

Story 739 (1976 Tape 12)

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Wisdom Comes from Intelligence, Not Age

TEK

Once there was and once there was not, when God had many people but it was a sin to talk too much, when camel was a barber, there was a padişah. This padişah considered himself the cleverest of men. One day while sitting on the royal throne in his palace, he began thinking of his great cleverness and wisdom. Summoning his vizier, he asked him, "O my vizier, do you think that there is any other man in the whole world who is as clever as I am?" Of course, he expected an answer that would make him even prouder of himself than he had been

But the vizier answered, "O my padişah, if you think that you are so unequaled in intelligence, you are in error. Don't you suppose that somewhere in this world there might be people more intelligent than you?"

The vizier's answer upset the padişah. He said, "O my vizier, you apparently think that there may somewhere be a man smarter than I am. Very well, then, I shall give you forty days in which to go and find for me the most intelligent

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man in the world

What could the vizier do? This was the padişah's command, and it had to be carried out. Quite unnecessarily the poor man had gotten himself into serious trouble. He created his own difficulty, and he returned home deep in thought and dejected.

His wife prepared a good dinner, but the vizier was too upset to eat anything. Noticing this, his wife asked him, are you thinking so seriously?"

"How could I do otherwise than think seriously? I have this day brought down great trouble upon myself

"What happened?"

"Today the padişah summoned me to his presence and asked me if he were not the most intelligent person in the world I asked him if he did not think there could be others as clever as he. He grew very upset at my response and said, 'I give you forty days to find and bring to me the most intelligent man in the world

"Is that all that is disturbing you?" his wife asked.

"Yes, that is all, but that is enough!"

"Don't worry about it. Tomorrow morning I shall saddle up your horse for a journey.

God willing,

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The next morning, after drinking tea and coffee and eating whatever was used for food in those days, the vizier filled a saddlebag with gold and jewels and departed on his journey. After riding for several days, he entered a large desert where he soon saw a horseman approaching him at a great speed. When he came within hearing distance, this stranger shouted, "Selâmünaleyküm, vizier."

"Aleykümselâm," he answered, but to himself the vizier thought, "Oh, ^{My} God, God--how does this man know who I am?" He observed that the man was dressed rather shabbily and looked poor. The vizier asked him, "My friend, where are you going? What is your difficulty? You are without shoes or hat, and you seem to be in poor condition."

I have important things to do and cannot talk much now. But ride over to yonder village and be a guest at our house. When I return I shall tell you of my trouble. But tell me, what is your problem? Surely you must have a problem, for ordinarily no one rides across this desert in such a way. What are you looking for in such a place?"

"My problem is a very complex one. Do you suppose you can help me with it?"

"My friend, first tell me your problem, and then we shall determine whether or not I can help you," said the stranger.

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Then the vizier told the man of his problem with the padişah. "It happened in such-and-such a way."

is that all that there is to it?" asked the man
 "Well, then, I know that I shall be able to help you with that

"How can you do that?"

"Just go to our village, and when you get there, ask for the home of Ahmet Bey, my father, and then become a guest at his house. When I return, I shall help you solve your difficulty."

"Friend, whom do you know at this village?" asked the vizier, who wondered if this man were an impostor.

"Brother, I have a wife in this village, I have children there, and my father lives there, too. We are well-to-do people and we do not want for anything."

"Is your father at home now?"

he is not at home right now."

"Where is he, then?"

"My father has gone to bring to the village a sweet thing from somewhere

"Well, then, is your mother there?"

"No, my mother is away, too. She has gone to cry at a neighbor's home."

"Well, is your wife at home?"

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"No, she is not there just now."

"Where is she?"

"Oh, she has gone to another village to laugh."

"Brother, I simply cannot understand all of this. What is all of this about? How can it be?"

"Well, you just go to my family's house, as I asked you to do, and when I come back, I shall explain everything to you. You will then learn how one can cry on loan, laugh on loan, and how one can bring a sweet thing to the village. I shall tell you all of this tonight.

Well, to keep the story from becoming too long, let us end the conversation here and go on with what actually happened. Arriving in the nearby village in a short time, the vizier asked for directions to the home of Ahmet Bey. When he reached it, he found that the place was empty, just as he had been told. After taking his horse to the stable, he entered the house and sat down in a corner to await the return of the family.

After a little while, Ahmet Bey returned, and upon entering the house, he saw the stranger. "I wonder who he is?" he thought to himself. But to the stranger he said, "Welcome!" After offering the man something to eat and drink, he asked him, "Who are you? Where do you come from? What are you seeking here?"

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"This is my difficulty. I am a vizier of the padişah, along the route I was traveling I met your son. I told him that I had offended the padişah by saying that there were probably other people in the world as intelligent as

Annoyed by this, the padişah gave me forty days to find for him the most intelligent man in the world. Now that you know my problem, do you think that you can help me?"

"Oh, that is very easy, but just wait until my family all gets back here together. My wife has been loaned out to mourn over at yonder village, and my daughter-in-law is here, either. Just wait until they return, and we shall help you.

They sat down and drank coffee together and ate some food. After a few minutes, the vizier asked Ahmet Bey some questions. "O Ahmet Bey, when I met your son today, I asked him some questions. I asked him if his father were at home. He answered, 'No, he is not at home just now, for he has gone to bring something sweet to the village from somewhere.' I did not understand that in the least. What did it mean?"

"My dear vizier, that is really quite simple. What he referred to when he said 'getting something sweet' was water. Our village has run out of water. All our wells are dry.

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Therefore, I searched outside the village for water and found some nearby. I also found men to build a fountain with taps here in our village and to construct tiles to carry water to that fountain. Is there anything sweeter than water? When you need water it is the sweetest thing on earth."

"Aha, you are right! People cannot live without water. So, you located water, had it brought here, and had equipment built to control its flow, thus taking care of the water problem?"

"That is correct."

"Well, here is another question I asked your son: 'Where is your mother today?' He answered, 'My mother has gone to a neighbor to cry.' What is the meaning of that?"

"That is also easily explained. A child of one of our neighbors died. My wife went to that neighbor's house to join in the mourning for that child. If one of our children or the child of a relative should die tomorrow, those neighbors would come to our house to help us mourn. We call that 'being loaned out to cry.' Some day they will repay the debt."

"Well, then I asked your son another question: 'Is your wife at home?' He said, 'No.' When I asked him then where she was, he answered, 'She has gone to laugh at a

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neighbor's home.' I did not understand this, either. What did it mean?"

"The meaning of this has to do with the marriage of one of our relatives. She has gone to the wedding to participate in the celebrations, to laugh and enjoy herself. Some day we shall have such a celebration here, and then they will come here and repay that debt. Isn't that good?"

"Oh, that is excellent. I never thought of it that way before."

Soon after that, the sun set, and the other members of the family returned. Ahmet Bey's son, the man with the shabby clothes, returned. His wife and daughter-in-law also returned. After they had all sat for a while talking, the vizier became very serious and addressed the others in this way: "Friends, let us not waste too much time. We have spent a whole day here. The padişah has great power and influence, and if I do not solve my problem, he may order my beheading.

"What shall we do?"

"Let us leave immediately," said the vizier. "Which of you will come with me? Will it be you, Ahmet Bey, or your son? I do not care which, but we must hurry."

"All right, let us go!"

They saddled the vizier's horse and helped him to mount

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it. Ahmet Bey said, "I shall not go but shall let my son go.

"All right, then, let us have a horse saddled for your son so that he can ride with me."

you ride alone," said Ahmet Bey's son. "I shall meet you there, and I shall be there ahead of you."

God, God, how is that possible?"

"Don't worry about it. It is possible, and I shall be there."

right," said the vizier, "but before I leave let me at least buy you some decent clothes.

I shall not need any additional clothes. I will go like this, or I will not go at all."

"All right, all right," said the vizier and rode off toward his own country. He rode very hard all the way home, and when he arrived there, he went directly to the palace. To his great surprise, the son of Ahmet Bey was already there awaiting him. He thought to himself, "If this man could get here before I could do so, he must be a very special person."

As soon as the vizier reached the palace, the padişah was informed: "Your vizier and another man are coming, your majesty. The vizier requests permission to enter your presence as soon as possible." The padişah gave permission for both

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men to enter. (Now comes the important part of our story!)

As soon as the two men had entered, the padişah filled a bucket with water and placed it in the center of the room. Upon seeing that, the son of Ahmet Bey took out a large knife and laid it across the top of the bucket.

When the vizier witnessed this, he thought, "Oh, Lord, Lord! What is this all about?" His face began to change color, and he wondered, "Am I going to lose my head or not?"

A few minutes later the padişah began to stroke his beard. While the padişah was stroking his beard, the son of Ahmet Bey placed his hand on his head. At this, the vizier lost even more of his composure, turning white and making little gasping sounds, for he could not understand any of this exchange, either.

The padişah then addressed the vizier, saying, "Take this man to the royal treasury and let him take anything whatsoever he wants.

"Yes, your majesty," said the vizier. To himself he thought, "Well, whatever has been done has now been done." When they reached the treasury, he said to the son of Ahmet Bey, "Friend, choose whatever you would like to have from all this wealth, whether it be gold, silver, diamonds, precious clothing, or anything else. Take whatever you wish!"

The man said, "Brother, I am already rich myself. I do

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not want any of these things. I came here simply to save your head. May God bless you!" Having said this, he left without taking anything. (That is the kind of man we need in the world today!

the man had left, the vizier returned to the padişah's court. After they had carried on some casual conversation for a while, the vizier said, "My padişah, I could not understand any of the symbolic discussion that you and our guest were having. Would you mind telling me what it meant?"

"Not at all," said the padişah. "My friend, as soon as the two of you had entered this room, I filled a bucket with water and placed it in the center of the room. By doing this I was informing him, 'My intelligence is as large as the sea.' His answer was, 'Your intelligence may be as great as the water, but how can you get across it without a bridge?' Placing the large knife across the bucket, he signaled, 'If you are the water, then I am the bridge across it.' By God, I was surprised! But it was true: if there were no bridge over the water, I could not get across it. --After that, I began to stroke my white beard, meaning by that, 'Look out! I am old and wise, and as padişah I have too much power to be insulted.' By placing his hand on his head, he meant, 'Intelligence does not come from age but

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from brains. You have made a mistake by threatening your vizier with death for telling you the truth. That proves the limitation of your intelligence. Just because you are old does not prove that you are wise.' And he was correct!"