

Story 1791 (1991 Tape 5)

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Logic of a Lush

Fahrettin Kerim Gökay¹ was the president of the Yeşilay² Society, and Neyzen Tevfik³ used to attend every meeting of that organization. But although

¹An early twentieth-century native of Eskişehir, Fahrettin Kerim Gökay had some interest in politics, but he was more distinguished for his medical career. He wrote several medical studies, and he was indeed a leader of the Yeşilay Society.

²Yeşilay means green moon. The Yeşilay Society is the Prohibitionist Society of Turkey. Although all Moslems are supposed to refrain from drinking alcohol, the existence of this organization demonstrates that not all Moslems obey this rule. --Moslem Turkey has an organization parallel to the Christian Red Cross. It is named the Red Moon (Kızılây) Society. The term Yeşilay is a takeoff from Kızılây. The moon is a symbol of supreme beauty for Turks, and it is the major icon on the Turkish flag.

³Neyzen Tevfik was born near Bodrum in 1878 and died at İstanbul in 1953. He was called Neyzen because he played the ney, a deep-toned wind instrument. After surnames were required by the Kemalist Reforms of the 1920s, his family took the name Kolaylı. However, he continued to be known only as Neyzen Tevfik--even in the Turkish encyclopaedias. He was an alcoholic in real life as well as in folktales. He was a poet who produced several volumes, among them Hiç (1919) and Azâb-ı Mukaddes (1949).

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Neyzen Tevfik was a member and supporter of the Yeşilay Society, he continued to be an alcoholic.

At one of the meetings of the Yeşilay Society, Fahrettin Kerim Gökay gave a lecture. He was trying to demonstrate that it was not natural to drink alcohol. He asked his audience, "If you place a container of water and a container of alcoholic beverage before a donkey, which would the donkey drink?"

Several of the listeners said, "It would drink the water."

Fahrettin Kerim Gökay then asked, "Why?"

Before anyone else could say anything, Neyzen Tevfik answered, "Because it is a donkey!"