

Story 866 (1961-62 Tape 71 Narrator: Mehmet Çan

Location: Unidentified village of
Konya Province; but
tale taped at Izmir
among labor gang

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Nasreddin Hoca Explains How to Behave in Heaven

One day Nasreddin Hoca went to the forest to cut fire-wood. He climbed into a tree and started to saw off a large branch. As he was doing so, a stranger passed along close to the tree and asked the Hoca, "What are you doing up there? If you are not careful, you will fall."

"How do you know that I will fall?"

"It is inevitable that you will fall because you are cutting the branch you are sitting upon."

The traveler went on his way, and a few minutes later, the Hoca fell out of the tree. When the Hoca hit the ground, he was knocked unconscious. When he came to himself again, he got up and ran after the stranger. When he finally caught up with him, Hoca asked, "How did you know that I would fall from the tree? I did fall."

"Of course you did. You were sitting upon the branch you were cutting off the tree. When the branch fell, why, naturally, you fell with it."

"If you were wise enough to know that," said Nasreddin

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Hoca, "then you are probably also wise enough to know when I shall

The traveler laughed at this, but when he stopped laughing, he said, "If you should ever see forty loaded pack animals going up a hill, observe them closely. If all forty of those animals fart before they reach the top of the hill, you will die at once."

Not long after that, the Hoca saw a caravan of forty mules climbing the hill that led to his village. They were heavily loaded, and they strained as they climbed up the hill. When thirty-eight of the animals had farted, Hoca said, "I probably have only about two minutes to live." When the thirty-ninth and then the fortieth mule had also farted, Nasreddin Hoca said, "I am dead!" and he fell to the ground.

Those who saw him fall rushed to him and tried to persuade him that he was still alive. But it was no use. The Hoca was convinced that he was dead, and he did not even try to move. The men who were there began to carry him to his home. When they reached a river, they were not able to find a bridge on which to cross it. Hoca sat up and said, "When I was alive, the bridge was over that way." As he said this he pointed upstream to where the bridge was.

Ablution

Cemetery

After Hoca had been carried home, he was washed¹ and then buried. As he was being buried, he told the gravediggers that one of his arms was to remain free, above the surface of the ground. They followed the Hoca's instructions and buried all of him but one arm.

After all of the mourners had left the cemetery, the Hoca lay comfortably in his grave for some time. As evening was approaching, however, he began to feel very cold in the wet ground, and he struggled to get out of the grave. At about the same time, a peddler leading two donkeys loaded with glassware was passing through the cemetery. When the donkeys saw the Hoca's free arm swinging wildly from the grave, they broke loose, ran wildly, and fell several times in their panic, smashing all of the glassware in their saddlebags. The peddler was furious with the Hoca, and, dragging him from his grave, he gave him a very sound beating.

It was the next morning before the Hoca was able to drag himself home, still wearing his shroud. When the neighbors saw him coming, they shouted, "The Hoca has returned from the other world!" And when they reached him, they asked, "Hoca, how is it in heaven?"

¹ Before being buried, Moslems are given a ritual washing. This ablution is intended to give spiritual as well as physical cleanliness to the corpse.

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"Well, it is fine--just so long as you do not frighten
a peddler's donkeys!"