

Story 1750 (1994 Tape 3)

Narrator: Cevdet Uğuz,
veterinarian

Location: Taşkale village,
Karaman (provincial
capital but former-
ly kaza merkezi),
Province of Karaman

Date: March 1994

Yunus Emre's¹ Association with Hacı Bektaş Veli²
and Taptuk Emre³

Because they were suffering from a famine, the people of his village once sent Yunus Emre to Hacı Bektaş Veli to ask that saint for some food.⁴ When Yunus Emre

¹Late 13th- and early 14th-century poet, mystic, and virtual saint. He was Turkey's most important folk poet; some authorities go farther and credit him with being Turkey's most important poet.

²Late 13th- and early 14th-century mystic who is credited by many with having founded the Bektaşî order of dervishes. An important shrine for his followers and admirers is located at Kırşehir, central Turkey.

³A contemporary of both Yunus Emre and Hacı Bektaş Veli, he was the teacher and "master" of Yunus Emre during his lengthy apprenticeship for becoming a dervish. Like Hacı Bektaş Veli, Taptuk Emre also founded a dervish order. He lived near Nallıhan, not far from the Sakarya River Dam. His village there is now called Sultan Emrem.

⁴In some versions of this episode--see article by Talat Halman in Notes, Vol. IX--Yunus Emre did not beg for food but sought to raise money for food by selling wild pears to Hacı Bektaş Veli; or he tried to trade the pears for wheat.

Story 1750

arrived at Hacı Bektaş Veli's home, the saint asked him, "Would you rather have wheat or my blessing?"⁵

Yunus Emre answered, "My fellow villagers need wheat now more than they need 'breath.'" Accordingly, he took the wheat offered and started for home with it. Along the way, however, he had some misgivings about the choice he had made. He thought, "Perhaps I should have taken the 'breath' instead of the wheat." Returning to Hacı Bektaş Veli's home, he said to the saint, "I have changed my mind. I should prefer to have the 'breath' instead of the wheat.

Hacı Bektaş Veli answered, "I can no longer give you the 'breath.' The ability to do that for you has now been assigned to Taptuk Emre."

⁵The narrator here credits Hacı Bektaş Veli with having said literally, "Would you rather have wheat or breath?" Breathing on or blowing on people by religious figures was credited with having various beneficial effects. There were once many faith healers known as "blowers" who recited a passage from the Koran and then blew it upon the sufferer. But breathing or blowing by a saint or other religious figure was thought to confer upon the recipient inspiration or religious insight. We have used the word blessing as the simplest and most convenient way of presenting this concept in the text of this tale.

Story 1750

Yunus Emre took the wheat to his village, but after he had delivered it, he began immediately to search for the person named Taptuk Emre. When he finally found Taptuk Emre, he became his apprentice and servant. He used to cut firewood for his master and carry it from forest to Taptuk Emre's home. He worked at this hard task for twenty years, and then he became a poet and a mystic like Taptuk Emre.