

Story 1707 1974 Tape 42) Narrator: Behçet Mahir, 65;
odacı at Atatürk
University and
coffeehouse
raconteur

Location: Erzurum, capital
city of Erzurum
Province

Date: 1974

Solomon Informs Three Giants of Their Destinies¹

This is a story about Kirman Shah, but it is related to many other people too. Part of it goes back even as far as the time of Solomon, the son of David. It will soon tell about Kirman Shah on his way to Hirat,² for he

discovered that his true love was the daughter of the Shah of Hirat, Abul Khan.³ But before we report any more about his travel to Hirat, let us first say something about Solomon, the son of David.

Solomon, David's son, had once had some of this [story] inscribed on the door of the treasury building.

¹This is a story incorporated into the four-hour-long tale titled "Kirman Shah" (ATON #1698). It is not merely an interpolated story, for it provides what is supposedly historical and religious background for one part of Kirman Shah's life. It is a story, however, that exists quite apart from its relationship to "Kirman Shah." We have, therefore, given it separate status as one of the numerous folk legends on Solomon.

²Usually Herat, this city is located in eastern Persia in the large area known as Khurasan or Horasan

³A name so common that it probably does not refer here to any identifiable historical person.

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He had once called to his presence three ferocious ants and said to them, "Oh, you cruel giants, know that if I had been permitted to do so, I should long ago have had the ifrits⁴ tear you to pieces. But Allah had not given me permission to do that. Your deaths will be brought about by sons of Arabs.⁵ Each one of your killers will be brought into this world and then reared under the protection of a patron saint."⁶ Pointing to one of the giants, Solomon said, "Your killer will meet you in the land of Çükükaf."⁷ So Solomon had warned the giant about that thousands of years before it was to happen

Upon hearing the words of Solomon, that giant

⁴A demon, often pictured as very large and ferocious. Solomon had brought under his control both demons and jinns, and in folktales he enslaves these supernatural creatures and uses them for his own purposes.

⁵Legends about Solomon are numerous. Behçet Mahir in several tales touches upon this account of three giants allowed to live by Solomon because they were fated to be killed by other scourges of evil forces. One was to be killed by Hamza, Islamic warrior of Mohammed's time; see "Hamzai Sahip Kiran," ATON No. 1700. One was to be slain by Ali--perhaps the giant he slays near the end of Ali Çiftçi's tale "Blood Castle," ATON No. 927. And one was to be killed by Kirman Shah.

⁶The term used here by the narrator is pir.

⁷Unidentified location.

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written down the date when he would supposedly be killed. He said, "Will I allow that Arab's son to grow up so that he can confront me and kill me?" (Related to this thought is the proverb "Crush the head of the serpent while it is still small lest it grow into a dangerous dragon." There is truth in this proverb, but one cannot follow such advice if it is opposed by Fate. As soon as the giant had written down that date, Allah had caused him to fall into a very lengthy sleep, and as a result he was entirely unaware that much of his allotted life span had passed away. A storyteller should explain the ways in which the truth of proverbial expressions may be effective or ineffective. A similar explanation should be made about words relied upon by the Devil--who originally was called Ahut in heaven and Ezacıl⁸ on earth. The Devil proudly relied upon certain words, even though Allah was the only one who had any right to be proud. The Devil was so proud that he refused to revere⁹ Adam after Adam had just been

⁸Not listed in Standard Turkish or Ottoman Turkish dictionaries or in the Encyclopaedia of Islam.

⁹Mahir here and Ali Çiftçi in his accounts of the Creation story claim that the angels were instructed to worship Adam. It is our judgment that revere is a better translation.

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created and taken to heaven, even though all of the other angels revered Adam. For his refusal to revere Adam, the Devil had been cursed.¹⁰ But the Devil was unconcerned about his damnation, for he relied for his welfare upon a set of words that he had learned. "I know the ismi-azan prayer.¹¹ I have always relied upon that prayer, and I shall rely upon it until the end of the world. Thus by continuing to recite this prayer, I shall at last use it to enter heaven." But on that day Allah will remove from his memory the words of the ismi-azan prayer. No matter what precautions a person may take against it, that which is written¹² as your fate always occurs.

¹⁰The Moslem explanation of why Satan was damned differs from the Christian explanation, which condemns Satan for having led a revolt against God by a third of the angels.

¹¹Not explained in available commentaries on the Koran or in the Encyclopaedia of Islam.

¹²Although folk narrators frequently speak of fate as having been written, they actually mean predestined; among early peoples, writing had about it an air of the magical or sacred.

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Upon hearing his destiny spoken by Solomon, the giant had written down the date of his destined death so that several years before that time he could kill Kirman Shah while that hero was still an infant. But the giant then fell asleep and did not awaken until the time that Kirman had reached the age of eighteen years.