

Story 1434 (1971 Tape 7)

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Location: Karakaya village,
Silifke kaza,
İçel Province

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Fatih Mehmet¹ Observes Mutual Support among Merchants

Some time after he had conquered İstanbul, Fatih Mehmet decided to visit some of the merchants in the city to see how they carried on their businesses. He disguised himself so that no one would recognize him as the sultan, and he left palace just after dawn

Going to a grocery store, Fatih Mehmet ordered two kilograms of rice. After the merchant had weighed out two kilograms of rice, Fatih Mehmet said, "I also want two kilograms of butter."

This time the shopkeeper said, "Friend, I think that the man who owns the shop next door to this one has not yet had his first sale today.² Will you please go and buy your butter from him?"

¹Fatih means conqueror, and the reference here is to Sultan Mehmet II, who defeated the Byzantines and conquered Constantinople (now İstanbul) in 1453.

²There is a belief among many different peoples that it is propitious for a merchant to make his first sale early in the day. Sometimes merchants have been known to discount prices below the break-even point in order to make a sale to the first customer of the day. In several ATON tales, Turkish merchants are shown as being concerned not only about their own first sales on given days but also about their fellow merchants' first sales.

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Surprised by this, the sultan went to the shop next door and ordered two kilograms of butter. That merchant said, "I have just had my first sale of the day. Will you please buy your butter from the store down on the corner of this street? Its owner has not had any sales yet today."

As he left that second shop, Fatih Mehmet thought, "If all of my people are as supportive of each other as these merchants are, my country will be so strongly united that no invader could ever defeat it."