

Story 1476 (1989 Tape 9)

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Angelic Troops in the Korean War

I should like to tell you some stories about the Korean War that I heard from a very close friend. I think that they went to the Korean War in 1955.¹ That friend of mine received several wounds in that war. His first name was Yusuf, but even though he was from my own village, I cannot now remember his last name. He left this world for the next world² after a traffic accident. I am now going to tell you one of his stories just the way he told it to me.

"One day during the Korean War three of us were hiding because we were completely surrounded by the enemy. It was time for the morning prayers, and we had to take our ritual ablutions.³ We tried to find a source of clean water, and we finally did locate one, but it was very close to the enemy zone. Regardless of the danger that might be involved, we had to perform the prayers that Allah required of us.

¹The Korean War began in July 1950 and ended in July 1953.

²Here, as in an earlier tale, this narrator does not say literally that the deceased "left this world for the next world." He says simply that the deceased "changed worlds."

³Here, as in an earlier tale, the narrator pronounces the standard Turkish abdest (ritual ablution) as aptes.

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"While we were performing our prayer rituals, the enemy observed us and attacked us, but we were completely unaware of that fact. As the enemy started to approach us, they in turn were attacked by troops that did not look at all like us. We first noticed the enemy when we heard them shouting in fear as a result of the assault that was being made against them by ghostly troops. After our prayers had been completed, we ourselves attacked the enemy and captured the entire squadron. After the enemy had surrendered their arms to us, our leader asked their commander, 'How is it that a whole squadron could surrender to just three men?'

The enemy commander answered, 'We did not surrender to three soldiers. There were many other troops who didn't look like you three. They were wearing long robes and wearing green turbans, and they were advancing in closely joined ranks. Do you keep a secret army hidden somewhere around here?' This incident made both me and our leader cry.

"We realized that there must have been holy forces assisting us. Because we were fighting for a good cause, Allah had sent us help. He had saved us because ours was a righteous war."⁴

⁴The motif of angelic forces aiding hard-pressed troops is a widely distributed motif. In the British tradition the best-known version appears in a short story of World War I, "The Angels of Mons" (originally titled "The Bowmen"), by Arthur

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When I heard this story from Yusuf, I thanked Allah for what He had done. And now I have told you Yusuf's story.

Machen. This piece of fiction seemed so true to many readers that it actually influenced British troops in the latter part of the war.--Although such divine help is the responsibility of the Deity, in the Turkish tradition it is often brought about by Hızır, a fertility god but in recent times more often a last-minute rescuer from disaster. Often the appeal for help is made not to Allah but to Hızır. See ATON tale 497.