

Story 819 (1974 Tape 18)

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Tercan kaza, Erzincan  
Province

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The Name of Hızır Used Falsely

There was a man here in our village named Abbas. When he was in Erzurum one day he bought a very fine ox and brought it home. Soon afterwards this ox was seen by a man here called Uncle Durak. This Uncle Durak was a very rich man who enjoyed his wealth. As soon as he saw the ox, he asked Abbas to sell it to him. When Abbas refused to sell the ox, Uncle Durak became <sup>angry</sup> angry at him and said to him, "You will see what I shall do to you. Because you will not sell me that ox, I shall force you to slaughter it

When Uncle Durak left Abbas, he went to see another in this village named Mevlid.<sup>1</sup> He explained to him what situation was and said to him, "Mevlid, go and in some way force Abbas to slaughter his ox."

<sup>1</sup>It is ironic that the treacherous agent of the immoral rich man should be named Mevlid. Mevlid, Mevlit, or Mevlüt is the title of a cantata that may well be the most important piece of Turkish Islamic religious literature. Mevlid-i Şerif, composed by Süleyman Çelebi in 1409, is an extended eulogy devoted to the birth and life of Mohammed. It is chanted as a requiem.

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"All right, I'll do it! Abbas is like a godfather<sup>2</sup> to me. He will do whatever I ask him to do."

Mevlid went to Abbas and said to him, "Last night I had a dream in which I saw the Blessed Hızır.<sup>3</sup> He said to me 'If Abbas slaughters his new ox, he will be safe. If he does not slaughter it, he will soon die.'"

Abbas asked, "Do you know when the Blessed Hızır will come?"

"No."

Abbas then thought to himself, "He will probably come on Hidrellez Night."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup>The Turkish term used here is kirve (though pronounced here as kivre). Kirve refers to the man who pays for a circumcision celebration. Since 200-300 people may attend such a celebration, a 2- or 3-day event, the cost of food and entertainment may be very high.

<sup>3</sup>Hızır is a spiritual being with several functions. He is a last-minute rescuer. He is a granter of wishes. He roams the earth at times, testing human hospitality; he rewards the hospitable, punishes the inhospitable. He is also a very ancient water and fertility god, the object of a cult that runs throughout the Middle East. He is sometimes seen as the messenger of Allah.

<sup>4</sup>Hidrellez Day is May 6. It is supposedly the day when Hızır and Elijah meet to renew their agreement on the parts of the world which are their respective domains. Elijah and Hızır were very similar in their roles as water and fertility gods, and that similarity is testified to by the name of the holiday Hidrellez, a compound of Hızır + Elyas [for Elias or Elijah]. Turkish people think only of Hızır on that holiday, omitting Elijah in all but name. On the night before Hidrellez, Hızır may knock on one's door in the guise of an impoverished and hungry old man, and so people always prepare food against his coming--just as at the Jewish Seder Feast a place is set and

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He then went to his wife and said, "Prepare the big pan for Hidrellez night. Put flour in it, and if the Blessed Hızır visits us, we shall know of his visit."

His wife filled the large pan with clean flour and set it outside the house before their front door. Mevlid came secretly that night and made a handprint right in the middle of the pan of flour.

When Abbas arose on Hidrellez Day, he went at once to examine the pan of flour. Seeing the handprint in it, he said to his wife, "The Blessed Hızır has come. Let us go out and slaughter that ox at once!"

They slaughtered the ox and sent one quarter of it to our village to Mevlid. They ate some of the ox themselves, and they shared the rest with their friends.

wine poured for the possible coming of Elijah. In the early morning of Hidrellez Day people exhibit in their gardens effigies of the things they wish for. If Hızır looks upon these requests with favor, they may expect to receive the wished-for items within the coming year.