

Story #456

Narrator: Professor Suheyl Ünver

Location: Istanbul

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Behlül Dane Interprets Sign Language

Every day around noon a man in a boat used to pass the palace of Harun Reshid, and as he did so, he would raise his hand showing only his thumb. This continued for some time, but Harun Reshid did nothing about it. He spoke about it to Behlül Dane, however, and Behlül went and sat along the bank at <sup>?</sup>Shatul-Arap<sup>1</sup> and awaited the passage of the man.

When he appeared in his boat, he again held up only his thumb. Behlül, in response, raised his hand showing two fingers close together and his thumb apart from them. After this, the man did not return again.

Harun Reshid, who had observed all this from a distance, said to Behlül, "What did he say, and what did you respond to him?"

"When he held up his thumb," said Behlül, "he meant, 'Be sensible! Be united! Otherwise your end will be terrible.' I said back to him, 'It is impossible to have two people together and have them come close to a unity of view.' That was why I made that sign to him."

<sup>1</sup>The Shatul-Arap is the short distance between the confluence of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers and the point where they join the sea. It is a place mentioned frequently in Middle Eastern folklore. It is thought to be the place where Hızır and Elijah meet annually.