

Story 1152 (1969 Tape 7) Narrator: Muzaffer Çelik  
Location: Şeyh Ali village  
 Polatlı kaza  
 Ankara Province  
Date: 1969

Twisted Mouth as Punishment for Sacrilege

Tzbo  
 In 1958 I went to the old Köselers village. This was late in the evening, and I was just in time for the night prayer.<sup>1</sup> After coming out of the mosque, I urinated against a wall in the mosque yard. For just a moment after that, a wind blew very hard. I went to my mother-in-law's house and went to bed.

I like to have tea for breakfast, and the following morning my mother-in-law served me tea. I was unable to drink the tea, however, for my mouth was all crooked, and I spilled the tea. My face was twisted and paralyzed. I had taken my tractor to that village, and that morning I rode it back to my own village but I had some difficulty seeing, for one of my eyes was hurting very much.

When I got home and my friends saw my condition, they advised me to go to visit a certain grave in the cemetery of Emirler village. I went to that village and found the grave they had described, and as I was looking down at it, a chill passed over my body. Then an old man appeared there. He

<sup>1</sup> This is the fifth and last prayer service of the Moslem religious day. It is called the Yatsı prayer.

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rubbed my back and slapped me. I did not consult any ~~doctor~~ doctor about my condition, but three days after I had visited that grave, my face paralysis disappeared.

I later inquired about the grave I had been sent to visit. I was told that the man who was buried there had lost his shoes while fleeing the Greek invading forces during the war <sup>2</sup>. One of those shoes returned to him again, but the other never did. Later I saw his other shoe in the home of an old woman in another village. I never used to believe in such things before my face was paralyzed, but after that time I believed in them a great deal.

I was paralyzed because I urinated without first having said, "Bismillah."<sup>3</sup> I was drunk at the time.

Ahmet Uysal: I have heard it reported that many men from this village are afflicted with such paralysis. What

<sup>2</sup> The war referred to is the War of Independence, in the early 1920s, when a large Greek army (with French, British, and Italian support) invaded Turkey just after its heavy losses during World War I.

<sup>3</sup> Bismillah is the shortened, more convenient form of Bismillāhhirrahmanirrahim, which means "In the name of the most merciful God." It is a word used audibly or silently by many devout Moslems before starting any undertaking, great or small, and it then signifies "I begin this act by mentioning the name of God as a sign of respect." It is widely believed that saying this aids success and failing to say it may bring failure in any undertaking.

Attacks of what looks like Bell's Palsy seem fairly common among men in Turkey. It is usually attributed to the person's

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do they think causes their paralysis?

Narrator: Most of them go out of the house at night without saying "Bismillah" first. Thus the man's mouth may become crooked and his eyes may be crossed. In that condition a man should not look into a mirror, for if he does, then he may never be cured. He should go to that grave in Emirler village without having looked into a mirror, and then he can be cured. There are people who come even from Ankara to be cured there

having carelessly or inadvertently urinated on a saint's grave or on some other sacred place. Some psychologists have explained this as psychosomatic in a patient who firmly believes that this can happen as a penalty for an offense.