

Story 1567 1992 Tape 2)

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Location: Derinkuyu, kaza town
of Nevşehir Province

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Judge Nasreddin Hoca¹ Qualifies a Decision

During the period of Nasreddin Hoca's life when he was serving as a judge, one of his neighbors went to him for a legal opinion. This neighbor said, "Hoca, one of your oxen broke off a horn of one of my oxen. The injured ox was bleeding so badly that I had to slaughter it so that its meat would not be impure.² Is there any penalty for such behavior on the part of one's ox?"

Nasreddin Hoca thought about this question for a moment. Then he said, "Oxen are only animals, and we cannot hold their owner responsible for their animal behavior. I am sorry that your ox had to be killed because of what my ox had done, but what has happened has happened. There is nothing that we can do about it now."

¹A hoca is a preacher and the religious leader of a community. In pre-Republican times the hoca was also the community teacher. Separation of church and state in the Republic required that teachers be people of secular rather than of religious training. Nasreddin Hoca is Turkey's most popular comic folk character.

²If livestock become ill or injured, their owners often hasten to slaughter them in the approved Moslem manner. If they are bled properly, their meat will be considered acceptable for human consumption. If they die with some blood in their bodies, their meat is considered haram (forbidden). The word haram is not used in this tale, but the implication of the possibility of the meat's becoming haram is perfectly clear.

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When the neighbor heard this answer of the Hoca, he said, "All right, Hoca, but I accidentally told the story backwards. It was my ox that broke the horn of your ox and made it necessary to slaughter your ox for you."

When the Hoca heard the story told correctly, he said, "Aha! This is probably a more serious matter than I at first supposed. Let me consult my black book to discover what the punishment is for such a case."