

Story 1952 (1964 Tape 9)

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Erzurum Province

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Harun Reşit¹ Protects Behlül Dane²

Harun Reşit was blessed with great earthly power and wealth, but he was unfortunate in having some evil men among his advisers. They often tried to influence him to rule unwisely and to make faulty judgments. He had to remain on his guard constantly in order to avoid bad advice.

Some of those evil counselors did not like Behlül Dane because of his intelligence and wisdom. They said to the ruler, “Your Majesty, your brother, Behlül Dane, is a most unworthy person. He behaves so

¹Harun Reşit (Haroun al-Raschid) was probably the most powerful of the Abbasid caliphs. There is little doubt that he was also the most colorful of the Abbasid caliphs, for stories about him abound, including several in The Arabian Nights. He was at the peak of his power and influence around the year 800.

²Legend has it that Behlül Dane was the half brother of Harun Reşit. Legend also has it that he was mad. If he was mad, there was method to his madness. His antic disposition was a “cover” for his role as satirist and critic of the powerful and wealthy—not excluding Harun Reşit. In tale after tale Behlül Dane propounds moral truths and provides valuable religious insights.

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strangely that he is a disgrace to you and to everyone else in the palace. His presence here damages your good reputation. Why don't you get rid of him? You should have him executed."

Harun Reşit answered, "Since I can find no real fault in Behlül Dane, how could I do such a thing? My being the caliph does not give me the right to harm an innocent person."