

Story 1033 (Transcript of
Yalvaç tape)

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Location: Vezirhan village,
attached to city of
Bilecik, Bilecik
Province

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Haer - All
The Pilgrim Pays His Debt *Debt - All*

In earlier times people used to make the pilgrimage
[to Mecca] by camel. They would travel day and night
without stopping. A camel driver would lead a caravan of
forty pilgrims mounted on forty camels on these trips.

About halfway through one such pilgrimage the last
camel became separated from the rest of the caravan when
its rider fell asleep. Because this happened in the dark
of night, the caravan leader did not notice that the
last camel was missing from the group

The camel that had become separated lost its way and
wandered into a forest. It traveled a great distance in
that forest before it stopped. When the pilgrim on that
camel awoke, he discovered that it was morning prayer time.¹
At the same time, he noticed two tents standing nearby,
one of them red and the other one white.

When the pilgrim rode up closer to these two tents, a

¹This morning prayer (sabah namazı), the first of the
five daily prayers, occurs at sunrise.

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woman came out of the red tent and a man came from the white one. The man was the shah of that region. He asked the pilgrim, "Friend, are you a human being or a jinn?"²

"I am not a jinn but a creature of God.

"What are you doing here?"

"I have come from such-and-such a place, and I am on my way to (Mecca) on a pilgrimage. However, I fell asleep on my camel and became separated from the rest of the caravan. I really do not know how I got here.

The shah then said, "Because you are on a pilgrimage, I shall consider you my guest. I host my guests here, taking care of them for three days and three nights.

But the pilgrim begged him, "Oh, please help me catch up with my caravan. Let me go and overtake it!"

The shah said, "Do not worry a bit about that. After have kept you here as my guest for three days and three nights, I shall make it possible for you to catch up with the caravan again."

^{128, 134}
Hearing that, the pilgrim said, "Very well."

² A regular verbal formula is used to ask this question: inmisiin cinmisiin? The question may be directed to any unknown being who startles one or appears unexpectedly somewhere.

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The shah then said to his wife, "I shall patrol the area. While I am gone, you will take care of our guest until evening." After giving that order, the shah mounted his horse and left

After the woman had prepared food and was bringing it to him, the pilgrim took a good look at the woman for the first time and went out of his mind.³ He took from his pocket the 100 liras that he was carrying. He counted out eighty liras that he intended to keep and put them in another pocket. Taking the remaining twenty liras, he dropped them into the hand of the woman when she served him his food. Without giving any response of any kind, the woman took the money.

In the evening when the shah rode back, the woman went to meet her husband. He asked her, "How did you get along with our guest? Did you make him comfortable?"

The woman handed him the twenty liras and said, "Your guest offered me this

When the pilgrim observed the shah and his wife talking together, he grew frightened. He wondered, "Is that woman going to tell her husband about the money I gave

³A euphemism for saying that he had lost control of himself in his desire for the woman.

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her?"

In the meantime the shah said to his wife, "Never mind. Don't be afraid. I know your virtue." Then while his wife took his horse to the stable, the shah went to his guest, as if nothing had happened, and made him feel comfortable. He chatted with the pilgrim most of the night and thus made him feel quite at ease.

In the morning the pilgrim and the shah ate breakfast together. Then the shah mounted his horse and again went out to patrol the area, saying that he would return in the evening. Again the pilgrim remained throughout the day with the shah's wife. Thinking that the money he had given her was not enough to win her over, the pilgrim this time gave her thirty liras when she delivered his food to him. He still desired this woman. Again the woman took the money after setting down the food, and then she left without making any kind of response.

That evening the woman again met her returning husband. She gave him the thirty liras and reported the situation to him. He said, "Don't be afraid. I know what I am doing. I have lived in this area for a long time. I have never harmed anyone here, and I am sure that no one will harm us. He then joined the pilgrim again and talked with him even

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more cordially than he had done the previous night.

On the morning of the following day the shah went to patrol the area again. As before, the pilgrim remained behind with the shah's wife. This time when the woman brought him his noon meal, the pilgrim gave her fifty liras. But just as she had done both times previously, the woman took the money without making the slightest response or comment.

For the third time the woman met the shah as he returned from his day of patrolling. She told him what happened and gave him the fifty liras. Without any sign of being upset or angry, the shah again joined his guest and again talked with him throughout the night.

Thus the pilgrim remained there as guest for three days and three nights. On the morning of the fourth day, the pilgrim said to himself, "Well, my money is all gone. To the shah he said, "Please give me permission to leave."⁴

The shah replied, "I shall allow you to depart after we have eaten breakfast."

This worried the pilgrim greatly. He was unable to

⁴Anyone who has been accepted as a guest could not, in earlier times, simply depart whenever he decided to leave. He was obliged to secure permission from his host to leave. In rural Turkey this custom is still quite widespread, not only for overnight guests but even for dinner guests.

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eat much breakfast, for he feared that the shah intended to kill him.

But after breakfast the shah said, "All right, get ready now. You will ride on your camel, and I shall ride on my horse." They mounted their animals and rode steadily all that day. The shah, who knew every part of that region, took a shortcut and by the end of the day they had overtaken the caravan. The shah pointed out the caravan to the pilgrim and said, "Those are your friends over there. They have only now arrived here because they took the longer route."

When the pilgrim saw the caravan, he said, "Let me join my friends now."

The shah said, "Let us be certain first that they really are your friends. Can you recognize them? Count them to see how many they number. Are they really your friends, or is this perhaps some other caravan?"

After a few moments the pilgrim said, "I have counted them, and there are thirty-nine of them."

The shah then said, "Shall I accompany you until you join your friends, or do you wish to go by yourself?"

"I shall go by myself," said the pilgrim. He then reached for the shah's hand in order to say goodbye.

But the shah did not give him his hand. He said to the

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pilgrim, "I want to ask you a question. When my wife showed proper respect for you on the first day, did you give her twenty liras? Did you then give her thirty liras on the second day and fifty on the third day?" Holding up the total 100 liras, he asked, "Is this not your money? Did you do this?" When the pilgrim said nothing, the shah continued, "How many children do you have? I am forgiving you for the sake of your children. Here is your hundred liras to which I have added another hundred liras for your children. Instead of going on a pilgrimage, you might rather return to your own country and spend this on your children. Had it not been for the thought of your children, I'd have cut off your head! Go now and rejoin your friends. I shall not accompany you."

When the pilgrim saw his friends, he was happy. He was also relieved that he had survived and that the shah had forgiven him and had not cut off his head. So the pilgrim rejoined his friends and the shah returned to his own territory.

It was not quite a month after that time that the shah became involved in a war with his enemies. The war went badly for him, and his forces were defeated. The shah himself barely escaped with his life, and he was forced to

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from that country. His enemies took the shah's wife captive and made a slave of her.

After a short while the woman managed to escape, and she fled into the pilgrim's country as a refugee. There the government took care of her for two or three months, but after that time it announced that if no one claimed the woman as his wife within a certain number of days, she would be put up for sale on the slave market.

By that time the caravan had returned from Mecca. The pilgrim just happened to walk into the marketplace on day when the woman was scheduled to be sold. He took just one look at this woman and recognized her. He remembered that this was the woman who was the shah's wife and the woman who had served him. Going to the official in charge of the market, the pilgrim said, "What is the price for this woman? Let me pay the price and take this woman is my relative."

The pilgrim paid the price that was asked and took the woman from the market. As they walked toward his home, the two talked. The pilgrim said, "I am the pilgrim who stayed as a guest with you and your husband." When she recognized the pilgrim, she kissed his hand. He then asked her, "Where is your husband, the shah?"

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"I don't know," the woman said. "Shortly after you left, my husband began fighting with his enemies. He was defeated by them, and I do not know what has become of him."

When the pilgrim arrived home with this woman, his wife asked him, "Who is this woman and why did you bring her home? What are we going to do with her?"

He said, "She was a traveling companion, and she helped take care of me along the road. She is my sister." The pilgrim owned two houses, and they settled the wife of the shah in their second house.

About a week later the pilgrim was walking about the city, and he again went to the market area. He saw there a man who looked somewhat like the shah, but he doubted that it was actually the same man that had been his host. The man was in very miserable condition. Going up to him, the pilgrim extended his hand and asked, "Where have you come from, and where are you going?"⁵ I have now recognized you for certain, but do you remember me? I am the pilgrim who was your guest a short while ago."

⁵This is not a genuine question but an element of phatic communication. It is a set question in the palaver of greeting a stranger. In such palaver the question is usually answered, but here no answer is expected and none is given.

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After the two men had embraced, the shah said, "Now I recognize you, but I must tell you that I am in desperate circumstances."

The pilgrim said, "Don't worry too much about such things. They come from God."

"I have lost my family," said the shah. "What became of them? Were they slaughtered?"

The pilgrim said, "I have a sister who is better than any other family for you."

"Don't tease me," said the shah. "I am burning with anguish."

"Come and see," said the pilgrim. Pulling the shah by the arm, he took him to the house where the shah's wife now lived. When they arrived at that house, he said, "My sister is here, and she is better than your wife. If you do not agree with that, then don't accept her."

As soon as the shah saw the woman, he immediately recognized her as his wife. The two of them embraced one another and were reunited in this way. Before that time the pilgrim had given the shah's wife the title deed to that house, and so the shah and his family now had a comfortable place in which to live.