

Story #545 (1974 Tapes #8 & #9)

Narrator: Talibî Coşkun, 76, folk poet and former heavy-weight wrestler

Location: Tale was told in Ankara, but narrator is from Tonus köyü, Şarkısla kazası, Sivas Province

Date: April 19, 1974

The Padişah Cured by the Tears of a Blessed Child (cure)

Before the caliphs there were meliks,¹ who were the padişahs of the time before Christ.² Finally the Ottomans took the title of padişah. It was in that early time that there was a padişah who had a lame foot.

Physicians Doctors were called, and many came. They agreed that what was needed to cure the foot was a rare and difficult-to-find drug. "Well, find it!" ordered the padişah. "I am dying."

"We need a boy of eight years' age. He must have fair hair--golden hair--and his eyes must be blue."

"What shall we do with such a boy?" asked the padişah.

"Your feet will go into his stomach. Of course, the boy will first have to be slain. Your feet will have to remain in his stomach for some time, and then your lame foot will be cured."

The padişah gave an order that such a boy should be sought. Neighboring areas and villages were all searched, but no such boy could be found. scholars also searched, and at last they found a boy who answered the description--hair and eyes.

¹ Melik is an old word for king. It appeared in the 10th-century Turkish epic, The Book of Dede Korkut.

² Uneducated raconteurs in Turkey often make sweeping but confused generalizations about history. They sometimes invent their history as they go along, and often it is more colorful and interesting than the facts.

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They took the boy to the padişah's palace, and there the doctors examined him. But soon the news spread concerning what they intended to do with the boy, and when the boy's father heard this, he rushed to the palace. "My padişah," he cried, "I have only one son. We have heard that he is to be slaughtered and his stomach wrapped around your foot.³ Please give my son back."

The padişah said [to the father], "Come here, son. How many golden liras do you want in order to sell this boy to us and to make the bargain helâl?"⁴

When the father heard the word gold, he became agreeable and said, "All right, my padişah, let him be sacrificed for you."

But the boy's mother had no knowledge of this, and when she learned of it, she went to the padişah too. She said, "My padişah, I have heard that you are going to do such-and-such to my son."

"Well, his father sold him to me. I paid him a quantity of gold."

She said, "I planted him in my field and took so much trouble to raise him. How can a father know the value of a son? How can he know his real value?"⁵

I kiss your hands. Give me my child back." She wept.

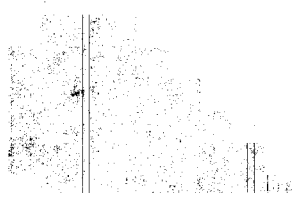
Since she talked in a legal way, the padişah thought much about this.

³ It is an age-old practice to wrap wounded or badly injured people in the skins of freshly slain animals--a practice still used in some parts of Turkey. The same strategy of folk medicine is present here in the use of the boy's stomach.

⁴ Helâl means permitted, lawful, morally acceptable. Any transaction or indebtedness not declared helâl by the second party will be held against the first party on Judgment Day.

⁵ The mother's comment is rhymed in Turkish:

Ben onu tarlamda ekmişem
 Bunca yıl zahmetini çekmişem;
 Baba ne bilsin evladının kadrini,
 ----- kıymetime vere evladını.



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But he had gold brought from the treasury, and when she saw this, she also softened. "Well, what can I say, since his father has already sold him?" The padişah paid the woman a sum of gold, and she departed.

They said to the boy, "You have been sold by both your father and mother. They received gold for you at the rate of 100, 500, 1,000 pieces. What is your response to this?"

He said, "I have no hope left from anyone. All I can do is pray to Allah and weep."

The padişah took him in his arms to console him, but by now the padişah's foot was completely green. "My son, make it helâl for me. You will be used as a medicine for me."

The boy wept so much that five, ten, a hundred tears fell from his eyes. They fell upon the padişah's diseased leg, and that diseased leg started to get well. The padişah looked at his foot in amazement. Before, he had not been able to move the foot at all, but now he could move it a little. He made the boy cry more, and as more tears fell on the foot, it improved even more. They called the doctors and explained what had happened.

The doctors said, "Oh, that is the work of Allah!"

The padişah was very happy. He pressed the boy to his chest, made him a vizier, and adopted him as his son. (This story is also from the Ahmediye.⁶ In the written form the boy talks a great deal with Allah.)

⁶ This work was cited by the narrator as a source also for Story #544. In view of Talibî Coşkun's low level of literacy, it seems most unlikely that he actually read this tale as he claims here.