

Story 1025 (1974 Tape 17)

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Nasreddin Hoca Tells How to Behave in the Other World

One day Nasreddin Hoca took his donkey and went out to cut wood. Climbing a tree, he began to cut off a large branch. As he was sawing through the branch, a man came along and asked Nasreddin Hoca, "What are you doing up there?"

"I am cutting wood. When I have it cut, I shall load it on my donkey and take it home."

"That may be so," said the man, "but if you continue to cut that branch that you are standing on, you are also going to fall to the ground!"

The stranger started on down the road again, and the hoca continued sawing on the branch. Just as the stranger had predicted, when the branch was cut off, the hoca fell to the ground with it. Quite surprised at this, the hoca said to himself, "What a remarkably intelligent man that stranger must be! He knew ahead of time that I was going to fall out of the tree. If he could predict that, then he can also probably predict when I will die." Running down the road after the stranger, the hoca called, "Hey,

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wait a minute! I want to ask you something. You were able to predict my falling from a tree, and so you can probably tell me when I am going to die. I am sure that you know such things!"

"Oh, hoca, I do not know that! How could I know anything like that?"

"Yes, you do know! You knew all about my falling even before it happened. You definitely do know when I am going to die, and I demand that you tell me!"

Knowing that he was going to have to tell the hoca something, he said, "Well, you should load wheat on your donkey, and then before you return home, you should climb up on top of the wheat. When your donkey refuses to go any farther, that will be the time and place you will die."

Nasreddin Hoca did exactly as the stranger suggested. He loaded two large bags of wheat on his donkey and then placed himself on top of the load. The poor animal could hardly walk under this very heavy load. When they came to a hill, the donkey climbed up a few steps but then could not go any farther. As soon as the donkey stopped, Nasreddin Hoca exclaimed, "Oh, I am dead," and fell to the ground.

With its load lightened, the donkey wandered away a short distance, where it was attacked by wolves. As these

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wild animals were eating the donkey, the hoca said, "Wolves, eat, eat! Nasredin Hoca is dead, and so you might as well eat him too." But the wolves left after eating the donkey.

With no donkey to ride, Nasreddin Hoca now had to walk. He walked to a nearby cemetery, and since he was dead, he climbed into a newly dug grave. After he had been lying there for some time, he heard several people approaching. Climbing back up over the edge of the grave, he saw that it was a group of merchants approaching with their mules loaded with goods of several different kinds. But when the mules saw him suddenly come up out of the ground, they were frightened, and in their fear they ran about wildly for a few minutes, falling several times, and damaging many of the things they were carrying. The merchants were ^{angry} furious at the hoca, and after calming their mules, they beat him severely.

With great difficulty Nasreddin Hoca slowly dragged himself back to the village. His friends asked, "Oh, Nasreddin Hoca, where have you been and what has happened to you?"

"Well, I have just come back from the other world."

"How is it there? What kind of a place is it?"

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"It is a good enough place, but you must be very careful not to frighten the merchants' mules there or you will suffer almost endless beating!"