

Story 1384 (1989 Tape 5)

Narrator: Memduh Derin, 59,  
graduate of a  
technical school

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Gazneli Mahmut<sup>1</sup> Explains His Confusing Behavior

This is a story about Gazneli Mahmut. During his time there was a woman who had been a prostitute but had then reformed and become a weaver. She preferred to do that kind of work, and she wished to avoid completely her former trade. But there was one young man who refused to allow her to withdraw from prostitution. He went to her and insisted on her sleeping with him.

The woman went to Gazneli Mahmut and complained about this situation. Upset by what he heard, Gazneli Mahmut said to the woman, "Go home, and if this young man comes to your door again, allow him to enter your house. I shall take

<sup>1</sup>It is difficult to know why Gazneli Mahmut was made the protagonist of this brief tale of little consequence. Gazneli Mahmut was a great warrior and militant champion of Islam. Born in 997 at Ghazna, a son of the governor of Horasan (Khurasan) he succeeded his father and then carried out several notable campaigns to make new converts to Islam. He defeated the formidable Ismailite sect and captured their city of Nishapur. In the very early 11th century he invaded India and there defeated a confederacy of Hindu princes. Peasant narrators often grab from thin air some name they have heard, often in an entirely different context.

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care of matters after that." He then arranged with the woman to hide him and a small band of his men inside her house.

When the insistent young man came to the woman's door and knocked upon it, she opened the door and permitted him to enter. Without being able to see more than the outline of the young man, Gazneli Mahmut rushed upon him and killed him with a dagger. Then he ordered his men to turn on the lights. After taking a look at the face of the dead youth, Gazneli Mahmut then performed two rekats<sup>2</sup> of prayer. <sup>130-131</sup>

The men who were with him were confused by this behavior of Gazneli Mahmut. They said, "Oh, Sultan Mahmut, we know why you killed the young man, but why did you have us extinguish the lights before you killed him, have them lighted again after you had killed him, and then proceed to perform two rekats of prayer? What was the meaning of all that?"

Gazneli Mahmut then explained his actions. He said, "As you know, I have a son who is now a young man. I ordered

<sup>2</sup>A rekat is a series of physical movements and gestures performed during prayer. The number of rekats performed varies with the particular services of which they are part. At a service at which a dozen or more rekats are required, there is a considerable amount of energy expended.

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you to turn off the lights because if the culprit turned out to be my son and if I saw his face, I should not have been able to kill him. Then, after I had killed the culprit, I ordered you to turn on the lights again so that I could determine whether or not the corpse was that of my son. When I looked and saw that the dead young man was not my I rejoiced, and in gratitude to Allah I performed two rekats of prayer."