

Story 833 (1974 Tape 18)

Narrator: Unidentified very old man

Location: Olgunlar village, kaza of Rafayik or Refahiye, Erzincan Province

Date: August 1974

Ibrahim Ethem¹ from Ruler to Saint

Saint Ibrahim Ethem liked very much to go hunting. One day while he was hunting, he sat down to eat his lunch. As he was doing so, a bird swooped down and took from his hand the piece of bread he was eating and then flew away with it. Saint Ibrahim followed the bird, and he soon came to a man tied to a tree. The man held captive there was eating bread. The saint asked him, "What are you doing here? Why are you tied to this tree? And how do you manage to get bread way out here?"

The man answered, "I was a peddler, but (bandits) robbed me and tied me to this tree. A little bird keeps bringing me my food, and another brings me water."

¹Ibrahim Bin Adham was one of the early Islamic figures (8th century) about whom we know a considerable amount. Born in Balkh, northern Afghanistan, he became an important political and military figure, living much of his life in Khurasan (also called Khorasan, and in Turkish Horasan), a section of Northeastern Iran. Always an ascetic, he was converted to Sufism, after which he abandoned public life--he was never actually a ruler but a statesman--left Horasan, moved to Syria, and there spent his last years willingly doing physical labor for his meager maintenance. See more extensive commentary on his life and fame in separate Notes volume.

Story

When Saint Ibrahim heard this, he decided to abandon his throne. He said, "If God provides even for a person who is tied up this way, what need have I of a crown?"

After a while his court attendants traced his whereabouts. They followed him and they found him finally, mending his jacket along the seashore. They said, "Please come back. We shall take care of all your work. You will only have to tell us what you wish to have done, and we shall do it

"Can you do all I ask you to do even here?" he asked. Throwing his sewing needle into the sea, Saint Ibrahim said to them, "Get that needle for me.

His ministers asked, "Your Majesty, how could we possibly do that?"

Saint Ibrahim then called, "O you fishes in the sea! Will one of you bring me back my needle?" A minute or two later a fish appeared on the surface of the water with the needle in its mouth.

When his ministers saw this, they were amazed. Speechless at first, they then said, "We understand now that you are a saint and do not need our services."

They were right. God serves such men as Saint Ibrahim Ethem.