

Story 1890 (1996 Tape 3)

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71

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The Son of a Lazy Man Seeks Allah for Aid

Once there were and once there were not a man, his wife and their son. The father was a very lazy person.¹ One day the son asked this man to buy him a new pair of shoes. The lazy man replied, "When Allah gives me the necessary money, I shall buy you a new pair of shoes."

But the son grew up without any covering for his feet. When he had become a young man, still walking around barefooted, he thought, "I must find Allah myself and ask Him for a pair of shoes." After walking for a long while in search of Allah, he came to a tree. The tree asked him, "Where are you going, young man?"

"I am trying to find Allah in order to ask for a pair of shoes."

"If you find Allah," said the tree, "please

¹ The narrator does not say literally that the father was a lazy man. She uses instead a common Turkish figure of speech to express that idea. She says, "He was digging up ashes with his feet."

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Him also why it is that I cannot bear fruit."

young man continued his journey, and after awhile he came to the shore of a sea. As he was walking along that shore, he saw a fish leap up above the surface of the water. "Where are you going?" the fish asked him.

"I am trying to find Allah in order to ask Him for a pair of shoes."

you find Him," said the fish, "tell Him that the jewel in my stomach is becoming too heavy for me to carry around any longer. Please ask Him to find some person who is worthy of it."

The young man agreed to convey the fish's request to Allah. Then he continued on his journey. After he had walked farther, he encountered two bandits. They were not ordinary bandits, however, for what they stole from the rich they gave to the poor. They too asked him, "Where are you going?"

"I am trying to find Allah in order to ask Him for a pair of shoes."

"There is no need for you to go any farther," said the bandits. "We shall give you a pair of shoes, and

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then you can return to your village."

"No, thank you. I want to get the shoes from Allah.

"Very well," said the bandits. "If you insist on searching until you find Allah, please ask Him to answer a question that worries us. Ask Him in what corner of hell he has spread a small carpet for our future use. After He has given you an answer, please return and give that information to us."

The traveler continued on his way, but this time he went a much greater distance before he was stopped. He saw an old man praying in the doorway of a cave. Hanging behind that old man were two clusters of grapes and a loaf of bread. After hiding one bunch of grapes and half of the bread, the old man asked the traveler to join him for lunch. While they ate, the guest explained where he was going. As the guest was about to depart, the old man said, "If you really do find Allah, ask Him where in the next world He has spread a carpet for my use."

Farther along his way the barefooted young man saw a girl and her attendant sitting on a small island some distance from the shore of the sea. The girl saw

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him, too, and she called to him, "Where are you going?"

The young man replied, "I am trying to find Allah in order to ask if He will buy me a pair of new shoes."

Then the girl shouted, "If you do find Allah, remind Him that He left me on this island with no one but a servant. Tell Him that I am tired of sitting here with no other company, and ask Him if He won't find a husband for me who will rescue me from this island."

After that the young man once again continued his journey in search of Allah. Walking and walking, he finally reached a mountain. A man came forth from a forest on that mountain and called, "Hey, young man, where are you going?"

"I am traveling in search of Allah in order to ask Him if He will buy me a pair of shoes.

The man replied, "This is the end of the road. You should turn around and return to your village."

"It does not matter that this road ends here at the foot of this mountain. I shall find some other way to reach Allah."

The man of the mountain then said, "You have your own question to ask Allah, but you also have questions to

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Him in behalf of some other people whom you met along your way. Why don't you tell me about those questions too?"

The young traveler then told this man about the girl on the island in the sea, about the old man praying in the cave mouth and about his bunches of grapes; about bandits who had offered to help him; about the fish that had risen from the sea and spoken to him; and about the tree that had appealed to him for help.

The man of the mountain then said to him, "My son, cave and everything that is in it is yours. There you will find great riches and many valuable objects. When you reach the cave, a caravan will appear there and its drivers will load on their camels all this wealth for you. They will then go with you to the place along the seashore opposite the island where the girl is waiting for help. That girl is your future wife. When you get there this time, you will find a road extending over the water from the mainland to the island. Go to the island on that road and rescue the girl. When you the fish, it will vomit forth the jewel in its belly. Take that jewel with you, for it is yours.

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After the young traveler had done all the things he had been directed to do by the mountain man and had collected all that had been promised to him, he returned home. When he arrived there, he opened the door and called in to his parents. He said, "Father, leave your laziness for now, and come see what I have found." The father went outside and looked at the caravan load of wealth and all of the things that the boy had brought. He himself had never acquired anything, for instead of working or seeking fortune, he had remained idle and simply hoped that Allah would provide whatever he wanted

This story teaches us that we should not be lazy. If you wish to own anything, you should not only ask for it but also work for it. It gives us some other lessons too. The old man praying in the cave was not really a good person. Although he had a cave full of treasure he offered none of it to the young man; and although he had been provided by Allah] with a double portion of food that day so that he could feed his guest properly , he had hidden half the grapes and half the bread for himself. The man of the mountain said of that cave dweller, "He may pray every day, but unless he changes his ways, he

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will go to hell instead of to heaven."²

²This is a tale with several well-known components, but the narrator was not capable of telling it effectively. For some of her omissions and confusions, see the entry for this tale in ATON Notes, Vol. X.