

Story 764 (1970 Tape 13)

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Location: Ova Akça village, kaza  
merkezi of Bursa, Bursa  
Province

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Behlül Dane Consults the Dung Heap

One day when Harun Reşit had not seen his brother<sup>1</sup> for a long time, he said to one of his attendants, "Find Behlül Dane and bring him here to me."

The attendant found Behlül and said to him, "Your brother has called you. You must come to the palace at once.

Behlül went to the palace as he had been ordered, but instead of going into the presence of Harun Reşit, he went instead to the palace toilet and refused to come out.

After Behlül had been there for a full hour, his brother ordered, "Go and see what that fellow is doing in the toilet all this time. What does he mean by spending so much time there?"

When they went to the toilet again to speak to Behlül, they found him with his hand cupped over his ear as if he were listening to something in the toilet. Returning to Harun Reşit, they reported, "Your Majesty, your brother is

<sup>1</sup>The holy fool Behlül Dane was reputedly the half-brother of the great Abbasid Caliph Harun Reşit (Haroun al-Raschid.) There is no valid evidence for this relationship.

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cupping his hands over one ear and listening to something in the toilet."

When he heard that, Harun Reşit arose from his throne and went to his brother himself. He found that Behlül was doing just as he had been reported to be doing: holding his hand over one ear and listening to the toilet. "Behlül, what are you doing here?" his brother demanded.

"I am listening to the many pieces of dung in the dung heap."

"What do they say?" asked Harun Reşit.

"Brother, they are saying this: 'We mingled with mankind and then left mankind. Before we mingled with mankind we were such beautiful things as bread, meat, butter and honey. Our stay among mankind left us the filthy smelly things we are now.'"<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup>This anecdote (widely known throughout Turkey) becomes more meaningful when one realizes that Behlül was known as a recluse to the point of being a misogynist.