

Story 1784 1994 Tape 5)

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Allah Distinguishes Between Humble and Haughty

Once there was and once there was not a married couple who were very poor but very good people. All that they had to eat for a long time was bread. One day, however, the unusual and patient husband caught a large fish and took it home.

While the wife was cleaning and preparing the fish to be cooked, she was surprised to find in its stomach a partly corroded bowl. She set this bowl aside and continued with her work. When her husband returned at dinnertime he was looking forward to a meal of something besides bread. His wife said, "My good husband, I cooked the fish you brought home, but before that I discovered in its stomach this partly corroded bowl.

After they had enjoyed their dinner, the husband drank some water from that bowl. As he drank water from the inside of the bowl, gold coins dropped to the floor from the outside of the bowl. As this gold struck the

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floor a loud voice in the air said, "Hearty appetite to you, Mehmet Ağa!"¹ At first the man was frightened, but when he had grown calmer, he said to himself, "This must have been a gift from Allah." When he reported to his wife how gold had fallen from the bowl, he said to her, "This must have been a gift from Allah. There is no other way to explain it."

Day after day gold continued to fall from the corroded bowl, and before long the formerly poor couple became a very rich couple. Their neighbors wondered about their newly found wealth. Some were suspicious, and some were envious. As their wealth accumulated, the couple had constructed a magnificent palace. It had golden stairs, and at every landing of the stairway music could be heard. There was a different melody at each landing.

News about the wealthy couple and their beautiful palace spread rapidly, and it was not long before the padishah of that land heard it. He asked his attendants,

¹An ağa is a rural landholder, sometimes wealthy and often powerful. The word ağa is also used as a mild honorific placed after the given name of an adult male: Ahmet Ağa, Hasan Ağa. Sometimes this is a sincere compliment or gesture of esteem; sometimes it is an expression of flattery. A salesman, a cab driver, a porter may dub any prospective customer ağa.

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"How can there be a palace even more impressive than mine? Who are the people who own it? Have them brought to my presence!" When Mehmet Ağa and his wife were told that the padishah wished to see them, they climbed into their golden coach and were driven to his palace. When they arrived there, the padishah asked them, "How did you become so rich?"

"Your majesty, gold falls at our feet after we drink water from this old bowl," answered Mehmet Ağa.

the padishah tried to drink water from that bowl, he took only a sip before throwing the bowl to the floor. "How can one drink water from such a filthy bowl?" he demanded. Because the padishah had no faith in the bowl, and because he was so haughty, Allah withheld the falling gold from his kismet. The padishah could not believe that gold could be produced by an object as disgusting to him as the corroded bowl. Thinking that Mehmet Ağa must have lied to him about the source of his great wealth, the padishah ordered him to demonstrate how he gained gold from the bowl. Mehmet Ağa filled the bowl with water and then drank it all without any hesitation. As usual, gold coins dropped from the outer edges of the

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bowl, and, as usual, a loud voice said, "Hearty appetite, Mehmet Ağa!"

"This is almost unbelievable!" exclaimed the padishah. "Let me try it again!" But no matter how many times he tried to drink water from the corroded bowl, he could not overcome his disgust for that corroded object. As a result of this feeling, he was denied by Allah from receiving any gold. Angered by this, the padishah shouted at Mehmet Ağa and his wife, "Take your filthy bowl and leave! I do not want to see any more of you!"

Mehmet Ağa and his wife continued to receive gold from the bowl, and with it they began to provide food for all of the poor people in that land. They found their happiness in doing this.