

Story 816 (1974 Tape 18)

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Tercan kaza, Erzincan  
Province

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Behlül Dane<sup>1</sup> Teaches God's Time versus Human Time

One day while Harun Reşit was Caliph of all Islam, Behlül Dane was walking down the street with some of his friends. As he walked along, Behlül kept saying, "I have a God whose one hour is equivalent to 1,000 of our hours."<sup>2</sup>

As Behlül Dane and his friends were passing the Caliph's palace, Harun Reşit asked, "Who is that fellow who has memorized something which he keeps repeating, something to which his friends keep saying, 'Yes, yes'? Call him here."

When Behlül Dane and his friends were brought before the Caliph, Harun Reşit asked, "What were you talking about?"

<sup>1</sup>Behlül Dane is usually pictured as the "mad" half-brother of Harun Reşit, the greatest of the Abbasid Caliphs, who flourished around 800 A.D. There is very little, if any, historical verification of the existence of such a relationship. Behlül was not really crazy, but his piety and austerity made him seem so to the hedonistic Caliph and his court, both of whom represent worldliness and hedonism in several tales of The Arabian Nights. Like the schlemiel of Jewish tradition, Behlül was God's fool who dared to call to spiritual account the behavior of the mighty. In this tale and others, he demonstrates his high spiritual standing in the eyes of the Deity.

<sup>2</sup>Compare this with "A day in thy courts is better than a thousand" (Psalms, 84, verse 10).

Story 816

The things that you say are not logical. Do such things like that ever really happen?"

Behlül answered, "Our creative God can do anything. For him everything is easy. Yes, things like that have happened, and things like that will happen again." When Harun Reşit asked Behlül to prove his statement, Behlül Dane began to pray: "O God, my great God, who can make an hour of your time seem like 1,000 of our hours, show yourself to this Caliph. He does not believe me when I this, and he does not believe in your ability to do this."

One day soon after this, Harun Reşit spent some time enjoying the company of one of his slave girls. When he was finished doing this, he asked the girl for a kettle of water which he could take with him to the toilet. When she brought the water, he took the kettle and headed for the toilet

When Harun Reşit entered that room, he had a vision. *73-75*  
*To see with his*  
*transformation*  
*73*  
The first thing that he noticed was that his clothes had become the clothes of a woman. Then he realized that he was among a number of shepherds *73-76* with their flocks of sheep. The many sheep dogs which pressed around him made him feel almost suffocated. The shepherds ran to the place where the dogs had gathered, thinking that the disturbance had been caused either by a wolf or by a thief trying to get

## Story

some sheep. When they came and saw a person in woman's clothes, one of them asked, "Who are you? Are you a jinn or some other supernatural being?"<sup>3</sup>

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"I am neither a jinn nor any other supernatural creature but a child of human beings."

"Woman, what family connections do you have in this area?"

"I don't have any such connections around here. Won't you take me with you?"

"Very well," said the shepherd.

When evening came, the shepherd took Harun Reşit home with him. Harun Reşit in his new form became this shepherd's woman, and they were soon married. As time went on, year after year, they had three or five children.<sup>4</sup> (It was, of course, the Lord, who can make one of his hours seem like a

<sup>3</sup> When any folktale character encounters an unknown person in an unlikely place, he will probably wonder if that stranger is a supernatural creature. Believing in numerous and dangerous supernatural creatures often made visible to mortal eyes, he is logically justified in suspecting the presence of such a being. He asks, quite automatically, "Are you a jinn or other supernatural creature?" In Turkish the query is neatly and thoroughly rhymed, partly the result of the inflectional endings of Turkish verbs: In misin, cin misin?

<sup>4</sup> This is not a matter of vagueness or carelessness. Instead of saying a couple (of anything), two or three, three or four, or a few, the Turkish villager is likely to say three or five.

thousand of ours, who was doing all this.)

When he blinked his eyes and looked around him, Harun Reşit discovered that he was still in the toilet. The shepherd, their children, and the sheep had all disappeared. Taking his kettle with him, he returned to his own quarters in the palace, but he was gravely disturbed. His wife asked him, "What is wrong, my Caliph? You were in the toilet for some time. Are you in some way ill?"

"Don't ask me, my wife; don't ask me. I do not have time to talk about it." They went to bed, but Harun Reşit slept little, for he kept thinking about the shepherd he had married, about the children they had had, and he remembered the names of these children very clearly. In the morning, he went to his court chamber and sat upon his throne as usual.

Behlül Dane knew all about what had happened to Harun Reşit in his vision. Behlül was very knowledgeable about all of the spiritual matters of the community. morning Behlül said to his friends, "Let us again stroll past the palace. I shall repeat my former words about a thousand hours, and you can again say, 'Yes, yes' to those words." Walking past the palace, Behlül turned to his left and said, "My God is so great that he can make one of his hours seem like a thousand to us."

Story 816

His friends said, "Yes, yes."

Then turning to his right, Behlül again said, "My is so great that he can make one of his hours seem like a thousand of ours."

Again his friends said, "Yes, yes."

At that point Harun Reşit started crying from the palace balcony, "Yes, it is true! Yes, it is true!"

Behlül then said, "You didn't believe it when I told you this before you had become wife to a shepherd for seven years. You didn't believe in God's ability to do such things before that. But now you say, 'Yes, yes!'" Saying no more than that, Behlül departed.