

Story 709 (1966 Tape 3)

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şehir nahiye, Çekerek
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The Youngest Son Outwits the Köse

'TEK Once there was and once there was not, when God had more human beings than kernels of grain, when it was a sin to talk too much and a virtue to say little, I went little, I went far, traveling straight over rivers and dales, until I came to a place where there lived a köse.¹ He had a köse acquaintance who lived in another village, and he feared this second köse. The first köse had three sons. One day he called his sons to his side and said, "My sons, I am now 60 years old, and my köse acquaintance in the next village is 70. Neither of us is likely to live much longer, but while I can still do so, I want to warn you never to have anything to do with that other köse. Don't even speak to him!" Not long after he had given his sons this warning, this first köse died. Among other properties, he had left each of his

¹ The köse in Turkish oral tradition is a trickster and villain. He can be recognized by certain physical traits: his beardlessness, his short stature, his short-leggedness (often bandy-legged), and sometimes a heart-shaped face. He is viciously destructive and, hence, always suspect. He is so feared and hated that he seems less than human, and he is so treated.

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77,79,80,82,83,85
77,80,82,83
three sons a seven-camel caravan.

One day shortly after his father's death, the eldest decided to take his seven-camel caravan to the city. Along the way, he stopped at the village of the köse who had been his father's acquaintance. Looking for a place to spend the night, he finally decided to ask to become a guest of his father's acquaintance, forgetting completely his father's warning against that man. Going to that köse's home, he greeted him, saying, "Selâmünaleyküm."

"Aleykümselâm."² 77,78,80,83

"Can you give hospitality tonight to me and my caravan? We need a place to stay."

"Of course I will, my son," said the köse, "but there is one condition to my accepting you as guests.

"What is your condition?"

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"My condition is that you will not defecate at any during the night that you spend at my home. If you can manage to sleep here without defecating, I shall give you another seven-camel caravan and a field for their pasturage. On the other hand, if you cannot refrain from defecating, I shall take from you the seven-camel caravan which you now own."

"All right! That is an easy condition--nothing easier."

² This is the traditional Muslim exchange of greetings: "Peace be unto you," and "Peace be unto you also."

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After the guest was shown to his room, the köse went to his wife and said, "Lady, a traveler is stopping at our home tonight as guest. If he does not defecate while he is here, I shall give him seven camels, but if he does defecate, then I shall take from him the seven camels which he owns now."

"All right

"When you make the soup for dinner, I want you to grate into it one and a half bars of soap."

"Very well.

That evening when the soup was ready, the köse took a bowl of it to the guest's room and said, "Selāmūnaleykūm."

"Aleykūmselām."³

After the young man had eaten all of his soup and other food, the köse locked the door and windows of his room in preparation for the night. No more than five minutes after the guest had retired, he began to have severe intestinal pains, for the soup did not want to stay there. He tried unsuccessfully to open the door and then the windows, running around and looking for some way out of the room. The poor man finally let it all go on the floor, much to his shame. He said to himself, "How can I look my host in the face tomorrow? I don't care if he does take my seven camels. Let him have them!"

³ This exchange of greetings is very unlikely here. Once the initial greeting has been given by one person and responded to by another person, they have established mutual recognition and trust. This understanding needs no reconfirmation.

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When the köse came to the guest's room the following morning, the oldest son told him what had happened and said, "You can keep your seven camels and your field and my camels too!" He then left the köse's house and that village and returned to his own village

When he got back home, his two brothers looked at him in surprise and asked, "What happened to you? Where are your camels?"

"Well, I encountered that köse who was our father's acquaintance in the next village. Needing a place to stay for the night, I asked him to accept me as a guest. He agreed to do so, but made as a condition of his acceptance my agreement not to defecate during my stay there. If I did not defecate, he promised to give me seven more camels and a field for their pasturage, but if I did defecate, he would take the seven camels which I already had. During the night I had terrible inner pains and needed to visit the toilet, but I could not do so, for all of the windows and the door were locked. To my great shame, I befouled badly the room in which I slept. In this way the köse won my camels

"Why couldn't you control yourself?" his brothers asked, but they received no answer.

The middle brother then said, "Bring out and harness my camels. I shall go this time." He traveled for three or four days, his camel bells ringing all the time. When he reached

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the neighboring village, he asked someone, "Where does that man called köse live in this village?"

"That is his house over there.

Going to the house where he had been directed, the middle brother said to the man he saw there, "Selâmünaleyküm
"Aleykümselâm."

"I am on my way to Tokat.⁴ May I spend the night as a guest at your house?"

may on one condition. If you can remain in my home overnight without defecating,

from you the seven camels you brought here."

right! That condition will be the easiest thing in the world for me to meet."

The köse then went to his wife and said, "Lady, tonight you will grate three and a half bars of soap into the bulgur⁵ soup, and grate an onion into it, too. This guest we have tonight is a very strong one. See to it that it is good bulgur soup."

Later that evening when the guest was eating his dinner,

⁴ A province adjacent to the one in which this tale was told.

⁵ Bulgur is wheat dehusked, cracked, and cooked. It is thus a precooked cereal grain that serves as an "instant food." It may be eaten alone, as porridge, or mixed into other dishes.

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he said to his host, "What a delicious soup this is It goes down so easily."

"My wife is an especially good soup cook," answered the köse. "She also knows how to treat guests."

After eating and drinking a great deal, the guest, yawning and stretching, said to the köse, "You had better clear the table. I do not feel very well. In fact, I feel awful!"

The köse quickly gathered everything from the table and departed, locking the windows and door as he left. He went to his wife and reported, "Our guest became upset even before finishing dinner.

As a matter of fact, the guest was so very upset that he began defecating even before the köse had closed the completely. He soiled not only the mattress but the floor and walls as well.

"Apparently my father's

When the köse came to his room the following morning, the guest said to him, "I am too ashamed even to look you in the face You may have everything I have. I make it all

⁶ Anything haram is forbidden. Stolen or usurped property is not approved by God and thus is haram. To use it is to invite retribution or to bring bad luck to oneself. The opposite of haram is helâl.

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helâl⁷ to you, as helâl as was the blessed milk with which my mother nursed me."⁸ Saying this, he left the köse's house, greatly depressed in spirits. When he arrived home, he said to the oldest brother, "That fellow who tricked you has also tricked me!"

To himself the youngest brother said, "Ah-ha I know how to deal with that köse!" He, too, had been left a seven-camel caravan by their father, and with this he, too, set out, several days later, for the village of the köse. When he reached that village, he asked, "Where can a stranger like me spend the night?"

People told him, "There is a köse here who may possibly house you. He is the only one willing to put up strangers for the night."

That day the köse--his legs crossed carefully--was

⁷The middle son means that if the köse takes the offered property, he will not be indebted or obligated to the young man in any way. Unless a gift or service is thus made helâl, it will, at the bar of Judgment, be held as damning evidence against the owner. Thus, before a Muslim dies, he asks all of his family and friends to make helâl all of the things which they have ever given him or done for him.

⁸ One of the things that may be either helâl or haram, depending upon whether the giver has or has not released the receiver from all obligation for the gifts, is the milk with which one is nursed. Any mother can quickly bring to terms a recalcitrant child--whether that offspring be four or forty years old--simply by threatening not to make helâl the milk with which she had nursed him or her.

sitting drinking coffee with his wife and daughter. They were very affluent people. Looking down the road, he saw a camel caravan approaching. He said, "God willing,⁹ that caravan is coming to us." It did just that, stopping before the köse's door.

"Selâmünaleyküm," said the youngest son.

"Aleyküselâm," replied the köse.

"I should like to be your guest for the night," said youngest son, "but let us talk about your terms first before I unload my camels."

The köse said, "I once had a camel caravan. Then I bought two more, and so now I have three. If you can accept my condition, then bring in your camels and unload them; place food bags before them and make them comfortable. Be at ease yourself, and we shall sit and talk together. --My terms are as follows. I shall have made up for you a very luxurious bed, one that would be worth 1,000 liras if you had to pay for it. If you can sleep there for the night without defecating, I shall in the morning add seven camels to your caravan and permit you to continue your journey happily."

"Well, I can do that," said the youngest brother. "I

⁹ The expression in Turkish is inşallah--if Allah be willing. This expression is an acknowledgment of the power of the Deity. It indicates humility, the absence of presumption. In a sense, it is a means of safeguarding oneself against committing hubris.

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shall eat a very light meal and thus be able to stay without defecating. I accept your terms

The köse's wife made up the bed and said, "It is as clean as any bed can be, for you shall be the very first to sleep in it."

"God willing, I hope that I shall be comfortable here tonight."

To himself the köse said, "He will see how he will be here tonight!" Then, going to the kitchen, he said to his wife, "Lady, make flour soup tonight and grate four bars of soap into it."

the soup was brought in that evening, the guest asked the köse, "Why is this soup so gray and foamy?"

"It was made with factory-ground flour, not flour ground as peasants grind it. This flour was so fine that we did not even have to sieve it."

As the guest drank his soup, it seemed to go down easily, but soon he became nauseated and started to froth at the mouth. He said, "Excuse me, uncle, but when I arrived here off the road, I was very hungry, and I think that I may have eaten too much. If you do not mind, I shall lie down upon the bed, and you may gather up the dishes and take them away."

The köse closed and locked the windows and door as he was carrying away the dishes and remaining food.

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Inside the bedroom, the young man began to look around to see what there was that might be of use to him. He saw a stove, a fireplace with ashes in it, a pair of boots hanging on the wall, and a pitcher on a shelf. "All that will be useful," he said. When he became badly griped, he filled first one boot and then the second. He also filled the pitcher. This relieved him considerably. When his belly began to pain him again, he filled the stove. Finally, he filled the fireplace and then covered it with ashes. By this time it was almost dawn, and the bed was still spotlessly clean

In the morning when the köse entered the room, he examined the bed and found it fresh and clean. He said, "This is perfect. You deserve my camels. I shall see you off in half an hour." --Going to his wife, he said, "This man is certainly a clean one. There is not a single spot on the bed!"

The köse gave the guest seven camels loaded with grain but while loading the grain, he slit the bags when the young man was not looking. As soon as the caravan started to move the grain began to pour out. The köse said, "Young man, don't you have an upholstery needle?"

I don't."

"Well, go to my house and ask my wife for one and then bring it here."

When the youngest son reached the house, which was still within shouting distance from the caravan, he said to the

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köse's wife, "Give me the thing which only a woman has to give.

"No, I won't

The youngest son then shouted to the köse, "She won't give it to me She won't give it to me!"

"You bitch!" shouted the köse, "give it to him; give it!"

After a little while, the youngest son shouted, "Your daughter has it now and she won't give it to me!"

"Give it to him! Give it to him!"

When the guest did not come back even then, the köse decided to go home. When he reached the house, his wife said, "Your guest has raped both me and our daughter!"

Very angry, the köse shouted, "Bring me my boots!" When he put them on, he soiled himself badly with their contents. "Pour that pitcher of water over me to clean off this filth!" But when the contents of the pitcher were poured upon him, he was made even more filthy. In the meantime, the youngest had departed with the fourteen camels

That is the end of our tale.