

Story 2179 (1999 Tape 13)      Narrator: Hüseyin Kızıllakar,  
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A Laz<sup>1</sup> Sends Football News from  
the Other World

Temel<sup>2</sup> and Ali were close friends. Among the interests they had in common was playing football. They were both very fond of that game, and they played it at every opportunity.

One day after they had been playing football, Temel fell into deep and sad thought. Noticing this, Ali asked, "What is the matter, Temel? We have just enjoyed a good game of football. Why do you look so sad?"

Temel answered, "We are playing football much of the

<sup>1</sup>The 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 often 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.

<sup>2</sup>In 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 leading character in a folktale is named Temel, the Turkish audience knows at once that a Laz story will follow.

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time in this world. But I have just begun to wonder whether we shall be able to enjoy that game in the next world. Is football played in heaven?"

After talking about this problem for a short while, each agreed to share with the other whatever information he acquired about this question. "Whichever of us dies first should come to the other in a dream and tell him about whether football exists in the next world."

Not long after this, Temel became ill and died. A few days after his death Temel kept his promise and appeared to Ali in a dream. He said, "Ali, I have two pieces of news for you--one good and the other bad."

"Tell me the good news first," said Ali.

"Very well," answered Temel. "There is an excellent playing field here and a football team has been organized. It will play its first match tomorrow."

"I am delighted to hear that. What is the bad news?"

Temel answered, "The bad news is that you are to be the eleventh member of that team."