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Hatay Province

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The Laz¹ with Burnt Ears

Temel² was taken to the hospital with badly burned ears. Friends who went to the hospital to see him asked "Temel, how did this happen?"

Temel explained the matter to them sadly. He said, "While I was ironing some clothes, the telephone rang. Startled by the ringing of the telephone, I pressed the iron instead of the receiver to my ear

One of his friends asked, "But why is the other ear also burned?"

Temel answered, "Oh, that other ear. It got burned when, in great pain, I was trying to telephone for an ambulance

¹The word Laz originally referred to an ethnic minority living along the extreme eastern end of the Turkish Black Sea coast, mainly in Trabzon and Rize provinces. As time has passed, the term has broadened to include all Turkish residents living along the entire Turkish Black Sea coast. The Laz people are stereotyped as being stupid or inept, and there are countless jokes and anecdotes that so picture them. This stereotype, like most others, is baseless, for Lazes are much like other people.

²In folktales Laz males are usually given one or another of five names: Temel, Dursun, Cemal, Hızır, İdris. By far the most popular name is Temel. When a lead character in a folktale is named Temel, the Turkish audience knows at once that a Laz story will follow.