

Story 1086 (1976 Tape 28)

Narrator: Ali Çiftçi, farmer, 60

Location: Çıkırıkçı village,  
Sarıkaya kaza, Yozgat  
Province

Date: December 31, 1976

Behlül Dane<sup>1</sup> Shows (Harun Reşit) What  
Worshippers Are Thinking

People went to Harun Reşit one day and said, "Your brother does not perform the prayer ritual in the mosque."

After they had gone, Harun Reşit called Behlül Dane and asked, "Brother, don't you perform the prayer ritual when you go to the mosque? People are complaining about you."

"Let us go to the mosque together, and I shall show you why I am unable to perform prayers properly," said Behlül.

When they reached the mosque door, he said to the caliph, "You look through my sleeve at what is going on."<sup>2</sup>

*Amir & Danij  
look through*

<sup>1</sup> Behlül Dane is largely a legendary figure in the Moslem past of the Abbassid Period. Whether there is any historicity to this figure is questionable, though until the 18th century there was a grave at Baghdad that was supposedly his. He was said to be the mad half-brother of Harun Reşit (Haroun al-Raschid), greatest of the Abbassid caliphs, who flourished around 800. There was method in his alleged "madness," for his antic behavior was a "cover" for his role as satirist and critic of worldliness of the powerful and wealthy--notably the caliph himself. At times he was, like the Jewish schlemihl, a saintly fool.

*to re-look  
end -  
beneath*

<sup>2</sup> Behlül Dane could read the minds of those near him. Hence in the mosque the many non-religious thoughts of the people around him distracted him from the spiritual frame of mind necessary to say his prayers. Although this is only implicit here, it is clearly stated in variants of this tale. He has his brother look through his sleeve --sometimes just through his armpit--so that he can see with Behlül's insight what is running through the minds of the "worshippers."

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By viewing them through Behlül Dane's sleeve, Harun Reşit was able to see that none of the worshipers had his mind on the prayers. Each was thinking of something else-- something which was not at all religious. The hoca<sup>3</sup> himself was thinking about where he should tie his donkey. "Where should I tie it?" he thought. "Shall I tie it to this tree or to that tree?"

*M  
Reşit*

Behlül Dane surprised and confused everyone by shouting out, "Lie on the ground and tie it to your penis!"

<sup>3</sup>The hoca is a preacher and sometimes a teacher, akin to a priest