

Story 1132 (1974 Tape 11) Narrator: Mehmet İlhan

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kaza, Yozgat Province

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Behlül Dane<sup>1</sup> and the Property One Takes to the Grave

One day Harun Reşit said to his brother, Behlül Dane, "My brother, why do you sit there all day doing nothing? Go out and do some shopping."

"Very well. Go and load forty mules with wheat for me, and I shall go." Harun Reşit had forty mules loaded with wheat, and Behlül took them and left. He led the mules to a low sandbar along the edge of the river, and there he scattered all of the wheat. He then said to the fish that swam all around the sandbar, "I shall expect something in return for this favor I have done you."

The fish ate the wheat and then they collected all of the gold, the silver, and the jewelry that had ever fallen into

<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 Abassid caliphs, who flourished around 800. There was a method in his alleged "madness", for his antic behaviour was a "cover" for his role as a satirist and critic of the worldliness of the powerful and wealthy-- notably the caliph himself. At times he was, like the Jewish schlemihl, a saintly fool.

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the river. They carried all this wealth in their mouths and placed it on the sandbar. On the following morning Behlül Dane returned to the sandbar and took all of the gifts that the fish had brought him. His brother was amazed at the results of his brother's shopping trip

After some time had passed, Harun Reşit one day said again to Behlül Dane, "My brother, why do you sit there all day doing nothing? Why don't you go shopping again?"

"All right, but this time I shall need eighty mules loaded with wheat

Behlül Dane led the mules to the same sandbar in the river, and there he again scattered all of the wheat that they had carried. To the fish who swam in great numbers around the sandbar, he said, "This wheat is in return for what you did for me before. I do not want anything back from you this time." As he returned to the palace, Behlül wrapped a small amount of soil in his handkerchief

Harun Reşit, who was waiting for his brother's return looked out the window as he approached. He wondered why mules came back with empty saddlebags and what it was that his brother was carrying in his handkerchief. When he went to meet Behlül, Harun Reşit took the handkerchief from Behlül's hand and opened it carefully. He looked very disap-

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pointed when he found inside it only a handful of soil

"What is this, brother?" he asked.

"This is called ~~What-Do-I-Really-Own~~ soil. We shall place this on your eyelids when you die. Even if you came to possess a whole world of property, this in the end would cover your eyes and be the only property you would have. That is why I brought this for you."