

Story 840 (1974 Tape 19)

Narrator: Kara Ahmet Durmaz, 65

Location: Tercan, kaza town of
Erzincan Province

Date: August 12, 1974

Hızır¹ Shows That Everyone Reflects/ His Origins

According to our religious beliefs,² Saint Hızır comes to the assistance of those in desperate need of help. Once one of our sultans was thinking about Hızır, and he wondered to himself, "How can I have the opportunity of seeing Hızır?"

After considering this for some time, the sultan unable to think of any way in which he himself could make contact with the saint. He therefore sent messengers throughout the land to make the following announcement: "I, sultan, will give a rich reward to anyone who can show me

¹Hızır is a very ancient fertility and water deity in the Middle East, a role which he still plays in the mythology of rural Turkey. For all Turks, both rural and urban, he had two other roles: (1) that of a last-minute rescuer from disaster and (2) that of a granter of wishes. He has also, in recent years, been thought of as an agent of Allah, carrying out the Deity's will in human life.

²Although Hızır is an object of religious belief, most of this belief has nothing whatsoever to do with Islam. He is not named in the Koran, though many view the unnamed Koranic figure called by Allah "Our Servant" as being Hızır. The very extensive cult of Hızır as fertility god in rural Turkey is strongly opposed by the Moslem establishment--so much so that much of its worship has gone underground. Very visible, though, remain the many shrines and temples of Hızır, especially along the Mediterranean coast of Turkey.

Story 840

St. Hızır."

Among those who heard this announcement was a poor hoca¹ in a small village. Going to the palace and gaining permission to speak to the sultan, this poor man said, "My Padişah, I can show you St. Hızır, but you must give me forty days in which to do it."

[Unfortunately the tape on which this tale was recorded was damaged in transit. The collectors remember Kara Ahmet's rendition well enough, however, to be certain that it is a variant of a very commonly told tale in Turkey. Other variants in ATON, q.v., are 210, 301, 523, 699.]

³A hoca is a Moslem priest.