

Story 1343 (1988 Tape 15)

Narrator: Yusuf Özdiril

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Province

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Nâsreddin Hoca and "İnşallah"¹ *AK*

On a warm spring evening Nasreddin Hoca once said to his wife, "If it is dry tomorrow, I shall plow our field, but if it rains, I shall go to the coffeehouse at Kasaba² and spend my time there.

His wife replied, "You should say 'İnşallah' when you make such a statement!"

"What is the need of 'İnşallah' here? Tomorrow it will either be dry or it will rain. The weather must behave in one way or the other. It has no other choice! I simply decided what to do in either case."

The following morning brought "the rain that drenches a fool."³ The Hoca, accordingly, said to his wife, "I am going to Kasaba

¹İnşallah means "if Allah is willing." Many Turks utter this word when they make a declaration of what they intend to do or accomplish. It is an effort to avoid hubris, that excessive pride and self-confidence which almost invites some superior power to frustrate the proclaimed intentions.

²The İstanbul narrator uses Kasaba (a village attached to the administrative district of Turgutlu, Manisa Province) as a sort of generic village in several of his tales. The Hoca did not live in that area.

³The narrator explains that this is a proverbial description of a drizzle.

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"Very well," she replied, "but it would be a good precaution to say 'inşallah'.

"Forget it!"⁴ retorted the Hoca.

On his way toward Kasaba the Hoca met some ¹²³cavalrymen. These men asked him, "Hoca, how should we go to find such and such a village?"

"Go straight ahead until you reach an intersection. Turn left there and go until you reach another intersection. There you should turn right. Then after traveling on that road for a way

The captain of the cavalrymen interrupted the Hoca and said, "That is too complicated! You lead us there!"

"But how can I lead you there when I am on my way to?"

Again the captain interrupted, saying very sternly and loudly, "I told you to lead us there!" They then beat the Hoca with their riding whips and forced him to run ahead of their horses as he led them to the village they were seeking. Whenever the Hoca slowed down at all, they struck him again with their whips. By the time they arrived in the village sought by the cavalrymen, the Hoca was too exhausted to go on to Kasaba.

⁴The Turkish used here is Boş ver!--literally, "Give it nothing!"

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Instead, he turned around and started to return homeward.

As he was trudging toward home, the rain began to come down much harder. By the time he reached his own house, he was thoroughly soaked, badly spattered with mud, and footsore.

When he knocked on the door, his wife inquired from within, "Who is it?"

"It is I, hanım⁵--İnşallah!"

⁵Hanım means lady, a more respectful term than woman.