

Story 1352 (1969 Tape 5)

Narrator: Mehmet İlşıldak

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Gümüşhane Province

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Collected by Dr. Saim Sakaoğlu

The Unimportant Secret and Its Important Consequences

in the past a padişah said to his grand vizier, "Oh my vizier, let us travel about through the country together in order to learn more about the living conditions of our people." The vizier made the necessary preparations for their journey, and one morning the two of them left the palace and began their tour.

One day as they were traveling along, they came upon a large plain. Ahead of them they saw a large flock of sheep beneath a tall tree, and they noticed that a ^{sheep} dog had been hanged from one of the branches of that tree. As they approached, the padişah called to the ^{ALL} shepherd, "Selâmünaleyküm!"

The shepherd answered, "Aleykümselâm!"¹ but he did not realize that the man who had greeted him was the padişah. The shepherd was just about to begin eating his lunch, and he said

¹Selâmünaleyküm/Aleykümselâm--traditional exchange of greetings between Moslems not well acquainted with each other. It means roughly May peace be unto you/And may peace be unto you too. If Selâmünaleyküm is not responded to, the speaker should be wary of the one so addressed.

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to the travelers, "Come and share this bread and milk with me."

The padişah replied, "Thank you, but we are not hungry just now. But tell us why that dog was hanged from a branch of this tree."

The shepherd responded, "Oh, please do not ask me any questions about that dog. You may be my guests, and you may eat and drink anything you wish from my provisions, but do not ask any questions about that dog." Although the padişah persisted in asking questions about the dead dog, the shepherd refused to respond to these questions.

The two travelers moved on past that place, but curiosity about the hanged dog and annoyance at the shepherd still bothered the padişah. When they got back to the palace, he said to the vizier, "Go back and tell that shepherd that I shall punish him severely if he does not tell us his secret about the dog."

The vizier returned to the shepherd and explained to him that his recent visitor had been the padişah. He then said, "The padişah has said that he will punish you severely if you do not tell me your reason for having hanged that dog."

The shepherd said, "Well, whatever he may do, neither he nor anyone else will succeed in forcing me to talk about the

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hanging of that dog."

The vizier returned to the palace and reported to the padişah the shepherd's refusal to reveal his secret. After thinking for a moment, the padişah handed the vizier ten golden liras and said, "These ten gold coins will be yours if will explain your reason for killing that dog

The shepherd still refused to provide any information about the hanged dog. He said, "Even if you were to offer me 100 golden liras, I would not speak about that matter

This time when the vizier returned to the palace without the information that the padişah wanted, the padişah ordered, "Now go and bring that shepherd to me!" When that order had been fulfilled, the padişah said to the shepherd, "I want to tell me at once why you hanged that dog. If you refuse to do so, I shall put you in prison and leave you there for the rest of your life!"

"You may do whatever you wish to me, but I still shall not tell you what you want to know." As a result of this refusal, the padişah ordered his men to put the shepherd into prison.

Time passed, but the shepherd remained silent about his reason for hanging the dog. Finally, the padişah said to his vizier, "My vizier, apparently that shepherd still refuses to

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satisfy our curiosity about the hanged dog. Bring him back here into my presence again, and I shall make one more effort to persuade him to reveal his secret." When the shepherd was brought before him, the padişah once more tried to persuade the shepherd to change his mind. Still the shepherd refused to talk about the dog.

For some time after that, the padişah kept wondering what other means he might use to extract the information he wanted from the shepherd. Finally he thought of an idea he was sure would be successful. "I shall give him my daughter in marriage. There should be no secrets which husbands and wives do not share, and so I shall be able to learn what I want to know about the dog through my daughter." He therefore gave his daughter to the shepherd as his bride, and there soon began a very long wedding celebration. During that ceremony the padişah said to his daughter, "After you are married, I want you to find out from your husband why he hanged a dog from the branch of a tree in his home area."

When the ceremony ended and the marriage was completed, the bride was delivered to the nuptial chamber. But shortly after the newlyweds had begun living together, the daughter of the padişah went to her father and said, "I asked my hus-

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band to tell me about the dog he had hanged, but he refused to tell me about it. Because of his unwillingness to tell me that, I refused to sleep with him."

At last the padişah could no longer stand being denied the information he wanted. Calling his son-in-law to him, he said, "You may wish from me anything you want, and I shall grant it to you on the condition that you will then explain to me the matter of the hanged dog."

"All right, my padişah," said his son-in-law. "I want you to make me padişah for just a month. I shall be padişah for a month and then I shall return the title to you." padişah accepted this arrangement.

As soon as the former shepherd had become the padişah, he issued an order to the viziers: "Have every male in the land, from the lowliest doorman to the highest official, report to the public bath so that we can determine whether or not they have been circumcised. If you discover anyone who has not been circumcised, have that person executed at once." The viziers carried out this order exactly, and in doing so, they cleaned out of the country all of the infidels.

After he had ruled for a month, the former shepherd returned the throne to his father-in-law. He said, "Now, my

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padişah, I can tell you about my reason for hanging that dog, but before I do that, I want to tell you something else. really know very little about your people. You did not know how many infidels there were in your country. Now I shall tell you about the hanged dog. I had four sheepdogs that used to help me tend that large flock of sheep. However, of those dogs began running with the wolves, and he would sometimes lead an attack on the sheep. That is the reason for my hanging him."