It went to and fro through the oasis. An oasis is a place in the desert where there is water and where there are trees. A tiny shepherd's boy was standing near the well, drawing up bucketfuls of water for the sheep and goats that had been entrusted into his care.

„Hello“, said the baby camel. The boy looked up. „Hello“, he answered.

„You do not happen to know a name that would suit me?“, the baby camel asked. The boy pondered over this request for a while. „Well“, he said then, „no, I do not, at least not at this very moment. However, you might want to wait until I have watered the herd. The two of us could decide how to name you then.“

The baby camel agreed. It waited in the shade of a tall palm tree. The boy tirelessly drew one bucket of water after the other. Finally, the sun started to sink.

At about that time, an old camel driver came by. He realized that it was already getting dark, and he shouted at the boy, „hurry, hurry! Do you believe it will get you anywhere if you keep on dawdling?“ The camel driver was a very nervous man. The boy knew this, and he did not take it amiss; he obeyed and began to draw the buckets up as fast as he could.

Faster and faster, the boy leaned over the rim of the stone well to draw yet another bucket of water, and because his shoulders were getting tired, he soon hung over the opening rather than standing in front of it. Just a few more buckets, he eventually told himself. Just a few more. He pulled himself together and glanced into the depth of the shaft, and it was then that he lost his balance and fell into the well.

He hit the ground hard. However, when he dared to breathe again and slowly opened his eyes, he realized in amazement that he must have had a guardian angel watching over him: The well was deep but its walls were made of large stones, and one of these smooth pieces of rock stuck out far into the opening of the well. On this plane, the boy had come to a rest, and apart from a couple of bruises, he was uninjured.

Carefully, so as to avoid falling deeper into the abyss, he stood up and looked upward – and realized that he would not be able to climb the slippery stones. His arms almost reached the rim of the well, but no matter how hard he tried, he was not quite able to reach it. What was he supposed to do? „Help“, he cried as loudly as he could, „help me, I am down here!“

And yet again, the boy was lucky, for the baby camel stuck his head into the well, and he could hold on to it until he stood on dry sand again. „Hello“, the camel said in a friendly voice. „Hello“, Abdul said. Abdul was the boy's name.

„Why did you hurry so much?“, the baby camel asked.

Abdul sounded surprised when he answered, „Well, you know that the old man scolded me. He told me to make haste.“

Now it was the camel’s turn to be surprised: „I know. But if you fall into the well again or slop water because you are in a hurry, it will take you a lot more time than it will if you just go on as usual.“

Abdul thought about this for a while. Then he realized that the baby camel might be right, and he started drawing buckets again, patiently this time and with relieving serenity. And the camel had been right, this way the work was done much faster: Soon the large trough, the watering place, had been filled.

After a while, the sheep and the goats had had their share of water and lay down in the sand. This, of course, meant that Abdul could now spare time for his new friend, and because it had already become cold – in the desert, the days are hot, but the nights are very cold -, he lit a fire for himself, for the camel and for the sheep and the goats.

They sat together comfortably and looked for a name that would suit the camel that did not have a name. After all, Abdul did not want to shout „Camel, let’s go!“ all the time. It was resolved that they were searching for a name the baby camel would enjoy hearing for the rest of his life.

„Well“, Abdul asked, „What is it you like best in the whole of this world?“

„My mama and my papa“, the camel answered like a shot.

Abdul thought about this. „It will not work“, he finally said, „we cannot call you ‚Mama-and-Papa‘. What else is there that you really, really like?“

„You“, answered the camel. „I really like you.“

Abdul laughed. „What a chaos this would bring“, he claimed, „if I called you, ‘Abdul, come over here!’, and you would answer, ‘I will, but only if you come with me, Abdul!’“

This made the camel laugh as well. „No, it will not work“, it agreed. They fell silent again.

After a while, the boy asked for the third time, „Think hard – what else is there in the world that you really, really like?“

And the baby camel answered in a tone of utter conviction, „I really like having plenty of time.“

„Alright“, said Abdul, „now we have got a name for you: From now on, you shall be called ‘I-have-plenty-of-time’“.

The baby camel was happy to agree with this. Now, it not only had a name, but also found a friend! And from then on, Abdul and ‘I-have-plenty-of-time’ spent their evenings together in the company of the sheep and the goats, near the warm glow of the fire, and they remained friends for a very, very long time - actually, for the rest of their lives.



A.S.

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