

Story 1587 1987 Tape 3)

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A Saint Urinates in Public

Behlül Dane¹ one day began to urinate in the street where there were several people present. He repeated this vulgar behavior several times during the next few days, and this became so offensive to people that they complained about it to Harun Reşit. They said, "You are the ruler of this land. How can you allow your brother to do such a disgusting thing?"

Harun Reşit answered, "Very well. I shall speak to him about this." And the very next time he saw his brother, Harun Reşit asked him about his unacceptable behavior.

Behlül Dane answered, "I was never guilty of such behavior when there were people present. It was only in the presence of animals that I behaved in that way. Come with me, and I shall show you the facts in this matter."

¹Behlül Dane is largely a legendary figure in the Moslem past of the Abbasid Period. Whether there is any historicity to this figure is questionable, though until the 18th century there was a grave at Baghdad that was supposedly his. He was said to be the mad half brother of Harun Reşit (Haroun al-Raschid) greatest of the Abbasid caliphs, who flourished around 800. There was method in his alleged "madness," for his antic behavior was a "cover" for his role as satirist and critic of worldliness of the powerful and wealthy--notably the caliph himself. At times he was, like the Jewish schlemihl, a saintly fool.

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Behlül Dane and Harun Reşit went out into the street and walked along together. Although there were some people ahead of them, Behlül Dane again urinated in the street. "What are you doing?" asked Harun Reşit. "Aren't you doing the same thing again right now?"

"Why are you concerned so much?" asked Behlül Dane. "There is no one else here."

"What do you those creatures are ahead of us?" asked his brother.

Behlül Dane took off his jacket. He then said, "Here! Look down the street through the armhole of my jacket and tell me what you see."

Gazing through the sleeve of Behlül's jacket, Harun saw ahead only donkeys, dogs, and cats. It was then that Harun Reşit first realized that Behlül Dane was a saint.