

Story 1999 (1984 Tape 7)

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Location: Akçapınar village, kaza
of Bolu, Province of
Bolu

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Man/Goat Parallel

There was once an ağa¹ who had a ne'er-do-well son. When he came of age, he asked his father to make arrangements for him to be married.² Because of his son's bad behavior, the ağa hesitated for awhile, but after several requests from his son, the father began searching for a suitable bride. An acceptable girl was located, and the ağa and his wife made the necessary arrangements with her parents.

After his son had been married, the ağa expected that the young man would settle down and be a more respectable person. But

¹An ağa (English, agha) is a rural landowner, sometimes wealthy, often powerful. The word does not indicate an official title but describes an economic status. They are often the principal employers of farm workers, and they are often viewed by their employees as harsh, driving, and abusive. The term ağa is also used in a complimentary way, as an honorific, for a distinguished or just older person than the one using the term. Thus an older brother is called ağa bey by his younger siblings. Ağa bey may be used as a deferential term to one older or more prestigious than the speaker. A taxi driver may refer to his passenger as ağa bey; a salesman speaking to a male customer may call him ağa bey.

²Until fairly recently most marriages were arranged by parents. Often the bride and groom did not even see each other until the time of the wedding ceremony. To this day, arranged marriages are fairly common, especially in rural areas.

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this change did not occur immediately. Not long after the wedding, the son went to the ağa and said, “Father, I should like to have you make arrangements for me to marry still another girl.”³

Shocked by this request, the ağa said, “My son, you cannot do such a thing right now. It is too soon after your first marriage. Wait for awhile, and we shall talk about this matter later.”

After nearly a year had passed, the ağa one day said to his son, “Whose daughter was it that you wanted to have as your second wife?”

The son answered, “Father, I think that we should wait even longer to consider this matter. I am very happy with my present wife.”

Thinking that his son was now really settling down, the ağa one day said to the young married couple, “This would be a good time for the two of you to go and visit your aunts and uncles. I shall pay your travel expenses.”

Mounted on good horses from the ağa’s stable, the two set out on their journey. Along their way they came upon a herdsman tending a large flock of goats. They noticed that most of the flock was grazing contentedly on the rich grass in that area. But there were two male goats that stood motionless with their heads hanging down. The son of

³Polygamy is still acceptable in Muslim society, though it is quite uncommon in modern Turkey.

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the ağa called, “Hey, herdsman, what is the matter with those two male goats who stand there and eat nothing?”

The herdsman answered, “Sir, they are the only male goats in this large flock, and they are unable to handle all of the females. That is why they stand apart and look discouraged.”

“I was that same way once,” said the son of the ağa, “but now I am going to visit my aunts and uncles. Why don’t you send them to visit their aunts and uncles?”