

Story 810 (1974 Tape 18)

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Location: Olgunlar village,
Rafayık kaza
(Refahiye?), Erzincan
Province

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Battal Gazi¹ and the Ox Tail

There was a man who lived like a chieftain once in this area. He was also a judge. His name was Ukba.² He was such a powerful man that people agreed with whatever he said. He always called a goat ox, and he always called the ox goat. All of the people in his town felt obliged to do the same and call these animals by the wrong names.

Living at the same time as Ukba there was a very handsome man named Battal Gazi. One day Battal Gazi visited Ukba's home town. Once as he was walking down a street in that town he passed a butcher shop. Inside there were hanging the carcasses of two animals, a goat and an ox. On the goat there was a tag which said ox, and on the ox there was a tag

¹ Seyyid Battal (whose real name was Abdullah) acquired the title of Gazi for military action in support of the Islamic cause. He was an early champion of the Moslem cause whose exploits are pictured in numerous folktales, legends, and pieces of literature. He was involved in numerous conflicts with Byzantine forces. He died in battle at Afyonkarahisar in 740.

² Ukba (or Ukbe) was a judge in Baghdad at the time of Battal Gazi. Ukba was supposedly a Christian. He figures in the Battal Gazi legends. See Notes to this tale. Whether or not the incident in this tale has any historicity is not known.

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that said goat. When he saw these signs, Battal Gazi became curious. He asked the butcher why he called these animals by the wrong names. He was told that those were the names given to those animals by Ukbar.

This angered Battal Gazi. He took an ox tail and drove many nails into it so that the points stuck out. Then he dressed as a woman and went to the court where Ukba served as judge. When the judge looked over all the people who had come to present cases, he saw Battal Gazi dressed like a woman. Ukba, thinking it really was a woman, asked Battal Gazi to stand aside. Battal Gazi was carrying the nail-studded ox tail behind him

Later when Ukba called him into his office, Battal Gazi showed the judge the ox tail and asked him, "Is this the tail of an ox or the tail of a goat?" As he asked this question, Battal Gazi began beating Ukba with the nail-studded ox tail. By the time he left, Battal Gazi had punctured Ukba's body all over with nail holes. His attendants had to call in ^{physicians} doctors to treat Ukba.

Every day, Battal Gazi went to ask if Ukba was recovering. He intended to beat him again when he was completely healed. In the meantime, Ukba had hired several bodyguards to protect him from further attacks. When he had fully recovered, Ukba began hearing legal cases once more. Battal

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Gazi dressed as a woman again, and when he found Ukba alone, he started beating him again with the nail-filled ox tail. As he did so, he kept shouting at Ukba, "Is this an ox tail or a goat tail?"

Again doctors had to be called to treat Ukba's injuries. After that, the authorities had a tent set up as Ukba's office, and that tent was always completely encircled with well-armed soldiers to prevent any further injury to Ukba. Battal Gazi kept watching for some time for an opportunity to beat Ukba again, but he was never able to get past the soldiers guarding him.

One day Battal Gazi saw ride into that town on horse-back a very muscular and powerful-looking young man. Battal Gazi asked this young man, "Which of us do you think is the braver?"

The young man said at once, "I am the braver!"

Battal Gazi said, "Do you see that tent over there surrounded by soldiers?"

"Yes

"Well, I shall agree that you are the braver man if you will take this ox tail over there, throw it into the tent, and ask loudly, 'Is this an ox tail or a goat tail?'"

The young man at once accepted this challenge. He rode to the tent, threw the ox tail inside it, and roared, "Is

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this an ox tail or a goat tail?" All of the soldiers immediately began to pursue him, thinking that he must be Battal Gazi

With Ukba left entirely alone, Battal Gazi went to the tent, picked up the nailed ox tail, and began beating him again. As he did so, he kept shouting, "Is this an ox tail or a goat tail?"