

Story 1133 (1974 Tape 11) Narrator: Mehmet İlhan

Location: Sekeli village, Yerköy
kaza, Yozgat Province

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^{all} Behlül Dane¹ Builds ^{all} Heavens and Hells

Behlül Dane often played with the children. One day he was building heavens and hells out of mud and sticks. While he was doing this, the wife of ^{all} Harun Reşit² came along and asked him, "Behlül Dane, what are you doing?"

"I am building heavens and ^{all} hells," he replied.

"Will you sell a heaven to me?" she asked.

"I will

"How much do you want for it?"

"Five kuruş,"³ Behlül answered.

¹ Behlül Dane is largely a legendary figure in the Moslem past of the Abbasid 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 Abbasid 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.

² Her name was Zübeyde.

³ The para was formerly the smallest monetary unit. There were 40 paras to the kuruş and 100 kuruş to the Turkish lira. By mid-20th century, devaluation of Turkish money had eliminated from use the para, and by the 1970s the kuruş also fell out of circulation. When the lira fell to the value of 1/10 of a U.S. cent (and much lower in the 1980s), the kuruş became utterly meaningless.

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Zübey

Story 1133

She gave him the five kuruş and bought the heaven.

At night Harun Reşit saw in a dream that he was in heaven. His wife was there, and there were houris⁴ all around them. "Where did you get this miraculous heaven?" he asked his wife

"Behlül was making heavens and hells, and I bought this heaven from him."

This experience remained in the mind of Harun Reşit. Several days later he saw Behlül playing with the children. He was again constructing heavens and hells. "What are you doing?" Harun asked.

"I am making heavens and hells.

"Will you sell me a heaven?"

I will not sell it to you."

"Why not?"

"Because you would never have believed such a miracle possible if you had not seen your wife's heaven. I sold it to her because she believed in it."

⁴ Angelic female attendants who act as hostesses and servants to those Moslems who reach heaven.