

Story 1006 (1974 Tape 51) Narrator: Bayram Şahin, 73

Location: Limonlu village,  
kaza of Mersin,  
İçel Province

Date: 1974

Hızır<sup>1</sup> Examines Three Merchants

One day Hızır went to the Blessed Moses and said,  
"Come along with me while I examine three men today."<sup>2</sup>  
Moses agreed to this, and the two of them set forth to  
visit the three men.

<sup>1</sup> Hızır has played many roles in the religions and  
lore of the Middle East: fertility god, water deity, last-  
minute rescuer from disaster, granter of wishes, Moslem  
saint, and agent of God. Here he is the saint walking  
the earth and testing selected human beings, in much the  
way Christian saints do in Medieval and Renaissance  
legends.

<sup>2</sup> Although not mentioned by name in the Koran  
(except in a latter-day chapter title), he is usually  
taken to be the individual Allah refers to as "Our  
Servant" in Chapter XVIII. There he is chosen to instruct  
Moses, whom he takes along on his travels. Before they set  
out, however, Hızır warns Moses that he is not to inter-  
fere with anything that he (Hızır) does along the way.  
Hızır commits three acts which seem, on the surface, out-  
rageous and/or illogical. Each time, Moses demands an  
explanation, and after his third demand, he is dismissed  
by Hızır after Hızır has explained the divine reasons for  
doing what he has done. This Koranic account appears in  
a couple of ATON tales previous to this one. The Koranic  
account is important to know here, for there is an obvious  
parallel between Hızır's enigmatic behavior in the Koranic  
account and his behavior in this tale. Here again he is  
teaching Moses, though here Moses does not interfere with  
his actions.

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The first man they visited was a grocer. Hızır said to him, "I want ten kilograms of sugar." After the grocer had weighed out that amount, Hızır said, "I shall probably need more than that. Add another ten kilograms to my order." After the grocer had done this Hızır said, "Never mind--I don't wish to buy any of this sugar."

Moses was puzzled by this behavior of his companion, but after they had left the shop, Hızır explained, "That grocer was an insensitive and stupid fellow! He had no more than five or ten kilograms of sugar in his shop, but he was not at all aware of how miraculous it was that he could weigh up twenty kilograms to sell."<sup>3</sup>

Then they went to a second shop. As they were entering it, a beggar entered ahead of them and asked the shop owner for alms. The owner said, "Get out of here! Ask God for money!"

As they left that second shop, Hızır commented to Moses, "That shopkeeper is only a shell. He has nothing whatsoever inside him."

They went next to a cloth shop. The entire shop was filled with large rolls of cloth. Hızır pointed to

<sup>3</sup> Hızır has miraculously added to the sugar supply.

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a roll on a high shelf and said, "I want five meters of that cloth." The shopkeeper climbed up a ladder, took down the roll of cloth, and cut five meters from

As the two men were leaving the shop, however Hızır said, "I have changed my mind. I don't like this cloth as well as I do the cloth next to it on the shelf." Again the man climbed up the ladder, brought down a roll of cloth, and cut five meters of material from it. Once again as they were ready to leave the shop, Hızır decided that he wanted some different kind of cloth. By the time they actually left, the shopkeeper had cut pieces of cloth from four different rolls.

As they were leaving, the shopkeeper said, "Would Hızır and the Blessed Moses ever tell a lie?"

Afterwards Hızır said to Moses, "This was the wise among the three shopkeepers we visited. The other two are dupes who have no basis for their pretensions."