

Story 763 (1970 Tape 13)

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village hoca

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kaza merkezi of
Bursa, Bursa Province

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all The Koranic Hızır¹

The blessed Moses one day made supplication to ^{Allah} God in which he said, "O God, I wish to become acquainted with Hızır." When God informed him about the whereabouts of Hızır, the blessed Moses went to that place. When he got there, he saw someone lying on the ground asleep. He wondered if such an important person could possibly be sleeping on the ground like a vagrant. He doubted it, so he walked on past the sleeper. When he did so, however, he suddenly realized that he had gone beyond the place

¹Hızır derives from great antiquity--far earlier than Biblical or classical times. He is not named in the Koran, but a "servant of God" in the Koran behaves in some ways like the ancient Hızır, and so the identification is made. Much about Hızır is not accepted by the Muslim establishment, and a widespread cult of Hızır is opposed by the establishment. Hızır was originally a water deity and vegetation deity, sometimes identified with the Jewish Elijah in his early role of water god. He is the last-minute rescuer from disaster if God wills that the disaster be averted. To modern rural Turks, he is still often the fertility to urban Turks he is a granter of wishes. To both he continues to be the last-minute rescuer.

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had specified as Hızır's location. He wondered if the sleeper on the ground could possibly be Hızır himself, and so he returned to this man and said, "Selâmünaleyküm!"²

The man awakened and answered, "Aleykümselâm." he asked, "What is the purpose of your travel?"

"I requested of God permission to become acquainted with Hızır. God directed me to this spot, but so far I have not been able to find anyone fitting his description."

"What do you want of Hızır?"

"I want to enjoy his company for a while and learn what I can from him."

"I am Hızır," the man said.

"Then you are the one I am seeking. Let us be friends."

"Very well, we shall be friends, but there is one condition which I must attach to our friendship: You must never question my affairs. Whatever I do is my business. If you interfere with it, then our friendship will end."

"I shall promise you not to interfere," said blessed Moses.

The two of them then set out together, and after had walked some distance, they came to a seaport. As they

²The traditional exchange between Moslem strangers: May peace be unto you / May peace be unto you too.

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wandered about the docks, they came upon a ship loading passengers. Although they also wished to board the ship, were afraid that they might be refused passage, and so waited nearby until the ship finished loading

Someone already aboard the vessel said, "What are those two fellows waiting around for?" As a matter of fact, those two men also wanted to go to such-and-such a place such as Istanbul or Gelibolu,³ but they had no money.

When this was discovered to be their problem, a parson on the ship said, "Never mind that. Some pay and some pray." And in this way blessed Moses and Hızır were allowed to board the ship.

As soon as they were safely aboard, Hızır and Moses went down into the hold of the ship. There Hızır took out a sharp knife and cut a hole in the bottom of the ship. When Moses observed this, he said, "Friend, what is this?

allowed us to come aboard without any money, and now have done such a damaging thing. What is the meaning of this?"

"Friend," said Hızır, "I thought you were not going to interfere with my actions

³Gelibolu, a city on the Dardanelles, is known in Europe and America as Gallipoli, the site of a major defeat for the British Navy during World War I.

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Moses said, "Oh, I am sorry. I shall not do it again."

Although the ship was taking in water now, it managed to reach its destination. After the two men had landed, they went to a village where they stayed that day. They noticed that the villagers were not showing them any hospitality at all. They had offered the two men neither food nor lodging. As they were leaving the village, the men noticed a wall standing not upright but slanting dangerously in one direction. Hızır went to the wall and straightened it up.

Moses said to Hızır, "I cannot help wondering about your behavior. You seem to be doing evil to the good and good to the evil. The people of this village showed us no hospitality and did not help us in any way, and here you are straightening up their leaning wall!"

"Remember your promise! You are not to interfere!"

They proceeded then to another village. In the evening the people of that second village showed them great hospitality. The people gave them food and lodging and provided everything they could for their comfort. After the people had seen them off the following morning, they left the center of the village and were walking through the outskirts of the settlement. There they saw a group of children playing in the street. One boy, however, stood

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apart, just staring at the others. Hızır went to that boy and strangled him.

"What a thing to do!" said Moses. "At the first village the people gave us nothing, not even water to drink, but you straightened up their sagging wall. Here where so much hospitality was shown to us, you committed a terrible act against this innocent child. Is this just?"

"It is as it should be," said Hızır. "Remember your promise not to interfere? Well, you have now interfered three times, and that brings our friendship to an end. Before we part, however, I shall explain to you the nature of the things I have done so that they do not remain unsolved mysteries in your mind

will recall that at the seaport they allowed us to board the ship without the payment of any money. Now, that ship belonged to seven orphans and was their only means of income. I cut a hole in the bottom of the ship in order to assure their having its income until they have grown up. A war will commence in a few days, and when that happens, full mobilization will be declared, and all of the best vessels will be confiscated by the state to serve as military transports. Therefore, I damaged this ship so

that it would not be taken away from the orphans.⁴

*Next I straightened up a sagging wall at such-and-such a place. That wall belonged to a small child whose parents had died. There is a treasure hidden under that wall that was about to collapse. Since the child is still under the guardianship of his uncle, it would be the uncle who, while cleaning up the rubble, would have found and kept the treasure if the wall had collapsed. In that case the child would have received none of it. I straightened up the wall so that the treasure would remain there until the child grew up and could discover the treasure himself. Thus, my action was taken not out of annoyance at the inhospitality of that village but out of pity for the child.

"At this last place I strangled that boy without allowing myself to be deterred by his innocent appearance. The fact is that if he had grown up, he would have committed great cruelties to his father and mother and great offenses to his nation. In order to prevent the suffering of his parents and his nation from the effects of

⁴At the end of this tale there was discussion of this element of the story in the coffeehouse where the taping was done. Seemingly everyone present had stories of losses suffered by his family during emergencies of the past-- losses suffered through government confiscation of personal property. Among these stories were accounts of how Turkish peasants had damaged equipment that they needed in order to make that equipment less likely to be confiscated.

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his evil treatment, I killed him. He would have caused great harm to mankind.

"This is the place where our friendship ends. May God grant health to both of us. Farewell!"