

Story #418 (Tape #5, 1972)

Narrator: Kazım Özsarı

Location: Isçehisar (nahiye) in kaza  
of Afyonkarahisar, Province  
of Afyonkarahisar

Date: 1972

Why Behlül Dane Could Not Arise

Sir, according to what we have heard, Behlül Divane<sup>1</sup> was a brother of Harun Reshid. One day Harun Reshid said to him, "Brother, instead of wasting time as you have been doing, you should have a job of some sort. I shall appoint you imam<sup>2</sup> to a mosque."

When Behlül was conducting the Friday service<sup>3</sup> at the mosque, he said Allahu ekber<sup>4</sup> and fell forward on the floor. Everyone waited for him to rise, but he would not do so.<sup>5</sup> He remained in this position for one hour, two hours, three hours, five hours, until gradually the members of the congregation arose and left the mosque

They went to Harun Reshid and complained about Behlül's behavior.

"You made an imam of your brother. At the service today he said Allahu

<sup>1</sup>Divane means mad; usually his name is given as Behlül Dane.

<sup>2</sup>The imam is the priest who conducts the required part of the service which is called farz. The sünnet which may follow if the worshipper wishes is an individual matter.

<sup>3</sup>Before the founding of the Turkish Republic, Friday was the Turkish sabbath day, and the Friday midday service was the most important of the week's thirty-five prayer services.

<sup>4</sup>Allahu ekber--God is great.

<sup>5</sup>The congregation follows the lead of the imam; until he makes one of the ritual movements, no one else is supposed to make it.

ekber, but he would not arise after that."

When Harun Reshid had him called to his presence and asked him why he had not arisen at the mosque, Behlul said, "It is a good thing I was able to arise after a whole day. If you had been there, you would not have been able to arise, even if you had tried, for a whole year."

"Why is that?" asked Harun Reshid.

"Because each man who came to the mosque hung his saddlebag around my

Each man said, 'Uydum imama [I follow the imam]',<sup>6</sup> but he did not really do so. He just put his saddlebag around my neck, and their sins were so heavy I could not arise."<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup>The worshippers said that they were following the imam's lead, but they were doing so only on a physical level. They were not doing so spiritually or mentally. Behlul Dane, able to read the minds of others, according to most accounts of him, knew that the congregation was thinking of worldly things while supposedly worshiping.