

Story 1450 (1992 Tape 5)

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Accountability for Family

There was a Laz named Temel<sup>1</sup> who was the captain of a ship on the Black Sea.<sup>2</sup> He had been sailing the Black Sea for so many years and he had become so well known to residents in all of the towns and cities along the Turkish coast that one day he was interviewed by a newspaper reporter.

The reporter asked Temel many questions about his work on the Black Sea and about himself. At one point he asked, "Captain Temel, how many children do you have?"

"I don't know."

Surprised, the reporter asked, "How can that be? What do you mean by saying that you do not know how many children you have?"

"Well, I am always traveling," answered Temel, "and I not been back to my village for four years. How should I know how many children I have? Such matters are in the hands of Allah."

<sup>1</sup>The Laz people along the Turkish Black Sea coast are stereotyped as being stupid; of course, they are no different from any other people in the matter of native intelligence. In comic anecdotes about the Laz, the protagonists usually have one or another of five or six names. The most common tag name for a Laz is Temel, and the second most common is probably Dursun. Thus, whenever Temel or Dursun appears in a Turkish folktale, the audience knows at once that he is a Laz.

<sup>2</sup>The Laz people (who live mainly in Rize, Artvin, and Trabzon Provinces in extreme northeastern Turkey) have traditionally

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made their livings on the Black Sea in the whole range of maritime pursuits--fishing, shipbuilding, and shipping. Most of the Turkish ships on the Black Sea are manned and commanded by Lazes.