

Story 1943 (1997 Tape 1

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ince

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The Tree That Bore Fruit Twice
on the Day It Was Planted

One day Harun Reşit¹ went out walking across the countryside with his vizier. After awhile they came upon an old man who was planting a sapling. Harun Reşit asked the old man, "Father, what are you planting?"

"My son, it is an olive sapling."

How many years will it take for such a tree to produce fruit?" the caliph asked

"About thirty years," answered the old man.

"You are already old," said Harun Reşit, "and--though only Allah knows for certain the answer to this question--do you think that you will live long enough to eat any of its fruit?"

"You are right. I may not live long enough to taste

¹Harun Reşit (Haroun al-Raschid) was the most renowned of the Abbasid caliphs who reigned over the Islamic world in the 8th and 9th centuries. Harun, who was at the peak of his power around 800, was also the most colorful figure in this dynasty--so much so that he is featured in several tales of the Arabian Nights.

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of the fruit from this tree. I am not planting it myself, however. The mature trees that you see standing in this orchard were planted by my grandfather, it was my father and I who picked their fruit. This tree that I am planting will feed my grandchildren.

Harun Reşit was so pleased with this answer that he said to his vizier, "Cafer,² give a gold coin to the old man."

Pleased by this gift, the old man smiled and said, "My sapling bore fruit on the very day I planted it!"

Harun Reşit was so amused by this remark that he turned to his vizier and said, "Cafer, give him another gold coin."

Even more delighted with this second gift, the old man said, "Everyone else's olive trees produce fruit only once a year, but my olive tree has already borne two crops this year."

The caliph then said to his vizier, "Hurry! Let us

²For about two decades the Persian Barmecide (Barmekid) family provided viziers, counselors, and scribes for the Abbasid caliphate. Harun Reşid's grand vizier was Cafer (Jafar) Barmecide. By then the Barmecides had acquired so much power in the Abbasid caliphate that they posed a threat to the dynasty. Harun Reşit had the family exterminated; Cafer was executed in 803.

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leave this place at once, or this old man will take
everything that we have!"