

Story 2109 (1999 Tape 2)

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Location: Akkent town, Çal
kaza, Denizli
Province

Date: May 20, 1999

What Fate Giveth, Fate May Take Away

What I am going to tell you now may be a folktale, but the people of the Aegean region of Turkey believe that it is an account of something that actually happened. The places named are on the map of Turkey, and the elements of nature mentioned are familiar to people in that area.

There is a brook named Feslekçay which flows between the town of Nazilli in Aydın Province and Sarayköy, a town just across the border in Denizli Province. This brook runs along the foot of the Bozdağ mountain range. A peculiar feature of that stream is the unusual gravel that lies in the shallow water along its banks. Much of that gravel is small, shaped like coffee beans, and coffee colored

There was a coffee dealer in that part of the country who made his living by delivering large quantities of coffee to stores and coffeehouses in Aydın and Denizli provinces. He would load a camel with bags of coffee beans and deliver them to regular customers in cities,

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towns, and villages. One day as he was passing along Feslekçay brook, he suddenly became aware of the similarity between its gravel and coffee beans. He stopped immediately and unloaded the coffee bags from his camel. He carefully added as much of that gravel as possible into the coffee bags. He then continued on his route with a much larger load. We don't know whether the man was happy doing this, but it certainly increased his income.

After selling that larger load of coffee, he first bought an additional camel and then went to the warehouse to buy more coffee beans. (I do not know where Turkey's coffee comes from--Yemen, Argentina, Brazil. He bought three bags of coffee beans, and after going to the Feslekçay brook, he mixed it with three bags of that stream's special gravel. After selling that load, he acquired another camel and bought from the warehouse this time bags of beans. His business continued to grow in this way until he had ninety-nine camels. As he started toward the brook with these camels, he thought, "When my herd reaches 100, I shall abandon this business. I shall pray for givenness and never again sell gravel for coffee beans."

He was thinking through this idea as he approached

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the Feslekçay brook and the mountains that tower behind it. Those Bozdağ mountains were notorious for their sudden and violent rain showers during the summer months. Such storms sometimes swept everything before them into the Menderes River. Everyone who lived in that region was very cautious about such downpours and the floods they produced. As the coffee dealer was mixing gravel and coffee beans, the skies clouded, and a few minutes later, torrents of rain began to fall. The rush of water from the mountains swept away both his camels and his coffee. The dealer himself barely escaped with his life. He thought, "My business was like Feslekçay itself. Many times it had benefited me, and then in one blow took from me all I had gained. Whatever comes from Hay may end in Huy."¹ People in this area now use that expression to describe any sudden and unexpected reversal in fortune.

¹A situation in which things are going well and happily is described as being hay hay. One in which things are going badly may be described as being hay huy. A proverbial expression says, "Haydan gelen, huya gider" ("What comes from Hay may go to Huy").