

Story #471

Narrator: Professor Suheyl Ünver

Location: Istanbul

Date: 1971

Behlül Dane Tells a Hafız¹ Where to Tie His Horse

Once a hafız with a very fine voice came to visit Harun Reshid. The Caliph kept him as his guest in the palace for several days. One evening just before the time for the yatsı² prayer service, when Behlül was also there, Harun Reshid said to this hafız, "If you will conduct the yatsı service tonight, I shall present you with a fine horse."

The congregation was ready, and the hafız took the imam's³ position at the mihrab⁴. The hafız conducted the service, chanting the prayers in a very impassioned voice.⁵ Immediately after he had started this chanting, however, his mind moved to other subjects. He thought to himself, "After I finish conducting this prayer service, the Caliph will present me with a horse. If I take this horse to an inn where I

¹A hafız is one who has memorized the Koran verbatim from beginning to end.

²Yatsı, held just after dark, is the last of the five prayer services of the day.

³The imam is the religious official who conducts prayer services in a mosque.

⁴The mihrab is the niche in the wall of the mosque facing Mecca.

⁵The narrator uses the word yanık, meaning burning, to describe the sound of the voice of the hafız. Perhaps there is a better translation than the one we have given here.

might stay and tie him there, he might be stolen. If I tie him to a palm tree in the desert, he might be eaten there by lions." And thus his thoughts went on and on.

Behlül, like many saintly men, had intuitive knowledge about many things, and he read the thoughts of the hafız. Right in the middle of the prayer service he shouted, "Hey, hafız! Lie on your back and tie it to your penis!" He spoiled and nullified the prayer service and left the mosque.⁶

⁶ Any interruption in a prayer service nullifies all that has preceded and makes it necessary to begin the service all over again.