

Story 2155 (1999 Tape 8)

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Location: Erzurum, capital of
Erzurum Province

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The Lost Minaret

In a village of Erzincan Province a small mosque was under construction. The muhtar¹ one day said, "When the mosque has been completed, we shall need a minaret for it I am willing to buy a small minaret, but I do not know where they are sold."

A man answered, "Excellent minarets are made in burt."²

The muhtar traveled to Bayburt and entered a minaret factory. He looked around in that factory but saw no minarets. A clerk observed the muhtar and asked, "What are you looking for, brother?"

"I am looking for a small minaret. I was told that this factory made good minarets, but I do not see any minarets here."

The clerk answered, "Large minarets constructed of stone must be made at the sites of the mosques they are to adorn."

¹A muhtar is the headman of a village or other small settlement. Until TV arrived in the 1960s, the muhtar might be the only elected official seen by many villagers. All other officials in their area were probably appointees of federal ministries.

²Long a kaza town of Gümüşhane Province, Bayburt became the capital of a new province, Bayburt Province, in the 1980s.

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Small minarets made of wood and metal are built here, but we have to know the size and design you wish before we start construction. After you have paid for the minaret, we begin construction immediately."

After giving the clerk the specifications for the minaret he wanted, the muhtar asked, "When could such a minaret be available?"

The clerk answered, "It will be built today and set afloat on a large log raft down the Çoruh River. It will reach such and such a village by six or seven o'clock tomorrow morning. You should be there to pull the raft ashore at that time and then make arrangements to have the minaret carried overland the short distance to your village.

The muhtar paid for the minaret and then set out for the river port mentioned by the clerk. He had a sister, the wife of a merchant, living in that village, and so he could stay with her family for the night

The sister and her family welcomed the muhtar and did what they could to make him comfortable. A nephew took the muhtar to a public bath to wash himself. His sister then had him shaved and had his hair cut. Before he went to bed, he asked his sister to awaken him early because he had to be at the river front by six o'clock to pull ashore the raft

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carrying the small minaret he had bought

When dawn arrived, his sister awakened him, and he set out for the waterfront. He was still really half asleep, however. As he passed a shop, he saw what he first thought was his own image reflected in its large glass window. Staring at the window a second time, however, he concluded that the short-haired, clean-shaven image was that of his nephew. Rushing back to his sister's home, he shouted at her, "You awakened the wrong person!"

By the time his relatives had wakened him fully and clarified the matter for him, he ran back to the river again. Waterfront workers there told him that a log raft bearing a small minaret had floated past that port just a few minutes earlier.