

Story #42 (Tape 27)
1961-1962

Narrator: Nuri Konuralp, newspaper man
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#42

Inherited Behavior -- inherited

There was once a widow in a village who used to carry her daily requirement of water from the fountain in a skin bag. She would make a trip a day to the fountain, and the water that she brought would last her until the next day. One day a boy of that village decided to play a trick on this widow. As she was returning home from the fountain with her bag of water, the boy sneaked up behind her and pierced the skin bag several times with a needle. The woman's home was rather far from the fountain, and by the time she reached home, the water had almost all run out of the skin. She emptied the little that was left into an pot -- earthenware earthenware pot and returned once more to the fountain to refill her bag. But, once again, the naughty boy punctured her bag. This went on for several days and the woman finally decided to go and complain to the boy's father.

bag -- made of skin

The widow went to the boy's home when the father had just returned from his day's work and she said to him, "Uncle Hasan, this son of yours has made my life miserable, and I cannot stand his pranks any longer."

"What has he done?" asked the man.

"I carry water from the fountain every day," she said, "and he sneaks up behind me and punctures my skin bag with a needle and lets the water run out. He has already done this too often to me."

"I see," said the father. "Well, you go home and I shall see to it that this does not happen again."

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When she had left, the father was at first going to call the boy to him and order him to stop pestering the poor woman, but then he decided against this and began to think about the problem. He wondered if he had ever fed his son with any food that had been stolen or unethically obtained. He thought and thought and searched his mind for any time when he had acquired food illegally. As far as he could remember, he had never fed his son even a mouthful of food so obtained.

He then went to the boy's mother and said, "If this boy is mine and if he was reared in this house, then he should not conduct himself in this way. I have thought much and yet I cannot remember having given to him any food that was (haram)¹ Now you think and see if you can recall having given the child any food of this sort."

The woman sat down and thought for a while, and then she said to her husband, "Oh, yes, I remember now. After he was born I never fed the child with anything haram, but early in my pregnancy with him I did. There was once a man who brought a (basket) of (pomegranates) to be delivered to our (neighbor). The neighbor was not at home when he arrived, and so he left the basket in our home, to be transferred when the neighbor returned. I was very thirsty that day and I thought about stealing one of the pomegranates from the basket. But instead of doing this, I took one from the basket, pricked it several times with a needle, and sucked it to quench my thirst. Then I put the fruit back into the basket and said nothing about it."

Magic -- Sympathetic -- Homogeneous

¹Haram and halal mean literally forbidden and lawful. Haram, however, has a broader meaning; it refers to anything unethical, illegal, taboo, or anything forbidden by religion; if someone commits an act which is haram, he must be absolved of this, forgiven for it, or he will not be able to enter heaven when he dies. To absolve someone, forgive him, or release him from obligation is to make his actions halal. A dying person is always visited by relatives, friends, and even acquaintances who ask that he make their relationship halal; and he is even more concerned that they absolve him of all obligations in the same way. This is also done before someone takes a journey, lest he die en route without the opportunity to effect this mutual exchange.

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"Well, then, go at once to that neighbor and ask him to make this helal.

She went to the home of her neighbor and did as her husband had directed her. As soon as she was absolved of her (sin) by the forgiveness of that neighbor, the boy's behavior improved and he no longer teased the poor old widow. His father never mentioned this to him, but he did not have to, for the boy was cured when the mother's deed had been made helal.