

Story 1549 (1992 Tape 1

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"Eat, My Fur Coat, Eat!"

One of the wealthy residents in the part of the country where Nasreddin Hoca¹ lived gave a very lavish feast for all of his neighbors. Nasreddin Hoca was among those who went to that feast, but he was not treated very well there. Because his clothes were shabby and not as clean as they might be, he was not shown much respect or given much consideration. better seats were given to those guests who wore fashionable and expensive clothes, but Nasreddin Hoca was placed near the door, where he was served last.² In fact, they gave the Hoca only the food that was left over after all of the others been served. He was deeply offended by this treatment.

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.

²In rural areas of Turkey there is often a set pattern for the seating arrangement at social occasions. The person of greatest status is across the room from the main entrance. People of lesser rank spread out in graduated distances to the right and left of this central position all the way to the door, or, in extremely crowded conditions, even out the door. If someone of any degree of status enters a full room, everyone of lesser status must move down a notch. The wise person of lowly status therefore seats himself well toward the door so that he will not be affected by the possibly frequent shuffling for position.

Story 1549

Some time passed before another wealthy man gave a feast for all of his neighbors, but the Hoca was also invited to attend that second lavish meal

Remembering the unpleasant experience he had had at the first feast, Nasreddin Hoca bought an expensive fur coat for this occasion. When he arrived at the feast wearing that expensive fur coat, he was shown great respect and attention by the host and by the attendants. He was served large portions of the finest food. When all of the other guests began to eat, however, Nasreddin Hoca did not touch his food. Instead, he said loudly, "Eat, my fur coat, eat!"

All of the other people present were confused. They asked, "Oh, Hoca, what is the matter? Why did you say, 'Eat, my coat, eat!'?"

Nasreddin Hoca answered, "All of this respect and special attention has been extended to my expensive coat, not to me. Therefore it is the coat, not I, which should eat this fine food!"