

Story #475 (Tape #11, 1970)

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Behlül Dane and the Miracle of "Time Within Time"

As you know, there once was a very wealthy man named Harun Reshid. He had a brother whose original name was Behlül Budala [silly fool]. Harun was ashamed of this foolish brother of his, for he was totally unaware of the many miracles that Behlül had performed.

One day he decided to get rid of Behlül. He had made a plan as to how to do this. He arose early one morning and said to Behlül, "Behlül, come along! We have a little plowing to do somewhere.¹ Let us go and get it done. You just lead the oxen."

But Behlül Dane knew all along what was going on in the mind of *mind reading* his elder brother. Allah made him aware of what his brother was thinking. With Behlül leading the oxen and Harun Reshid carrying his rifle,² they finally reached the field where they were to plow. Before they started plowing, however, Harun said to Behlül, "Behlül, take this cap of mine³ and set it over there where I can shoot at it to see whether or

¹It is not at all ridiculous to the peasant narrator of a remote rural area that the great Harun Reshid, Caliph of Baghdad, Commander of the Faithful, should take his brother to do a little plowing.

²A rifle circa 800 is, of course, an anachronism.

³Kasket is the word used here for a peasant cap.

not I am a good marksman."

"Very well, brother," he said. As he was setting the cap down, Harun aimed his gun at it, but he had decided to shoot Behlül there. As he aimed at Behlül and was just about to pull the trigger, Behlül, with the help of Allah, slapped his brother "Tin-n-n-g!"⁴ all the way from where he was standing, and Harun flew all the way to the land of Mağrib.⁵ Something like a powerful wind had come and struck Harun Reshid and lifted him up and then carried him there. Although he was a wealthy and chivalrous man, he had this happen to him. He suffered this because he had evil in his heart.

He asked people where he was, and they told him that he was in the land of Mağrib. He did not know what to do about this situation. (In those days there were no airplanes or busses such as we have today.)

"Oh, my mother!" he said to himself. "Where have I landed? Oh, why did I ever treat Behlül so?" He was filled with remorse[?] for what he had done to his brother, and when he was alone, he wept over this.

He spent many days there in that way.

The padishah of that country had a daughter for whom he had sought a wealthy husband, but they had not yet been able to find a person suitable for her. One day when the vezirs of the padishah were walking in the marketplace, they saw Harun Reshid and they liked his appearance

⁵ Mağrib or Mağrip refers generally to North Africa and specifically to Morocco, the Moslem land farthest west. Not capitalized, the word means west, farthest west, the place where the sun sets. In the folk imagination, however, Mağrip often signifies a legendary place very far away, one of the two ends of the world.

at once. They reported this to the padishah: "Your Majesty, our ruler, we have seen this day in the marketplace a man who, to speak roughly, would seem to be a good foundation stone. Where he came from we do not know. He is a quiet man and yet one who can speak in a genteel way. If he is wealthy, might we not perhaps give your daughter to him?"

"Well, find out," said the padishah. "Ask him if he will accept our religious laws."

They called Harun Reshid, sat at a table with him, and started talking with him. "From what country do you come?" they asked him.

Harun Reshid could not, of course, say, "I am from such-and-such a country, and such-and-such a thing happened to me," for he was ashamed of this.

After talking for a while, they finally said to him, "We are going to give you the daughter of the padishah, because we like the way you talk and the way you carry yourself. We have three conditions, however, which you must meet. If you can comply with them, then you will have the daughter of the padishah."

"What are your terms?" he asked.

"You will not tell lies. You will not do anything haram.⁶ You will not interfere with the affairs of Allah."

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⁶In Moslem canonical law, there are many actions that are forbidden or haram. The concepts of haram and helal (forbidden, bad versus approved, good) are too involved to discuss here, for they include dicta concerning almost every aspect of life.

"These are all very simple," said Harun Reshid. "I accept these three conditions fully."

The wedding took place soon after that, and Harun was thus married to the daughter of the padishah. One day not long after that, during the grape season, the important vezirs of the land planned to go on a picnic to one of the vineyards. They shouted up from below, "Reshid Bey, Reshid Bey," for he now lived in the palace of the padishah as his son-in-law. "Come on! Get ready! We are going to a vineyard where we can enjoy ourselves!"

He got dressed and went with them to the vineyard. Now one of the vezirs said, "Let each of us go to his own vines and from them bring a bunch of grapes to eat here by this cool fountain." They showed Harun Reshid where his father-in-law's vines were. He went there, cut a few bunches of grapes, and returned to the fountain where they all started eating and drinking. As he sat among them, Harun noticed that the vezirs were whispering something to each other that they did not explain to him.

When he returned home in the evening, Harun's wife said to him, "Reshid Bey, what did you do today?"

"Well, we went to a vineyard. There everyone went to his own vines and picked some grapes to eat."

"What did you do?" she asked.

"I went to my father-in-law's vines and picked a couple of bunches of grapes to eat."

"Oh, that is bad," she said. "Did you ask my father's permission to do this first--in the morning before you left? It is haram. You should have asked my father about it. I can take care of this matter, but you must not violate the second condition. You have violated one of the conditions today, but you must not do it again."

Harun Reshid was surprised at this. He said, "If you remain quiet about it, I shall not do it again."

"Very well," she said.

That very day in the evening it started to rain. In a mood of absent-mindedness, Harun Reshid stretched his hand out the window, and

"Why, it is raining!"

His wife said, "You promised not to interfere in the affairs of Allah! You just violated the second condition! How did you happen to do this?"

Harun did not know how this had happened. To himself he said, "By Allah, I said that those conditions would be easy to fulfill. Why is it I cannot manage to keep them?"

After that they went to bed. In the morning his friends, the vezirs, came at 8 or 9 o'clock and shouted from below, "Reshid Bey! Reshid Bey!" His wife went out to speak to them. "Tell Reshid Bey to come with us. We shall go to such-and-such a place today where there are vineyards."

His wife returned and said to Harun Reshid, "They are going to the vineyards at such-and-such a place today, and they want you to go with them."

"Tell them that I am not here," said Harun Reshid.

"How dare you say that you are not at home when, in fact, you are here? You have violated all three conditions of our religion. I must report this to my father!"

The girl went and informed her father of the violations which her husband had committed. The padishah said at once, "This man must be put to death." He had written a firman⁷ in which he said, "Inasmuch as my son-in-law has violated the sheriat,⁸ I hereby sentence him to death.

and they could consult him on this matter first. They had the gallows set up, and they planned to lay the whole matter before the sheik. If he approved, they would then proceed with the hanging. They explained to Harun Reshid that their sheik would come on Friday, and that if he then approved, they would hang Harun Reshid on that day.

Harun prayed: "O Almighty Allah! May their sheik be a man of compassion," He then begged Allah for forgiveness.

⁷ A firman was the imperial order issued by the Sultan in pre-Republican Turkey.

⁸ The sheri or sheriat is the Moslem canonical law.

⁹ In pre-Republic times Friday was the Moslem sabbath day in Turkey. The noon service of that day (öğle namazı) was the most important prayer service of the week, and all officials, clerical and secular, attended that service.

When the time came, Harun Reshid was taken to the gallows. They all waited at the foot of the gallows for the sheik to arrive, and about an hour before the noon ^{Friday} service, they saw him coming, approaching the square. When Harun Reshid looked in that direction, he said to himself, "Heavens above!" for it was his brother who was coming. He was their sheik. Behlül was able to see the entire world at the blinking of an eye. "By Allah, I am lost, for I treated Behlül very badly. I was hurled to this part of the world by Fortune. Now Behlül will certainly say, 'Hang this man.' When he says that, I shall be finished with life."

Behlül arrived, and the people prostrated themselves before him to kiss his hands and feet. His garments were very different now from the ragged clothes he usually wore. Behlül asked, "What is this?"

They explained: "He came to us from such-and-such a land, and we made him son-in-law to our padishah. He promised not to violate three of the rules of our religious law, but he violated all of them. He was sentenced to death, and now we wish to consult you about the matter. That is why we have waited here."

Behlül looked at Harun without revealing his identity, but both he and Harun Reshid recognized each other. Behlül said to those gathered there, "Leave him to me. I shall pass judgment on him and also carry out the punishment. It will take just a minute." He approached Harun, and, with the help of Allah, he again dealt Harun a terrible blow. Immediately after that, both Harun and Behlül were back in that same field where Harun had planned to shoot Behlül. Harun was still aiming

his gun at Behlül, who was setting up his brother's cap. When Harun saw his own country again, he knew what had happened. He threw his gun aside and, running to his brother, he said, 'You are my brother, Behlül Bir Dane. Allah created you to be Bir Dane.'¹⁰

His name was at first Behlül Budala, but it was later changed, for this reason, to Behlül Bir Dane. Harun went and kissed Behlül's eyes, and Behlül kissed his hands.¹¹

[Narrator: There are many, many stories about miracles that he performed.

Ahmet Uysal: Tell us about some of his miracles.]

¹⁰ Dane is a variant of the word tane. In ordinary usage, bir tane means unique, one of a kind.

¹¹ Kissing eyes and hands are the proper gestures for the older and younger brothers, respectively.