

Story #303 Tape #10, Summer 1970)

Narrator: Huseyin Kiliç
Arslan, teacher
at Akça Bey Köy

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Why Behlül Dane Laughed

Harun Reşid, one of the Abbassid Caliphs, had a younger brother named Behlül Bir Dane. Harun Reşid had never seen this brother of his laugh. He always had a very sober look on his face. Harun Reşid had this announcement made to everyone: "Let anyone who sees my brother laugh report the incident to me."

One day after that when Behlül Bir Dane was passing a butcher shop, he laughed aloud. This was reported at once to Harun Reşid. He called his brother to him and said, "You have never been known to laugh until now. Why did you laugh today as you passed the butcher shop?"

"I laughed because I saw there that every sheep was hung by its own leg.¹ I guessed then that you will be held responsible for your sins and for what you have done to people, not I. I was

¹This is one of the most commonly used Turkish proverbs. It sometimes has the implication that everyone has his own particular failures or flaws. Here it suggests simply that everyone must take the consequences of his own behavior.

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so pleased by this thought that that was the reason why I laughed."

Ahmet Uysal: Why was it, actually, that he laughed?

Huseyin Kılıç Arslan: Harun Reşid was a reckless man, and he did many reckless things. Behlül Bir Dane felt responsible for the actions of his brother, and he feared that in the afterlife he would be held accountable for them. When he came to realize that everyone must be held responsible just for his own sins, he was so relieved that he laughed.