

Story 1471 (1989 Tape 9)

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The Ages of the Fox and the Turtle

One day the fox and the turtle decided to form a partnership to grow grain. They sowed the seeds in the early summer, and in the autumn they worked together again to harvest their crop. They then divided the grain into two equal parts, and both of them were entirely satisfied with this arrangement. But when they came to divide the straw, they had a difference of opinion about how this was to be done. The turtle said, "Since I am much older than you are, I should get all of the straw.

The fox disagreed with that. He said, "If we are partners then we should have equal shares of the straw."

After they had argued about this for a while, they decided to take the matter to court. They said to the judge, "Your honor, one of us believes that the straw should be divided equally and the other believes that it should all go to the older partner."

The judge then said, "All right! Which of you is the older? I have decided to give all of the straw to that person."

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The turtle said, "Yes, your honor. Go ahead and ask fox his age first and then ask me."

The fox thought very carefully and said to himself, "I should say that I was born at a very ancient date so that turtle will not be able to beat me." When the judge asked him his age, the fox said, "Your honor, I do not have any written documents to prove this, but I was born on the day that they dug out the dirt to lay the foundation of the wall around city of Diyarbakır."¹

When the turtle heard the fox's statement, he began to cry. Very curious, the judge asked, "Now what? Why are you crying now?"

The turtle answered, "Your honor, please excuse me. I am crying because I was reminded of my youngest son, named Maksut. He died on that very day, that very day that the fox mentioned I remember my son's death with sadness."

¹An ancient city in southeastern Turkey.