

Story #429 (Tape #1, 1968)

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Location: Haymana, kaza of Ankara
Province

Date: 1968

Piety in Excess

There was once a padishah who frequently had his belongings stolen. he was not alone in such losses to ^{thieves} robbers, for even the poor people in the villages had their property stolen. The padishah was never able to find the thief. He called the town criers, he called the police, he called everyone, but no one could discover the thief. And this went on for years. The padishah ordered that those who preached in the mosques should tell how much had been stolen and especially his property. "I shall reward generously whoever catches the thief," he declared.

There was in that land a dervish who had 150 followers. You know, followers of dervishes were, in those days, exempt from military duty.¹ This dervish had bells on his shoes so that when he walked the ringing sound would warn the ants out of his path, thus keeping them from being crushed.

Just after hearing the padishah's announcement made in the mosque, a man decided to follow this dervish. He saw him go into a butcher shop and order an okka² of meat.

¹The first two sentences of this paragraph appear mixed in with the material of the first paragraph on the tape. We moved them to this position for the sake of clarity.

²An okka, a measure used in Turkey before the adoption of the metric system, weighed 2.8 pounds.

"Of course, Efendi," said the butcher.

"Wait," said the dervish. "I shall buy the meat later. I do not have enough money with me now." But as he turned to leave the butcher shop, the tip of his gown happened to touch some of the meat. "Oh, I have gotten a piece of your meat on my gown."

"What do you mean, Hoca Efendi?"

"Here, you take this lira and give up your right to the meat that rubbed off on my gown, and thus make it helal³ to me."

The man who had been tailing the dervish was now certain that this dervish was the thief. The dervish went to his tekke⁴ and started his zikir⁵ and the man who had been following him went to the padishah to report: "Your Majesty, I have found the thief."

The dervish was a very important man in the city, and no one in the city dared to accuse him in any way. Furthermore, the padishah was very fond of him. But this dervish had a cellar beneath his house--like a tunnel---and the goods of all kinds that he had stolen were stored there. He would steal sheep by going to a rural shepherd and engaging him in conversation; while the two talked, the dervish's men would tie up the

³Helal refers to that unencumbered by a debt of obligation, something which will not be held against one on the judgement day or in the next world. The opposite is haram.

⁴Tekke is the monastery or dervish quarters.

⁵Zikir (or zikir) is the dervish religious service. It may also refer to the trance-like ecstasy produced by mentioning the name of Allah and then doing breathing exercises.

sheep. Using a kind of code language, he would give directions to his thieves while he was supposedly just telling a story to the shepherd:

İki yünlü, bir kıllı Two woolies and one hairy

Hinyo çalıya bağlı Hinyo is tied to the bush ⁶

They would thus steal these animals and take them to his stables

The man who had been following the dervish said, "My Padishah, I hope you will not execute me for what I am going to tell you, but I think that I have discovered the thief. He is your shéikh, the dervish."

"What? Be quiet!"

"No, your Majesty, if it is a lie I tell, then here is my neck, but please first make an investigation."

"Very well, then," said the padishah, "let us go and search the cellar beneath the dervish's house." The padishah and his whole retinue went to the home of the dervish, where they found 1001 different kinds of stolen goods, including stolen sheep, goats, and horses. All of these things they recovered.⁷

⁶Woolies are the sheep; hairy refers to a goat; hinyo here refers to a horse.

⁷This is not well told. The detective in variants of this gains his knowledge of the theft or some special insight which enables him to recognize the supposedly pious dervish as a hypocrite.