

Story 963 (1973 Tape 10)

Narrator: Unidentified man

Location: Ağaköy village
Bursa Province

Date: February

all Nasreddin Hoca's¹ Rotating Oven *all*

One day Nasreddin Hoca decided to build an oven for his house.² He set to work and spent several days working on his oven. When it was finished, he called in all of his neighbors to examine it. He said to them, "Neighbors, I built this oven. Please take a good look at it and tell me if I made any mistake in the construction."

The neighbors all examined the oven very carefully. After they had finished inspecting it, they talked with each other briefly about it. Then they came to Nasreddin Hoca and said, "Oh, Hoca, this oven is very well built. It does,

¹ Nasreddin Hoca is Turkey's most beloved comic folk character. At times wise and at other times foolish, he is above all human and sympathetic. The word hoca refers to a Moslem priest, but the word can also mean teacher. In his era all education was in the hands of the clergy, and Nasreddin Hoca, like many another hoca, was both teacher and priest. As such, he was the victim of both the humor aimed at the clergy and that aimed at teachers and professors.

² In rural areas of Turkey, people cooked with a mangal (a type of charcoal burner) or over the fire of a fireplace. There were few stoves with built-in ovens. Sometimes ovens were built into fireplaces. At other times brick or stone ovens were built in the back yard as separate small structures. It is the latter type that is referred to in this tale.

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however, have one deficiency. Its opening faces the north. When the north wind blows in winter, the oven may smoke a great deal."

"Yes, yes, you are right," said Nasreddin Hoca. The following day he demolished his oven and began to build a new one. Several days later, when it was finished, he called his neighbors again and asked them what they thought of it. They inspected it closely and then said, "Oh, Hoca, the oven is built very well, but the opening faces south. It will probably not burn very well, and when the south wind blows, it is sure to smoke

Nasreddin Hoca thought about this for a moment, and then he said, "You are probably right, Neighbors." He wrecked that oven, too, and then he started construction for the third time. When he had finished the third oven, he called in the neighbors once more and said to them, "Take a look at my oven. I am wondering what you will say about it this time."

After the neighbors had examined his oven this time, they said, "This is a well-built oven, Hoca, but it has one flaw. It faces the east, and when the east wind blows, it is likely to be very smoky."

Again the Hoca said, "Yes, you are probably quite right." But he was very angry this time. He knocked down his oven once again and prepared to rebuild it. Before he did so,

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however, he bought a set of very strong wheels taken from an ox cart. Then he built his oven upon those wheels. When it was completed, he called in his neighbors for the fourth time. When one of them said, "Oh, Hoca, this oven opening should be facing the north," he turned the wheels around toward the north.

When another neighbor said, "Oh, Hoca, this oven opening should be facing the west," he turned the wheels around until the oven door faced west.

Whatever direction anyone favored for the oven opening, Nasreddin Hoca met the demand by turning the wheels in the appropriate direction. Finally all of his neighbors came to him, and every one of them said, "Hoca, your oven is very well built!"