

Story 98 (Milli Kütüphane Tape)

Narrator: Saliha Arel

Location: Sivas, capital  
of province of  
same name

Date: Collected in the  
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Hızır and Barbara  
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Old Köse Baba

Once there was and once there was not, when God's creatures were many and it was a sin to talk too much, there was an old Köse Baba. One day he said to his wife, "Look, woman. This is all we have. Let us do this. You make some bread with the flour we have, and let us kill the calf and cook its meat, and we shall call all the peasants in and give them a feast. After all, they are good people. After that, they will invite us, one each day, and it will mean that we shall have enough to eat for days and days."

*Peasants  
Tricks*

The wife said, "Yes, let us do so."

So they killed the calf, and they made bread out of the flour that they had, and they invited all their peasant neighbors to eat with them. Everybody came, and they had feast on what they had. They ate and drank, and then they went to their homes.

In the morning when they woke up, Köse Baba and his wife

looked around and there was not a thing to eat--no flour nothing except an itching dog--and Köse Baba went outside. He looked on his right and he looked on his left, and, oh! he was hungry, and there was nothing to eat.

into the house and said, "My wife, look!

and Mehmet Ağa's chimney are smoking.

cooking something to invite us to share with them."

But that day they waited and waited to be invited.

Nobody asked them in.

Well, they slept that night, and the next morning when they woke up, they looked around and there was not a thing to eat--no flour, nothing except an itching dog--and Köse Baba went outside. He looked on his right and he looked on his left, and, oh! he was hungry, and there was nothing to eat. Finally he came into the house and said, "My wife, look Ahmet Ağa's and Mehmet Ağa's chimneys are smoking heavily. I am sure they are going to invite us today."

But on the second day nobody asked them, either

Well, they slept that night, and the next morning when they woke up, they looked around and there was not a thing to eat--no flour, nothing except an itching dog--and Köse Baba went outside. He looked on his right, and he looked on his left. Oh, how he looked! and he was so hungry, and there was nothing to eat. Finally he came into the house and said, "My wife, look Today Ahmet Ağa's chimney and Mehmet

Ağa's chimney are smoking even more heavily. Today must be the day they are preparing to invite us in to eat with the

But on the third day nobody asked them, either

They went to bed hungry that night, and they got up the next morning with much difficulty. That day Köse Baba said, "This will not do, wife. Let me do this. Where is the (skin) of that calf? Let me take it down to the market and buy what I can with the money from it." So he took the skin over his shoulder and he started on his way to town

But he was very hungry and very tired, and as he walked and walked he became exhausted. When he came to a tree he wanted to take a rest there. He threw the skin out into the sun and he himself lay down in the shade. He went to sleep there. When he opened his eyes, he saw a man with lots of gold pieces putting his gold pieces on Köse Baba's calfskin to count them. Well, when Köse Baba woke up, he frightened the man away, and Köse Baba folded the skin with the gold pieces inside, and he started on his way back to his village.

Before he came to the village, he called to his wife, "Woman, woman! Go to Ahmet Ağa's and go to Mehmet Ağa's and borrow their measures. I have loads of gold to be measured."

She heard him and said, "What is he saying? I have money and I want to measure it? Well, let me go and get some measures." She went to the neighbors' and said, "Köse just said to me, 'Woman, woman, go to Ahmet Ağa's and go to Mehmet Ağa's and borrow their measures. I have loads of gold to be



measured.' I do not know whether there is any truth in it, but please give me something to measure the gold with."

One of the neighbors was a clever woman. She stuck ~~some~~ tar underneath the measure to see if it were true that they had gold, and she gave the measure to Köse's wife and she went home. The gold really measured quite a bit. It was a whole measure full. A few pieces got stuck underneath the measure, and when the measure was taken back, the neighbor said, "Oh, it is true that they have gold."

The neighbors went to ask Köse Baba where he got all his gold, and Köse Baba said, "Oh, I had the skin of my calf, you know. I took it to the skin merchants and they wanted to buy it. I sold it to them, and this is the money they gave me for the skin."

They said, "It is not true."

"Well," said Köse Baba, "How can you say it is not true? Did I have five kuruş to buy a loaf of bread for myself?"

"No," they said, "you did not."

"Well, that is how it is, then," he said.

And the next morning the whole village killed all the cattle they had--big calves, little calves, oxen, and cows, and everything--and they skinned them, loaded themselves with the skins, and started on the way to the market to sell them

Then they came to the town, they were asked how much they wanted for the skins they had brought. They told the unbelievable amount of money they were asking, and the

townspeople said, "Have you gone out of your mind? A skin cannot be worth more than five liras at most. How can you ask so much money?"

"Oh, we know how skins are sold," said the peasants.

The townspeople said, "Well, you go and sell them where you can. We are not going to buy them."

But they could not sell any of the skins. When they saw they would not be able to sell any of the skins, they loaded themselves again with the skins and they went back to their village. And they said, "Well, Köse Baba has done this to us. We are going to have our revenge on him."

The next day Köse Baba and his wife were sitting in the chimney corner talking when the villagers came and poured manure down on their heads through the chimney, taking their revenge on Köse Baba. But Köse Baba was not angry. He only called up through the chimney, "Put the cow manure on one side, and the horse manure on the other. I shall make them into chemicals in the morning, and I shall sell them."

In the morning he really sifted them and packed them in bags and started on the way to the town again. As he was going on his way it came to be late in the evening, and he could not get to the town that night, so he stopped at an inn. He told innkeeper that he had precious chemicals in his bags, and that he was on his way to the town to sell them, but he would not be able to go on that night. He told the innkeeper to be sure not to take any other customers at the

inn that night. He put his bags into the watering trough in the yard and then he went to sleep

In the middle of the night some other customers came. They knocked, knocked, knocked on the door. "Innkeeper! Innkeeper! We are cold and we are hungry! Open the door!" they called. And it was cold outside. What could the innkeeper do? How could he let the men and animals perish in the cold? So he had to open the door. He watered the horses and put them into the stable, and he brought the men in and put them into the room with Köse Baba.

Early in the morning these men--Jewish merchants--were ready to start on their way. But Köse Baba woke up, hearing their noise, and he called to them, "Wait a minute, you! Where do you think you are going? I had my precious chemicals deposited out there in the yard. Let us see if they are still there. If they are not, God help you!"

He went to the trough, and of course when the animals had been watered the night before, the chemicals had become soaked, and they were almost all gone from the bags. Köse Baba said, "Oh, my precious chemicals My precious chemicals are gone! All my plans are ruined! I was to sell my chemicals for so much money, and now they are all gone! He locked the doors, and he screamed, "I shall give you to the court I shall give you to the police You deprived me of the money that was mine!

And the head merchant said, "Oh, please, sir, do not give us to the court. We have business to take care of. We have cattle and we have animals. Choose what you like."

But Köse Baba still screamed and shouted. Finally the innkeeper came, and he tried to make peace between them.

Suddenly, "Allright," said Köse Baba. He stood up straight and he walked to the stable and took out one of the most heavily loaded animals. It was loaded with all kinds of goods. He chose it for himself, and rode on it, and went back to his village. He went a little, he went far. He went six months and a summer. He went straight over rivers and over dales, until he came to the outskirts of his village. He called again, "Woman, woman! Go to Ahmet Ağa's and go to Mehmet Ağa's and get their arşın sticks and meter sticks. I am going to measure the cloth I brought."

When the neighbors looked, they saw that the animal was loaded up to its nose, and it really and truly was coming. They said, "Köse Baba, where did you get all this?"

Köse Baba said, "Well, do you not know? I made chemicals out of the manure you poured through my chimney. I sold them for their worth, and this is what the merchants gave me."

The next day the villagers gathered up all the manure they could lay their hands on. They sifted it and packed it in bags. Then they loaded the bags on their animals and set off for the market. When they got to the town, they were asked what they had for sale. The peasants said, "Chemicals."

"Well, what kind of chemicals?"

"Well, chemicals! Do you not know?"

When the merchants dipped their hands into the bags to find out what kind of chemicals the peasants had, and found out what they were, they called the peasants bad names and they called them fools. They hit them on the face. They poured the chemicals out on the ground and hit the peasants with empty bags and sent them away from the town.

When the peasants came back to the village, they said, "We must get our revenge on Köse Baba. He has made enough fun of us. He had our animals killed, and now he has played this trick on us. He fooled us, and now we must play a trick on him. What can we do? What can we do?" Finally they decided to make a coffin and put him in the coffin and throw him into the bottomless lake near the village.

One day they gathered before the mosque and they made the coffin. Köse Baba came along, and, well, he was a simple-minded man. "Greetings!" he said

"Greetings to you, too," they answered.

"What are you doing?" he asked.

And they answered, "It is a coffin we are making--what everybody needs. You do, we do, everybody does. Say, Köse Baba, will you get into this coffin and look to see if there are any holes left?"

Simple-minded man that he was, Köse Baba climbed into the coffin. They quickly nailed the lid on the coffin and they put him on the platform outside the mosque.\*

\*Something like an altar, where the coffin rests while funeral services are being held inside the mosque.



"Let us go into the mosque and pray for Köse Baba, and then take him to the bottomless lake and throw him in there," they said.

While he was in the coffin and all the rest were in the mosque, Köse Baba kept saying, "I will not be an ağa. I will not be a general. I will not be an ağa. I will not be a general." And a poor peasant was passing by, with a flock of sheep. When he heard Köse Baba repeating, "I will not be an ağa. I will not be a general. I will not be an ağa. I will not be a general," he said, "Say, Köse Baba. Why do you say that?"

Köse Baba said, "Well, the padişah wants me, and the padişah said, 'If he comes to me in a coffin, saying nothing, I shall divide the wealth of the land with him.' I do not need any more wealth. Thank the Lord, I have everything that I need."

"Oh, please, Köse Baba," said the peasant. "You have everything and I have nothing. The sun burns my head and the ground burns my soles. I am so poor that I do not know how to live. Please, Köse Baba, let me be in your place. Let me go in your place. I want to be an ağa, and I want to be a general."

"All right, son," said Köse Baba. "Fly like a bird and get some pincers to take the nails out of the lid so that you can get in before the crowd comes out of the mosque."

The shepherd ran and brought some pincers, and in a hurry he got the nails out and the lid off. Köse Baba got out and

the shepherd got in, and Köse Baba nailed the lid on tightly in a hurry. He fell behind the flock of sheep the shepherd had, and drove the flock of sheep away.

After the prayer was finished, the peasants came out of the mosque and lifted up the coffin, saying "Yah, by the name of Allah! Yah, by the name of Allah!" They carried the coffin to the side of the bottomless lake, the shepherd all the while saying nothing. The poor thing, it seems, was the only son of his father and mother. And Zum, they threw it into the middle of the lake. "Thanks be to Allah," they said, "that we have got rid of this Köse Baba."

After a few days, what did they see but Köse Baba, coming to the village with a big flock of sheep before him, saying, Chush, chesh. "Ho, Köse Baba!" they called. "We threw you into the bottomless lake to get rid of you. here did you come from?"

"Well," said Köse Baba, "you did not throw me far enough. If you had thrown me two lengths farther, I would have twice as many sheep to bring back."

"Lie! Lie He is lying," they said.

And Köse Baba answered, "If it is a lie, who threw me into the lake? You threw me into the lake, and you know it."

And the slow-witted peasants decided to go to the bottomless lake and get some sheep for themselves, too. One after another, they threw themselves far out into the lake two lengths farther than they had thrown Köse Baba.

There was a boy among them who was his mother's only son. He came to the lake together with his mother. He threw himself into the lake, and when he was being drowned the air started coming out of his lungs, and his mother heard him say guk, guk, guk, guk. She thought he was saying kirk, kirk, kirk, kirk, and she shouted, "Forty is enough! Forty is enough. Get them and come out."

Thus all the men and all the boys of the village were drowned in the bottomless lake, and all the women and girls of that village were nobody's but Köse Baba's. So he ate and he drank, he plowed and he reaped, and he had his wish fulfilled.