

Story 2090 (1999) Tape 1

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The Yürük<sup>1</sup> and the Teravîh<sup>2</sup> Service

There was once a Yürük who had lived with his family for a long time on a high plateau. He was a Muslim who understood the religious practices of Islam, but it had been years since he had been inside a mosque. Once during Ramazan this Yürük, along with his wife and children, descended from the plateau to visit a town at the foot of that upland area. Arriving there late in the evening, they came to the town mosque. There the Yürük said to his

<sup>1</sup>The word Yürük (or Yörük) means simply nomad. It is not a tribal designation, but such large masses of Yürüks move about in the area of the Taurus Mountains that they give the appearance of being tribes. They are herdsmen with very large flocks of sheep and goats. Their livelihood comes mainly from their sale of wool and cheese to sedentary residents.

<sup>2</sup>There are five daily prayer services in Islam, the last one of each day being performed two hours after sunset. During Ramazan (the holy month of fasting and austerity), the evening prayer service is immediately followed by an additional prayer session known as Teravîh. A Muslim prayer service is made up of a number of cycles of physical gestures (rekats), accompanied by religious statements. The number of rekats may vary, but for the late-evening prayer service during Ramazan there are 12 rekats followed by an additional 20 special rekats. Inasmuch as the physical movements of a rekat are rather strenuous, a continuous routine of 32 rekats may be an exhausting experience.

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wife, "You and the children wait right here for me. I want to join the evening prayer service in this mosque." He then proceeded to take ritual ablutions and entered mosque.

During the few times in his life that the Yürük had attended worship in a mosque, none of them had ever occurred during the evening service in Ramazan. He did not know, therefore, what he was getting into. As the rekats continued and continued, the Yürük concluded that the imam<sup>3</sup> was protracting the service to punish him for previous failure to worship there. During a brief pause between rekats of the teravih section, the Yürük slipped out of the mosque and spoke to his wife. "You and the children had better continue on to the home of our relatives, where we have arranged to live during our stay in this town. There is a competition between the imam and me to determine which can endure the greater number of rekats. I want to remain here to defeat him!"

<sup>3</sup>The imam is the prayer leader in a mosque.