

Story 1386 (1989 Tape 6)

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The Vizier's Greed Shrinks his Hats

In the old days, there was once a padişah who had a famous but very miserly and greedy grand vizier. One day this vizier got some fine felt from somewhere, and he decided to have a tailored fez made out of it. Going to a hat shop, he greeted the hatmaker, "Selâmünaleyküm!"<sup>2</sup>

"Aleykümselâm, my vizier! What can I do for you?"

"I should like to have a fez made from this material. Can you make it for me?"

"Yes, my vizier," said the hatmaker, and he made some measurements of the vizier's head.

After that, the two men began talking of this and that. During a lull in the conversation, the vizier asked, "Son,

<sup>1</sup>A flattopped hat shaped like a truncated cone. During the latter part of the Ottoman period it replaced the turban as the most prestigious type of headwear. Because of its identification with İslam, the fez was outlawed as a hat to be worn in public, though it might still be used in religious quarters. In several Moslem countries the fez is still worn.

<sup>2</sup>Selâmünaleyküm/Aleykümselâm--traditional exchange of greetings between Moslems not well acquainted with each

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do you think that you might be able to get two fezes from this piece of material for me?"

Although the hatmaker seemed doubtful about this, he thought for a couple of minutes and then answered, "Yes, I guess I could."

Again the two began again to exchange their comments about various unimportant matters. They were talking mainly to be sociable. Again when the conversation lagged, the miserly vizier asked, "Son, would it not be possible for you to make me three fezes from this material?"

Knowing that by then he had lost control of the matter, the hatmaker agreed to make three fezes. The greediness of the grand vizier continued until he had committed the hatmaker to making five fezes from the piece of material he had brought to the shop

The vizier returned to the shop at the time that the hatmaker had said the fezes would be ready. To his dismay, he discovered that the hatmaker had made five tiny fezes--much too small for a human head--from the piece of fine felt he had left at the shop. Angrily the vizier said, "Such

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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small fezes are completely useless to me! What did you think you were doing?"

    Patiently the hatmaker explained, "You asked only for five fezes. You said nothing about wishing to wear them. As you will remember, I measured your head for only one fez."