

Story 922 (1981 Tape 8)

Narrator: Ali Çiftçi, farmer

Location: Çıkırıkçı village,
Sarıkaya kaza, Yozgat
Province

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Legendary Lokman¹ and Barley Soup

Once while Dr. Lokman² was walking about the countryside, a certain flower spoke to him and revealed that it was a cure for death. "Whoever drinks my juice will never die," it said. Lokman immediately wrote down the name of this flower in his notebook.

When ^{Allah} God observed this, he said to Gabriel, "Lokman has a remedy for death, but who is it that gives people their daily bread?" (As you know, only God can determine how many years a man can live, and He is the only One who gives you your daily bread.) God then said to Gabriel, "Go down there and make him drop his notebook in the river."

There was a river that ran right through the middle of the city of Adana, and there was a bridge across that river. Gabriel went to that bridge, and when he saw Lokman coming, he

¹Lokman (Lukman) was a pre-Islamic legendary figure of pagan times who was incorporated into the Koran. He assumes many roles: physician, wise man, giver of proverbs, and teller of fables. See Encyclopaedia of Islam.

²The narrator uses the wording Lokman Hekim (Physician Lokman).

language of plants - indicated by R.B.
flourish

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turned himself ^{transformed} into a human being. After greeting Lokman, he asked him, "What have you been doing?"

"Well, I have just found a remedy for death."

Gabriel said, "If you could do that, then you are probably intelligent enough to tell me where Gabriel is at this moment."

Lokman looked into his notebook and then said, "Gabriel is not at his usual place right now."

"Look more carefully for him in your book."

This time Dr. Lokman studied his notebook very closely and discovered that Gabriel was somewhere standing on a bridge. He said, "I see Gabriel on a bridge. I hope that you are not Gabriel."³

Gabriel said to Dr. Lokman, "You know very well who I am." As he said this, he struck Lokman's book with his arm, knocking it into the river.

The book was soon lost among the waves of the river. After

³For illiterate people the book is a mystery, an almost magic object. This impression derives in part from their seeing educated people consult books for information, some of which may be vital information. Thus books become akin to oracles. Charlatans, quacks, and those posing as religious authorities in folktales often exploit the gullibility of the uneducated by pretending to find advice, remedies, prophecies, and/or warnings in their books. Usually this is a deceptive device for exploiting the less knowledgeable people. Here the book serves as a magic mirror or crystal ball in which Lokman can see everything that goes on in the universe.

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a while some leaves of the book washed up into a barley field along the bank of that river a distance below Adana. That is the reason that some old folks give sick people barley soup to drink. It is supposed to cure them and restore their health completely.⁴

⁴This is an instance of ^{contagion} sympathetic magic. Barley becomes curative through its contact with the book of the wondrous Dr. Lokman. It is not the barley by itself but barley in water (barley soup) that is thought to be effective; the role of the river is thus maintained in the folk medicine.