

Story 799 (1974 Tape 14)

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Location: Akdağmadeni, kaza town in Yozgat Province

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*Hayat* Allah Gives 1,000 for 10 Through a Bektaşî<sup>1</sup> *Hayat*

Once a Türkmen<sup>2</sup> came to Istanbul with a flock of sheep to sell. He sold his sheep and received ten gold liras for them. He then went to a mosque and listened to a sermon there.<sup>3</sup> The preacher was speaking about charity, and he said that what a man gives to the poor is paid back to him by Allah at the rate of 100 times the amount he gave.

After the service was finished, the Türkmen went to

<sup>1</sup> A Bektaşî is a member of a dervish order of that same name. In pre-Republican times they were perhaps the most powerful and politically influential dervish order.

<sup>2</sup> The original Oğuz tribes of Turks who settled in Turkey became known as Türkmen after their conversion to Islam. Although most of the people in these twenty-four nomadic tribes became sedentary in Turkey, some remained nomadic. These nomadic remnants can still be found occasionally in Turkey and neighboring countries.

<sup>3</sup> Not every prayer service has a sermon. In fact, there is usually only one sermon (known as the hutbe) in most mosques per week--that is, at one service out of thirty-five. This is usually given at the Friday noon service, Friday having been, in pre-Republican times, the Moslem Sabbath.

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the preacher and handed him the ten golden liras he had gotten for his sheep. "This is for the poor," he said, "for now I know that for every lira I give, Allah will pay me back 100 liras. That means that for these ten liras I shall receive a thousand."

They went outside the mosque where there were gathered many poor people. There the preacher distributed the Türkmen's ten liras among the crowd. The Türkmen was now left completely without money to return to his own section of the country. He had expected Allah to pay him the 1,000 he owed him promptly. Going to the preacher again, he said "You told me that Allah would pay me back 100 for every one I gave in charity. I gave ten liras, and so I should get back 1,000 liras, but I have nothing, not even ten kuruş."<sup>4</sup>

"It may take some time," said the preacher, "but Allah will return a great amount to you."

The Türkmen left Istanbul and started home. Along the way he saw a pear tree with fruit on its branches, and so he climbed into this tree to pick a few pears. While he was up there, a Bektaşî came along and sat down beneath the tree

<sup>4</sup> The kuruş is worth 1/100 of a lira. In the 1980's, when the lira was worth only 1/6 or 1/7 of an American cent, the kuruş, became a meaningless monetary denomination.

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to eat his lunch. He opened his sack and took from it rakı<sup>5</sup> bread, and other foods. He gave each of these food items a name, calling them Ömer<sup>2</sup>, Bekir<sup>2</sup>, Osman<sup>2</sup>,<sup>6</sup> the Prophet<sup>7</sup>, and Allah. With every drink of rakı he took, he named one of these figures. "Bekir, they respected your age, and that is why you were given the caliphate."<sup>8</sup> If I do not eat you, then whom should I eat?" Saying this, he took a bite of bread

After a sip of rakı, he said, "Ömer, why didn't you allow Ali to have the caliphate?"<sup>9</sup> If I don't eat you, then whom should I eat?" He then took a bite of cheese.

<sup>5</sup> Rakı (irak in Arabic) is a powerful liquor flavored with anise seed. The most popular distilled liquor in Turkey, it is manufactured by a government monopoly. All alcohol is forbidden to Moslems, but many urban Turks are only nominally Moslem. A member of a religious order should, of course, obey the Islamic law against the drinking of alcohol, but the flamboyant, unorthodox, and at times downright sacrilegious Bektasıs drank it freely.

<sup>6</sup> Abu Bekir (Abu Bakr), Ömer, and Osman (Othman) were, in that order, the first three Caliphs or successors to Mohammed.

<sup>7</sup> Moslems recognize many prophets, Biblical and otherwise, but when they refer to the Prophet, they always mean Mohammed.

<sup>8</sup> Abu Bekir was one of Mohammed's oldest close associates, and also his father-in-law.

<sup>9</sup> Ali, son-in-law of Mohammed, became the fourth Caliph, but one division of Islam, the Shia or Shi'ite wing, insist that Ali should have been the immediate successor to Mohammed, that Abu Bekir, Ömer, and Osman had no legitimacy as Caliphs. From the very earliest days of Islam, this schism has split the movement badly.

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Sipping his rakı again, he said, "Osman, you were an Affani. Kureys people were your ancestors.<sup>10</sup> How ----- you entitled to have the caliphate? How did you come to get it? If I don't eat you, then whom should I eat?" Saying this, he ate some olives.

Next he called upon Mohammed. "O Mohammed, I do not know how you ever became the Prophet. You could have made a will indicating that Ali was to succeed you. If I do not eat you, then whom should I eat?" Saying this, he ate some more bread.

Then after another taste of rakı, "And you, O Allah. Why didn't you tell your Prophet to give the caliphate to Ali? The people would have made Ali the Caliph if you had so indicated. If I don't eat you, then whom should I eat?" Saying this, he was just about to take another bite of bread when he was interrupted.

Above him in the tree the Türkmén shouted in a loud voice, "Stop! Please don't eat him! He owes me 1,000 liras!"

Terrified by this loud call from above, the Bektaşî was stunned. He collapsed in fright, and died right there.

Climbing down from the pear tree, the Türkmén ate the

<sup>10</sup> These terms apparently refer to the tribal origins of Osman

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rest of the Bektāṣi's food. He poured out the rakı, thinking it tasted very bad. Then he took the Bektāṣi's belt and opened it. Inside it he found 1,000 gold liras. When he saw these, the Türkmen said, "O Allah, you have paid me the 1,000 liras you owed me, but if I hadn't been here, he'd have eaten you!"