

Story 1663 (1993 Tape 4)

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Nasreddin Hoca¹ and the Mecidiye²

Nasreddin Hoca was a very religious man. He always prayed at the required times and gave thanks to Allah. But there was a time in his life when he was in debt. One morning while he was praying to Allah on the porch of his apartment, he said, "O my Allah, You have always been very generous to me. Now I need one mecidiye to pay a debt. In those former times a mecidiye had quite a high value.

Nasreddin Hoca had a neighbor who lived in the apartment above his. That neighbor was a Jew. When he heard Nasreddin Hoca praying to Allah for a mecidiye, the Jew decided to play a practical joke on the Hoca. He took one

¹Nasreddin Hoca is the best-known comic character in Turkish folklore. He is a somewhat universal type found in several different countries, and in some of his roles he appears (with different names) in the Aarne-Thompson and other type indexes. Many (perhaps most) Turkish people insist on his historicity, placing him in many times in the past, most frequently in the time of Tamerlane.

²A small silver coin worth 20 piasters in the mid-19th century. It was issued during the reign of Sultan Abdül Mecit (1839-1861), from whom it got its name.

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mecidiye and dropped it down right in the middle of the Hoca's prayer rug.

When the Hoca saw the mecidiye, he understood perfectly well what had happened, but he nevertheless opened his hands³ and said, "O great Allah, You gave me what I asked for! Thank You very much!"

When the Jew heard that, he rushed downstairs to the Hoca's porch and said, "You thought that it was Allah who gave you that mecidiye, but you are mistaken, neighbor. I dropped it upon your prayer rug simply as a joke.

the Hoca protested, "No! It was Allah who gave me this mecidiye. If you claim otherwise, you will have to prove your claim."

"Very well," answered the Jew. "Let us take this matter to the kadı."⁴

Nasreddin Hoca said, "All right. Let us go to the kadı. But you know that I do not have any donkey to ride

³When Moslems pray, they do not clasp their hands (as Christians do) but open them, palms upward.

⁴The kadı was pre-Republic judge of Moslem canonical law. When a tale is devoted to the kadı as the primary character, it often shows negative characteristics of this official, especially susceptibility to bribery.

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and you know that I do not have any appropriate clothes in which to appear before the kadı

"Never mind that," answered his neighbor. "I shall let you ride one of my donkeys and wear one of my fur coats. Here! Put it on, and then let us go."

Together the two men proceeded to the kadı's office. The Hoca was riding on one of the Jew's donkeys, and he was wearing one of the Jew's fur coats.

When they arrived at the court, the kadı said to the Jew, "Tell me your complaint against Nasreddin Hoca."

The Jew gave an account of all that had happened. After listening to this complaint carefully, the kadı turned to Nasreddin Hoca and asked, "Is this true, Hoca?"

Nasreddin Hoca answered, "If you allow him to pretend that that is true, then he is likely to make other false claims. He might, for example, claim that the donkey on which I rode here was his and not mine. He might even go so far as to claim that this fur coat of mine was also his!"

The kadı then asked the Jew, "Does the donkey ridden here by the Hoca belong to you?"

course it does!" said the Jew.

"Does the fur coat he is wearing also belong to you?"

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"Of course it does!" responded the Jew.

After hearing this, the kadı believed that the Jew was a dishonest man.

After the Jew had been given thirty falaka blows and the case had been dismissed, Nasreddin Hoca said to him, "I am an honest man. I do not want anything to come between me and Allah. I did this to you because I do not like practical jokes. This is your mecidiye. This is your donkey, and this is your fur coat. I hope that you have learned a lesson not to interfere with Allah's business!"

⁵In earlier times the soles of people's feet were beaten as punishment for various offenses. When this punishment was administered, the victim's feet were tied together on a specially designed wooden frame known as a falaka.