

Story 1856 (1984 Tape 6)

Narrator: Ali Çiftçi, farmer; by now he must have been in late 60s or early 70s

Location: Çıkırıkçı village,
Sarıkaya kaza,
Yozgat Province

Date: March 1984

Charity Rewarded

One day Caliph Ali¹ went home and said to his wife, “Hey, Fatma,² I am hungry. Is there anything in the house to eat?”

“No, but here are six akçes.”³

Ali took the six akçes and headed for the marketplace to buy some food. Along the way he came upon two men who were having an argument. The first man, who was an infidel, said to the second man, who was a Muslim, “Pay me back the money you owe me! If you don’t, I shall take the matter to court.”

¹Cousin and son-in-law of Mohammed, Ali later became the fourth caliph.

²Fatma is a Turkish form of Fatima. Although there is some doubt about the identity of other supposed children of Mohammed, Fatima was definitely his daughter by his oldest wife.

³A small coin worth 1/3 of a para, which was worth 1/40 of a kuruş, which was worth 1/100 of a Turkish lira. Now (1995) that the lira has been devaluated to 1/40,000 of a U.S. dollar, all three of these coins are mere matters of monetary history. The kuruş was still in circulation into the early 1960s.

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The Muslim answered, “But I do not have any money right now. Give me some time, and I shall pay you.”

Ali asked the infidel, “How much money does this man owe you?”

The infidel said, “He owes me six akçes.”

Ali then gave his six akçes to the creditor and said, “Take your money now and leave this man alone.”

Caliph Ali returned home empty-handed and explained to Fatma what had happened. Fatma said, “That is all right, Ali. You did a good thing.”

Shortly after that, Ali said, “I am going over to your father’s house.” As he was on his way there, he encountered a man with a camel.

The man said, “Hey, Ali, come here! I shall sell this camel to you for just 200 red akçes.”⁴

Ali replied, “But I do not have any money at all.”

“That is all right,” the man said. “Whenever you have that much money, you can then pay me for it.”

⁴There are two inaccuracies here in Ali Çiftçi’s tale. (1) The akçe was a silver coin, not a gold one. (2) Turkish peasants have the misconception that the most valuable gold is red gold. There is no red gold. Any “gold” that appears to be reddish is probably an alloy of gold and copper, and hence worth less than pure gold.

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“Under that condition I shall buy your camel,” said Ali. After going a short way farther, he met another man.

This second man said, “I need a camel right away. Please sell yours to me.

“That will depend upon how much you will pay me for this camel.”

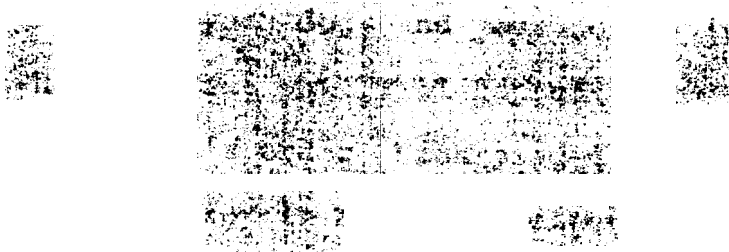
“I shall pay you 300 akçes for this camel.”

Ali agreed to that price. Taking his money, he went to the marketplace and bought some food. Then he took that food home, where he and his family ate it.

Ali then set out again for the home of Mohammed. At that same moment, the Prophet departed from his house to visit Ali. When they met in the middle of the road, the Prophet asked, “Oh, Ali, how much did you pay for the camel, and for how much did you sell it?” Of course, the Prophet knew all about what had happened. He then said, “The seller of the camel was not really a man, but the angel Gabriel. The buyer of your camel was not a man, either. He was the angel Michael. And the animal involved was not an ordinary camel, but one sent from heaven. You helped a fellow Muslim by giving away your last six akçes. Allah gave you 100 akçes in return.”

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Allah will give you 1,000 kuruşes in return for one that you give in charity.⁵



⁵There are other tales that illustrate this same point. See, for example, ATON No. 83, "Allah Gives 1,000 for 1 Through a Bektaşî," and ATON No. 799, "Allah Gives 1,000 for 10 Through a Bektaşî."