

Story 818 (1974 Tape 18)

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Location: Kurukol village, Tercan kaza, Erzincan Province

Date: August 11, 1974

Ibrahim Hakı's Son Elected to The Forty

Saint Hakı Father¹ came from Hasankale² in the Province of Erzurum. He was an important scholar, and a great scholar as far as Turkey is concerned.

Saint Hakı Father had two sons, one named Zâkir and the other named Şâkir. Zâkir spent much of his time drinking at barrooms, and he was often drunk. Şâkir spent most of his time with his father and did not like his brother very well. But I have heard reports that Saint Hakı Father paid the drinking expenses of Zâkir. He would ask Zâkir, "How much did you spend today, Son?"

"Three or five³ kuruş,"⁴ Zâkir would say, and his father

¹Ibrahim Hakı was the most prominent saint of the Erzurum area. He lived during the late seventeenth century and the early eighteenth century.

²Hasankale is a town some thirty kilometers east of Erzurum on the road to Kars.

³Three or five is a colloquial expression meaning a couple, a few, three or four.

⁴The kuruş is 1/100 of a lira. After the continuous devaluation of the Turkish lira which by the 1980s had reduced its value to 1/7 of a U.S. cent, the kuruş became meaningless. At the time of Ibrahim Hakı, the kuruş was worth fifty times as much as today's lira.

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would give him that amount.

We have an old belief in The Three, The Seven, and The Forty.⁵ These are groups of saints, each of which has its own special kind of knowledge. Saint Haki Father hoped that his son Şâkir would become one of The Forty.

Hasankale was a town distinguished by the large hill behind it--a hill considered sacred--and by its mosque. (Its old mosque is still there. In our time it was run-down and needed repair, and now that it has been renovated it is in much better condition. I went there once to visit it. Anyway, one day Saint Haki Father and Şâkir went to that mosque in an effort to have Sâkir included among The Forty

On that same day Zâkir had reached the conclusion that it was a disgraceful thing that his father had to pay his drinking expenses. He decided to reform. When he looked for his father to tell him this, he was informed that his father and Şâkir had gone to the mosque and to the sacred hill. He followed them and found them on the sacred hill.

⁵In Moslem mysticism these groups of saints are behind-the-scene administrators of much of life. They are made up of living people of saintly status, their identities known only within their own group. The smaller the group, the greater its power, apparently. Above The Three is Kutup (The Pole), the most powerful of all these overseers of human activity. Whenever one of these saints dies, another is elected to fill his place.

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He saw his father and Şâkir there on the hill, each standing before a large stone. The Forty were also there, not in the form of ordinary people but in the form of pigeons. Saint Hakı said to his son Şâkir, "Throw yours, Son; throw yours."

Şâkir said, "I shall, Father; I shall." But he was unable to do this

Zâkir called to them and asked, "Father, may I do it?"

"Do it, Son.

Zâkir then picked up the heavy stone and threw it. As it left his hand and rose in the air, it became a pigeon.⁶

Saint Hakı Father then said this: "Do not speak evil of those who drink. They may be outwardly unattractive but within they may be filled with treasures."⁷

(Saint Hakı wrote a book titled Mârifetnâme. It is done in old writing.⁸ If you can understand that old writing, you can find all kinds of things in it. It tells when we are

⁶In this testing or initiation ceremony, Şâkir fails and the seemingly less worthy Zâkir succeeds. The transformation into a pigeon of the stone he throws symbolizes his acceptance into The Forty.

⁷This is the literal translation of a figurative expression. Another way of saying it might be this: "That which seems crude may really be a diamond in the rough." Another might be "Those who are physically unattractive may have beautiful souls."

⁸Ottoman Turkish written in Arabic script.

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likely to have a drought, or when we are likely to have a wolf attack.⁹ It has this kind of information in it.)

⁹This tale and No. 817 illustrate the way in which the immediate context may color a tale. Kurukol village is named for its aridity--Dry Arm or Dry Branch (of a stream). Both tales mention drought. Here in this tale the narrator cites two of the subjects mentioned in Haki's book, and both of those cited apply directly to pressing concerns of the people of Kurukol: drought and wolf attacks on sheep flocks. There are still many wolves in the mountains of eastern Turkey, certainly many more than there are in Western Turkey.