

Story 1082 (1980 Tape 1

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Jew / all
The Rabbi, the Priest, and the Deserted Imam¹

Once in the past there was a man who had a fountain constructed near a mosque. Above the fountain he placed a sign which bore the following message: "It is forbidden for Moslems to drink this water."

People who saw this sign said, "What kind of a warning is this? Here is a fountain built near a mosque but Moslems must not drink its water." They were so annoyed by this that they went to the vali² of the province and complained about it.

The vali called to his office the man who had had the fountain built, and he asked that man, "What kind of a person are you, anyway? First you have a fountain constructed near a mosque, which belongs to Moslems, and then you place above it a sign which says, 'It is forbidden for Moslems to drink this water.'
will drink it?

¹The imam is the Moslem prayer leader at the mosque.

²A vali is the governor of a province.

The man replied, "All right. I shall explain this to you. It is quite simple. But before I do so, please call the rabbi here for me."

"Very well," said the vali, and he sent two uniformed guards to get the rabbi.

These guards went to the rabbi and said, "The vali wants to see you at his office."

When the rabbi was taken to the vali's office, several Jewish people accompanied him. They said to the vali, "Our rabbi is a very honest man and a very kind man. Why did you have him brought here? What has happened? He hasn't done anything wrong. There must be some mistake."

The vali said to the fountain builder, "Ask the rabbi whatever you wish to ask him. You were the one who caused him to be brought here."

"Very well," said the fountain builder, "but I want you now to have the priest³ brought here too."

The vali agreed to this. Guards went to the church and they said to the priest, "The vali has requested your presence. Come with us

The priest asked, "What is the matter? Why am I being summoned in this way?" Then he followed the guards to the

³The word papaz used here refers to a Christian priest, usually either a Greek or Armenian clergyman. The reference here is to an Armenian clergyman.

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vali's office, accompanied by several members of the Christian community.

When they arrived before the vali, the Christians said, "Our priest is a completely honest man. He is perfect in his behavior. He is a self-respecting man. Why have you called him here?"

vali spoke to the fountain builder, saying, "Ask them whatever you want to ask them.

the man said nothing to the rabbi or the priest. Instead, he said to the vali, "Now call the imam here. Call Ahmet or whatever his name is.

Guards were once more sent out, this time to the mosque "You are wanted at the vali's office," they said

The Moslems who were at the mosque said, "Who knows what he may have done? He is probably guilty of some great offense." And none of them accompanied him.

After the guards reported what had been said at the mosque, the vali said to the fountain builder, "Now ask these men whatever questions you wish to ask."

The fountain builder said, "What need is there to ask any questions now? You can see now yourself why I placed the sign above the fountain. When the rabbi was brought here, many of the Jewish community came with him. When the priest was brought here, many Armenians accompanied him.

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But look at the poor imam! Not a single Moslem came to support him! I knew ahead of time that this would happen, and that is why I have forbidden Moslems to take water from the fountain I built. Nobody came here and said, 'Our imam is a very honest man. He hasn't done anything wrong!' Instead they remained behind saying, 'Who knows what he may have done? He is probably guilty of some great offense.'"⁴

⁴This is an unusual story. Told by a Moslem, it seems to be a condemnation of Moslems for not having greater faith in the integrity of their religious leaders.