

Story 699 | (1981 Tape 1

Narrator: Ali Çiftçi, farmer
Location: Çıkırıkçı village,
kaza of Sarıkaya,
Yozgat Province

Date: June 6, 1981

Solomon's Knowledge of Bird Language

[Ahmet Uysal: "There are creatures in many of our tales who understand human language, and there are human beings who understand the languages of birds and beasts. Do you know anything about this?"

Well, there is Sultan Süleyman.¹ Allah sent to him from Paradise a seal in a ring. When he placed that ring on his finger, he could understand the language of every bird on earth. One day his wife said to Sultan Süleyman, "Make me a palace out of bird bones."

He called to a meeting all the birds. The blind owl, Baykuş, who was Sultan Süleyman's kadı,² did not appear at the meeting. The Baykuş in the morning called in the language of birds, "O my bird people, awaken! Do not remain unconscious! Arise!"

Karakuş,³ the eagle, was Sultan Süleyman's gendarme.

¹Rural people, who have very little grasp of history, almost always confuse the Biblical Solomon with the Ottoman sultan Süleyman the Magnificent, who ruled from 1520 to 1566.

²The kadı was a judge under the pre-Republican shariat law.

³Although not all eagles are black, most of those in Turkey are that color.

Süleyman sent him after Baykuş. Karakuş went to Baykuş and said, "Your honor, please come to the meeting which Sultan Süleyman has called. He wants you there." While speaking to Baykuş in this way, Karakuş got his claws on the owl's body and dragged him to the meeting.

Sultan Süleyman asked, "Why did you not come by your own will?"

"Why should I?"

Sultan Süleyman asked him this question: "Who are more numerous in this world--females or males?"

The owl answered, "Females are more numerous, and that is easy to prove. If the men of the world follow the advice of their wives in a service way, as you do, deciding to build a palace of bird bones, we cannot doubt at all about the predominance of the females.

Sultan Süleyman said, "Well, if that is the case, I forgive you. And, furthermore, I shall award you a sparrow per day for your food."

It was in this way that the owl managed to protect the bird world.

Ahmet Uysal: "What about the sparrow?"

The sparrow escaped from prison, but he was still fettered, and that is why he always hops instead of walking. The sparrow cannot take steps--his feet are shackled together. His feet are handcuffed.

Story 699

[Ahmet Uysal:

into the fire,⁴
the fire too!"

"I shall leap into

Allah gave orders to Gabriel, "Go and stop that bird from leaping into the fire!"

Gabriel went to the nightingale and asked, "What are you up to?"

The nightingale responded, "Well, Allah has 1001 names I have memorized 999 of them. If Süleyman teaches me the other two, it will be well. But if he refuses, then I shall throw myself into the flames!"

The nightingale's wish was granted, and as a result, it is the only creature that can sing all of the 1001 names of Allah.

⁴The Biblical account of Abraham makes no reference to his being thrown into the fire. This is from the koran, Chapter XXI, verses 68-69. The Lord (Allah) made the heat coolness, and so Abraham was unharmed.