

Story 1376 (1989 Tape 4)

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Location: Konya, Konya
Province

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Nasreddin Hoca Punishes a Miser

In the old days hocas did not get a regular salary. Instead, the people each gave their hocas whatever they could afford. Each month a hoca would go door by door to the homes of all members of his congregation to collect money with which to provide the necessities for himself and his family.

One day in a certain village Nasreddin Hoca was making the rounds to collect his monthly income. Almost everyone in the village was generous toward the Hoca that day, but there was one man who refused to give anything at all. Annoyed by this man, the Hoca said to him, "If you don't pay me something for my services, I shall cut off the wind that you need for harvesting."¹

The miserly man asked, "Oh, Hoca, how could you possibly manage to do such a terrible thing?"

¹Before the time of threshing machines, the grain separated from the stalks of the plant was all mixed up with a great amount of finely chopped straw. To get rid of the chaff, farmers tossed forkfuls of the mixture into the air when a light breeze was blowing. The grain, being heavier, fell back to earth at their feet while the very light chaff

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The Hoca said nothing, but he proceeded to carry out his threat. He planted two tall young poplar trees on the windward side of the village threshing floor.² Then he fastened a long, light carpet between them to shut off the wind. This could have been harmful not only to the miserly farmer but also to all of the other farmers. Several villagers protested, saying, "Please, Hoca, do not punish us something that this stingy man has done. That would not be just."

The Hoca acknowledged the truth of what these villagers said. Thereafter, he kept the carpet firmly in place only when the miser was trying to thresh his wheat. When anyone else was using the threshing floor, the Hoca folded back one of the carpet to allow a breeze to pass across the grain.

drifted downwind several meters where it heaped up. Such winnowing could not be done without a breeze.

²In premechanized Turkey (and even in some remote areas of modern Turkey) grain was threshed on a large circular area of clean, hard-packed clay. It required a great deal of work to construct such a threshing floor; it was constructed by community effort and was available to any villager who wished to use it.

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We learn from this anecdote and many others like it that Nasreddin Hoca was a man of many talents.