

Story 1266 (1972 Tape 10)

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Province

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Hızır¹ and Moses Travel Together

The Prophet Moses once asked Allah, "O, my Allah, is any human being more virtuous than I am?"

Allah answered, "O, Moses, there is indeed a mortal more deserving of heaven than even you are. His name is Hızır."

"If that is the case, O Allah, then tell me how I can see this man. How can I find him?"

Allah directed Moses, saying, "Cook three fishes and them in your traveling bag. Then set forth on your search for Hızır. When you reach a place where the cooked fish jump out of your bag and into the water and then swim away, you will have reached the location of Hızır."

Moses cooked three fishes, packed them in his bag, and set forth in search of Hızır. He took along with him one of his friends to serve as his traveling companion. After traveling for some time, the two men grew hungry. They stopped by the side of the road for a while, where they ate some bread. Having satisfied his hunger, Moses lay down and took

¹Once a water deity and fertility god--and still both

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a nap, but his friend stayed awake.

When Moses awakened, they resumed their journey. Some time later when Moses looked into his traveling bag, he noticed that the fishes were no longer there. He asked his friend, "What became of the fishes that we brought along with us?"

The friend answered, "Moses, while you were sleeping earlier, those fishes jumped out of your bag and into the nearby river." The friend had known that there were three fishes in that bag, but he had not known that they were cooked.

The two men immediately returned to the place where the three fishes had jumped into the river. There they saw a man sleeping on the bank of the river. When he woke up, they greeted him, "Selâmünaleyküm!"

"Aleykümselâm!"² that man responded.

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."

²Selâmünaleyküm/Aleykümselâm--traditional exchange of greetings between Moslems not well acquainted with each other.

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Moses understood that this man must be the Hızır for whom he was looking. He began talking to this man. "Oh, Hızır, will you accept me as a friend and traveling companion?"

"Yes, I shall accept you but only on the condition that you will not interfere in any way with my affairs."

"Very well," said Moses. "I shall not interfere with anything that you are doing."

"Remember that," said Hızır, "for if you should forget it, then we shall have to part company."

Hızır and Moses then started traveling together. After a while they walked into a village along their way where they saw several children playing together in the street. Walking up to these children, Hızır grabbed a boy, smashed his head against the ground, and thereby killed him.

Shocked and confused by this unusual act, Moses asked, "Oh, Hızır, why did you do such a terrible thing? Why did you kill this innocent child?"

"Aha, Moses Didn't I tell you that you were not to interfere in what was my business? Our ways should separate here

It means roughly May peace be unto you/And may peace be unto you too. If Selâmünaleyküm is not responded to, the speaker should be wary of the one so addressed.

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and now!"

"No, no! Please do not say so," replied Moses. "I promise that I shall not interfere again in your business."

Hızır said, "All right," and they left the village. After walking some distance they came to another village in that second village no one showed them any hospitality at all. No one gave them either a scrap of bread or a drop of water. All of the time that they were there they were hungry and thirsty. There they came upon a wall that was tilting so badly that it was ready to collapse. (I remember now another such crooked wall with which the name of Hacı Bektaş Veli³ was associated. I once went to see that wall. It is said that Hacı Bektaş Veli once supported that wall with his back in order to prevent it from falling. Hızır bonded together the bricks in the tilting wall so that the wall would not fall down. This action confused Moses again, and once again he asked for an explanation: "What are you doing there Hızır? The people of this village have treated us badly, giving us neither food nor drink. Why, then, are you doing them this good service?"

³Moslem saint (d. 1516) whose name may have provided the name for the Bektasi Order of dervishes, whose headquarters is a monastery built over his tomb in Kirşehir Province.

Hızır responded, "Moses, haven't I warned you not to interfere with my work? Now let us bid each other farewell and go our separate ways

But Moses again pleaded with him, "No, no, Hızır. Do not say so. I shall not break my promise again in this way.

The two then renewed their journey together. After some time they came to the shore of a sea, where they boarded a that was ready to leave. The sailors charged them nothing when they entered the ship, and they were given a free passage. Ten or fifteen minutes after the voyage had started Hızır went down into the hold of the ship. There he took a hammer and some nails and began to punch small holes in the bottom of the ship. A number of small holes allowed quite a bit of seawater to begin pouring into the hold of the ship. Unable to avoid comment on this, Moses asked, "Hey, Hızır, what are you doing?"

When Hızır heard this question, he said, "That ends our relationship! This is the third time that you have interfered with things that I have done, and I can no longer continue to accept you as a traveling companion!"

"I understand what you mean," said Moses, "but before we please explain to me your reasons for doing the strange

things you have done during our travels."

Hızır then proceeded to give explanations for his behavior.

In the first village where we stopped I killed a child. What you did not know was that this child came from exceptionally good parents who could have been ruined by that boy if he had been allowed to grow up and put into action the evil nature within him. In the second village, where we were not treated hospitably by any of the residents, I repaired a wall that was ready to collapse. I did so because beneath that wall lay a treasure that belongs to a child who is still a minor and unable to defend his rights. If that wall had collapsed at this time, the villagers would have found the treasure, and the rightful owner would have never possessed it. When we boarded this ship, on which we were given free passage, I opened holes in the hull big enough to admit quite a large amount of water. I did so to protect the owners of the ship. It will end its voyage in the capital city, where the padişah is presently confiscating good ships for his own purposes. When his agents see how damaged this ship is, they will not confiscate it.

Despite the leaks in the ship, it finally reached its destination, and there Hızır and Moses parted company.