

Story 1755 (1994 Tape 4)      Narrator: Gülsüm Söylemez, 56

Location: Olucak village,  
Suşehri kaza,  
Sivas Province

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Seven Brothers, a Sister, and Multiple Weddings

There was once a family in which there were seven sons. One day the oldest of these sons went to their mother and said, "Mother, you are to arrange to have all seven of us married on the same day."

The woman answered, "Son, how could I possibly do that? You must be married one at a time--one on the first day, one on the following day, and so on

"No, no!" said the oldest son. "We must all be married on the same day!"

"I cannot arrange it that way," the woman answered

After that, the seven brothers said nothing further to their mother. They left home and traveled to a distant mountain. On the top of that mountain they build a house for themselves.

These seven brothers had a younger sister, who remained at home with her mother. When she began to attend elementary school, her classmates picked on her

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Sometimes they even beat her, for she had no one to protect her from such harsh treatment. She regretted that her brothers were not there to protect her. When she went home from school one day, she said to her mother, "Where are my big brothers? Didn't I once have some big brothers?"

"Yes, you did, my daughter. They asked me to have all seven of them married on the same day. Because I was unable to do that, they never spoke to me again. They just left without even saying, 'Good-bye

"Well, the other children at school are beating me, and there is no one to stop them. If I had older brothers, they would protect me. The other students have older brothers to protect them, but there is no one to protect me. Where are my brothers?"

"Our dog would be able to find them," said the mother. She tied one end of a rope to the dog's collar and the other end to the belt around her daughter's waist. "This dog will take you to your older brothers.

The dog followed the trail that the brothers had taken, and the girl walked along behind him. They reached the distant mountain and climbed up to its peak. When they

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got to the top of the mountain, the girl discovered that her brothers had built a beautiful house there. None of them was at home, however, for they had all gone hunting.

Entering the house, the sister cleaned it carefully, set the table, and then prepared a meal. She cooked seven different kinds of food. Then she hid in the attic in order not to be seen.

When the seven brothers returned, they were very surprised to discover the work that had been done in their house. They did not, of course, know that their sister was there. One of them said, "Our house has been cleaned thoroughly. Who could have done this?" No one could answer that question, and so they ate their supper--seven different kinds of food--and then they went to bed.

When they returned home from hunting on the next day, they found that someone had again cleaned their house and cooked their food. The oldest brother said, "One of us should remain here tomorrow to discover who it is that is doing this.

One of the other brothers said, "I won't stay here!" Then one after another all of the six older brothers said

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same thing, for they were all afraid.

At that point the youngest brother said, "I shall stay here and keep watch to see what happens."

The next day six of the brothers went hunting, and youngest remained at home. He hid himself behind one the doors in the house. The girl soon came down from the attic. She cleaned the house, set the table, and cooked some food. As she was about to return to the attic, however, the youngest brother caught her and asked, "Are you a jinn or some other supernatural creature?"<sup>1</sup>

"I am neither a jinn nor other supernatural creature but a child of the One who created you and me and everything else. I am your sister. Other children were beating me at school because I did not have any older

<sup>1</sup>This is the formulaic expression given when one encounters an unknown being in a very unlikely place. The expression in Turkish is in misin, cin misin? --which means literally, "Are you a human being (in) or a jinn (cin)?" but when the person so queried answers, "Neither," it is clear that, in this context only, in is taken to mean otherworldly being. For some reason, the narrator here says, "Is misin, cis misin?" Inasmuch as there are several dialect words in this tale up to this point, one can conclude that Is misin, cis misin? is a dialectal pronunciation. It is the first time so far in ATON holdings that we have encountered this pronunciation.

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brother to protect me. When I told this to our mother, she said, 'You too have brothers, but they stopped talking to me and they left after I was unable to have all seven of them married on the same day.' Mother told the dog to bring me here. I am your sister."

"Very well," said the youngest brother. "You stay here with us and work in the house during the day while we are away hunting." Every day she cleaned the house, set the table for supper, and then cooked food for her brothers.

The brothers had a cat. One day as the brothers were leaving to hunt, one of them said to his sister, "Here are three grapes. Eat two of them and give the other one to the cat. Be sure to give the cat one, for if you do not, it will urinate on the fire and extinguish the flames." He was afraid that she would have to go out of the house to get more fire. But despite the warning that she had been given, the girl ate all three of the grapes, and, just as her brother had warned her, the cat urinated on the fire and extinguished the flames.

That was the fire on which she had intended to cook food for supper. Realizing that she would have to go

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somewhere to get some fire, the sister went out the front door and looked around. She looked to one side and saw some tobacco smoke rising; she looked to the other side and saw a great number of dogs. She said to herself, "If I go in that direction, those dogs could be dangerous. I had better go in the direction in which I saw the tobacco smoke."

She went in that direction, and when she came to a house, she looked through the chimney to see what was inside. She saw a giant woman and seven girls of marriageable age inside. The giant woman sensed the presence of the sister and said, "There is a very strong human smell here now."

The seven girls had also sensed this, but knowing that the giant would eat the girl if she found her, they said, "No, there is no human being here."

But the giant woman said again, "I am sure that I smell a human being," and she went outside the house.

The sister then called down the chimney to the seven girls, and she said, "Give me an ember of the fire."

But the girls inside said, "The giant's wife has counted all of the embers. Since they have been counted,

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how can we give you one and not be detected?"

The sister answered, "Take a pair of scissors cut a piece off one of the embers. The same number of pieces will remain.

They cut a piece from a glowing firebrand and passed it through the chimney<sup>2</sup> to the sister. The sister took it and went back to her brothers' house. But along the way home she dropped the silken cord which she was wearing around her waist. When the giant woman found this, it led her in the direction of the brothers' house knocked on the door and said to the sister, "Open the door so that I can give you the silken cord which you dropped."

"Pass it through that little opening in the door, the girl said.

"No, I shall not do that. Extend your finger through that opening, and I shall give it to you." When the girl

<sup>2</sup>Chimneys of Turkish rural homes are not vertical shafts of small circumference. At base, they may be 12-15 feet in width, broad enough to include a generous fireplace (for both cooking and warmth) plus one or more built-in ovens. At top they are often a meter or more wide. In folktales such chimneys are often used for purposes of eavesdropping on or spying upon the occupants of a house.

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stuck her finger out, the giant wife grabbed it. then began sucking and sucking and sucking on it. After a while the sister fainted and fell to the floor. Then the giant's wife left.

When the brothers got home, they unlocked the door but they had to push and push in order to get it open. Then they found their unconscious sister lying against the inside of the door. When the seven brothers finally roused her, they asked, "What happened? Why did you faint?"

"After I failed to give the cat one of the grapes, it urinated on the fire and put it out. I had to fire in order to cook, and so I went outside to look for some. Outside the door I looked in one direction and saw some tobacco smoke<sup>3</sup> rising. I looked in the other direction and saw a large pack of dogs. Fearing that those dogs might attack me, I went in the direction in which I had seen the tobacco smoke. When I reached the house from which the smoke was rising, I saw through the chimney

<sup>3</sup>Any smoke rising from a house might call attention to itself. Why in this tale should the smoke be tobacco smoke? There is no hint of an answer to this question.



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seven girls of marriageable age and a giant woman. I asked the girls for a firebrand, but they could not give me one because the giant wife always counted the number of pieces of wood that were burning. They finally cut a small piece off one of the firebrands and gave that to me. I took that piece and brought it here. Unfortunately, along the way I had dropped the silken cord from my robe. The giant woman found that cord and tracked me here. When I reached through our door to take the cord from her, she grabbed my finger and sucked on it so hard and so long that I fainted."

The brothers asked, "Where is that giant woman's home?" After their sister had described its location, brothers went there. They beat the giant woman so hard that they killed her. They then married the seven girls who had been held captive there

They all had their wishes fulfilled. May all the rest of us have all of our wishes fulfilled, too.