

Story 1757 (1994 Tape 4)

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Apt Expressions Misapplied

Shortly after their marriage a young man and his wife began to have some difficulty over their food. The meals that the young wife cooked were either too salty or not salted enough. The husband asked his wife, "My lady, why are the meals that way? First you cook a very salty meal, and then the next time you cook one with so little salt that it is tasteless. Why is that?"

"I forgot to bring with me my special little measuring cup for salt. It is still at my father's home. Go and get it for me, and from now on I shall cook better by using it.

The husband went to the village where his wife's parents lived. There he was welcomed and shown the traditional hospitality. After he had been there for a while, they asked him, "What is your problem? Why did you come to visit us?"

The husband explained the problem as such and such "Your daughter forgot to take from here her measuring cup

Story 1757

for salt when she came to my home. Sometimes the food she cooks is very salty, and sometimes it needs more salt. She is unable to cook anything that has a satisfactory taste. I came here to get her special little measuring cup for salt."

"Very well," his mother-in-law said. "Stay with us as our guest, and when you are ready to leave in the morning, I shall explain to you how she should handle her of salt."

He spent that night there with his wife's parents. He arose in the morning and prepared to return to his own village. Just as he was about to leave, he said to his mother-in-law, "Mother, aren't you going to give me the measuring cup for salt? Have you forgotten?"

His mother-in-law answered, "You cannot really determine how much salt to use by means of a measuring

Tell my daughter to add much salt to a large batch of soup and less salt to a small batch. In other words, less to less, more to more."

The young husband was not a very intelligent man, and he had a bad habit of forgetting almost immediately whatever had been told to him. In order not to forget his

Story 1757

mother-in-law's instructions, he kept repeating them as he walked along: "More to big, less to small! More to big, less to small!"

As he walked along saying that over and over, he two brothers who were on their way to settle their inheritance. Their father had died recently, and they his only heirs. The husband said to the two brothers, "Selamünaleyküm."

"Aleykümselam,"<sup>1</sup> they replied

To remember his mother-in-law's instructions, the young husband went on saying, "More to the big, less to the small."

Upon hearing that, the younger brother thought it indicated that his portion of the inheritance should be reduced.<sup>2</sup> "You pimp! Don't say that!" he shouted angrily.

<sup>1</sup>The traditional exchange of greetings between Moslems not acquainted with each other: "May Allah be with you!" and "May Allah be with you too!"

<sup>2</sup>Simple translation does not make the situation here fully meaningful. In Turkish one does not distinguish between two brothers (or two sisters) as the older and the younger. One refers to the older brother as the big brother (even though he may be physically small) and the younger one as the small brother (even though he may be physically huge). This information is necessary to an understanding of the younger brother's anger here.

Story 1757

"That matter is none of your business." And he began to beat the young husband.

After he had been beaten severely, the young husband asked, "But, brother, what should I say?"

The younger brother answered, "You should say, 'May Allah give more! May Allah give more!'"

The young husband then proceeded along his way saying, "May Allah give more! May Allah give more!" He kept saying this now so that he would not forget it. Along the way he came upon an unfortunate man with an itching disease. He kept scratching himself, and he scratched so hard that his clothes were all torn and in disarray "Salamünaleyküm," said the young husband.

"Aleykümselam."

"May Allah give more! May Allah give more!"

When the scratcher heard that, he shouted, "Don't say that!" and he began to strike the young husband

"What should I say, then? Everyone seems to say something different."

The scratcher replied, "You should say, 'May Allah get rid of it! May Allah get rid of it!'"

Now as the young husband continued walking homeward,

Story 1757

he kept saying, "May Allah get rid of it! May Allah get rid of it!" He soon came to a cemetery where there was a crowd of people. He realized that there was a funeral about to begin. "Selamünaleyküm," he called.

"Aleykümselam," several men replied.

"May Allah get rid of it! May Allah get rid of it!"

"What a terrible thing to say!" they shouted at him, and some of the friends of the dead person began to beat him.

"What should I say, then?" the young husband cried out. "Everyone tells me to say something different."

"You should say, 'May Allah forgive him! May Allah forgive him!' What else would anyone say at a funeral?"

He traveled a little farther, steadily repeating, "May Allah forgive him! May Allah forgive him!" He was still saying this when he came to the outskirts of a village where a crowd of children and others were standing looking at a dead dog. "May Allah forgive him! May Allah forgive him," said the young husband.

"That is what you say for a dead human being, not for a dog!" several people said to him as they hit him.

At last he reached his own village. When he came to

## Story 1757

own house, he found his wife standing before it to welcome him. After they had exchanged greetings, his wife asked, "Where is my little cup for measuring salt? Did my mother give you any instructions for me? How am I to do my cooking?"

Her husband answered, "Go and cook the best way you how! I no longer care how much salt you may put in any meal!"