

ABBA YOUSAB THE HERMIT

The saintly father Abba Yousab lived in the wilderness of Sheheet. He was well advanced in age, and his body had become weak from his constant spiritual struggles, devotion and strict ascetism. He prayed unceasingly and kept watch throughout the night. He was a blessed man of patience and tolerance, and humbly clothed himself in a tunic of weaved palm. God provided him with food, and upon the soft clouds Abba Yousab would travel from place to place...He possessed many spiritual virtues. One day he thought curiously to himself, "I wonder if anyone is equal to me in virtues?" and he prayed that the Lord would reveal a sign. Abba Yousab then heard the voice of the Lord's angel saying to him, "He who is the king of Antioch, go to him and see the honour bestowed upon him." Abba Yousab at once rode upon the clouds, and when he had reached the city of Antioch, he walked with his rod until he arrived at the gate of the city. There he saw the king mounted on his horse, and surrounded by all his soldiers and guards. He was received by all the people with great honour and dignity. The king was clothed in the most exquisite gown, and on his head he wore a crown glittering with diamonds and precious gems. Abba Yousab became very confused at this, and as he wondered how he could compare spiritually with such a magnificent king, the king approached him and said, "Abba Yousab, you bring upon yourself many hardships." He then ordered the soldiers to take the saint to his palace and take care of him there until the king returns. When the king arrived at the palace, he took hold of the saint's hands and lead him into a lavish hall where a banquet had been prepared. The two of them sat beside each other on the table...Later, the king lead the saint to his private quarters, and there Abba Yousab was introduced to the king's wife. The queen who was arrayed in beautiful jewels and fine apparel, welcomed the saintly father with much joy and warmth. Serving the king and queen were maids who were also very beautifully dressed. Having completed their duties, the queen then dismissed them... The king and queen then excused themselves and after a short while returned clothed in animal fur. Abba Yousab marvelled at this. They then lead the saint into another room within the palace, and there sitting on the ground, working with his hands was a monk. Immediately the monk came forward to kiss the hermit father, then greeted the king and queen. They then all stood together and prayed the 6th hour prayer, before returning to their craft work. Each one of them worked in silence, then the monk said to the saint, "My saintly father Abba Yousab, it was God's will to reveal to you the life of the king and queen, for it has been a spiritual experience for you." They then spoke about the many wonders of God, His love and His care. After praying the 9th hour prayer, the servant prepared a small table upon which lay bread and a small portion of food. They ate and gave many thanks to God. The monk then took the saint aside and said, "My dear brother, I hope that you have benefitted from the example of the king and queen, for as you have noticed, their greatness is not in ruling the monarchy, but in spirituality and wisdom. Despite their richness, they live in ascetism and humility. They eat only a little and delight in working with their hands." The king

and queen took the saint's blessings before Abba Yousab left, riding upon his cloud back to his cave in El-Eskeet. He glorified God through His chosen people, and lived in joy and continuous prayer and praise until the day he rested in peace. May all glory be to our God forever, amen.