Story #665 (1976, Tapes #17 & 18)

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The Auspicious Dream

In times past, when students went to the old-fashioned schools, they were taught by their teachers and parents not to tell their dreams to anyone unless that person had first said, "May it be auspicious."[1] Jz boo

One night a boy dreamed of something, and as soon as he woke up, he found his mother and told her that he had just had a dream. His mother must have been occupied with other matters, for she did not say, "May it be auspicious." Accordingly, the boy did not recount his dream, for this was what he had been tuaght. He then went to his father and told him he had just had a dream, but his father was also preoccupied and did not remember to say, "May it be auspicious" to the boy who went on without being able to tell his dream either to his mother or father. When he arrived at school, he sought his teacher, and told him that he had had a dream, but the teacher was busy preparing for class, and he too failed to say, "May it be auspicious." He asked the boy to tell his dream, but the boy had been well trained and would not.

His parents heard of this incident with his teacher and asked him again about his dream, but the boy, even though he wanted to tell his

[1]The expression used here for "May it be auspicious" is Hayrola or Hayırola, both contractions of Hayırlı olsun.

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dream, could not, inasmuch as no one had said, "May it be auspicious." This incident reached the ears of the governor and somehow found its way even to the padishah of the land. The court started talking about a boy who had had a dream but would not or could not tell anyone about it. They wondered if he might be a prophet or a magician of some sort.

The padishah decided to see the boy himself and had him brought to his presence. He greeted the boy in a friendly manner, and asked him to be seated. Then he told the boy he had heard that the boy had had a dream. The boy replied that indeed he had. The padishah asked him to tell him his dream. But the boy said, "I cannot."

The padishah became angry and demanded to hear his dream, but the boy refused to do so once again. The padishah then called the guards and ordered them, "Throw this boy into the dungeon!" This was done.

A few days went by, and the padishah had a young daughter who had heard about the boy. She realized that everyone had forgotten about him, and she took pity on him. Daily she brought him something to eat. Sometimes it would be a slice of bread, and at other times a piece of cheese and an apple. Of course her father knew nothing of his duaghter's activities.

In those days when another country wanted to declare war, the ruler would first send a messenger with a puzzle to be solved. If the challenged country could not provide the correct answer, then the countries would go to war.

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The Czar of Russia sent a messenger to the padishah of Turkey with a puzzle to be solved. He sent two tree seedlings about 50 centimeters long which were identical in height, and he asked, "Which of these will grow the longer roots?" Forty days were given before war would be declared.

The padishah gathered all his men about him and explained the problem at hand. They all pondered on the question but could not provide an answer. The padishah grew very anxious, for not only was he about to lose face, but this would also involve the land in war.

His daughter saw that her father was worried, and she asked him what was wrong. He told her his dilemma. She said, "Father, do not worry, I shall find a solution to the problem." She went to the dungeon to take some food to the boy, for she thought that there was more to him than met the eye. She said to him, "My father is in a very difficult situation. Will you help us even though my father has thrown you into this dungeon?" After all, she had been taking care of him.

The boy said, "The problem is simple. Bring me some more food, and I shall tell you the solution." When she returned with the requested food, he said, "Tell your father that he should place the two seedlings into a large pan of water. The lighter one will float to the surface, while the heavier one will be more submerged in the water, if not altogether sunk. The heavier seedling will grow the longer roots."

The girl thanked the boy and the next morning told her father what to do with the seedlings. The padishah conducted the experiment right away, and he marked the heavier seedling and sent it back with the

messenger.

The Russian Czar was amazed to find out that the correct seedling had been marked, and he decided he would have to bide his time. In about a year the Czar decided to make another move. He sent a messenger with two identical swords and told the messenger to say to the padishah, "Keep the better of these swords and return the one which is of poorer quality. Otherwise, prepare for war."

The padishah examined the two swords, but they looked as if they had been made in the same mold, and he could see no difference between the two. He became even more worried when his experts found no clue to the puzzle.

His daughter, meanwhile, had continued to go to the dungeon[2] to see and feed the boy whom everyone else seemed to have forgotten. No one even remembered to ask him about his dream. We shall soon see where that dream will finally lead. His only crime had been a well-learned lesson. He had been taught never to reveal a dream until someone had said, "May it be auspicious," and he adhered to his elders' teaching.

The padishah's daughter went to feed the boy that day and told him that her father was in serious trouble again. She said, "The Russian Czar has sent two identical swords and asked the padishah to keep the better of the two and send back to him the one of poorer quality..

[2]The narrator does not actually use the word dungeon but says coal bin.

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Unless this is done, they will go to war against us. The czar has given us a forty-day period to solve the problem."

The boy said, "Do not worry. It is a relatively simple problem." After they had eaten the delicacies she had brought him and drunk their tea, the boy said this to the padishah's daughter: "The way to test the two swords is to bury the blades in ashes for a few days. Then take them out and bury them in mud for a couple more days. When the two swords are rinsed after that period, the one of good quality will have no blemishes on its blade, but the one of poor quality will have some rust spots."

The girl thanked him for his advice, and she went to tell her father how to test the swords. After the padishah had tested the swords, one of them had become rusty, and he sent that one to the Czar.

The Czar was once again surprised to have his adversary succeed in solving the problem and decided he would have to challenge the padishah with a very difficult problem. After some time had elapsed, he sent a messenger to Turkey and asked the padishah to give him the exact number of all existing stars. Otherwise he should be ready to go to war in forty days. The padishah became very worried, for how could all God's stars be counted? Again he gathered all the wise men of the land and asked them to find the answer to the puzzle, but of course they could not.

After some time, he again told his daughter what was bothering him, and this time she admitted it was indeed a difficult problem.

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She asked him to give her a few days to consult someone. He asked, "Who is is that you have been consulting?"

The daughter replied, "I shall tell you who it is if this person can again help us out of our dilemma." As usual, she took the boy his meal, and she told him that her father was really in serious trouble this time. "The Czar of Russia has asked for the number of all existing stars."

He admitted, "This is not an easy question to answer." Then, after eating his meal, he said to the girl, "This time I shall have to be released from the dungeon, given a horse, a clean suit of clothing, and all that a proper young man would need to travel. I myself shall go to the Czar to give him the answer to his puzzle."

The girl went to her father, and he asked if she had found a solution to the problem. She said, "I have been working on it, but I shall need your cooperation this time. The boy whom you once had thrown into the dungeon is the one who had given me the answers to the previous problems. I have fed that boy all this time and kept him alive. The boy has now offered to go and give the answer to the Czar in person, but there are some requirements to be met."

The padishah readily agreed to free the boy, and he ordered his men to bring him one of the best horses of the land, and a suit of clothing, and all the necessities of a long journey. The boy then asked to have the horse shod with golden horseshoes, and to have the padishah send a letter to the Czar describing the messenger who would deliver the answer.

When the Russians heard of the golden horseshoes, they had the way to the palace laid with carpeting, and awaited the arrival of the wise man who could bring the answer to the difficult question.

Now, at that time, it was customary for men of wisdom or means to wear a beard when about thirty-eight or forty years of age. The boy had grown during the time of his imprisonment, but he was still a very young man. When the Russians saw a very young man dressed in travel attire approaching the palace, they wondered whether they were being made fun of, or whether their adversaries were foolish enough to hope that such a young man could supply the answer to such a very difficult problem.

They greeted the young man and brought him into the assembly room, where the Czar had gathered all his high priests. The young man was announced and entered. The head ~~priest~~ archbishop, like all other priests, had a long beard just as Makarios has one now. They asked the young man, "How can you hope to solve such a difficult problem when you are not yet old enough to have grown a beard?"

The young man excused himself from the meeting and said he would return shortly. He went out of the palace, found a goat with beard at the market place, and then quickly returned to the assembly. When he was asked about the goat, he said, "If it is a beard you want, the goat has it. But if it is the answer to your riddle you would like to hear, it is I who have it."

The crowd laughed and applauded the boy's witty remark. The Czar told the young man to proceed with the business at hand. He said that

they had mentioned the beard only because it was customary for an emissary to be old enough to have one, but he could now give them the reply he had come to deliver.

The young man said he was ready to give them the answer, if the Czar would allow him to ask one small question first. The priests and the Czar thought that no harm would come of a question asked by this very young person, and told him he could ask his question. The young man then asked, "Have you seen the horse on which I have traveled, the one standing outside the palace on the unrolled carpet, the one which wears golden shoes?"

The Czar answered that he had.

Then the young man asked, "How many hairs are on that horse's hide?"

The Czar exclaimed, "That is a foolish question, for the hairs on a horse's hide cannot be counted."

Then the young man replied, "It is indeed a foolish question. In fact, it is as foolish as asking the number of the stars in the sky, for no one can accurately count all the stars."

The crowd applauded the young man for his wise reply and agreed that asking for the number of the stars had been a foolish question. The Czar and his delegation of priests had no choice but to agree with the multitude, and they declared that the young man had been the victor of this battle of wits. He bade them all goodbye, mounted his horse, and returned to Turkey.

When he arrived at the padishah's palace, he told that ruler

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that he had solved his problem, and he recounted the events at the Czar's palace. The emperor was very pleased and told him he was indeed a wise young man. Then the boy suddenly remembered how he had gotten into this predicament, and he decided to test the emperor. He said, "You may remember, when I was just a boy, I had a dream."

The emperor had suffered a great deal under his responsibilities all the while the boy had grown in the dungeon, and had gained wisdon. He immediately said, "May it be auspicious! May it be auspicious!" And the young man told his dream of so long before.

"I saw the sunset on my right shoulder, and the moon on my left. You are a wise man, my padishah. Tell me what the meaning of that dream is. I wanted to tell my father and mother about my dream, but they did not bless the dream with proper words, and so I could not tell them. I tried to tell my teacher, but he also forgot the blessing. When I was brought to you, the very same thing happened, and thus until now, I have not been able to ask anyone about my dream."

The emperor said, "Well, I shall tell you what you dream means. The sun upon your right shoulder, is my daughter, who has fed you and kept you alive all this time. She is beautiful and will make a wonderful spouse. The moon on your left shoulder is the Russian Czar's daughter, who is also beautiful.. I have just received a message from the Czar announcing her arrival. He is sending her to you to be your spouse as a tie to bind our two countries together." He then ordered a huge wedding that lasted forty days and forty nights, and the young man married the two royal girls. I did not go to the wedding, for if I had gone, I should not have been able to sit here with my friend to tell this tale.