

Story 1088 (1976 Tape 28)

Narrator: Ali Çiftçi, farmer, 60

Location: Çıkırıkçı village,
Sarıkaya kaza, Yozgat
Province

Date: December 31, 1976

Behlül Dane¹ and Hızır²

One day in Baghdad a hoca³ was ^{all} preaching a sermon.
Hızır Aleyhisselâm⁴ was in the mosque listening to him.
Behlül Dane was lying outside the mosque. Hızır Aleyhis-
selâm arose, went outside the mosque, and said to Behlül

¹Behlül 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.

²Once a water deity and fertility god--and still both those figures to most farmers in southern Turkey--Hızır is more widely known now as a granter of wishes, a last-minute rescuer from disaster, and a special messenger and agent of God. In these latter three functions he appears fairly frequently in Turkish folktales. Not mentioned by name in the Koran, a chapter of that work was later named after him. He is assumed to be the person instructing Moses in Chapter XVIII of the Koran, where he is referred to by God simply as "our servant."

³A hoca is a Moslem preacher, and once also a teacher. He is akin to a priest.

⁴Often used after the names of prophets, it means Rest in peace--a gesture of respect to the dead. It is an anomaly here, for Hızır, having drunk of the Abu-Hayat, the Water of Life, was immortal.

Story 1088

Dane, "O man, why do you lie here this way? Go inside and listen to the hoca. He speaks so sweetly that his words flow from his mouth like honey."

"Go away, or I shall shout loudly, 'Hızır is coming!' If I do that, you will suddenly be surrounded by people Stepping away a short distance, Hızır Aleyhisselâm bent down near the ground and called to God: "O my God, what is this fellow's name?"

"O my man, the names of the people you like are written in your book, and the names of the people I like are written in mine. His name is written in mine

In this way God refused to give Hızır Behlül Dane's name.⁵

⁵Hızır has great and widespread status throughout the Middle East where relatively few people know of Behlül Dane. Here, however, God is clearly favoring Behlül Dane above Hızır.