

Story 2181 (1999 Tape 14) Narrator: Mustafa Dilek, 61

Location: Bayraklı town,
Karşıyaka kaza,
İzmir Province

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A Laz¹ Wins a Golden Ball

There was once a padishah who had constructed a golden ball that weighed 10 kilograms. He announced that he would give that ball to any person who could tell him a lie which seemed to him believable. Many different people went to the padishah and told him lies, but the ruler was not deceived into believing any of them.

One day an Albanian² was admitted into the presence of the padishah. He said, "My padishah, I make a living by raising and selling camels. A short while ago I had forty fine camels in my paddock, all of them ready for sale. One morning as I was riding my donkey out to the paddock, I suddenly saw an eagle overhead. First that large

¹The word Laz originally referred to an ethnic minority living along the extreme eastern end of the Turkish Black Sea coast, mainly in Trabzon and Rize provinces. As time has passed, the term has broadened to include all Turkish residents living along the entire Turkish Black Sea coast. The Laz people are stereotyped as being stupid or inept, and there are countless jokes and anecdotes that so picture them. This stereotype, like most others, is baseless, for Lazes are much like other people. Some Lazes counter the stereotype by picturing themselves as being so unusually clever that they can outwit all other people.

²There is nothing "Albanian" about this character.

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bird swooped down and stole my fez. Then it descended again and carried me aloft into the sky. Next it took the donkey. Finally it carried upward my entire pack of camels, one at a time. After it had ascended with the fortieth camel, it dropped us all back down to earth again.

The padishah said, "Get out of here! What kind of an obvious lie is that? You couldn't fool me or anyone else with such a foolish account.

A short while later a Laz from Kastamonu Province set out for the palace in order to take his turn at trying to win the golden ball. On the way he stopped in a marketplace and found a shop which sold used furniture and other household items. There he selected a broken earthenware jar. The shopkeeper asked curiously, "What are you going to do with such a broken thing?"

The Laz answered, "That is none of your business. How much will it cost me?" He then paid the amount asked by the shopkeeper, put the broken jar under his arm, and proceeded onward to the palace. When he arrived there and was shown into the throne room, he spoke not but placed the broken jar before the padishah.

Possibly the narrator was trying to show that people came from far and wide to attempt to win the valuable golden ball.

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"What is this?" asked the padishah.

"Do you see this jar, Your Majesty? It was involved in my father's will. Just before he died, he said that you owed him gold coins of a quantity that would fill this broken jar."

"Although I do not remember any such debt, I cannot absolutely disprove your claim. Such things can happen."

"You were then at least momentarily deceived by my lie. Thus, whether or not you owed my father any gold, you clearly owe me the golden ball.

"You are right," said the padishah. "Take that very valuable ball and depart in peace."