

Story 2185 (1999 Tape 14)

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Karşıyaka kaza,
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The Two-Stage Reform of an
Irreligious Village

Once a hoca¹ was appointed to lead the religious activities in such and such village. When he arrived in village, it was prayer time, and so the new hoca went at once to the mosque to lead the prayer service. He was surprised to find the mosque empty. He carried the prayers by himself and wondered why other members of the community were not there.

Later he asked some of the men in a coffeehouse, "Why do you not attend prayer service at the mosque?"

"Because it is such a long and tiresome procedure. Before one enters the mosque, one must take ritual ablutions. Parts of the body must be washed not just once three times. One must remove his shoes and then his socks in order to wash his feet. One must then put on

¹A hoca is the preacher and religious leader of a Muslim community. In pre-Republican times the hoca was also a teacher, for in those days education was the responsibility of the clergy. After the founding of the Republic, teachers were required to have secular rather than religious training.

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again his shoes and socks. Then when one is about to enter the mosque door, one must remove his shoes again. This is so much bother."

"But it would be better to wear shoes in the mosque than it would be to commit the greater sin of ignoring all prayer services day after day." And so it soon became customary in that village to pray while wearing shoes or boots.

After several years a new hoca was assigned to that village, and his predecessor moved to a nearby village. When the two hocas met one day in a marketplace, the newer one asked the other, "Why do the residents of my village wear shoes in the mosque?"

"Ah, those residents of your village! When I first arrived there, I discovered that they had lost our faith and were no better than infidels. My primary task was to get the bodies back inside the mosque, where they belong. Let your primary task be to get the shoes back outside the mosque, where they belong."