

Story 1135 (1974 Tape 11) Narrator: Hâlîl Halat

Location: Sekeli village, Yerköy
kaza, Yozgat Province

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Behlül Dane¹ Teaches Harun Reşit in "Time within Time"²

One day Behlül Dane and Harun Reşit were wandering through a cemetery. They were talking as they walked along, but after a while they fell into an argument and stopped before one of the gravestones. Behlül Dane said, "You listen too often to the advice of your wife. That is why you don't have a place in the other world. You will be classified as a sinner."

"How do you know this?" demanded Harun Reşit. The next thing Harun Reşit was aware of was finding himself in a country

¹ Behlül Dane is largely a legendary figure in the Moslem past of the Abbasid Period. Whether there is any historicity to this figure is questionable, though until the 18th century there was a grave at Baghdad that was supposedly his. He was said to be the mad half-brother of Harun Reşit (Haroun al-Raschid), greatest of the Abbasid caliphs, who flourished around 800. There was method in his alleged "madness," for his antic behavior was a "cover" for his role as satirist and critic of worldliness of the powerful and wealthy--notably the caliph himself. At times he was, like the Jewish schlemihl, a saintly fool.

² "Time within Time" refers to the chronology of events in an interior world. A person may dream or fantasize at great length during only a few seconds of ordinary time. One may even seem to spend years in that other world within; one may take a job, marry, have children, and see them grow to maturity. In Turkish this is called Zaman Zaman İçinde. It is elsewhere sometimes referred to as "Frozen Time" or "Moments of Eternity."

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completely strange to him. Looking about, he saw in the distance a farmer with white hair and a white beard. Walking to this man, Harun said, "I am looking for Şam." ^{Damascus} In what direction should I go in order to reach it?"

"I don't know, but I have a brother who lives farther down this road. He may well know where it is. Go and ask him."

Harun Reşit went to the old man's brother, who was also old, and asked, "Do you know how to get to Şam?"

"No, but I have a brother who lives beside the bay farther down this road. He is probably the only person who can tell you what you want to know."

Harun Reşit walked some distance farther and came to a bay. He found living there a fine young man with a black beard. At his service and awaiting his orders, his wife stood by his side. "Where are you from?" the young man asked Harun Reşit.

"I am from Şam, but I have lost my way. I wish to return to Şam, and I was told that you might be able to direct me there."

³⁻ Şam was the ancient name of Damascus. Inasmuch as Damascus has for long been one of the largest and best-known cities of the Middle East, it is especially remarkable that people in this other world do not know its whereabouts.

Brother
considers
reference
order of age

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"Stay here for the night and be my guest. On Friday we shall be able to get the information you wish concerning the route to Şam.

evening as they sat down to dinner, they were joined by the two white-haired brothers of the host. Harun Reşit was surprised to see these two white-haired men stand beside their brother at the table and wait on him. Later Harun asked his host, "What was the meaning of what I saw at dinner? Those two old men stood beside you while you ate and waited upon you. That is most unusual. Why did they do it?"

black-bearded host said, "Because they are my younger brothers

"How can that be?"

"Those two men are the servants of their wives. They never disregard what their wives say. That is the reason that their hair has grown white, their teeth have fallen out, and their backs have become bent. They have become the slaves of their wives. My wife does everything I tell her to do. She is always responsive to my orders. That is why I have stayed young."⁴

⁴ In some versions of this tale a special situation is created in which the wives of the three brothers illustrate their differing responses to the same problem.

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ready from nervous When Friday arrived, the host said, "A special hoca⁵ preach at the noon service today.⁶ Don't let him leave afterwards until you have spoken to him, for he is undoubtedly only one here who can direct you to Şam."

When the Friday noon service began, Harun Reşit looked at the (hoca) he said to himself, "Oh! That is our Behlül Dane What is he doing here?"

As soon as the noon service was completed, Harun Reşit hurried outside to speak to Behlül Dane privately before all of the crowd came out. He said to Behlül, "My brother, don't do this to me! Where is this place, anyway? I have been

⁵ A hoca is a preacher and the religious leader of a community. In pre-Republican times the hoca was also the community teacher. Separation of church and state in the Republic required that teachers be people of secular rather than religious training.

⁶ Although Sunday is now the official Sabbath in Turkey, traditional Moslems think of Friday as the Sabbath. Friday is the Sabbath throughout most of Islam and was so in pre-Republican Turkey. The Friday noon service in the mosque is considered the religious high point of the week. At that service there is a sermon preached by a hoca (preacher). Regardless of their attendance at the five daily prayer services on other days, most real believers make it a point to attend the Friday noon service. Other services may have a sermon, but the Friday noon service virtually always does.

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stuck here and suffering here for two years!⁷ Take me home!"

Behlül Dane tried to touch Harun Reşit's nose with his stick. Harun shouted, "Get out of my way! Get out of my way!" As he did so, Harun Reşit suddenly saw that they were again arguing before the gravestone

⁷ There is nothing in the tale to indicate that he has been in "Time within Time" for two years. The remark does, however, verify the idea that the stay within the trance state may seem to be very long in some instances.