

Story 1831 1989 Tape 7)

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Reservation about Crossing the Bridge of Sirat<sup>1</sup>

One day during a prayer service at the mosque Nasreddin Hoca<sup>2</sup> was preaching about the Bridge of Sirat. He explained how narrow it was and how difficult it was to cross. But he said that on Judgment Day everyone would be required to try to walk across that bridge

One of the members of the congregation was dozing from time to time during Hoca's sermon. He heard only

<sup>1</sup>In Moslem mythology the Bridge of Sirat stands between all mortals and their existence in another world. It is said to be as thin as a hair and as sharp as a razor. On Judgment Day those who manage to cross it will go on to Heaven. Those who slip off the bridge will fall into the flames below, presumably the flames of Hell. People encumbered by their sins will have less chance of crossing safely. Those who have slaughtered rams for the poor will be able to steady themselves as they cross by placing their hands on the backs of those rams, which line the bridge on either side of them.

<sup>2</sup>Now a hoca in Turkey is a preacher and religious leader. Before the founding of the Republic, he was both preacher and teacher, for education was then the responsibility of the clergy. Nasreddin Hoca is the most popular comic folk figure in the Turkish oral tradition. Sometimes wise and sometimes foolish, he is always an engaging personality. Many are the anecdotes told about him.

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part of what Hoca was saying. In order to clarify something in his own mind, this listener finally interrupted Hoca, asking, "Oh, Hoca, just a moment. Does that bridge that you are talking about have any hand railings?"

"No, none!" answered Hoca.

The man responded, "Well, in that case I shall not be there!"