

Story 2177 (1999 Tape 13)

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of Erzincan Province

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How the Dog Changed from Infidel to  
Blessed Creature

In a certain village there was an ağa<sup>1</sup> who had a favorite sheepdog. The ağa was so fond of this dog that each year at lambing time he gave it two of the newborn animals. After thirty years this unusually long-lived dog had in this way acquired a flock of sixty sheep.

When the dog finally died, the ağa decided to honor it with a regular funeral service. He went to the local hoca<sup>2</sup> and requested him to conduct this graveyard ritual. The hoca objected, saying, "I cannot very well conduct a

<sup>1</sup>An ağa is a rural landowner, sometimes wealthy, often powerful. The word does not indicate an official title but describes an economic status. Ağas are often the principal employers of farm workers, and they are often viewed by their employees as harsh, driving, and abusive. The term ağa is also used in a complimentary way, as an honorific, for a distinguished or just older person than the one using the term. Thus an older brother is called ağa bey by his siblings. So too, ağa bey may be used as a deferential term to one older or more prestigious than the speaker. A taxi driver may refer to his passenger as ağa bey; a salesman speaking to a male customer may call him ağa bey.

<sup>2</sup>A hoca is a preacher and the religious leader of a community. In pre-Republican times the hoca was also the

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sacred service for an unclean and infidel creature!" when the ağa insisted upon having his wish fulfilled, the hoca could not refuse to comply.

As soon as he left the cemetery, the angry hoca went to the kadı<sup>3</sup> of that area to make a complaint. When the kadı understood what had happened, he too became angry, and he ordered that the ağa report to his courtroom immediately. When the ağa arrived there, the kadı said to him, "I understand that you required this hoca to conduct a Muslim funeral service for your dog. How could you do such a thing?"

"Kadı Efendi,<sup>4</sup> I did so because that dog was such an unusually good creature. Shortly before his death, dog said to me, 'Through your kindness, I now own a flock of 60 sheep. When I die I request that you give 30 of those community teacher. Separation of church and state in the Republic required that teachers be people of secular rather than religious training.

<sup>3</sup>A kadı was a judge of Muslim canonical law in pre-Republican Turkey. In folktales he is often less than honest, particularly in his proneness to accept bribes. In Division VII of ATON there is a section of kadı jokes.

<sup>4</sup>In earlier times efendi was an honorific added to the first name or title of a distinguished man: Ahmet Efendi, Kadı Efendi. By the mid-20th century, however, the prestige of the word had so eroded that it was used only in complimenting servants and children.

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sheep to the hoca who conducts my funeral service and the other 30 to the esteemed kadı of this area. The dog also owned a cow, and that too he requested be given to the hoca."

Amazed and pleased by what he had just heard, the hoca said, "What a blessed soul that dog<sup>5</sup> really was!"

The kadı observed drily, "You found that dog to be an unclean infidel, but for thirty sheep and a cow you managed to convert it into a worthy member of our faith!"

<sup>5</sup>The word used here by the narrator was rahmetli, meaning the departed.