

Story #657 (1961-1962, Tape #70)

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Nasreddin Hoca's Brilliant Donkey

One day Nasreddin Hoca ran out of flour. His family did not have anything to make bread with. Nasreddin Hoca told the mill that he would send his beast to pick up a sack of flour, and he asked him to load the flour on the beast. The miller agreed to do that for the hoca. So the hoca sent his donkey to the mill to fetch the flour. The next day when his wife asked him about the flour, he told her that he had spoken to the miller about it, and that the flour would be delivered. The donkey fell into a well on the way to the miller and the water had swallowed him up.

The hoca went to see the miller again the next day and asked him why he had not sent the donkey back with the flour. The miller, not knowing what to say, told him that when he was loading the donkey some sheep herders had come to the mill and had reported that flour was fetching a very good price in Kayseri. The donkey had quickly departed, taking the road to Kayseri. The miller complemented the hoca on having such a smart donkey.

So the hoca went to the market place of Kayseri and started looking around for his donkey. A man who had been watching him approach, asked what he was looking for. The hoca told him he was looking for his donkey which he had sent to the mill to get a sack

of flour but which had taken the flour to the Kayseri market because it was fetching a good price there. The man said, "Yes, I saw your donkey doing business here yesterday. The flour had indeed fetched a good price, but someone had mentioned that cloth was being sold for a very reasonable price in Damascus, and that donkey of yours trotted off to do business there."

So, the hoca took the road to Damascus to find his donkey. When he finally arrived there, he went to the market and searched the place to find his donkey. A shopkeeper who was sitting in front of his shop saw the hoca circle the market a few times, and finally asked him what he was looking for. The hoca explained: "I am looking for my donkey which went to the mill to get a sack of flour. While at the mill, however, he heard that flour sold at a good price in Kayseri, and he went to Kayseri to sell the flour. There he got a good price for the flour, and upon hearing that cloth was selling at a low price in Damascus, he came here to buy cloth. I am now looking for my donkey so that we can go home."

The shopkeeper, who had a grudge against the vizier of Damascus, thought this would be a good opportunity to play a trick on him. He scratched his head and said, "Yesterday there was a donkey who was trading at the market place. The vizier saw him and thought he was a very smart donkey. He hired him as his head secretary."

The hoca said he had better go to the vizier then to get his donkey. The shopkeeper told him to take along some hay for the

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donkey had come such a long distance. The hoca thanked the shopkeeper and went to see the vizier about his donkey.

When he got there, the vizier and his head secretary saw the hay and immediately knew they were up against the shopkeeper's wrath. They asked the hoca what he wanted. He said to them "I am looking for my donkey which I sent to get a sack of flour from the mill. Then he decided to go to Kayseri to sell the flour at a high profit. Next he came to Damascus to buy cloth at a good price. He was observed trading at the market place and he was hired as head secretary of the vizier because he was so smart."

The two men looked at each other, and then the head secretary said, "That is a pretty smart donkey. I shall tell you what we shall do. We shall give you ten gold pieces, ^{+ 20} and you can go and buy another donkey that you can educate as well as you did the first one."

The hoca took the money and returned to the market place shopkeeper had been keeping an eye out for him, and he called the hoca over to the shop when he saw him. He asked him what had happened at the vizier's house, and the hoca said, "Well, they gave me ten gold pieces so that I could buy another donkey and train him as well as I did the last one."

The shopkeeper replied, "You certainly had a very intelligent donkey. In fact, you cannot find another one as smart as that. Why don't you take some rope and go back to the vizier and tell him that you have gotten another donkey but that you need the first for a

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while to help you train the new one. Tie up the chief secretary and take him along with you."

The hoca went back to the vizier and the head secretary and said, "I need to borrow my brilliant donkey briefly to help train my new one." Then he pulled and tried to tie the head secretary.

But the vizier said, "This is not a convenient time for that. I cannot spare him right now, but I shall let you know when I can."