

The Hero Faridun Crossing the Tigris (Shahnameh)

For many years, the world was ruled by a serpent king called Zahhak. He committed many evil acts and his people lived in fear. But the sages foresaw that a young hero, Faridun, would release the world from Zahhak's oppression. After hearing stories of the suffering inflicted by Zahhak, Faridun determined to attack the serpent king. Setting forth with his army, they reached the banks of the river Tigris. But the ferryman would not provide boats for them to cross. Undeterred, Faridun plunged into the rapid waters on his fearless horse Golrang. Seeing Faridun's bravery, his soldiers followed, and the army soon reached Jerusalem where Zahhak had his palace - but the serpent king had already fled to India in fear. Freeing the people from Zahhak's tyranny, Faridun settled into the palace and enjoyed many delights. Enraged, Zahhak returned to the city with an army of warlike demons. But all the young men of the city rose up to fight with Faridun's army, and Faridun was able to capture Zahhak. But he did not kill him. As the people returned to their everyday lives, Zahhak was taken to a faraway mountain cave. There, he was bound in lion skin, and nails driven through his body to pin him to the walls, preventing him from ever harming his people again.