

Story 1945 1997 Tape 1)

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How to Ward Off Dogs and Other Dangers

In the old days it was common for a young man to acquire an education studying under a chosen professor for as long as thirty years. He would then be tested by the professor, and if the student passed that test, he would receive a diploma from his teacher.¹ This story is about the examination of a certain student after he had completed thirty years of instruction

The professor said, "I shall ask you just one question, and if you can answer that question correctly, I shall give you your diploma. If you know all the things you should have learned during the past thirty years,

¹There is an anachronism here. Professors and diplomas are elements of modern education. The extended one-on-one educational process between a learned man and his student existed only at a much earlier time. At a medrese (school of theology) or at a tekke (dervish monastery) a student might remain under the tutelage of a given teacher for years. The frequency of this kind of education, as well as the extent of its duration, have seemingly been exaggerated in the folk memory. Allegedly the famous poet Yunus Emre spent forty years of the thirteenth century under the tutelage of the saint Taptuk Emre at the village now called Emrem Sultan in the kaza of Beypazarı, Ankara Province.

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you will know the answer. How many days will it take you to return from here to your own country?"

"It will take three months to walk there," answered the student.

"So, if you receive your diploma and set out for home, you will be traveling for three months?"

"Yes, if Allah is willing."

"Well, here is my question. As you are walking along, you might come to a place where a shepherd and six fierce sheepdogs² are tending a flock of sheep. If those sheepdogs advanced to attack you, what would you do?"

The student answered, "My dear professor, I would grab a large stick and fight off those fierce dogs.

The professor was not pleased with that response "I do not like your answer. It would be impossible to club six large dogs. You might knock down three dogs, but there would still be three left to kill you


Trying to give a better answer, the student said, "Well, I could throw stones at them. Even better, I might take along a gun to shoot such savage dogs.

²The tall, sturdy, shorthaired Turkish sheepdog can indeed be a fierce creature. It is capable of killing wolves, and there are many oral accounts of its prowess

But the professor was no more pleased with that answer than he had been with the first one. "Even if you struck the dogs with rocks or shot them with a gun, you would still be in danger. Don't you know that sheepdogs are valuable possessions and that shepherds become very fond of their dogs? They will take action against anyone who injures or kills their dogs. You have failed this test, and so I shall not give you your diploma now. Think more about my question, and six months from now I shall give you another chance to answer it."

Days passed and days passed, and after six months it was time for the student to be examined again. The student said, "My dear professor, I have been pondering your question steadily, but I have been unable to think a better answer to it."

The professor then proceeded to give one more lesson to his student of the past thirty years. "Listen, son! If you come upon the kind of situation I suggested, do not try to fight your way out of it. You should appeal to the shepherd for help. He could restrain the dogs easily with just a word or a signal. In real life you will probably come upon many confrontations of one kind or another. Do immediately think of punishing anyone or anything



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that seems to threaten you. If you injure them or kill one of them, you could lose much. Trust Allah and ask Him to punish those who threaten you or actually harm you. We are all constantly in His sight, and He will protect us."