

Story #396 (Tape #3, 1972)

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Trousers Too Long and Too Short

A man went to the store to buy Bayram<sup>1</sup> presents for his family. After he bought the presents for his wife and children, he noticed that his trousers were very shabby. He decided to get himself a new pair. The only pair of trousers that fitted him at the top were too long at the bottom. They needed to be shortened about a hand span. He bought the trousers anyway, thinking his wife could make use of the material cut off the legs

When he returned home he gave the presents to the members of his family, and then he said to his wife, "I bought a new pair of trousers today, but they need to be shortened about a hand span. Could you shorten them this evening? I want to wear them when I go to the mosque tomorrow morning for the Bayram worship service."

However, his wife answered, "I am sorry, but I cannot do it this evening. I am very busy. Why don't you ask your mother to do it?"

Then the man took the trousers to his mother and said, "Mother, I bought a new pair of trousers today, but they are about a hand span too long. Would you shorten them for me?"

<sup>1</sup>This is apparently in anticipation of the Şeker (Sweetmeat) Bayram, a three-day visitation period at the end of Ramazan. It is a highly social occasion, perhaps to counter the austerity and restrictions of Ramazan.

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"I'm sorry, son, but I cannot. I have to finish reading my prayers from the Koran. Why don't you ask your daughter to do it?"

When the man took his trousers to his daughter, the girl said, "I really do not know how to do it, father."<sup>2</sup>

After this the man gave up the idea of wearing the new trousers the next day, and he left them in his room. In the meantime the man's wife felt guilty about having refused to shorten her husband's trousers. "This man works like a slave. He brings home whatever we need. Why did I do such a thing?" She measured the trousers, shortened them by about a handspan, and left them in the room.

The man's mother also felt remorse: "He is a dutiful son and always tries to please me. I should not have refused this request." Then she measured the trousers, and shortened them about a hand span.

Then his daughter felt sorry for her father: "Father gives me anything I want. I should not have been so rude to him." Therefore she measured the trousers and shortened them about a hand span.

The next morning when the man wore his new trousers they were two spans too short and could hardly cover his knees.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup>There is some doubt about the exact excuse offered here by the daughter. The recording was poor at this spot. In variants of this tale the daughter, like the wife and the mother, excuses herself from doing the work by citing her involvement in other chores.

<sup>3</sup>The narrator failed to integrate his moralism with his art. He had to tell us flatly, quite outside the narration itself, that the point of the story was togetherness: this is the bad result of having people carry on individual enterprises without consulting and informing each other. It was not included in his tale, but told to us afterwards; hence we append it here in a like manner.