

Story 2182 (1999 Tape 14)

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Location: Bayraklı town,
Karşıyaka kaza,
İzmir Province

Date: February 15, 1999

Redemption from Rash Oath

One day a Jewish man¹ arose early and set forth to buy used clothes, which he would later sell for a higher price. As he was traveling along, his donkey stumbled over a sewer pipe. Both the donkey and its rider fell into a sewer pit. By struggling hard, the Jew managed to pull himself and his donkey out of that stinking hole. Going to the nearest stream, the dealer in used clothes scrubbed clean first his donkey and then himself. The Jew was so annoyed by this experience that he uttered an oath which he hoped would prevent its recurrence. He said, "I shall never dismount from my donkey again. If I do, I swear that I shall divorce my wife.

Not descending from his donkey even once, the eskici rode about all day. When night arrived, he returned home,

¹Although the protagonist is said to be a Jew, there is no evidence to support this statement. If this is intended to be an anti-Semitic tale, it is a failure. Buyers of secondhand wares walk the streets of Turkish cities calling out, "Eskici! Eskici!" (literally, "Junk dealer!"). Eskicis are not by any means exclusively Jewish

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knocked on his door, and shouted, "Come here, my wife!"

When his wife opened the door, she was very surprised. She asked, "Why are you still on your donkey?"

He explained to her what had happened. "I swore to God that I would never again climb down to the earth my donkey's back, promising that if I broke that oath, I would divorce my wife."

Alarmed at this situation, the wife said, "Don't dismount from your donkey! Don't dismount from your donkey. A footpath leading south from here goes through an extremely narrow gulch. You can sleep there by remaining on your donkey and leaning against one of the walls of that gulch. In the morning we shall find some solution for your dilemma."

The eskici managed to sleep there during the night. In the early morning his wife went to that gulch and led away the donkey that was still bearing its owner. She took it to the home of a kadı² and tied it to a nearby tree. Then she herself went inside to talk with the kadı. "What is the matter?" asked the kadı.

²A kadı was a pre-Republican judge of Muslim canonical law. There is a section of kadı tales in Division VII of the Archive of Turkish Oral Narrative. These early judges were not always honest, and several of those ATON tales show them accepting bribes. There is no indication of such immorality in this tale.

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"Yesterday my husband fell from the back of donkey into a sewer pit. He swore an oath, saying, 'I shall never descend to the earth again from my donkey's back. If I should do so, I swear that I shall divorce my wife!'"

The kadı then asked the woman to take him to the place where her husband awaited her return. When reached the tree where the donkey was tethered, the kadı said to the eskici, "Reach up and grasp the branch above your head. Then pull yourself upward off the donkey into the tree."

"I can't! I can't I swore to God that I would not do so.

"Do what I have ordered you to do! Do it!" replied the kadı.

The eskici had no choice but to climb up into the tree, and so that is what he did. The kadı then ordered the wife to take the donkey away from the foot of tree. Then he called up to the eskici, "You may now come down without breaking your oath or divorcing your wife. You will not be descending from your donkey but from a tree."