

ERDİNÇ BABACAN

He was born in the town of Torul in Gümüşhane in 1940. He completed his primary and secondary education in this town. Then he continued his education in Istanbul. In 1958, he graduated from Istanbul Beyoğlu Commercial School and in 1962, Istanbul Academy of Economics and Commerce, the Department of Industrial Management.

He has compiled these anecdotes as a special work becoming aware of the fact that anecdotes concerning Nasreddin Hodja have been told wrong even by those who are expected to be the most sensitive.

Nasreddin Hocafıkraları

Müellif

Erdoğan Babacan

İngilizceye çeviren

D. Bilgen G mleksiz

Dizgi

Erdoğan Babacan

Tashih

D. Bilgen G mleksiz

Baskı – Cilt

Ravza Yayıncılık ve Matbaacılık

25 Ocak 2010

ISBN 978-975-00723-2-1

All rights reserved. This publication may not be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher.

Yayımcı

ERDİNÇ BABACAN

Tlf.0216. 378 07 37 – 0536.939 04 50

Orhanlı Caddesi N0.28 Kurtk y/Pendik/İstanbul

erdincbabacan@babacanmineral.com

Nasreddin Hodja

He was born in the village of Hortu in Sivrihisar in 1208 and died in Akşehir in 1284. His tomb is in Akşehir.

He was first educated by his father Abdullah Effendi, who was the imam of the village he was born in. Then he studied at Sivrihisar and Konya Madrasahs (old Moslem schools). After he finished his education, he worked as an imam in his village in place of his father. Besides that he worked as an assistant cadı and a madrasah teacher, and learnt sufism from Seyyid Mohammed Hayrani.

Nasreddin Hodja was a saint who devoted his life to showing people the right path, telling them what's good, leading them to the truth, and advising them to avoid evil-doing. When he was doing this, he used a method of his own. He used to tell what was right; and in order to amend the corrupt sides of society, he used to explain the matter briefly making quite allusive jokes and using a language which the public could understand easily.

Each of his banters is like a proverb full of wisdom and morality. In this respect, it is obvious that some jokes that are dull and indecent, but are assumed to be Nasreddin Hodja's jokes, do not in fact belong to him. It is clear that a person who was both a scholar and a saint did not tell such simple and ordinary jokes.

Researches demonstrate that Nasreddin Hodja is not a legendary figure, but a devout Moslem who lived in the Seljukian times in the 13th century.

PREFACE:

We wanted to present the jokes of our Nasreddin Hodja, who is one of the distinguished personalities of Turkish art of humour lived in the 13th century, to the individual taste and interest of English speaking world citizens. We translated this book into English considering that cultural heritage is universal. We hope it will be beneficial to the reader.

We excluded the jokes which have been among the ones that are extant as they have always been told by the public, but are unfavorable and inconsistent with Nasreddin Hodja's personality. We hope you will like these humorous anecdotes that have made us both laugh and think for 750 years.

If you give this book, which you can buy when you go sightseeing in Turkey, to your friends and acquaintances as a travel souvenir with your autograph in it, you can perpetuate a memento of yours that will lie on the bookshelves for many years. We believe it is a nice small present that will be received with pleasure.

We send our love and kind regards to all our readers and wish them many happy and healthy years.

1 Who is greater?

They ask Hodja: “Effendi, who is greater, the Sultan or farmer?”

Hodja says: “Of course the farmer,” and adds: “Because if the farmer doesn’t grow wheat, the Sultan dies of hunger.”

Advice: Not only people themselves, but also their jobs are a part of society. The lack of an occupation is like the lack of an organ of the body, isn’t it?

2 **The poor animal!**

Nasreddin Hodja buys some books about the Holy Koran and its interpretation; and rudiments of Islam. He puts them in a large bag. He takes the bag on to his back and rides his donkey to the village.

The people who see Hodja on the way ask: “Oh, Hodja! Why did you take the bag on to your back?”

Hodja answers: “What can I do? The poor animal always tolerates me. Anyway, it is carrying me, and so I don’t want it to carry the bag as well.”

Advice: In fact, the load the donkey carries is the same in both situations. First we should think over the events carefully, then we should give a reaction.

3 **What if it becomes leavened!**

Nasreddin Hodja puts some food in his saddle-bag and sets out. At noon, he sits under a tree by Lake Akşehir. He eats some bread, olives and a bowl of yogurt merrily in the shadow. While he is shaking the bowl of yogurt, someone sees him and asks:

- “What are you doing, Hodja?”
- “I’m leavening the lake.”
- “My God! Can the lake be leavened? Is that possible?”
- I also know that it can’t, but what if it becomes leavened!

Advice: These words have appealed to people’s imagination for 750 years. We should make use of such good examples in our lives.

4 I'm running after my voice

While Hodja is calling for afternoon prayer, some of his neighbours are talking to each other in front of their houses and they behave as if they don't hear the call for prayer. In fact, those neighbours don't often go to mosque.

Hodja raises his voice a bit more; but nothing changes. Then he runs towards that direction and goes on calling for prayer while he is running. Some of them think that something has happened to Hodja; and they go and ask:

- "What happened, Hodja Effendi? Why are you calling for prayer running?"
- "I wonder how far my voice can go and so I'm running after it."

Advice: We shouldn't forget that calls for prayer invite us to eternal salvation. We should do our best to live our lives in a perfect way as time passes so quickly.

5 Chatting with the wife

One day Hodja asks his wife:

- “What is our neighbour Mehmet Agha’s name, the one who sells sandals?”
- “You’ve just said it, Effendi. It’s Mehmet Agha.”
- “Oh, dear! I’ve slipped up. I would ask about his job.”
- “Oh, Effendi! Haven’t you said he sells sandals?”
- “Don’t you understand? I mean where he lives.”
- “Effendi, what has happened to you today? You’ve said he’s our neighbour.”

Hodja gets angry suddenly:

- “Oh, it’s impossible to chat with you!”

Advice: You can talk about simple things. For example; if someone says “What nice weather!”, do you say “I see, I’m not blind.”? A great deal of profit can be gained from talking about useful matters.

6 **It thinks like humans**

While Nasreddin Hodja is strolling round the bazaar, he sees that they sell a parrot for 12 gold coins. He is surprised and asks:

- Why is this bird so expensive?
- It is a parrot. It can talk.

Hodja goes home immediately. He puts his turkey under his arm and takes it to the bazaar.

- “How much is the turkey?” they ask.
- “15 gold coins,” says Hodja.
- “Does a turkey cost 15 gold coins?”
- “Don’t you see that they sell a small parrot for 12 gold coins!”
- “But it has got a talent; it talks like humans. What about yours?”
- “It talks without thinking, but this one thinks like humans.”

Advice: One who talks without thinking can harm oneself as well as others. “Speaking” is a great favor granted to humans. Speaking prudently and sensibly is a greater favor. Accomplished people think well and speak reasonably.

7 **He cuts the branch he is on**

Nasreddin Hodja climbs the huge plane tree in the square of the village and starts cutting the branch he is on with an axe.

The ones who see Hodja shout:

- “Oh, Hodja! You’re cutting the branch you’re on. You’re going to fall off the tree.”

Hodja goes on cutting the branch off the tree and says:

- “You all know that one who cuts off this branch is going to fall over; but why don’t you still understand that one who cuts off this world which is the branch of the world to come (life after death) is going to fall into Hell although I always remind you of this fact?”

Advice: A really wise person plans his life. He both prepares himself for the life after death and works for this world.

8 **What you call water must be like this**

While Nasreddin Hodja is travelling on a summer day, he feels very thirsty at noon. He sees a lake nearby. He sits by the lake to drink some water. He puts some water in his palm and drinks a mouthful of water quickly. But it causes nausea and he tries to spit out the water. He tastes Acıgöl's water for the first time, and its water with sodium sulphate disturbs his stomach. While he is looking round, he comes across a small spring. When he understands that it is fresh water, first he rinses his mouth, then he drinks it. He also waters his donkey. Later he looks at Acıgöl rising in waves noisily and puts some freshwater from the spring into his hands.

“Don't put on airs like the rich but mean man's property. What you call water must be like this!” he says scattering the water in his hands to the lake.

Advice: It doesn't matter whether you offer much or little if you offer something in the right place and at the right time. We should seize the opportunity to get Allah's (God) consent.

9 **My son's father died!**

One day they see Hodja dressed in black and ask:

- “What happened, Hodja Effendi? You’re dressed in black!”
- “My son’s father has died, and so I’m mournful!”

Advice: We can get dressed in any colour and wear any kind of dress that is appropriate for our cultural and moral norms. It’s one of the good traits of a wise person to ask advice for the matters he is hesitant about.

10 Mum will cry!

One of Hodja's sons is a potter in a nearby village. One day he says:

- "Dad, I've spent all my money on these pots. If it is sunny and they all dry in time, I'll be rich. But if it rains, my mum will cry." (It is an idiom in Turkish which means to be in distress or to be in a great difficulty.)

Then Hodja calls on his elder son who lives in another village. His son says:

- "Dad, I've spent all my fortune on this farm. If it rains in time, I'll become rich. But if there is drought, my mum will cry?"

Hodja returns home upset. His wife says:

- "What happened, Effendi? Why are you sulky today?"
- "That is not important. You think about your own case. It doesn't matter whether it rains or not; one of our sons' mother will cry in any case."

Advice: We should take the necessary precautions beforehand in order to avoid the possible negative effects of coincidences. If one secret of success is "working hard", the other secret is "taking the necessary precautions in time."

11 Bath tip

One day Hodja goes to the Turkish bath. The keepers of the bath don't care for him at all. They give him an old and torn bath towel. Hodja doesn't say anything. When he is leaving the bath, he gives them a generous tip.

When he comes to the same bath a week later, he is served very well this time, but he gives them a very little tip.

The keepers of the bath say:

- "Effendi, are you giving such a little tip for our great care and respect?"

Hodja says:

- "The tip I've given today is for last week's service. The tip I gave last week was for today's service."

Advice: We should have a bath at least once in our public baths which are relics from our ancestors. We should ask and learn about their system.

12 To ones who complain about seasons

In a community, some people complain about cold weather. One of them says:

- “People are never satisfied with the present situation. In winter, they complain about the cold; in summer, they complain about hot weather.”

Hodja who overhears the man talking about seasons says:

- “Oh, you ignorant man! Don’t say so! Does anyone say anything bad about spring?”

Advice: It is a sign of maturity to evaluate the events as a whole. We shouldn’t forget to thank Allah (God), who created this world for us in such a beautiful form with His infinite divine art and provides life steadily and uninterruptedly.

13 **An inexperienced nightingale**

One day Hodja climbs one of the charity trees by the roadside and starts eating some figs. A traveller who is going by calls:

- “Halloo! Who are you? What are you doing there?”
- “I’m a nightingale,” says Hodja.

The man:

- “What a peculiar voice! Does a nightingale sing like this?”
- “What can I do? An inexperienced nightingale sings like this.”

Advice: We should protect our charities which are a very good example of Turkish-Islamic culture. We should do something charitable – It can even be planting a tree.

14 Hodja plays the saz

They ask Hodja:

- “Do you know how to play the stringed instruments?”
- “Yes, I do.” says Hodja.
- “Ok, then. Play it,” they say giving him the stringed instrument. (We call this instrument “saz” in Turkish. It is used to play oriental music.)

Hodja takes the plectrum into his hand and starts striking the strings without striking the frets, and so produces some odd sounds.

- “Oh, Hodja. Do you play the saz like this? You should strike the frets first; and as you strike the strings with the plectrum, notes are produced in accordance with the tune,” they say.
- “The ones who cannot find the frets play it like that. I’ve found the fret as soon as I’ve taken the saz into my hand. So why should I lose time trying to find the fret?” says Hodja.

Advice: We should avoid asking irrelevant questions when talking to people. The ascendant generation would call such people “awkward”.

15 **Something incomprehensible**

Hodja loses his 200 coins and he starts to pray to Allah (God) to find the money. Meanwhile a rich man from Aksehir is caught by the storm at sea; and he promises Allah (God) that he'll give 200 coins to Hodja if he arrives in his town safe and sound. He survives the storm and finds Hodja to give the money.

After thinking for a while Hodja says:

- "My God, what an intricate way! Where I lost my money, where you granted it to me! It's really difficult to comprehend your deeds.

Advice: We should never neglect to stick to the right means to get a result. One who wants to catch fish must at least throw his fishing-line into the sea.

16 **The problem has become complicated**

One day the inhabitants of the town complain to Hodja about the cadi (judge in Ottoman times):

- "Cadi Effendi cares for his personal interest only. He sometimes acquits the guilty; but sometimes punishes them severely for the same crime. He doesn't recognize the law. He is on the side of the one who serves his

interest. He is a hypocrite. How can we get rid of this problem?”

Although Hodja complains to the civil authorities about it, he can't convince them. They ask Hodja how he can prove that. He tells the governor that sending an inspector whom Cadi Effendi doesn't know and visiting him together with the inspector will be enough. They agree to this plan. On the decided day, the inspector comes to the town as Nasreddin Hodja's guest. Keeping his identity confidential, he visits Cadi with five or six people from the town.

After some talk, Hodja says to Cadi:

- “Effendi, while the cattle were grazing in the fields, a variegated cow -I think it was yours- killed our cow blowing it in the stomach. What is the penalty for this?”
- “This is not the owner's fault. There is no feud for animals.”

Hodja alters his word:

- “No, no! I said it wrong. Our cow killed yours.”

As soon as Cadi Effendi hears this, he stands up quickly and stretches up to the Law Book on the shelf. Hodja says:

- “Ha! The problem has now become complicated. Let's see what the Black-covered Book says about it!”

Advice: Posts and positions are transitory. Our forefathers say court is not cadi's possession. We should act cleverly and try to do our job righteously as long as we live.

17 I don't meddle in a small fire

Murat Agha, one of the richest men in the town, thinks that he is wealthy because he is wise. He goes to mosque only on Fridays. He has got a huge three-storeyed house near the mosque in a big garden which has got various kinds of fruit trees enclosed by solid stone-walls. He wears smart and expensive clothes, and walks proudly. After listening to Nasreddin Hodja's Friday sermons, he says pedantically, "Hodja, you don't meddle in worldly affairs! Religious affairs are different from worldly affairs" if it is contrary to his self-interest.

One day a fire breaks out in Murat Agha's house. Meanwhile people go out of the mosque after the midday prayer. Murat Agha, running towards the mosque and addressing himself to Nasreddin Hodja and the people there, cries aloud:

- "Ah Hodja! Help! My house is on fire. Help me to put out the fire!"

Hodja, in a calm and indifferent tone, says:

- "Look, neighbour! Let's follow your advice once in a blue moon. That fire is a worldly affair that you never want us to meddle in. But don't worry! The house will have been reduced to ashes in a few hours and the fire will have become extinguished. Why does such a small fire make a brave, gallant, rich and clever man like you anxious as you are not afraid of living for ever in a house made of fire in the world to come?"

Advice: Pride and vanity can mislead one. They can even send one to hell. We shouldn't tyrannize over ourselves.

18 The pleasure of finding the lost thing

Nasreddin Hodja goes to the bazaar in the town. He ties his donkey to a tree and goes shopping. When he comes back, he can't find his donkey. Immediately, he hires a public crier and makes him shout like this:

- "Whoever finds my donkey, I'll give him the donkey with its saddle and halter, and with everything on it."
- "Hodja Effendi, why are you looking for the donkey if you're going to give it to the one who finds it?" they ask.
- "You don't know the pleasure of finding the lost thing! That donkey is enough as a reward for the finder. I can give all my fortune to the one who brings back my youth. If I found 'Paradise', I could give my life too," says Hodja.

Advice: Having "stolen property" is a great sin. People must be tolerant and broadminded. We should care for others' rights although it doesn't serve our self-interest.

19 **Maybe there is a route beyond the tree**

Some children in the neighborhood want to hoax Nasreddin Hodja and so they make a plan. “Let’s make Hodja climb the tree and then let’s go away taking his shoes,” they think. They tangle their kites round a big tree at a time when Hodja is supposed to go by. They start to wait for him. When they see Hodja, they gather around him:

- “Hodja, our kites have entangled round the tree. We tried, but couldn’t disentangle them. Could you help us?”
- “Certainly!” says Hodja, putting his shoes into his backpack.

The children:

- “Hodja Effendi, why are taking them with you? What are you going to do with the shoes on the tree?”
- “Who knows, my children? God may grant me a journey beyond the tree in return for my kind act,” says Hodja.

Advice: They say one mind may be superior to another. (a Turkish proverb). We should always bear in mind that some people can be wiser than us. We should act elegantly, decently and kindly on principle.

20 In this large bowl

Nasreddin Hodja explains this world and the world to come (afterlife) to his new mollahs (students). “This world is the field of the world to come. If we gain something properly here, we can save it there as well. Everybody will have what they sent before from here. None of our deeds or services are without return ... etc.” explains Hodja. But he notices that the mollahs are languid and sleepy; and it is time for lunch:

- “Come on, boys! The class is over. Let’s go to my house to eat rice with meat and yoghurt as soon as we perform the midday prayer.”

They arrive at Hodja’s house and enter the drawing-room. Hodja calls out his wife:

- “We’ve come to eat rice with meat and yoghurt.”

Hodja’s wife speaks from within the house:

- “Mercy Effendi! There is not enough rice, meat, oil or yoghurt in the kitchen. There isn’t even enough firewood to cook that much meal.”

Hodja goes inside and enters the drawing-room with a huge cauldron, a ladle, a big tray, a large yoghurt bucket and a lot of spoons in his hand:

- “I beg your pardon, boys! If I had brought enough meat, rice, oil, milk and firewood to the house, I would cook them in this huge cauldron and offer them to you with these things! ...”

Advice: Our forefathers say, “What you cut up into your meal comes to your spoon.” We should make an effort beforehand to expect and hope something to happen. One who wants to catch fish must at least throw one’s fishing-line into the sea. No one can expect fish to come into his pocket just waiting by the seaside.

21 At that time I wasn’t there

Nasreddin Hodja is talking to some people who don’t usually worship God because of various excuses such as work, worldly concerns, health problems ... etc. Then they begin a conversation about eating and drinking.

Nasreddin Hodja:

- “I want to eat helva (a kind of Turkish sweetmeat) in these days, but we couldn’t cook it.”
- “Is it such a difficult thing to cook helva, Hodja?” they ask.
- “What can we do? When there was some sugar, there wasn’t any flour; when there was some flour, there wasn’t any sugar,” replies Hodja.
- “Couldn’t you ever have them together?” they ask.
- “Yes, I could, but at that time I wasn’t there!” says Hodja.

Advice: Our ancestors say “Don’t do today’s work tomorrow.” Words are of use only to one who listens to advice.

22 **I'm walking between you**

One day Nasreddin Hodja is travelling with a cadı and a merchant. Hodja in the middle, Cadi Effendi on his right and the merchant on his left are both talking and walking. Hodja Effendi usually drops a hint about his companions' life style and their slackness in worship when it is the right time. Cadi Effendi, who considers himself a great man because of his office, says to Hodja:

- "It is impossible to say something against you! If you want, you pretend to be so shrewd that you surpass the smartest men; if you want, you seem more muddled than a wild ox."

Hodja:

- "Not so! You're exaggerating, I know my place. Look! I'm walking between the shrewd man and the wild ox."

Advice: Our forefathers say, "The most cultivated man is the one who knows himself." We should think well about who we are now and what we are going to be in the future. It is very easy to break a heart; but it is so difficult to be a man of tolerance and understanding. How nice it is not to break a heart!

23 **Duck Soup**

Nasreddin Hodja sets out early and he hurries to arrive at the village before it grows dark. When it is about noon, he stops by a fountain to perform the midday prayer and eat his meal which is only hard-baked bread. When he sees wild ducks swimming in the water, he wants to catch one of them to roast and eat it. While he is trying to approach the ducks silently, they see him and fly away.

Hodja sits by the fountain, takes out his rusk from his bag and starts eating it dipping it into the water.

A traveller passing there says:

- “Bon appetite, Hodja! What are you eating?”

Hodja, dipping his rusk into the water, says:

- “Duck soup!”

Advice: We shouldn’t talk nonsense; we shouldn’t talk superfluously either. We shouldn’t ask about the things that are so obvious.

24 That one is contaminated, this one not

Alican, a tall and stout lad from Nasreddin Hodja's village, goes to the forest to collect wood on a hot summer day. As there is no water in that part of the forest reserved for firewood, everybody puts a pitcher of water into their saddle-bag before going to the forest.

Alican speaks to himself:

- "I'd rather carry two or three watermelons than carry a pitcher. Anyway, I'll take on the firewood to my back on my return. I don't want to try to bring back my earthenware jug without breaking it."

He puts the watermelons into his bag and goes to the forest. He wants to eat a watermelon before starting to work. So he cuts the watermelon, but as it is unripe, he throws it away. Then he cuts the other watermelons. As they are also unripe, he throws them away too. He becomes angry and makes water on to the watermelons. Nasreddin Hodja, who is also going to the forest, sees what has happened and approaches Alican:

- "Oh, boy! You mustn't make water on that food even if it is unripe. Repent for it or you'll offend the Provider."

But the young boy can't overcome his anger and doesn't repent. About noon, he becomes quite thirsty because of working in the hot weather. There is no one around and there is no water.

He approaches the unripe watermelons and eats all the watermelons that he has thrown away saying "That one is contaminated, this one not ...". While he is eating one of the last pieces, he meets Nasreddin Hodja again, who has finished his work in the forest and has loaded the firewood on to his donkey. Hodja first looks at the peels of the eaten watermelons, then he looks at Alican:

- "O my God! Listen, Alican! You didn't succeed to repent in time. How quickly my Lord made you eat your own urine!.."

Advice: We shouldn't underrate the experiences of our elders and what they say. Alican will have more experience as he grows older. So we should be the thousandth mind that learns from the experiences of thousands of other people instead of being the first mind that experiences everything itself.

I define "old age" like this: "Old age is the name of the station arrived at by the young, who ignore the words of those that want to tell the youth their experiences about living a productive life, and so who spend many years to rediscover America."

25 He will regret what he said

A peasant steals the other one's lamb and eats it. The one whose lamb was stolen steals that peasant's goat and eats it. When Nasreddin Hodja investigates the event, he understands who did what. One day while the heroes of the event are sitting in the tea-house, the owner of the goat starts praising his goat:

- "Its hair was two ells; its neck was three spans; its head was like this; its eyes were like that ... etc."

The one who slaughtered and ate the goat becomes annoyed because of his exaggeration. But what can he do! He must keep silent.

Nasreddin Hodja speaks to the man who stole and ate the goat:

- "Oh God! How this man is bragging! Now go to your house and bring the pelt of that sluggish goat so that this man will regret what he has said."

Advice: We shouldn't take and use another person's property without his consent even if it is worth a pin. As the number of ones who aren't pleased with us increases, our interrogation afterlife will become more and more difficult. As we still have an opportunity here, we should redeem ourselves from being cudgeled and rebuked in the world to come.

26 Which one didn't you like, the painter or the paint?

When Nasreddin Hodja is working as a *cadi*, the constables bring two boys, who are fighting with each other in the street, to court seizing them by the collar. One of the children is a fourteen-year-old black boy whose family comes from Sudan; and the other one, who is about the same age as the Sudanese boy, is the son of a notable family from Akşehir.

Our *Cadi* Hodja asks the boys why they are fighting with each other. The boy from Akşehir starts to speak at once:

- “*Cadi* Effendi, my friend always beats me by deceit whenever we play a game together. This time I caught him cheating. As he didn't accept what he had done, we started to fight.”

Hodja asks the black-skinned boy if he tricked or not. The black boy says:

- “*Cadi* Effendi, my friend always grumbles whenever he is beaten. He can't bear defeat. As his friends know his habit, they don't say anything, but laugh. But this time he called me ‘the black man's black child’ intending to insult me. That's why we were fighting. My friends would even beat him, but I intervened in the dispute.”

Nasreddin Hodja turns to the boy from Akşehir:

- “Apologize to your friend instantly so that he may forgive you. Allah, the Almighty (God), painted him like that. Which one didn’t you like, the painter or the paint? Repent for it immediately, otherwise both Allah and I will punish you.”

Advice: In Islam, nobody is considered to be superior or privileged due to their skin colour, wealth or race. All humans are Adam and Eve’s grandchildren. Superiority has something to do with piety. In other words, one who is superior is the one who believes in Allah, the Almighty and abstains from everything prohibited by the religion. We shouldn’t forget the fact that Bilal-i Habeşi, who was a close friend and muezzin of Mohammed, was a black slave from Ethiopia. (Muezzin is someone who calls for prayer from a minaret.) Today all Moslems pray to Allah for Bilal-i Habeşi. Also they say, “May Allah be pleased with him” whenever they say his name.

27 In the pitch dark

One of Nasreddin Hodja's guests stays overnight. The man is not a very devout Moslem. He even says, "I don't believe in a thing I've never seen. Is there anyone who has been to the future world? Can something unseen be known?" Hodja listens to his guest patiently. He tries to explain the truth to him without offending him, but he is not convinced. When it is time to sleep, Hodja lays out two beds on the ground. Hodja and his guest go to their beds. Hodja blows the candle on his right out. After a while, the guest says:

- "Hodja Effendi, could you light the candle on your right?"

- "Oh, my brother! Are you crazy? How can I know my right in the pitch dark!"

Advice: Our forefathers say, "Knowing one's own fault is the most important sign of intelligence." One who knows one's faults is ready to learn. It is worth spending time and teaching him. They say, "Who knows oneself knows one's place." "Either be a learner or a teacher, but never be the one who is between the two." We shouldn't forget this advice.

28 **They've laid out flour on the line**

One of his neighbours wants Hodja's rope. Hodja goes inside and comes back:

- "The rope isn't free. The women've laid out flour on it."

His neighbour:

- "How can that be, Effendi? Is it ever possible to lay out flour on a line?"

Hodja:

- "Yes, it is. If you're unwilling to give it, you can lay out even flour on a line!"

Advice: We should be gentle when we are saying something negative.

29 **You liked it and so I filled your bag with it**

"People mustn't do whatever their carnal minds want without thinking. When everything your carnal minds like comes before you in the future world, you can't escape or be freed from them even if you want to do so," preaches Hodja.

The next day Hodja and some of his peasant friends set off to go to the bazaar in the town. At those times, naturally donkeys are used as a means of transport. While travelling, they start to talk about the desires of carnal mind again. Some

villagers justify themselves by saying:

- "I don't oppress myself. I do what I like. It is my pleasure and right to do so."

Hodja takes advantage of the fact that the donkeys stop to smell the faeces ejected by the animals that passed along that street before. He starts to fill the feed-bag of his donkey with the faeces it has smelt. A few hours later, they stop for a rest by a fountain. While they are eating their food, they put the feed-bags round their donkeys' necks. Nasreddin Hodja's donkey smells it calmly for a while, then it becomes peevish and struggles to be freed from the feed-bag wagging its head violently.

- "Why are you trying to be freed from the bag becoming ill-natured? You liked it and I filled your feed-bag with it!" says Hodja.

When the ones who see what Hodja did say, "Hodja, this is wrong! How can the animal understand that?"

Hodja retorts:

- "People should think of themselves! What are they going to do when they are offered the bundles they prepared in this world for afterlife?"

Advice: Our forefathers said very nice proverbs on this subject: "What you cut up into your meal comes to your spoon." & "You shall reap what you have sown." In fact, man was expelled from Heaven and sent to Earth just because he didn't follow only one advice. Ones who obey the orders will be elevated to Heaven again while disobedient ones will descend into Hell. It is a matter of choice. Choose the place you like, you're entirely free!"

30 The cauldron bore a pot – The cauldron died

There is a usurer in the town. If he lends money to someone who is in urgent need of cash, he wants his money back together with the accrued interest. One day, this usurer's neighbour borrows his big cauldron. He takes and uses it. He puts a small cauldron in it when giving it back. The owner asks to be sure:

- "What about this pot?"

When his neighbour says:

- "Your cauldron has borne a pot!", he immediately takes it claiming ownership.

Some time later, his neighbour borrows the big cauldron again. The owner of the cauldron goes and wants his cauldron back as it hasn't been returned for almost 15 days.

- "The cauldron died!" replies his neighbour. The pawnbroker gets angry and has recourse to the court.

At that time, Nasreddin Hodja is the *cadi* (judge). After listening to both the defendant and the plaintiff, he judges:

- "Your cauldron could give birth, so it could also die." When the man says in a fury:

- "Is that possible, *Cadi Effendi*?"

Nasreddin Hodja retorts:

- "You believe that it gave birth to a pot, then why don't you believe that it died? ..."

Advice: What does one gain by doing a trade which is profitable in the short term; but which is much more unprofitable in the long term? Let's think twice! We are free to decide what to do ...

31 **Neither secretly nor publicly**

When they see Hodja eating bread in the bazaar in a year of famine,

- "Hodja Effendi, isn't it a shame to eat bread publicly?" they say.

Hodja:

- "If it is not a shame to glut secretly when one's neighbour is hungry, then why is it a shame to do so publicly? Being satiated when one's neighbour is hungry is either a shame everywhere or not a shame anywhere."

Advice: We shouldn't be indifferent to others' needs.

32 They make one eat helva flogging one

A poor man, who looks at the windows of helva shops in the market place of Konya with an appetite, wants one of the shop owners to give him some helva (a kind of Turkish sweetmeat) as alms. The shop owner doesn't give it. The poor man craves for helva. He can't stand it any longer and goes to another helva shop venturing to be beaten up. He puts a copper dish of helva before him and starts to tuck into it quickly.

Although the helva-seller says:

- "You chap! How can you eat my helva without asking and paying for it?", the man ignores him and goes on tucking in, so the helva-seller goes at the man.

Nasreddin Hodja, who is shopping there by chance, turns and says to the customers:

- "What nice men the helva-sellers of Konya are! They make even a poor man without any money eat helva flogging and smacking him."

Advice: We are in a world of trial, and there are lots of questions! Let's do our best to answer the questions. Let's try to give the correct answers. Let's win points and have pluses. At least, let's not have many minuses.

33 **As long as it is untrue**

One of the villagers claims that the other villager owes him 10 bushels of wheat. In fact there is not such a matter of debt, but the man plans to get 10 bushels of wheat by deceiving the court with a false witness. While he is looking for a false witness, Nasreddin Hodja says he can bear witness. The man becomes delighted because Cadi Effendi can decide it easily if Hodja is the witness.

At court, Cadi Effendi asks Hodja:

- "It's said that this man owes that man 10 bushels of wheat. What do you think about it?"

Nasreddin Hodja:

- "Yes, Cadi Effendi. This man owes that man 10 bushels of barley."

The man interrupts:

- "He would say 10 bushels of wheat. He must slip up."

Nasreddin Hodja turns to the man and says:

- "It makes no difference whether it is wheat or barley, it is untrue."

Advice: Doing injustice deliberately causes man to lose lots of points in his trial in this world. Life is short in this world. One shouldn't risk one's eternal life in the world to come for some small personal interests. A clever person shouldn't be entrapped by his self-interests. Nothing can be kept secret from Allah, the Almighty (God)... (Bushel is an old measure of volume. 1 bushel is 35 litres.)

34 **Take the goat in!**

Someone comes and tells Hodja his house is so small that it causes them trouble; and wants him to find a remedy for it. Hodja listens to the man calmly and says:

- “Now, go to your house and let the goat go inside the house.”

The man visits Hodja again the next day.

- “Oh, Hodja! After I took the goat in, my problem got bigger.”

Hodja listens to him calmly and says:

- “Now, go home and take the hens in.”

The man visits Hodja the next day:

- “Ah, Hodja, It’s getting worse and worse.”

Hodja speaks self-assured:

- “Go and take your cow in too.”

The man visits Hodja once more the next day:

- “Mercy, Hodja! I’m extremely troubled.”

Hodja keeps quite calm and says:

- “Let the goat go out of the house tonight.”

The next day he comes and tells Hodja that they feel a bit more relieved.

Hodja:

- “Tonight let the hens go outside too.”

The next day the man comes more relieved.

Hodja:

- “Now go home and let the cow go outside and clean your house thoroughly.”

The man does what Hodja says and comes to visit Hodja again the next day feeling much more relieved. Now his house seems very large and he gives Hodja his thanks for it.

Advice: In our time, we cram our houses with furniture. Sometimes we have so many things in our houses that we remember this anecdote.

35 **He would fit its width to its length**

A Persian who came to Akşehir always twaddles. One day he starts concocting:

- “In Isfahan, our Shah (sovereign) has got two hundred-roomed palaces that are 5000 ells long.” (1 ell is about 68 cm.)

One of the listeners wants to rejoin:

- “In our capital, Bursa there are some bigger palaces. Also a thermal-resort which is 5000 ells long has been built...”

Just at that time another Persian enters:

- “I’ve come from Bursa...” he begins to speak.

Then the man who is talking about the thermal-resort in Bursa says:

- “And it is 50 ells wide.”

- “How can it be? Its width doesn’t fit its length,” opposes the Persian.

Hodja, who is listening to them:

- “If that man hadn’t come from Bursa, he would fit its width to its length very well.”

Advice: Being truthful must be our principle. They say liars have short wings. Telling lies takes one’s esteem away.

36 **Raise your foot!**

While Hodja is performing the sunnah of midday prayer, he sees some dirt on the leg of the trousers of someone from the attendance. (That is a hindrance to ablution and so to prayer.) While he is going towards the niche to conduct the divine service, he says to the man:

- “Raise your foot! You will pray standing on one leg.”

The man asks in confusion:

- “Why, Hodja?”

Hodja showing the dirt on the leg of his trousers:

- “Look! This foot hasn’t performed an ablution!”

Advice: We should do our duties attentively. Negligence can do harm to our efforts.

37 **If you don't eat the sahur meal either**

Nasreddin Hodja has got a neighbour who doesn't fast and whose household doesn't fast either. But the man always makes them prepare the sahur meal (a meal eaten before dawn in Ramadan) and has his children get up to eat it together. At last his wife can't stop herself and goes to ask advice from Hodja:

- "I don't fast. Neither my husband nor my children fast. But my husband gets me make delicious meals persistently and we eat them all together before dawn. As we don't fast, why do we have to get up for sahur every night?"

- "Oh, woman! Don't talk like that! You don't perform the divine prayers at five appointed times a day. You don't fast. If you don't eat the sahur meal either, how can it be known that you are Moslems?" says Hodja.

Advice: We should try to strengthen the ties that will take us to afterlife felicity. If we manage to add the threads together, we can have a sound rope we have trust in.

38 **Don't be lazy but plough the field!**

Nasreddin Hodja conducts the morning prayer and goes home. He says to his wife:

- "I'll lie on the divan for a nap, and then I'll go to plough the field. Wake me about one hour later."

One hour later his wife calls out Hodja, but sees that he is sluggish.

- "Effendi! You are so lazy today that even tortoises have done more work than you have," says Hodja's wife.

Hodja gets up and prepares to go out. He arrives at the field and starts working. While he is ploughing the field, he sees a tortoise in front of the plough. It stands still. If he went on ploughing, he could bury it alive in the earth. He calls out:

- "Look, tortoise! I see that you managed to come here before me. But, don't be lazy! Look on me to learn how to plough!"

Advice: If we waste our time being lazy, we can't make any progress and others sneer at us. For instance, an athlete who is going to run in a marathon should take great care to train himself more than his opponents. Otherwise he stays so behind that everybody ridicules and laughs at him.

We need elite people of good character who can compete with anybody in every field such as Medicine, Literature, Art, Science, Religion, Sport ... etc.

39 **When will the Doomsday come?**

- “When will the doomsday come?” they ask Nasreddin Hodja.
- “If my wife dies, the small doomsday will come. If I die, the big one will come,” he answers.

Advice: Man will account for his life in the world to come. When one dies, one will stop striving and wait for doomsday. One’s deeds will be on the trial balance. It is useless to wonder when our world will come to end. What have we prepared for our own end which is certain to come? Only this fact concerns us. A woman is mostly responsible for accounting for herself and her family. Nasreddin Hodja says “If I die, the big doomsday will come,” pointing out that he will account for his attendance as he is an imam as well as being responsible for himself and his family.

40 **Could you read your own letter?**

Nasreddin Hodja delivers the letters he has written by hand and gives them to their receivers after he himself reads them. One day they say:

- “Effendi, why are you having a lot of trouble going and reading your own letters?”

- “If I don’t go, they don’t read the letters and so they will be of no use. You see! Do people read the letters they often receive about their death which is the most important subject? Then they are puzzled on their last day,” says Hodja.

Advice: We should educate ourselves very well. We should take example from the happenings around us and learn how to read the letters in the book of the universe. We should understand the divine order that says, “Can those who know (learned ones) and those who don’t know (ignorant ones) ever be equal?”

41 I don't feel sleepy now

Nasreddin Hodja stays as a guest in a village. They perform the bedtime prayer. After some talk, to remind him that it is time to go to bed, they say:

- "Hodja, why do people yawn?"

The host doesn't offer Hodja any food. As he feels very hungry, he says:

- "It is because of either hunger or sleeplessness."

Then he exerts himself to yawn and says:

- "But I don't feel sleepy now."

Advice: Our forefathers say, "A guest has to satisfy himself with the pot luck." It is not inconvenient to serve our guests with what we have at that moment. Offering our guests what we have is one of our national and religious traditions.

42 Two ells

Nasreddin Hodja goes to visit the governor. They give him a seat two ells further than the governor's seat. He sits down. After some talk, the governor asks:

- "Hodja, what is the difference between you and a donkey?"

Hodja answers without thinking at all:

- "A distance of two ells!"

Advice: Humaneness has nothing to do with one's post and position, but one's real self. We should have a nice and strong personality.

(Note: It is said that this conversation was made between Tamerlane and Nasreddin Hodja. But they lived in different centuries so it is impossible for them to meet each other. We should consider the character Timur Khan in the anecdotes as some other cruel rulers who lived in that age.)

43 **Are the animals huge?**

While Nasreddin Hodja is strolling round Konya, he sees a huge building. He stops and looks on. The doorkeeper of the building asks:

- “Effendi, why are you looking on naively?”
- “I want to understand what it is,” says Hodja.

To mock Hodja, the doorkeeper says:

- “It’s a mill!”

Nasreddin Hodja asks at once:

- “Are the animals working here as huge as the mill itself?”

Advice: Mocking someone or something is forbidden in our religion. It is also disgraceful in our moral mentality.

(Note: Before the invention of motors, mills used to work by water or wind power <windmill> or by animal power.)

44 **Let the friends see me in business!**

In his sermons, Nasreddin Hodja talks about the importance of sincerity in worship:

- “Make your prayers humbly and respectfully. That is the real benefit. Otherwise you suffer loss if you worship hypocritically. As you are toiling and having pain, you should gain profit”. He wants to explain this point with an impressive example since the attendance is indifferent to the matter. He pays one akçe (Ottoman coin) for nine eggs, but sells ten eggs for one akçe.

- “What peculiar trade this is, Hodja!” they say.

- “First look at the other sellers, and then look at me. I don’t intend to earn money, just let the friends see me in business!” (It is an idiom meaning that someone is doing something not for profit, but merely for pleasure or prestige.)

Advice: We should never forget to gain profit for afterlife as our life which is the capital of our worldly trade passes quickly.

45 I'll seize it by its neck

Just when Nasreddin Hodja immerses his jug into the brook to take some water, the jug slips out of his grasp and sinks in the deep water. Hodja stands still for a moment. One of his acquaintances passing there asks:

- "What are you waiting for, Hodja?"
- "The jug's dived into the water. I'll seize it by its neck when it comes out of the water."

Advice: We should do even something simple attentively in order not to get it wrong.

46 Wake up!

Nasreddin Hodja dreams that the women in the neighborhood married him to another woman and his wife didn't object to this marriage. Then he suddenly wakes up. He jogs and awakes his wife who is sleeping by him:

- "Oh God! What an indifferent woman you are! Wake up! The woman in our neighborhood will marry me to another woman and a fellow-wife will come to the house, but you're still silent."

Advice: We should always use our intellect in the best way.

47 **You're right too**

A man comes and tells an event he experienced to Nasreddin Hodja, who is the *cadi* (judge) at that time. He asks before he leaves:

- "Am I not right, Hodja?"
- "Yes, you're right," says Hodja.

Soon after another man comes and tells the same event according to himself. Then he asks:

- "Am I not right, Hodja?"
- "Yes, you're right," says Hodja.

After the man leaves, his wife calls out from within the room:

- "Effendi, you said <You're right> to both of them. One of them can't be right, can he?"
- "You're right too!" says Hodja.

Advice: Why is a football match on TV broadcast from sixteen different cameras? One who thinks that one has found the truth by looking in one direction only deceives oneself.

48 **Bring his robe and then take your saddle!**

A man from Nasreddin Hodja's village stops in front of the bushes on his way to his garden. He ties his donkey to a tree. He takes off his aba (drugget cloak) and puts it on the donkey's saddle. Then he goes to a sheltered place to make water. Just at that time someone steals the aba and escapes. When the man comes back and sees that his aba has disappeared, he takes a stick into his hand, grumbles and cudgels his donkey ruthlessly. Hodja, who is going to his garden, sees the event:

- "Don't worry! I'll punish it severely." He immediately takes off the donkey's saddle and puts it down. He unties its halter and winds it around its neck. Hodja hits the donkey once and calls out:

- "You won't get back your saddle. Bring your owner's aba and take your saddle."

Advice: We mustn't punish animals unjustly. If they deserve punishment, we should punish them fairly within limits.

49 **It's obvious who has been affected adversely by it**

One of Nasreddin Hodja's mean neighbours invites him to dinner. They sit at the table. They bring four olives, two boiled eggs, two slices of bread and a pinch of salt for two persons. The host, who wants to serve one spoonful of honey to his guest after dinner, puts the honey bowl under the table. Hodja, who sees this, immediately puts the bowl on the table and starts tucking into the honey without any bread. The host sees that his honey is about to finish:

- "Hodja, if you eat it without bread, it may affect you adversely."

Hodja doesn't care him and goes on eating:

- "It is obvious who has been affected adversely by it."

Advice: "Eat, drink but don't squander" is a rule in Islam. On the other hand, stinginess is described as a very bad habit. We should be moderate in everything we do.

50 **Is it hereditary?**

A woman, who has been married for three years, cannot become pregnant. The mother-in-law and the husband blame the woman and her mother for that. They grumble every day as if they certainly know that it is her fault. One day the mother-in-law takes her to Nasreddin Hodja:

- "Hodja Effendi, my daughter-in-law cannot become pregnant. I wish my son hadn't married the girl of this family. I don't know whether you'll write an amulet or say a prayer, but find a remedy for it," she grumbles furiously.

Hodja turns to the daughter-in-law who is sorrowful.

- "My girl, it may be hereditary! Was your mother without issue?"

Advice: We shouldn't blame anyone before we learn the real problem. People may not be as polite as Nasreddin Hodja when they are telling us that we are twaddling.

51 You're a troublesome sovereign sent by God

Timur Khan is a cruel Mongol who tyrannizes over people, burns and demolishes their houses and fields, kills lots of people when he occupies Anatolia. When he settles down in Akşehir, he sends for fifteen notable men of the city. He takes them in one by one and asks:

- "Am I just or unjust?"

He has both the ones who say "just" and the ones who say "unjust" killed.

The next day again he orders the people from Akşehir to send fifteen men. They become very frightened. They go to see Nasreddin Hodja immediately. They persuade him to be in the committee. The committee is received by Timur Khan.

Timur Khan asks Nasreddin Hodja who is the head of the committee:

- "Say if I'm just or unjust, Hodja Effendi!"

Hodja answers loudly without any hesitation:

- "You're neither just nor unjust. You're a great nuisance sent by Allah (God) to this nation that has become corrupt and gone too far."

Timur likes this answer and pardons the ones in the committee.

Advice: Blaming others all the time hinders people from finding the truth. We should form the habit of scrutinizing the events from different angles.

52 **As you flow crazily**

On a hot summer day, Nasreddin Hodja sets off. He wants to drink some water from a charity fountain by the roadside. He also wants to refresh himself washing his face and hands; and to perform an ablution. He notices that the water pipe has been plugged by a piece of wood. As the wood has become wet and so has swollen, it cannot be easily taken out of its place. Hodja tries hard and takes the plug out by pulling it strongly. The water that has gushed forth from the pipe soaks Hodja's clothes without letting him go aside. He looks at the fountain and grumbles:

- "I see! They closed your mouth with that peg as you flow crazily!"

Advice: The state of those who go too far is somewhat like this fountain, isn't it?

53 **How can it be known?**

Someone who has just returned from Africa says that people are naked there because of the scorching weather.

Hodja interrupts him:

- "OK, but how can one know whether they are ladies or gentlemen (humans)?"

Advice: Only humans wear various kinds of clothes. Other creatures cannot change their skins and hairs which are a part of their bodies as they want. We should appreciate our cover.

54 **Bring a donkey with you!**

Nasreddin Hodja ties his donkey somewhere near the entrance of the court and goes shopping in the bazaar. Meanwhile the *cadi* (judge) judges a dishonest dealer and as a punishment subjects him to being taken round the city sitting back to front on the donkey. They make the offender mount Hodja's ass, which is near the entrance and start taking him round the city. Hodja sees the man who is being taken round the bazaar, but doesn't say anything. The usher ties the donkey to the place he took it from. A few hours later while Hodja is going towards his donkey with his packets in his hands, he sees that they are about to make the same offender mount his donkey back to front once more. This time he intervenes and speaks loudly turning to the offender:

- "Either give up being a dishonest artisan or bring a donkey with you!"

Advice: In Ottoman times, rogues used to be taken round the city sitting back to front on a donkey as a punishment in order to make the public see and know them. It was an effective and useful method. If this kind of punishment was in force today, how many men that ride their donkeys straight could we see around us? Let's think about it!

55 **If the lost saddle-bag hadn't been found**

Hodja loses his saddle-bag when he is a guest in a village. He says to the villagers:

- "Find my saddle-bag, or I know what to do."

The villagers look for it everywhere in a flurry. They find it and bring it to Hodja. When Hodja is leaving the village, they ask:

- "Hodja, what would you do if we hadn't found the saddle-bag?"

Hodja:

- "Nothing, I've got an old woven carpet at home. I would make a saddle-bag out of it!"

Advice: We should help those who have been treated unjustly not because we are afraid of someone or something, but to avert injustice.

56 I would read even the whole Koran

Nasreddin Hodja and his wife visit their friend who is an imam in another town. The hostess is a very clever, dexterous and good-natured woman. She arranges the interior of her house and her garden so beautifully that they arouse admiration. She prepares a perfect dinner table. They eat and drink. When they return home, Hodja's wife asks:

- "By the way, you first say God's name before you sleep with me or hold my hand."

- "Of course, I do so. It's Allah's (God) order," says Hodja.

- "But before your friend, Imam Effendi sleeps with his wife, I heard that he reads <Yasin> (one of the suras of the Holy Koran)," says Hodja's wife.

Hodja laughs:

- "Oh, my dear wife, if I had such a wife, I would read even the whole Koran."

Advice: Our forefathers say a swift horse increases its fodder itself. It is a Turkish proverb. We should sometimes criticize ourselves and be aware of our defects.

57 The architectural style of minarets

While Nasreddin Hodja is travelling to Konya, he meets a friend from Sivrihisar, who is going to Konya too. They greet each other and set out together. While they're approaching Konya, the man from Sivrihisar asks wonderingly:

- "Hodja Effendi, how do they construct these high tapering minarets?"

Hodja smiles delicately:

- "They turn wells upside down, so it's done."

The man:

- "How do they turn them?"

Hodja answers:

- "I'm an imam. I can't interfere with architects' business."

Advice: Being curious is good if it leads one to research. That's why they say curiosity is half of knowledge. Nasreddin Hodja means experts on that subject can know it and he doesn't talk about the subject he doesn't know.

58 **Instead of looking for a hodja for your daughter**

One day one of the women in the neighborhood says to Nasreddin Hodja:

- “Hodja Effendi, I don’t know whether you’ll write an amulet or breathe on my madcap daughter, but do what you can do so that she’ll be more sober-minded. She never listens to my advice. She is intractable and disobedient”.

Hodja:

- “Look for a husband, not a hodja for your daughter. Then you’ll see how docile she’ll be!”

Advice: A disease that’s diagnosed right can be cured easily. So first right diagnosis, then treatment.

59 **You’ll see how I lament it**

Nasreddin Hodja has lost his donkey. He looks for the donkey together with a few people. These men are those who don’t live an Islamic life and say they’ll worship God when they grow old. Hodja looks for his donkey and sings song merrily at the same time.

- “Isn’t it peculiar, Hodja? Does a man who has lost his donkey look for it singing songs merrily?”

- “Like your hope in old age, my last hope is beyond that mountain. If I can’t find it there either, you’ll see how I lament my loss!”

Advice: How can we be sure that we'll live long? We shouldn't leave today's work to tomorrow. We shouldn't forget that when God says "Today!", the devil says "Tomorrow!"

60 The moon is in its proper place at last

Nasreddin Hodja goes to take some water from the well. A little child comes there running. He wants to drink water. While Hodja is immersing the bucket into the well, the boy looks into it. Suddenly the boy starts shouting and says the moon has fallen into the well. Then the hook of the bucket is stuck somewhere in the well. It cannot be pulled out. While the boy is pulling the bucket with Hodja, the hook is detached, and they both fall on their back. While they are lying on the ground, Hodja shows the little boy the moon in the sky and says:

- "Thank God! We've tried hard, but the moon is in its proper place at last."

Advice: We should educate our children who are the future of our nation agreeably trying to see the events from their point of view.

61 I found plenty of oxen from the Antiquity that can fill up a stable

They persuade Nasreddin Hodja to be the imam of their village from Ramadan to Festival of the Sacrifices offering him two oxen in return for his service. They want Hodja to conduct the prayers at five appointed times a day and also the night service of worship in Ramadan. They ask him to preach too. Hodja accepts their offer.

He gives lessons before the night service during Ramadan. He also preaches and lectures on religious matters. He strives hard to teach the attendance.

He conducts the Bairam prayer. While he is bidding the attendance farewell before he sets out to return to his village, he looks over their manners carefully. He sees that they are much the same. (In Turkish, people say “old bath, old bowl!”) There is almost no progress. So much so they give Hodja only one ox instead of two oxen they agreed upon by bargain.

Hodja returns home. While he is stabling his new ox, one of his neighbours comes to say “welcome”.

- “Welcome, Hodja, What did you do there, where did you get the ox?” he asks.

- “That place is a real treasure! I found plenty of oxen from the Antiquity that can fill up a huge stable.”

Advice: The distinctive feature, in other words the dominant feature, of human beings is their having intellect. If man who is a rational being does not use his intellect, then his rank won't be different from the rank of those that fill up a stable.

62 They even smell my fancy

Nasreddin Hodja longs for yoghurt soup with peppermint. He wishes there was one on the table and he ate it heartily. While he is thinking about a tureen of yoghurt soup with peppermint, somebody knocks at the door.

- "My dad sends you his kind regards and wants some yoghurt soup with peppermint from you" says the neighbour's child with a bowl in his hand.

- "Oh, what's that? The neighbours even smell my fancy!" says Hodja with a smile.

Advice: Our forefathers were very hospitable. "You get your share of what's cooked in your neighbour's kitchen," is a nice Turkish proverb. We shouldn't forget to offer our friends some of what we eat when we are eating something that may excite their desire.

63 I wish you offered a flat cake

Nasreddin Hodja stays overnight as a guest in one of his friends' house. The host shows Hodja the woolen bed laid on the floor after having a chat and serving a glass of sherbet (a cooling drink made of diluted fruit juices) to him. Hodja, who is hungry:

- "Thank you, but I don't want to get used to sleeping in such perfect beds. Instead of that I wish you offered me a flat cake cooked in the ashes. (It's a kind of pastry stuffed with cheese or minced-meat.) I would make a bed with one half and cover myself with the other half. Then I would have a sound sleep."

Advice: Allah, the Almighty loves those who're hospitable very much. Don't you want Allah (God) to love you very much?

64 Hit him with a stick 300 times!

When Nasreddin Hodja is with the Monarch, security forces bring a drunken soldier and ask:
-“What punishment do you order for this drunken soldier?”

The Monarch shouts with rage:

- “Hit him with a stick 300 times!”

Hodja bursts into laughter.

- “Why are you laughing?” shouts the Monarch.

- “Oh, my Sultan! Either you don’t know how to count, or you’ve never been flogged,” replies Hodja.

Advice: A person who is hit with a stick more than 100 times dies. Will they hit the dead body? We must be just.

65 God willing, I've come

One night Nasreddin Hodja says to his wife:

- "Tomorrow if it's rainy, I'll collect wood. If it's clear, I'll go ploughing."

- "Say 'God willing!', Effendi" says his wife.

- "Oh, darling! Either this one or the other one will happen," says Hodja.

The next day it rains. Hodja sets off and rides his donkey to the forest. On the way he encounters one of his neighbours who is going into town to see his doctor. They walk together for some time. But then the man feels so much pain that he can't walk. Hodja lets the patient mount his donkey and takes him to the doctor in the town. It becomes midnight by the time he returns his village. When Hodja knocks at the door and his wife says "who is it?" he says:

- "Open the door, darling. God willing, I've come!"

Advice: After making our preparations and taking the necessary measures, we shouldn't forget that we can do something only if Allah (God) permits us to do it.

66 It doesn't interest me – It doesn't interest you

While Nasreddin Hodja is walking the bazaar, a babbler says:

- “Effendi, they’ve just taken a pan of ‘baklava’ (a kind of lozenge-shaped sweet pastry, which is a very popular Turkish dessert), which has been roasted well”.

Hodja ignores him:

- “It doesn’t interest me!”

The babbler:

- “But they’ve taken the pan of baklava to your house”.

Hodja says crossly:

- “It doesn’t interest you!”

Advice: Babbling about the matters that don’t interest us may leave us in a difficult situation. We should think before we speak.

67 Pickaxe sheaths

One of the villagers sees high boots in a shoe shop in Konya for the first time in his life. He likes and buys them. He puts on his boots and goes to the village. Showing his boots, he asks Nasreddin Hodja:

- “What are these?”
- “So easy! They’re pickaxe sheaths!”

Advice: Our Hodja thinks the villager as the handle of a pickaxe and his feet as its sheaths. If we want to be respectable, we should be respectful and decent.

68 I cut and ran

They ask Nasreddin Hodja:

- “Have you ever been in love with a woman crazily?”
- “By God, once I was just about to fall in love crazily, but then I cut and ran remembering the Creator of the cause.”

Advice: We must try to obey the divine orders exactly even if we don’t understand the secret motives beneath them. We are living in a world of motives. We should try to understand the real motives beneath the events. If we just see the events as they seem, we spend our time in vain on our way to Heaven.

69 Man's adventure in this world

They ask Nasreddin Hodja:

- "Until when are people going to be born, live and die?"
- "Until Heaven and Hell become full," he answers.

Advice: Man is given free will to choose between Heaven and Hell. Both of them will be filled with rational beings. Lunatics are pardoned and excused from Hell.

70 One who has fallen off the roof can understand my condition

After the morning prayer, Nasreddin Hodja starts to shovel away the snow reaching up to the knee on the roof of his house. Then suddenly he falls off the roof losing his balance and faints. His neighbours rush towards him:

- "Let's call a doctor quickly!" says one.
- "Oh! Let's find a bone-setter!" says the other one.
- "Let's take him to the doctor on someone's back!" says somebody else.

Hodja, who has recovered in that row, puts his hand on his waist which aches and says:

- “Stop arguing! Immediately find me someone who has fallen off the roof before.”

Advice: We’ve got a proverb, “Having a bad experience once is more effective than being advised one thousand times.” We should learn from our experiences.

71 **Not to let you climb up**

Early in the morning, Nasreddin Hodja shovels away the snow on his roof. He feels he has to make water. He looks around and sees that there is not a soul. He kneels down in a corner and makes water down the roof. When he sees someone in the distance, he stops it. The one who is going past that street is a brazen-faced man whom Hodja doesn’t like.

- “Why did you stop, Hodja?” asks the man.
- “Well, if I didn’t stop, you would climb up the roof by clinging to it, wouldn’t you?” says Hodja.

Advice: We should always be moderate in our relationships with others. Those who are brazen-faced bore their kinsfolk and friends too.

72 **A greyhound for the mean police magistrate**

Nasreddin Hodja doesn't love the mean police magistrate (chief of the police office) at all. One day Police Magistrate orders Hodja a greyhound:

- "Hodja Effendi, you've got lots of acquaintances. Find me a greyhound. I want it to be of slender waist and hare-eared."

A few days later Hodja brings a fleshy stray dog putting a string round its neck. Police Magistrate gets angry:

- "Hodja Effendi, I wanted a greyhound of slender waist from you, but you've brought me a huge stray dog."

- "Don't worry, please! In any case it'll turn into a greyhound if it stays with you for a month."

Advice: We should look after the animals we own well. Animals have some rights too.

73 **Wasn't the thief faulty at all?**

Nasreddin Hodja's donkey has been stolen. Hodja's friends blame Hodja for it instead of consoling him:

- "You had to lock the door of the stable."
- "Didn't you hear a clattering noise?"
- "I think you didn't tie the donkey tightly."

Hodja listens to them silently, but he can bear it no longer and at last he says:

- "Enough! You think I'm totally faulty. Be just a bit! Wasn't the thief faulty at all?"

Advice: We should avoid superfluous talk that doesn't contribute to the solution.

74 **What if marrows grew on a walnut-tree**

On a summer day, Nasreddin Hodja sits in the shade of a walnut-tree to feel cool. When he notices the huge marrows a bit further on, he speaks to himself:

- “My God, how interesting! Huge marrows grow on the grass, but the fruit of this walnut-tree, which occupies an area of 200 square meters and of which branches stretch up to the sky and down to the earth, is tiny!”

Then just at that time a walnut drops down on his head. Hodja jumps to his feet saying, “Oh, my head!” He says:

- “My God, let it be a vow! I’ll never meddle in your affairs once again! What if marrows, instead of walnuts, grew on the tree!”

Advice: Attempting to find a fault in Allah’s (God) creation causes us to be held as contemptible and worthless. Allah knows every kind of creation properly. There are amazing subtleties, mysteries and motives beneath every being and event for one who knows how to look and think.

75 Hodja bribes Cadi Effendi

Nasreddin Hodja has to await the decision of the tribunal in Konya. But Cadi (judge) says “Come a few days later,” every time Hodja goes to the court. Hodja’s friends warn Hodja:

- “Cadi is a corrupt man. If you don’t bribe him, he doesn’t render a service.”

Hodja brings a pot of honey to Cadi and obtains what he wanted at once. Cadi wants to taste the honey that night, but he can’t believe what he sees: There is just a little honey on the top and its bottom is full of dung. The next morning Cadi orders the constable of the tribunal:

- “Find and bring Nasreddin Hodja to me. Tell him that there are some mistakes in the decision.”

Hodja stands before Cadi. Cadi shouts with rage:

- “Were you going to make me eat excrement at dinner?”

- “Not so! You ate that excrement when you took the pot to resolve the case.”

Advice: Allah (God) and Allah’s envoy damn both bribees and bribers. We should be careful not to be deceived.

76 Behold! Nasreddin shoots like this

When the notables of the town are going practising archery, Nasreddin Hodja goes with them. Everybody shoots arrows by turns. Some hit the target but some don't. When it is Hodja's turn:

- "Hodja, let's see how you shoot now!" they say. Hodja shoots an arrow, but it falls somewhere too far from the target.

- "Look! The head of janissary soldiers shoots like this." says Hodja.

The second shot doesn't hit the target either.

- "Our police magistrate shoots like this," says Hodja this time.

When the third shot just hits the target, Hodja turns towards his friends feeling proud and adds:

- "Behold! Nasreddin shoots like this."

Advice: Hodja doesn't know archery. Hodja's friends want to tease him as they know that he won't be able to score a hit. Hodja doesn't let them do so acting cleverly. We shouldn't argue with people acting cleverly in similar situations.

77 **A man keeps his word**

They ask Hodja how old he is. He says he is forty years old. When he is asked about his age a few years later, he again says he is forty.

- “Is it possible, Hodja Effendi? You said you were forty when we asked you about your age a few years ago.”

Hodja smiles:

- “A man keeps his word! ...”

Advice: It is impossible to stop time. We should appreciate every moment we live.

78 **A talk on calculation with the priests**

Three learned priests who have been to many different places of the world visit Akşehir too. They want to meet Hodja as they’ve heard of his fame. Hodja is introduced to the priests in a meeting attended by the notabilities of Akşehir. They eat and drink together. After some talk, one of the priests asks Hodja:

- “Hodja Effendi, where is the center of Earth?”
- “It’s the place my donkey’s right forefoot is stepping on now,” says Hodja showing his donkey, which is grazing.
- “How do you know that?” asks the priest.
- “If you don’t believe me, measure it,” replies Hodja.

The second priest asks:

- “All right, Hodja Effendi! How many stars are there in the sky?”
- “There are the same number of stars in the sky as my donkey’s hairs,” says Hodja.
- “How can you prove it?” they ask.
- “If you don’t believe me, count them,” replies Hodja.

Then the third priest asks:

- “How many hairs does my beard have?”
- “Their number is the same as the number of hairs on my donkey’s tail.”
- “How can you know that?” they ask.

Nasreddin Hodja gets serious:

- “I told you to measure it, but you didn’t. Then I told you to count them, but you didn’t. There is not a single hair more, but you don’t believe me. Let’s verify it. Let’s pluck a hair from the donkey’s tail and one from the priest’s beard. Thus we can see they’re equal without erring.”

The priests stop arguing and leave there.

Advice: Nasreddin Hodja answers the questions that are impossible to answer by using the same way of reasoning. He shows us that there is a way out for those who reason well.

79 **You eat all of them**

Nasreddin Hodja is travelling to Konya with a gluttonous, covetous and rich man from Akşehir. On the way they stop to eat their food when they feel hungry. The man tucks into all the food while Hodja eats just a few morsels. He always talks about eating, drinking and earning. They arrive in Konya. They stop at a bakery and walk in.

-“Are these loaves of bread yours?” Hodja asks the baker, who is taking out the loaves of bread which have just been baked and so smell very nice, and arranging them in a line in his shop window. The baker becomes puzzled and looks at Hodja in confusion. When he says “Yes, they’re mine,” Hodja says:

- “You’ve got such an amount of newly baked hot bread that smells nice. What are you waiting for, then? You yourself eat all of them!”

Advice: Uncontrolled flames can cause fire. Likewise when our ambitions go out of control, they destroy both our life in this world and our life after death.

80 In order not to have my faith stolen

One night a burglar breaks into Nasreddin Hodja's house. When Hodja sees the burglar, he hides in the closet. The burglar searches everywhere and puts the things that are of use to him into his sack. When he opens the door of the closet, he meets Hodja face to face.

- "Have you been here?" he stammers in stupefaction. Nasreddin Hodja speaks calmly:

- "The worldly goods you've stolen from my house are not valuable for me. I've hidden myself here in order not to have my faith stolen."

Advice: The faithless are free to do anything until they end up in Hell. It is quite clear that the burglar's going to search the closet. Hodja warns the burglar using a very effective method. We should endeavor to be friends with "Paradise Travellers".

81 **It's dark inside**

Nasreddin Hodja wants to warn those who don't believe in afterlife and search for the truths in wrong places by forming an example. He stands before the front door of his house, and then starts looking for something on the street which has just been swept and so is quite clean. This case draws people's attention.

- "What are you looking for, Hodja Effendi? There is nothing on the ground. Tell us what you are looking for, so we can look for it together," they say.

- "I've dropped my keys - four small keys which are fastened by a chain," says Hodja.

They become quite perplexed.

- "There is nothing around. Where have you lost your keys?" they ask.

- "In the basement," Hodja replies.

- "Why are you looking for them here, then?" they ask.

- "It is dark inside; nothing can be seen there. So I'm looking for the keys here as you look for Heaven in taverns," says Hodja.

Advice: The first condition of attaining our goal is determining a goal and striving for it. We shouldn't look for Paradise we have lost in wrong places.

82 **The state of those who wake up in this world**

They give Nasreddin Hodja 999 gold coins in his dream. While he is saying “Give me one more so that there will be 1000 gold coins. Otherwise I won’t accept it,” he wakes up. He sees that there are neither the gold coins nor the ones who offer them around.

- “Oh, my God! What does this mean? While one who wakes up in the world to come will find everything ready before one, one who wakes up in this world loses all the property one has.”

Advice: Afterlife is eternal. But life in this world is as short as a dream. We shouldn’t be entrapped by unwariness acting prudently.

83 **The dead on leave**

On a very hot summer day, Nasreddin Hodja digs a grave. When he is about to finish his work, he sweats so much that he takes off his shirt and flannel. Just at that time cavalry soldiers appear in the distance. They see Hodja as a naked man in the grave and call out:

- “You chap! What are you doing in the grave?”
- “It is my grave. They don’t give us any garments here. I’m off today so I’m looking around!”

Advice: If we deposit currency in the bank of ‘Afterlife’, we won’t be like the naked man there.

84 **Move your house to the field!**

- “My house doesn’t get the sun at all,” someone complains.

- “Does your field get the sun?” asks Hodja.

When the man says “Yes”, Hodja says:

- “Then don’t avoid God’s sun and move your house to the field.”

Advice: It is not a shame not to know, but not to learn (a Turkish proverb). We should consult the knowledgeable people before we act.

85 I slept by the spring

While Nasreddin Hodja is travelling from Akşehir to Konya, he stops at a village on his way and stays as a guest in a villager's house. When it is bedtime, the man asks:

- "Hodja Effendi, are you sleepy or thirsty?"

As the man doesn't offer anything to eat, Hodja says quite normally:

- "While I was travelling, I slept well by the spring."

Advice: If we want others to treat us generously, we should learn to treat them generously first.

86 They make it a star

Someone, who fancies he can mock Hodja, asks him:

- "When the moon becomes crescent (new moon), what happens to the old moon?"

Nasreddin Hodja retorts with a clever answer:

- "They clip it and make it a star."

Advice: In Yâsin (one of the suras of the Koran) / 39th verse, Allah (God) points out that the moon takes different forms so that we can know the time. In fact the moon is always the same. We should give a nice witty answer to a humorous question.

The villagers pronounce the name “EYYÛB” wrong as Eyip, iyip, iyp.

One day Nasreddin Hodja preaches:

- “Oh, moslem! Don’t name your sons Eyyûb. It becomes “ip” (ip means cord in English) getting shorter and shorter (thinner & thinner) by being uttered many times by the public.”

Advice: We should love our native tongue very much and protect it as we protect our most precious thing. No matter whether one is a professor in ordinary if one cannot speak one’s own language properly.

88 Stewed fruit with ice in Ramadan

On a hot summer day, Nasreddin Hodja is invited to dinner in Ramadan. They serve a pot of cold stewed fruit first. The shrewd host takes a ladle in his hand and gives each guest a dessert-spoon. Each time the host eats the stewed fruit with the ladle, he says;

- “Oohhh, I’ve died!”

Hodja and the other guests try to eat it with the small spoons in their hands; but they can neither get the taste of the stewed fruit nor get rid of their thirst. And the stewed fruit on the table is about to finish up. Hodja cannot keep silent and says to the host:

- “Effendi, you’re dying and then reviving again and again. That worries us very much. Please give that ladle to us so that we’ll die instead of you!”

Advice: Humorous jokes make our life more colourful helping us forget our worries if we don’t exceed the limits of morality and decency.

89 **Escape to the river!**

Nasreddin Hodja gathers twigs and bushes in the forest and loads them on to his donkey's back. Then he sets off to go to the village. On the way Hodja and the villagers who have returned from the forest have a talk together. The villagers say:

- "We can escape from Hell. We can escape from fire and get into water. Also when one is put into the grave, you prompt one what to say. We say what you say and redeem ourselves."

Hodja sees that they ignore his warnings. He strikes a match to kindle the bushes on the back of his donkey.

- "If you have reason, escape to the lake," he whispers to his donkey. As the flames rise higher, the villagers say excitedly:

- "Mercy! What have you done, Hodja? The poor animal is going to burn fiercely."

Hodja is quite calm:

- "Don't worry! I prompted the donkey what to do."

Advice: A mere hint is enough for a sensible person while loud remarks are in vain for a dull one. We should be sensible, God willing!

90 **Any affair concerning him goes wrong**

One of Nasreddin Hodja's relatives has got some bad habits. Hodja cannot dissuade him from behaving like that despite all his efforts. A child comes running towards the attendance that is leaving the mosque after the prayer:

- "So-and-so fell into the river while he was strolling on the riverside. He is fighting against fierce waves."

Hodja comes to the riverside quickly with a few friends and starts walking towards the direction the water is coming from.

The villagers:

- "The water is flowing towards the other direction, Hodja. We should look for him downstream, shouldn't we?"

Hodja nods his head:

- "Yes, but you don't know how peevish and cross this man is. Any affair concerning him goes wrong."

Advice: Those who don't give up their bad habits persistently are as mistaken as those who think that water flows upstream. We should interpret the advice of ones who know correctly and take advantage of them.

91 **Don't be together with it in the world to come!**

Nasreddin Hodja fells firewood in the forest, loads it on to his donkey and sets off to return home.

On his way home comes across an indiscreet man.

- "Oh, Hodja! How peacefully you two friends are travelling together!" says the man.

Hodja retorts:

- "Ah! Don't be misled by your brother's peaceful appearance. Sometimes it becomes obstinate and lies into mud; sometimes it brays untimely like an indiscreet man; and sometimes it goes at a gallop. Beware! Don't be eager to be together with it in the world to come."

Advice: Humans are responsible for every moment they live. Also we shouldn't forget the fact that we have been created as the noblest of all beings.

92 **If camels had wings**

One day Nasreddin Hodja preaches on the pulpit of the mosque:

- “Well, attendance! Thank Allah (God) that He didn’t create your camels with wings.”

The attendance hesitates for a while. They think that how nice it would be to fly in the air and to travel so fast if their camels had wings, and wonder what Hodja means by saying that. Then someone from the attendance asks:

- “Wouldn’t it be nice, Hodja?”

- “If camels had wings, they would alight on the roofs of your houses and the roofs would collapse on you,” replies Hodja.

Advice: We shouldn’t find a fault in Allah’s (God) creatures. We should try to understand the divine motives beneath the appearance.

93 **If you don't believe me, count up the number of stars!**

One day Nasreddin Hodja preaches in Konya.

- "Moslems! The air of this city is the same as the air of our city," he begins to speak.

Someone from the attendance asks:

- "How do you know that?"

- "The number of stars in Akşehir is the same as the number of stars in Konya. If you don't believe me, count up the number of stars, then," says Hodja.

Advice: Watch the starry sky at night when the weather is clear and meditate on our Creator's omnipotence, might and art seeing the order and harmony that have never been spoilt despite the fact that all these stars are moving so fast at the same time. If we try to count the numbers without sleeping at all in one year, we can only count up to 31.536.000 considering we count 60 numbers in one minute. ($60 \times 60 \text{ minutes} \times 24 \text{ hours} \times 365 \text{ days} = 31.536.000$) We know that there are hundreds of milliards of stars in the Milky Way.

94 **Don't disturb the wolf**

While Hodja is felling firewood in the forest on a winter day, a hungry wolf suddenly attacks and devours Hodja's donkey which has been tied down the slope; and then it escapes upwards:

Someone sees the event in the distance and calls out:

- "Oh, Hodja! A wolf has devoured your donkey and it is going away!"

Hodja first looks at the carcass and the bones of his donkey and then the wolf which is running up the slope.

- "Don't tire yourself in vain, Effendi. We can't change what happened. At least don't disturb the satiated wolf which is trying to run up the slope!" says Hodja.

Advice: We should learn to see the events from different angles. Why is a football match on TV broadcast from twelve or even more than twelve cameras?

95 If his imam is Timur the Lame

One day Hodja asks one of Timur Khan's men:

- "Whose sect do you follow?"

The man puts his hand on his chest and says:

- "Emir Timur's."

Someone there calls out:

- "Hodja Effendi, ask him who his prophet is too."

Hodja:

- "If his imam is Timur the Lame, we don't need to ask anything else, then."

Advice: We should follow right leaders and imams. Whose guide is a crow will never get his nose out of dung. (a Turkish proverb)

96 Chewing-gum, which is valuable property

One day they invite Nasreddin Hodja to a feast. The guests sit together around big copper trays, which are used as dinner tables. When they start to eat, one of the guests takes out the gum in his mouth and sticks it on to the edge of the huge copper tray. Then Hodja takes the gum on the edge of the copper tray and sticks it on to the tip of the man's nose.

- "Hodja Effendi, Couldn't you put it somewhere else?" they say.

Hodja wags his head:

- "This man's property is valuable. It should always be before his eyes!"

Advice: In public we should avoid the behaviours others dislike.

97 **After the pitcher has been broken**

Nasreddin Hodja wants his son to go to the fountain. He slaps his son's face after giving him the pitcher. Then he says:

- "Beware! Don't break it!"

Those who see what's happened say:

- "What are you doing, Hodja Effendi? The boy hasn't broken the pitcher. Why are you beating the child, who is entirely innocent?"

Hodja says:

- "Beating is of no use after the pitcher has been broken!"

Advice: We should take adults' warnings into consideration. One who likes one's own mind and follows it only is like a man who wastes his limited lifespan trying to rediscover the known.

98 **What the strap endures**

While Hodja is ploughing the field with his oxen, one of the straps with which the oxen are tied to the plough breaks off. Hodja ties his turban to the plough instead of the strap which has broken off. The turban breaks off too as soon as he pulls it.

Hodja speaks to his turban:

- “Oh, my turban! Did you now understand what the strap endures?”

Advice: Children deem life easy while their parents endure the troubles of life; the turban isn’t roughly handled likewise when it is carried on the head. When one takes a responsibility, one can understand its difficulties then.

99 **I haven’t talked to it recently**

After the evening prayer Nasreddin Hodja wants to stroll in the bazaar in Konya until the bedtime prayer. He sees a well-dressed man who is looking at the round moon in the sky. When Hodja approaches him, the man calls out:

- “Effendi, how is the moon today?”

- “I don’t know. I haven’t talked to it recently.”

Advice: When the moon is quite round, we call it full moon and the moon takes the shape of full moon on the fourteenth day of every month according to the Hegira calendar. In fact the man wants to learn the date. It is not enough to be well-dressed; we should also be sensible.

100 **The air in the bellows**

Nasreddin Hodja lights a fire with his bellows and then hangs them on the wall after plugging their mouth so as to prevent mice and insects from going inside.

- “Why are you plugging the mouth of the bellows?” they ask.

- “Well, if I don’t plug it, the air in the bellows will be wasted. I don’t like extravagance!”

Advice: Hodja, who finds a direct answer superfluous as the reason for that can be understood by thinking just a little on it, hints that extravagance is not good with an indirect answer.

101 **A place where you can’t find any sweets or pastries**

Nasreddin Hodja comes home after conducting the midday prayer. A funeral procession coming from another mosque appears in the street. The dead person’s relatives lament his death:

- “You’re going to dark places! In those regions there is neither light nor fire. There are neither sweets nor pastries!..”

Hodja says to his wife:

- “Oh, dear! Bolt the door, be quick! This funeral procession is certainly coming to our house!”

Advice: Our ancestors, Adam and Eve, had been in Paradise. Allah (God) had prohibited only one thing in order to test their faith. They didn't keep their word and so were descended into the world. The number of questions in the test of patience have increased in this world. Those who are obedient will find Heaven's honey and pies ready before them. Maybe those who are disobedient will be deprived of honey and pies forever. We should try to succeed in the test.

102 It'll go out to play with the walnuts

One of Nasreddin Hodja's neighbours is pregnant. She feels pains, but cannot give birth. Some women come to see Hodja:

- "Ah, Hodja! We don't know whether you'll say a prayer or something else. Say what you know so that the poor woman will be free from her sufferings."

Hodja goes to the grocer's shop immediately saying to the women waiting there he knows the cure for that, and comes back with some walnuts in his hand.

- "Take these and scatter them into the room. As soon as the baby hears the clatter of the walnuts, it'll go out to play with them."

Advice: When we need help with the matters that require expertise, we should ask the experts for help.

103 **An unexpected guest**

One evening someone knocks at the door. Nasreddin Hodja stretches out his head out of the window and calls out:

-“Who is it?”

A voice in the dark:

-“I’m God’s guest.” (an unexpected guest seeking hospitality in a house for the sake of God)

Hodja recognizes him by his voice – a man from the village where formerly, Nasreddin Hodja was appointed as an imam. Hodja knows that the man never used to go to mosque!.. He goes downstairs and takes him directly to the mosque holding his hand:

-“Here’s the place you’re looking for. This is God’s home. You can stay as a guest in here as long as you wish!”

Advice: We should always visit God’s home, not only when we’re in trouble like the man who looks for shelter and lodging saying he is God’s guest.

104 **The balance of Earth**

One day they ask Nasreddin Hodja:

- “Effendi, when it is morning, some people go in this direction and some go in that direction. Why?”
- “If all of them went in the same direction, Earth would be off balance and overturn!” replies Hodja.

Advice: If we pay attention to the fact that we do various kinds of things in various different places for life, we can understand the order and balance in the world. It doesn't matter what profession we've chosen, we should do our job very well.

105 **Maybe I would be lost too**

They invite Nasreddin Hodja to a wedding with musical entertainment, rejoicing and carousal. They persuade him to go there. He gets ready to go to the wedding, but just at that time he loses his donkey. While he is looking for his donkey,

- “Thank God! Thank God!” he says incessantly.
- “Why are you saying, ‘Thank God?’” they ask.
- “Thank God that I'm not on it. If I was on it, maybe I would be lost in that crowd too. God forbid!”

Advice: We should manage to avoid going to the places which can harm our moral values.

106 Sibling Strife

One day when Nasreddin Hodja is at home, one of his neighbours knocks at the door in a hurry.

- “Ah, Hodja! In our house my wife and my sister-in-law are brawling and fighting rigorously with each other. I intervened in the brawl but couldn’t manage to stop it. Come and help me!” says the man.

Hodja asks:

- “Why are they brawling? Is it a matter of age?”
- “No. It’s because of another matter,” says his neighbour.

Hodja says wagging his hand:

- “Then don’t worry, my son. Keep calm! The two sisters must already be reconciled with each other!”

Advice: We should be careful not to mention the matter of age superfluously about which women are very sensitive.

107 I'm a Billy goat

One day they ask Nasreddin Hodja an unnecessary question:

- "What is your star sign, Hodja?"
- "Billy goat," he says.

When the people there say:

- "But Effendi, there is not such a sign."

Hodja replies:

- "They told me that I was a Capricorn when I was a child. My star sign can't always remain as a Capricorn. It must already be a Billy goat until now."

Advice: We should avoid augury which is totally unrealistic.

108 **If it has something to do with the wadded turban**

A Persian gives Hodja the letter that has come from his homeland:

- “Hodja, Could you read it?”

Hodja looks at the writing which is both illegible and Persian.

- “One who knows Persian can read it. I don’t know Persian. Also the writing is illegible,” he says.

The Persian becomes furious.

- “Ha! You are wearing a wadded turban that’s as big as a mill stone, but you can’t still read this letter!” he grumbles.

Hodja takes off his wadded turban immediately and puts in on the Persian’s head:

- ”If it has something to do with the wadded turban, here you are, you wear it, and read the letter, then!”

Advice: Every language has its own rules. There are many languages written with the Latin characters. Can we read all of them correctly? We shouldn’t be like the ignorant Persian confusing what is in the head and what is on the head.

109 **Donkeys of today**

A parvenu buys a showy horse. He passes Nasreddin Hodja rapidly, who is riding his donkey, and goes away. Then he returns and rides his horse towards Hodja. He stops by his side and speaks to him in a disdainful manner:

- "How is the donkey going?"

Hodja replies:

- "The donkey of today! It's going together with the horse!"

Advice: Does wealth make a man of base origin a gentleman? Even if you put a gold-embroidered packsaddle on to a donkey, it's still a donkey. We should never forget that we can merely be exalted by education.

110 **The one who doesn't know Friday**

Hodja performs the Friday prayer in a mosque in the town he visits. While he is leaving the mosque together with the crowd, a man passing there approaches Hodja:

- "Effendi, what day is it today?"

- "I'm a stranger here. I don't know your days," replies Hodja.

Advice: We (only men) are obliged to perform the Friday prayer, so we must certainly fulfil this divine obligation which cannot be fulfilled subsequently.

111 **You didn't let him do it like a man**

A man becomes very thirsty while he is going on the country road on a summer day. He enters a market garden which he sees on the way to pick a watermelon in order to appease his thirst. Just when he is about to pick the watermelon that draws his attention, the watchman of the market garden scolds him standing before him with a stick in his hand:

- "What are you doing here?"

The man speaks in a puzzled and also a bit frightened manner:

- "Well, I've relieved myself."

There are big ox faeces by chance in the place the man has crouched.

- "Oh, man! Do you think I'm a fool? Those are ox faeces!"

Nasreddin Hodja, who witnesses the event while passing there, scolds the watchman:

- "It's your fault! You didn't let him do it like a man."

Advice: We shouldn't enter a market garden without permission. Asking permission is good. We may not meet Nasreddin Hodjas, who settle disputes.

112 Tell him not to forget his head!

A rich man from Akşehir invites Hodja to his house. Hodja goes there on the settled day. While the man is sitting by the window, Hodja knocks at the door:

- "I've come to visit your exalted effendi," he says.

- "He isn't at home, he has gone out," they say.

- "Give your master my best regards and tell him not to forget his head by the window again before he goes out."

Advice: We should keep our promise on principle to be respectable.

113 You'll get used to indigence

Someone makes ducks and drakes of a fortune he inherited from his father without thinking whether it is a good deed or a bad one for God. When nothing remains in his possession, he talks to Hodja about his troubles:

- "I'm in great difficulty. I'm about to beg in the street. Find a remedy for my afflictions."

- "Don't worry, my son! You'll be free from your sorrows soon," says Hodja.

The spendthrift gets excited:

- "Will I be rich again, Hodja?"

- "No, my son. You'll get used to indigence. You've spent your Afterlife capital here too.

When you get used to it, maybe you won't suffer much there."

Advice: We should evaluate our time in the best way. Our life capital is diminishing rapidly day by day.

114 It has given birth to a colt without tail

Nasreddin Hodja returns home tired and hungry. As soon as he sits at the dinner table to eat the wheat pilaf his wife has cooked, his neighbour's child knocks at the door:

- "Hodja Effendi, hurry up! My dad is calling you urgently!"

Hodja goes there and sees that his neighbour's ass has given birth to a colt without tail. He calls him to learn its reason. When Hodja returns home after a short while, his wife asks:

- "Effendi, why did the neighbour call you?"

Hodja answers in a bit discontented manner:

- "Oh, dear! Once in a blue moon, we, husband and wife, would eat wheat pilaf in private; but the neighbour's ass gave birth to a colt without tail!"

Advice: When we want something for ourselves, we shouldn't bother other people.

115 The accounts will be settled

While Nasreddin Hodja is walking in the street, a man approaches him from behind and slaps his nape. Hodja applies to Cadi (judge), but this man is a close friend of Cadi's. He tries to reconcile them with each other, but he can't succeed. As he has no alternative, he says:

- "I've decided that the one who gave a slap unjustly must give the injured party one silver coin."

Then he turns to the man and orders him to bring one silver coin making signs with his eyes. The man goes and Hodja starts waiting for him to bring the silver coin. As a long time passes and Hodja understands that the man won't come back, he quietly approaches Cadi, who is trying to read the paper in front of him, and gives him two slaps on the nape.

- "I've got some business to do, Cadi Effendi. I'm going to conduct the afternoon prayer in mosque. Take one silver coin from me and take one silver coin from that man. Thus the accounts will be settled," he adds giving him a silver coin.

Advice: Order and peace can only exist in societies where judges are fair. We shouldn't forget that "Just" is one of the most beautiful names of Allah (God).

116 **An insatiable guest**

One of Nasreddin Hodja's friends stays as a guest in his house. They eat and drink, and also have a pleasant chat. Just when they're going to bed late at night, the guest says:

- "Our hands, our hands; before they go to bed, they eat grapes!"

Hodja sees that eating and drinking will not come to an end.

- "We haven't got such a habit. We keep the grapes to eat them in autumn," he says.

Advice: Gluttony harms our health. We should get used to eating as much as we need.

117 **God grant**

One day while Nasreddin Hodja is relaying the roof of his house, someone knocks at the door. Hodja calls out from the roof:

- "What do you want?"

The man at the door says:

- "Can you come downstairs?"

Hodja goes down and opens the door.

- "What do you want?" he asks.

- "I want alms," says the man.

- "Come upstairs," Hodja says.

After they come to the roof, Hodja turns to the man:

- "God grant!"

Advice: We should always think well before we act, and know how to behave properly according to the situation.

118 He didn't listen to me when he was in life

When Nasreddin Hodja is working as an imam in Sivrihisar, he quarrels with the police magistrate of the town, who is a peevish man. After sometime, Police Magistrate dies. They want Hodja to conduct his funeral service and prompt him the articles of the faith of Islam after the burial. Hodja says:

- "Find someone else! He never listened to me when he was in life. Also we had quarrelled before he died. Who knows! Maybe he doesn't follow my advice once more being obstinate!"

Advice: We should listen to religious and moral advice given to us when we are in life.

119 Yataghan used as an eraser

The police magistrate of the city forbids the public to carry arms. By a bad coincidence Hodja is caught with his huge yataghan (a kind of curved scimitar) while he is going to the madrasah (Moslem school). Police Magistrate asks taking out the yataghan under his gown:

- “What’s this?”
- “I scrape the mistakes in books and notebooks with this,” says Hodja.
- “O, Hodja! As far as I know mistakes are scraped with a pen-knife. Is it ever possible to scrape incorrect scripts with this huge yataghan?” asks Police Magistrate.
- “Oh, Agha! Sometimes there are such mistakes that even this is not big enough to correct them,” replies Hodja.

Advice: As books are permanent works, the mistakes in them, which harm society, can even cause fights and wars.

Note: Formerly, people used to scrape the mistakes in books and notebooks. Today we erase them.

120 I was in it too

Hodja's neighbour asks him:

- "Hodja, what was that noise in your house? I heard great noise while I was going past your house last night."

- "Oh, dear! My gown fell down our wooden stairs," says Hodja.

- "Oh, Hodja! Does a gown make such noise?" asks his neighbour.

- "I was in it too!" replies Hodja.

Advice: We should also manage to talk about a small event without exaggerating it and make people smile.

121 He falls off the donkey

One day while Hodja is riding his donkey fast, he falls over. Some children gather around him:

- "O! Hodja has fallen off the donkey! Hodja has fallen off the donkey!"

Hodja stands up after collecting himself:

- "Nice kids! You should know that one who mounts the donkey absolutely dismounts it for one reason or another and so does one who mounts (comes to) this world."

Advice: Before we dismount (leave) the world, we should be well-prepared for the place we'll go to.

122 Why do we exist?

Some children ask Nasreddin Hodja:

- “Hodja Effendi, why did Allah (God) create humans?”

- “We are in this world to ascend, to pay debt, to be moderate and to earn honestly so as to own a house in the country of eternity, my sons,” he replies.

Advice: When we are taken to that place where we won't have a chance of earning or taking something from someone, we will truly become bankrupt if we don't have valid money. We should save valid money here for our afterlife. They don't grant a palace to one who has brought money only sufficient for a shanty.

123 In dust and earth while hunting wolves

Hodja and his helper Imad go hunting wolves. Imad suddenly enters the den to catch a cub. Just at that time its mother arrives. Hodja catches the wolf by its tail just before it enters the den. As the wolf

starts struggling to escape, Imad, who doesn't know what is going on, calls out from within the den:

- "What are you doing, Hodja Effendi? You've raised a great dust around!"

- "Pray that the mother wolf's tail doesn't break off! If it breaks off, you'll see the real dust and earth!"

Advice: We should do our best to take the necessary measures.

124 I'm looking for "sleep" in the streets

While Hodja is strolling round the town at midnight, Police Magistrate, who is responsible for public order and safety in that age, sees him.

- "Effendi, what are you looking for in the street at midnight?" asks Police Magistrate.

- "My sleep has escaped ... So I'm looking for it!" replies Hodja.

Note: "My sleep has escaped" is an idiomatic expression in Turkish which means "One can't sleep because one doesn't feel sleepy."

Advice: We should always be polite when we are doing our duties.

125 **They've daunted the logs**

Nasreddin Hodja wants to light a fire on the hearth to heat the meal. But the logs don't kindle at all although he uses chips, twigs and grass. When he blows to kindle them, the ashes soil his clothes blowing around. Hodja goes to his room, puts on his wife's mantle and wears her kerchief on his head so that his clothes won't become dusty and ashy. Meanwhile the logs become hot and start to burn when blown once.

- "Oh, I see!.. I see!.. Our women have even daunted the logs," he says.

Advice: We should accept that everyone is more dexterous in his / her own job.

126 **What if chicks mourn**

The inhabitants of the town go on practising a custom that is not acceptable in Islam in spite of Hodja's warnings. Relatives of the dead person get dressed in black and mourn for their dead kin.

One day Hodja's hen dies and he ties a piece of black cloth round the necks of the dead hen's chicks. His neighbours ask:

- "What happened to these chicks, Hodja Effendi?"

- "Their mother died... So they are mourning for her getting dressed in black!" replies Hodja.

Advice: Old laws are not applied any longer when legislators put new laws into force. Today do our courts judge according to Ottoman Code or Modern Code of civil laws? As Islamic Code, which is the latest one, is in force, the others were abolished. One who follows the old code deceives oneself, then. We should learn and practise our religion.

127 **I'll consult the donkey**

Nasreddin Hodja sees in the distance that his neighbour, who borrowed his donkey, is treating the animal cruelly while returning from the vineyard. One day Hodja's neighbour wants his donkey again.

- "Wait a minute! This time I'll go and ask the donkey," says Hodja.

He enters the stable and comes back after a short while:

- "I'm sorry but I consulted the donkey and he said no. 'When you lend me to other people, they are both beating me and cursing you!' he said."

Advice: We should use the effects which have been given to us in trust with great care. Also we shouldn't forget that our bodies have been entrusted to our souls.

128 Do you believe the donkey's word?

When the attendance is leaving the mosque after performing the morning prayer, someone asks Hodja:

- "Hodja, can I borrow your donkey if you don't need it today? I'm going to the bazaar."

- "Certainly! Come and take it," replies Hodja.

- "Hodja, I'll go and tell it to my wife so that she can make some preparation. I'll come and take it in an hour," says the man.

Hodja arrives home. Someone knocks at the door after a short while. Another neighbour asks:

- "Hodja, I'm going to the mill. Can you lend me your donkey today?"

- "The donkey isn't present," replies Hodja.

Just at that time the donkey brays from the stable.

- "But the donkey is in the stable, Hodja!" says the man.

- "Oh! Do you believe me or the donkey?" says Hodja.

Advice: We should still act politely when we don't comprehend an event thoroughly.

129 Timur Khan's value

Hodja and Timur are having a bath in the hammam (Turkish public bath).

- "Hodja, can you estimate my value?" asks Timur.

- "You're worth forty Ottoman coins," says Hodja.

Timur gets angry and frowns:

- "Oh, Hodja! Only this bath towel on me costs forty Ottoman coins!"

Hodja:

- "I essentially estimated the value of the bath towel. I dare not estimate your merit! Allah, the Absolute Ruler will let you know your exact value without underestimating or overestimating it when the time comes. I don't meddle in His affairs."

Advice: Man should never forget that he isn't left uncontrolled.

130 He measured it and now he's leaving

An acquaintance of Hodja asks him:

- "Hodja, how many yards is Earth?"

Just at that time a funeral procession passes by. Hodja shows the coffin:

- "Ask him! Look, he measured it and now he's leaving!..."

Advice: We should learn about our world. We should inquire about its diameter, the perimeter of the equator, its interior and exterior structure, how many km per hour it revolves on its axis and round the Sun, whether there is a mistake in its orbit. How do these innumerable stars and masses stay orderly in space? Can this infinite order be by chance?

131 He sits back to front on the donkey

While Hodja and some of his friends are riding their donkeys, Hodja falls behind the others.

His friends say:

- “No, Hodja! You go ahead of us.”

Hodja rides at the front. This time he feels uncomfortable as he has turned his back to his friends. He sits back to front on his donkey. They go on chatting on the way. Some people who see them ask:

- “Oh, Hodja! Why are sitting back to front on the donkey?”

- “Anyhow, most of us put the cart before the horse in this world!” replies Hodja.

Advice: We should tolerate some petty difficulties and faults in order not to hurt our friends’ feelings and break their hearts.

132 Is it convenient to chew gum in the toilet?

- “Is it convenient to chew gum in the toilet?” they ask Hodja.

- “I haven’t encountered a precept about this matter, but you had better not chew it,” answers Hodja.

- “Why not?” they persist in asking.

- “Well, ones who see you going out of the toilet chewing something in your mouth may think that you’re eating something from there.”

Advice: Ones who are occupied with details without learning the gist are hindered by details.

133 **What does the guest in the sky eat?**

Nasreddin Hodja starts to work in a village far from his home in order to preach and conduct the ritual prayers and the night service of worship during the holy month of Ramadan. They give Hodja a room in the village. Hodja doesn't bring his family as he has a short-term job; and he stays on his own in his room.

While he is preaching in the village, sometime he mentions Jesus Christ's elevation to the sky. When he leaves the mosque, an old woman comes near to him:

- "Hodja Effendi, you said Jesus Christ had been elevated to the sky, but you didn't explain what he ate and drank there!"

- "Oh, woman! I've been a guest in this village for days. You haven't asked even once what your guest eats and drinks, but you're asking what the Prophet who had been put up as a guest in the sky ate and drank!" says Hodja.

Advice: We should show concern for our guests. We should try to content God treating them with what we have.

134 I beat the daughter of the one who beats my wife

Nasreddin Hodja's wife goes to her father's house. The father slaps his daughter's face as she vexes him while they're talking. When the woman comes home, she tells Hodja what happened. She complains about her father. When Hodja hears his wife complaining about her father, he stands up and gives a slap on her face too. Then he adds:

- "Go and tell your father: If he beats my wife, I beat his daughter like this!"

Advice: We should always show affection and respect for our mothers and fathers. Even if they are wrong, we shouldn't complain about their behaviour to other people.

135 Four-footed ducks

One day Nasreddin Hodja is preaching in mosque. When he notices some people from the attendance are yawning and some of them are dozing, he goes on his speech like this:

- “One morning I was outside Akşehir. Four-footed ducks were drinking water by the brook.”

As soon as they hear the words “four-footed ducks”, they open their eyes and start to listen to Hodja carefully. Upon this Nasreddin Hodja says:

- “Oh God! What kind of men are you? I’ve been preaching seriously for some time, but you were dozing. When I made up a grotesque lie, you were all ears.”

136 When you go home, smear tar on the goat!

One day a peasant brings his scabby goat to Hodja:

- “Breathe on it, Hodja! Your breath is strong.”

After saying some prayers and blowing on the sick animal, he turns to the peasant:

- “I’ve blown on it, but you should also take the

necessary measures. When you go home, smear tar on the goat.”

Advice: We should consult an expert before we do anything we don't know.

(Hodja Effendi doesn't want to offend the peasant. He knows well that scab microbe doesn't live in airless places and its cure is tar.)

137 **The sign of the Doomsday**

They ask Nasreddin Hodja:

- “Hodja, what is the sign of the Doomsday?”
- “I don't care!” says Hodja.
- “Mercy, Hodja! If you say you don't care either, who can we ask to learn it?” they ask.
- “I said I don't care. If everybody says <I don't care!>, then this is a sign of the Doomsday!..” replies Hodja.

Advice: In sound societies, the problems of society concern everybody. Everyone should take risks to find a solution. There is a nice idiom in Turkish, “Everybody must put their hands under the stone.”

138 Donkey's reading

Nasreddin Hodja praises his donkey while he is talking to Timur:

- "I can even teach it how to read if I want."

- "Then teach it! You've three months!" says Timur.

Upon this decree Hodja starts to train his donkey. He puts its fodder between the leaves of a big book; when the fodder finishes, he instructs it to turn over the pages with its tongue. He hungers the donkey for three days before the end of the trimester.

As soon as the three-month period of time is up, a big book is put on the table. "Beware! Don't bray in the presence of Timur Khan!" is written on its first page. Then the donkey is brought. The hungry animal turns over the pages one by one with its tongue. As it can't find anything to eat, it starts to bray looking at the people there.

- "It's peculiar! The donkey doesn't understand what it has read," grumbles Timur.

Hodja speaks to Timur:

- "See! A donkey reads as such. I've instructed hundreds of them up until now."

Advice: The purpose of reading is learning and using the knowledge attained, isn't it?

139 **The one who has the blue bead**

Nasreddin Hodja has two wives. They don't get on well together and they are jealous of each other. Hodja secretly gives both of them a blue bead and speaks to each one in private:

- "Don't show this bead to your fellow-wife!"

One day his wives argue with each other again and force Hodja to tell the truth:

- "Tell us quickly! Which of us do you love more?"

- "The one who has the blue bead is the queen of my heart. I love both of you very much," says Hodja.

- "Hodja loves me more," they say innerly and go back to their work smiling.

Advice: Managing people is an art. We should settle unnecessary arguments without giving up the truths at all. We should act tenderly and find solutions to the problems of people we are responsible for according to the circumstances.

140 **The one who gives the money blows the whistle**

While Nasreddin Hodja is going to the bazaar, some children in the neighborhood ask him to bring each of them a whistle. “OK,” says Hodja. Only one of the children pays for the whistle he has ordered. When Hodja returns from the bazaar in the afternoon, the children rush towards him and want their whistles. Hodja gives a whistle to the boy who gave the money. The boy starts to blow his whistle.

- “Where are our whistles?” ask the other children.

- “The one who gives the money blows the whistle,” replies Hodja.

Advice: First we should fulfil the necessary requirements, then we should expect something to happen.

141 **If you don't know the wrong side of something**

They ask Nasreddin Hodja a silly and teasing question:

- "On which side is your nose?"

Hodja doesn't get angry at all and shows his nape immediately.

- "You're showing just the opposite side, Hodja Effendi," they say.

- "If you don't know the wrong side of something, you can't understand the right side of it," replies Hodja.

Advice: If there were no fools, could clever ones appreciate their wisdom? Disdaining people is unacceptable according to both Islam and public morality. We should try to speak and act decently.

142 **Good appetite!**

Tamerlane sends for some of the notables of Aksehir to become acquainted with them. He orders his servants to serve out sherbet (a cooling drink) to the guests. They wait for Tamerlane to start first. When he finishes drinking his sherbet, one of the flatterers slips up and says "Good day!" instead of saying "Good appetite!"

Tamerlane looks sourly at his face. Hodja wants to intervene:

- “My Sultan, they say like this in our town.”

Advice: If we correct a small mistake before it gets bigger, we may protect the people around us. Timur Khan is a cruel Mongol. He likes shedding blood. Our Nasreddin Hodja settles the matter agreeably.

143 **He gets what he deserves**

A rich man from Aksehir gives Nasreddin Hodja 50 Ottoman coins and says:

- “Hodja, take these and pray to Allah (God) for me in your prayers at five appointed times a day.”

Hodja gives him back the 10 Ottoman coins:

- “You haven’t performed the morning prayers for a long time. So you can’t get your portion of the morning prayers. But I can take the money you’ve given me for the others. I can’t accept the money I don’t deserve.”

Advice: Our Hodja points out clearly that praying to Allah (God) just after performing the divine service at five appointed times a day is very important and wealth doesn’t make anyone privileged. Ones who understand Islam very well know the excellence of morning prayers and try to benefit from them.

144 You're grazing where I left you

Nasreddin Hodja tells the attendance in mosque that people should heed the advice given to them, constantly try to learn something, and live a better life increasing their knowledge.

- "Don't forget the order which says 'Learn from the cradle to the grave'. It is a religious obligation for every Moslem man and woman to pass from imitative faith to verified faith," he says, but he can't see much awareness in them.

One day when they go to the forest together, they set their donkeys free on a flat grassy area. Hodja turns to the donkeys:

- "Graze here a bit. Then go this way, there the grass is better. Then go that way, there is some fresh water and the grass is much better."

They come back to take their donkeys after they've finished their work. They see that the donkeys are grazing in the place they first left them. Also they are not satiated and feel thirsty. Hodja scolds the donkeys:

- "I gave you some advice and showed you the way, but you're still grazing where I left you. Come on, go direct to your stable now!"

Advice: We should always develop ourselves in every field and never forget the warning which says “One whose two days are equal sustains loss”. We should learn and take advantage of today’s developing science, and try to use the new technology in what we do. The situation of those who don’t read or research at all after they have left school is the same as the situation of those who are grazing in the place where they have been left, isn’t it?

145 **Fire!**

Nasreddin Hodja, who feels very hungry, plunges his spoon hastily into the hot and peppery soup of dried curds, and gulps it down quickly. His mouth and throat burn very much. So he jumps to his feet shouting:

-“Stand aside! ... My stomach is on fire!”

Advice: Almost everyone has burnt themselves a few times in their life while eating hot soup. How nicely our Hodja is telling his pain! We’ve got a nice proverb that says, “One whose mouth was once burnt with hot milk blows on the yoghurt before eating it.” That is “A scalded cat dreads cold water.” We test the heat of the soup first before we eat it, don’t we?

146 Dream

Nasreddin Hodja goes to visit Timur Khan with a few friends. They chat a bit and drink sherbet. Then Timur Khan remembers the dream he had the previous night. He calls his spahees and orders:

- “Find so-and-so and bring him here at once. He did me harm in my dream. Hang him on to the tree in front of me!”

The soldiers go to look for the man immediately. Nasreddin Hodja asks permission from Timur Khan to leave.

- “Why are you in a hurry, Hodja Effendi? Sit down!” says Timur Khan.

- “My Khan! I must go home to pack up my belongings and then go hastily somewhere very far from Akşehir. It’s beyond my control to come or not to come into your dreams at night. What can I do then if it happens?” replies Hodja.

Advice: Nasreddin Hodja wants to save the man whom Timur Khan orders his men to hang warning him in a very polite way. If you become powerful one day and people do whatever you say, don’t abuse your power acting selfishly. Keep in mind that every human being is worth the world. You should know the Creator of that person can judge you severely when the time comes.

147 **Man's division**

One day four children come to Hodja. They put a bag of walnuts before Hodja and say:

- "Hodja Effendi, we can't share out these walnuts. Could you divide them up among us?"

Hodja asks:

- "Do you want Allah's (God) division or man's division?"

- "We want Allah's division," the children say.

Hodja opens the bag. He gives the first child five handfuls of walnuts; the second one three handfuls of walnuts; the third one two walnuts. He doesn't give any walnuts to the fourth child and says:

- "You owe ten walnuts to your friend whom I've given five handfuls of walnuts."

- "What sort of division is this, Hodja Effendi?" they say.

- "Well! Allah's division is like this to test His creatures. Allah grants some of His creatures a lot; some of them a little; and doesn't grant some of them any. If you'd wanted man's division, I'd give out the walnuts to everyone in equal numbers."

Advice: If everything was humdrum in the world, there wouldn't be diversity, but monotony. Everybody has to find the most suitable answers to the exam questions asked to them in this world. According to their circumstances, ones who give the correct answers will be granted boundless treats in Heaven. Paradise isn't free!

148 Instalment

One of Nasreddin Hodja's friends from Akşehir wants Nasreddin Hodja to lend him ten gold coins by instalments.

- "My friend, I also have some financial problems these days, so I can't give you money; but I can give you as many instalments as you like!" Hodja says.

Advice: We should try to meet others' needs and help them get rid of their troubles. But also we should definitely keep our promise. How nice even Hodja's refusal is, isn't it?

149 We can't save you from there

An ugly-voiced man from the attendance who doesn't know musical tunes and methods goes up the minaret and starts calling for the prayer.

Nasreddin Hodja calls out upwards standing under the minaret:

- "My boy! Why are you shouting? You've climbed such a branchless and knotless tree that we can't easily save you from there now!"

Advice: Being eager to call for prayer is a nice desire, but those who have been trained should do that. Nasreddin Hodja warns the muezzin (Moslem crier of the hour of prayer) saying, "You're shouting as one who climbs on top of a tall branchless and knotless tree in the forest shouts."

150 Wear them with pleasure and joy!

The cadi (judge) of Sivrihisar sometimes drinks. One day while Nasreddin Hodja is strolling in the country with his students, he sees Cadi, who is lying dead drunk on the riverside. His gown is on one side, his turban and wadded hat are on the other side. Hodja wears the gown on his back, the wadded hat on his head and wraps the turban round the hat; and goes home.

The next day when Cadi comes to himself, he orders his men:

- "Catch the man who has my gown and turban and bring him to me!"

After a short while, the court constable sees Nasreddin Hodja who is strolling in front of the court house with Cadi Effendi's gown and turban on. He drags Hodja to the hearing room as soon as he catches him. The folk follow them to learn what's happening.

Cadi bellows with rage:

- "Hodja! Where did you find the gown on your back and that wadded hat?"

- “Yesterday I went for a stroll with my disciples. We saw a decent well-dressed fellow who was lying blind drunk by the stream. His gown was on one side, his wadded hat on the other side... I put on his gown and wadded hat so that thieves could not steal them. Cadi Effendi, if you know their owner, tell me. I’ll give them back,” says Hodja.

Cadi speaks with a soft voice trying to collect himself:

-“How can I know him? Never mind! Wear them with pleasure and joy!”

Advice: Cadi Effendi, who punishes those that drink, doesn’t observe the law which prohibits the use of alcoholic drinks. Our Nasreddin Hodja teaches him an unforgettable lesson. If laws are applied equally to everyone, then there is justice.

151 **The one who sees the light is jumping out**

Hodja's neighbour's wife is pregnant. She feels pains at night. The women in the neighborhood call the midwife in a rush and bring her to the house.

The midwife calls out from within soon after:

- "Your wife has given birth to a boy!"

The man becomes happy.

After a short while the midwife calls out again:

- "Your wife has given birth to a girl!"

The man is surprised a bit:

- "Oh, Hodja! How will we look after the twins in this severe winter?"

Meanwhile, the midwife calls out again:

- "Your wife has given birth to another girl!"

- "Oh, midwife! Blow the candle out quickly!

The one who sees the light is jumping out. This poor man has already enough trouble!" says Hodja.

Advice: The future of nations depends on the education and training children receive. Great things cannot be achieved with little men, in other words with inadequately educated people. We shouldn't forget that all children are our future.

Our mothers and fathers are just a means for our coming to the world. Soul is given to the fetus, which is a piece of inanimate flesh, after the sixth week by Allah, the Almighty (God) so as to be tested in that family. From that moment forward, the baby is entitled to enter the World, which is a trial room for Heaven. Let's think about young people's endeavors for years in order to get into university.

152 I'm eating air

One of the fellow travellers treats Nasreddin Hodja with some powder of sweet roasted chickpeas telling him to open his hand while they are going to their fields in Aksehir on their donkeys. As he is trying to eat the powder in the palm of his hand, the wind starts to blow and it blows the powder off. Someone sees Hodja on the way and asks:

- "Effendi, what are you eating?"
- "If the wind goes on blowing like this, I'll eat air!"

Advice: We should take the circumstances into consideration before we do something. Otherwise we can encounter unforeseen difficulties even in doing the easiest thing such as eating some ready food.

153 A pair of baggy trousers and underpants

Tamerlane speaks to the people of Aksehir:

- "Send your boldest man to me. I'll charge him with a very important duty and I'll pay well for that."

A few youngsters from Aksehir take Nasreddin Hodja with them and come to the presence of Timur Khan, who is making his troops have target practice with arrows.

- “Let’s try these gallant men in turn. One of you stand in front of the target,” says Timur Khan showing his guests the target board.

A youngster stands in front of the target board as he has no alternative. Timur Khan orders him to open his arms and legs, and stand erect in that position. He signals one of his archers. The sharpshooter shoots an arrow and it passes between the man’s legs. Then he signals the other one. The second arrow pierces the sleeve of his cloak. The third arrow pierces his fez.

Timur Khan sees that the man stands still upright.

- “Well done! I liked you very much. You’re a brave man. Give this gallant youngster a new caftan and fez,” he orders his men.

Nasreddin Hodja, who sees the wetness and excrement oozing out of the legs of the man’s baggy trousers, says to Timur Khan:

- “My Khan, order your men to give him a pair of baggy trousers and underpants as the gallant youngster’s cannot be used again.”

Advice: One has the right to defend one’s life. Moreover Allah, the Almighty (God) orders and authorizes us to protect this important right. It is so bitter to be defenceless in the presence of a tyrant, isn’t it?

As tyrants will always exist till the Doomsday, we must work hard to make progress in science and technology, which will protect us and our society, in order not to suffer cruelty. Otherwise being gallant only does not mean anything when one is a living target for the well-equipped tyrant.

154 All of them taste the same

One day Nasreddin Hodja picks two baskets of grapes from his vineyard in Akşehir, loads them on to his donkey and sets forth. When he arrives at his neighborhood, some children assemble around him and want grapes:

- “Hodja Effendi, let us taste these grapes!”

Hodja takes a big bunch of grapes from the basket into his hand and distributes it to all the children.

- “You’ve given us a thimbleful of grapes, Hodja Effendi!” they start to grouch.

-“It doesn’t matter whether you eat a thimbleful or a basketful... They all taste the same!” says Hodja.

Advice: If he gave a bunch of grapes to each child, those in the basket might not be enough for all of them. When we want something from someone, we should be moderate.

155 In a case of lute

When Nasreddin Hodja is working as a cadi (judge) in Aksehir, someone comes and says:

- “So-and-so in the bazaar has stolen my lute.”

He sues the man. The suspect is brought up before the court.

- “You’ve stolen this man’s lute,” says Cadi Effendi to the accused.

- “I haven’t stolen his lute. This is my lute. I’ve got witnesses,” replies the man.

The adduced witnesses say that the owner of the lute is the defendant. They also explain some of its features such as the number of strings it has. The plaintiff objects to the witnesses.

- “I don’t accept their testimony. One of them dances at weddings, the other sings, and the third one ...”

Hodja interrupts him:

- “Oh, man! How can you find better witnesses than these men in a case of lute?”

Advice: According to the legal principles of that age, the testimony of rouges, fakers and liars ... etc and also the testimony of people from some occupational groups were not accepted. The plaintiff wants to remind Cadi Effendi that the witnesses are from one of those groups. But as the case is about a lute, Hodja makes a very appropriate decision, doesn’t he? We should always take into consideration that every case might have its own particular conditions.

156 The Ascension ladder

Some wise priests want to ask Nasreddin Hodja a question that they think he cannot answer.

- “Hodja Effendi, we want to ask you something. How did your prophet rise to the heavens for the Ascension?” they ask.

- “How? He ascended there using the ladder which had been fixed to elevate Jesus Christ to the fourth heaven.”

Advice: The Ascension of Prophet Mohammed is a phenomenon that is very difficult for people to understand. Jesus Christ’s elevation to the fourth heaven is a miracle that’s very hard to understand likewise. Can you imagine how many billions of light years are the fourth heaven far from us?

It is said that the dimensions of our universe are 70 billion light years. That is to say light, which is known is to travel 300.000 km per second, needs 70 billion light years to reach even the end of the universe. However, this distance was covered in a very short period of time during the Ascension as his bed was still warm when he returned. But it is an extremely easy deed for our Creator who has boundless power and knowledge.

We need to analyse quarks and even smaller particles in order to understand the constitution of matter. When we study the structure of molecules of the matter, and then the structure of the atoms which constitute that molecule, we can comprehend the great power that is put into those tiny particles. We see that electrons, which consist of light

particles, continuously revolve in an orbit. Who is turning these electrons that revolve round the atomic nucleus in a particular orbit without decelerating or accelerating since a time that can be called perpetual? Some use a meaningless expression such as, "They revolve by themselves." When you spin a top, does it spin forever?

The structure of the negative charged, positive charged and neutral particles that constitute atom is much more miraculous. In the centre there are four heavenly light particles of little or no proportion with infinite energy called quanta. They are encircled by an area like plasma from a very long distance. While the speed of light is 300.000 km per second, the speed of quantum particles that constitute light is billions of times faster than the speed of light.

Those who want to understand the divine order a bit should benefit from today's sciences of physics, chemistry and astronomy. We should read scientific journals and publications, and also make use of other opportunities. For instance, there are 65 billion iron atoms on the head of a pin. There are 57 particles in each atom. There are 4 quanta in each particle. If the nucleus of atom were a sphere of which diameter is one meter, the orbit of the nearest electron would pass 109.000 meters far from it. The distance of heavenly light particles called quanta to their plasmas is the same as that.

Only if we cling to science, we can attain "verified faith" without a doubt. We shouldn't forget the warning in a verse of the Koran that says, "Only the learned fear Allah (God) thoroughly."

157 **If you're great**

Timur Khan's soldiers' horses enter the fields of people of Aksehir and damage the crops. They ask Nasreddin Hodja to talk to Timur Khan, so he goes and tells him their wish. Suddenly Timur gets angry.

- "Oh, Hodja! How can you dare tell this to a conqueror like me, who holds the world in his claws?" he starts to shout.

Hodja doesn't care at all and says calmly:

- "So what? If you're a great sovereign who rules over the world, I'm the imam of Aksehir which is a small town where even sovereigns live!"

Advice: Worldly posts and offices are just a means of test for man who is travelling to infinity. The important thing is what we do in that position under those circumstances.

How nicely these lines by our estimable poet Cengiz Numanoglu express our aim in life!

"Some ranks are written on a gravestone;

They wear away in torrents of time.

Some ranks are written in the skies of Paradise;

They are carried to eternity."

Which rank do you want to have?

158 Thank God!

Nasreddin Hodja fills a basket with fragrant big bright yellow quinces and sets off.

A man Akşehir sees Hodja on the way and greets him.

- "Where are you going, Hodja Effendi?" he asks.

- "I'm going to give a present to Timur Khan," replies Hodja.

- "You had better give him figs. Look, how nice and mellow the figs are! The quinces may be hard," says the man.

Hodja empties the quinces into his garden. He picks the figs diligently and puts them into the basket. When he comes to the presence of Timur Khan, he presents his gift to him.

But Timur Khan doesn't like figs at all.

- "Throw the figs at this man's head one by one," he orders his men thinking Hodja has brought them on purpose.

Hodja, who has been caught in a rain of figs, says "Oh, Thank God!" each time a fig hits his head.

- "Oh, Hodja! What does this mean? You thank God each time it hits your head," says Timur.

Hodja again says "Thank God! Thank God!" and adds:

- "What if I hadn't followed my friend's advice and had brought the quinces!.."

Advice: In Anatolian Seljuk and Ottoman culture, there is a proverb, "Remember me with a walnut, even if it is rotten." We value even a rotten walnut. Gift giving is advised by our religion. We should accept the gifts offered to us indulgently.

159 **How many feet does your donkey have?**

While Nasreddin Hodja is going to his field by Lake Akşehir, a priggish fellow asks:

- “Hodja Effendi, how many feet does your donkey have?”

Hodja comes off his donkey. After touching its legs one by one, he says:

- “It has got four feet.”

- “Hodja, don’t you know how many feet your donkey has? Why have you counted them?” they ask.

Hodja smiles:

- “I know, but I hadn’t looked at them since last night. I counted up again thinking that they might have been stolen.”

Advice: If we encounter such a rude and frivolous question, we should be able to give an exemplary answer without being offensive.

The procedure in Islam tells us to evaluate the news brought by immoral people after absolutely verifying it. Furthermore, does the man, who asks how many feet the donkey has, indicate some other problem? Our Hodja checks his donkey’s feet to be sure. He also implies that thieves can steal absurd things.

160 Fasting of one who kisses his wife...

They ask Nasreddin Hodja:

- "If a man kisses his wife, is his fast broken?"

Hodja smiles:

- "Yes if they are newly married. If two years have passed since they got married ... I don't know that. But if three years have passed, it isn't broken."

Advice: If only it was possible to let our love stay as it started. We should appreciate every day we live for our felicity in this world and in the world to come.

161 They hollowed out a radish

One day a puckish friend of Hodja says:

- "If you know what's in the palm of my hand, I'll stand you a kaygana."

- "Give a clue," says Hodja.

- "A roundish thing of which inside is yellow and outside is white," says the man.

- "I know, I know! They hollowed out a radish and then put a carrot in it," says Hodja.

Advice: “Kaygana” is an oriental dish made with flour, butter, cheese, salt and eggs. When Nasreddin Hodja wanted a clue, he thought he would choose between cheese and one of the others. But the one who asked the riddle explained it so clearly that it would be childish to say “egg”.

Do you like “kaygana”, which is part of old Turkish cuisine? I think everyone has eaten “kaygana” at least once in their life. But unfortunately today we use the word “omelette”, which is adopted from foreign languages into Turkish, instead of “kaygana”, which is originally a Turkish word!

+++ In 1995s, we were touring Iznik. At that time we entered a shrine in which there was also the tomb of Grand Vizier Candarlı Kara Halil Hayrettin Pasha. There were two tombs side by side. On the gravestone there were some writings in Ottoman Turkish. None of us, including those who had graduated from a vocational religious school, could manage to read them exactly. When we came to the gate of Iznik city walls, we saw a group of Greek tourists reading the historical writings engraved on the stones easily and we felt really sad. They were able to read and understand the scripts written by their ancestors on the stones of the ramparts two or three thousand years ago. What a pity that we couldn't read the tombstones of our forebear! Europeans regard Greeks as their roots. They proved right! +++

162 **One looks for the other one's donkey...**

Police Magistrate's donkey has been lost. The inhabitants of the town start to look for the animal.

- "You search the vineyards," they say to Nasreddin Hodja

Hodja both looks for it and sings folk songs gaily. Those who see Hodja say:

- "You're merry, Hodja. What are you looking for in the vineyards?"

- "Police Magistrate's donkey has been lost, and I'm looking for it," he says.

- "Why are you singing songs while you're looking for the donkey?" someone asks.

- "Well, one looks for the other one's donkey singing songs!" replies Hodja.

Advice: Our forefathers say, "Fire burns the place it drops in". The others will lose nothing if a wolf devours Police Magistrate's donkey. But Hodja does his duty as a neighbour and doesn't neglect to look for the donkey. We shouldn't forget that neighbours always have some rights on one another.

163 My turban is playing with the children

While Nasreddin Hodja is riding his donkey at a gallop, he drops his turban on to the ground. The children of the neighborhood snatch the turban from the ground. They keep turning and playing with the turban throwing it to one another like a ball. As Hodja sees that he won't be able to take his turban easily from their hands, he goes home leaving it behind.

- "Effendi, where is your turban?" his wife asks.
- "It remembered its childhood, so it is playing with the children," Hodja replies.

Advice: Turban is an inanimate thing. Of course it can't play with the children voluntarily. If our Nasreddin Hodja strived to take his turban from the children, he would appear to be playing ball together with them. If he took his turban from the children scolding them, he would offend them. But Hodja returned home leaving his turban to the children and didn't hurt them for a turban. He told his wife the event he'd experienced briefly. We too should be tolerant.

164 He is used to taking something

Nasreddin Hodja goes to the vineyards with the notables of Akşehir to have a picnic. They eat their meal and then fruit under the big trees.

The police magistrate of Akşehir who is well-known for his riches and stinginess starts to walk in the vineyard. He both picks and eats the fruit on the trees, and walks looking at the branches to find ripe fruit. He suddenly falls into a large well in the market garden as he doesn't watch his steps, and starts to shout for help. In order to save him from there, Police Magistrate's friends, who are standing at the edge of the well, say:

- "You're gonna drown, give your hand quickly!"

They stretch out their hands, but Police Magistrate, who is struggling in the water, doesn't hold anybody's hand. Hodja rushes to help. He holds on to something firm at the edge of the well with one hand and extends the other to the man.

- "Take my hand!" he says.

Police Magistrate grips Hodja's hand tightly at once, and he is taken out of the well.

- "Hodja, why didn't Police Magistrate hold none of our hands, but yours?" the others ask somewhat puzzled.

- "He is used to taking something, not giving. You said 'Give your hand!', but I said 'Take my hand!'"

Advice: One can rid oneself of stinginess, which is a kind of disease, by learning to mend one's ways. It is not possible to get rid of stinginess with riches. We should take good people as an example.

On the other hand, if Police Magistrate held the hand of one of those people who extended their hands rashly without holding on to something firm at the edge of the well, he would probably cause them fall into the well too.

165 The mule is standing back to front

During the time Nasreddin Hodja has a post at court as a *cadi* (judge), some people apply to court to complain about their neighbours concerning various issues. They claim that they are definitely right in each case, but their neighbours definitely wrong.

To clarify one of the objects at issue, they need to go to the land. The plaintiffs bring Hodja a mule to mount. Hodja climbs up on to the mounting block on the left of the mule. He puts his right foot in the stirrup and mounts the animal springing. As Hodja faces the tail of the animal, the people there laugh.

- "Why are you sitting on it back to front, Hodja?" they ask.

- "I'm not sitting back to front. This animal is standing back to front!"

Advice: One who mounts an animal for the first time usually puts one's wrong foot in the stirrup and so sits back to front. Here our Hodja also teaches the plaintiffs who always consider themselves right a thought provoking lesson, doesn't he?

166 **If I had six fingers**

One of the richest people of Akşehir invites the notabilities of the town to a feast in his house. A chicken that is attentively roasted is put in everybody's plate. They start to eat.

While Nasreddin Hodja is eating the chicken with an appetite holding it in his hand, one of the well-mannered men at the table makes an improper remark against Hodja:

- "Hodja, why are you eating with five fingers?"
- "Because I don't have six fingers!" replies Hodja.

Advice: In fact, nobody likes to eat a roast chicken with a fork and a knife. When we eat chicken with our hands, we enjoy it fully although our fingers get greasy, don't we? We should avoid being bound by strict rules all the time.

167 **The ones who don't know should learn from the ones who know**

Nasreddin Hodja often talks about the Devil's tricks again and again on the pulpit. As he sees the attendance doesn't follow his advice, one day before starting his preaching, he says:

- "Attendance! I want to explain the Devil's tricks to you again today. Do you know a little what I'm gonna tell you?"

- "We don't know at all," they say.

- "If you don't know anything about it, what can I tell you?" he says and turns to another subject. When he comes to the pulpit next week, he asks the same question again.

- "We know," they say.

- "As you know it, I don't need to explain it to you," he says and turns to another subject again.

One week later, Hodja repeats his question on the pulpit. This time some people from the attendance say "We know"; some say "We don't know" acting shrewdly.

- "Then the ones who don't know should learn from the ones who know!" he says and turns to another subject again.

Advice: The Devil is striving incessantly to make man fail the test in this world. Those who don't know the Devil that is an obvious enemy of man has very little chance to pass the test. Ones

who get good marks in this test will be put in Paradise. Ones who don't will undergo Hell. Can a sensible person be indifferent to such a momentous matter?

168 **If Azrael comes**

Nasreddin Hodja's wife emulates other women and wears make-up like them applying kohl on her eyebrows and rouge on her cheeks. Hodja warns his wife, who overdoes it, but he sees that she doesn't want to listen to his advice. One day he says:

- "From now on, wear make-up and doll yourself up nicely every day, darling! Put on your new clothes and be present by my side like that."

Surprised by these unexpected words, his wife says:

- "Oh, Effendi! Why did you change your mind?"

- "I don't feel well at all these days, dear! Be present by my side in your best finery in case Azrael, the Angel of Death comes and likes you, and so takes you with him instead of me!" says Hodja.

Advice: Nasreddin Hodja frightens his wife, who doesn't listen to him well, with Azrael. It is not considered agreeable to go too far regarding the things we are allowed to do. Rushing into extremes is criticized in Islam. We are advised to be moderate.

169 **Some parts which haven't been exposed to daylight**

Hodja goes to Konya and then returns to Akşehir. While he is chatting with his wife, he says:

- "There are lots of pretty fair women."

His wife feels offended:

- "They don't work in the sun from morning till evening as I do."

Hodja can't help saying:

- "Don't get hurt, dear! But I also know some parts of your body which haven't been exposed to daylight!"

Advice: Some people are excessively touchy. If someone says, "It's gonna rain", they say "Do you mean I'm a duck?" It is not good to be insensitive, but it can be really boring to be very touchy.

170 **As long as you aren't in it**

They ask Nasreddin Hodja:

- "Should we walk before or after the coffin in a funeral?"

- "As long as you aren't in the coffin, it doesn't matter whether you're walking before or after it!"

Advice: It could be one of us, who is in the coffin. If we are not the one who is being carried away in order to be interrogated, we can walk anywhere we want. It doesn't matter for now!

171 **When you hear about ready money, how cheerfully you laugh!**

A man owes his friend a great deal of money. He can't pay his debt as his business isn't going on well. One day the creditor duns him and wants his money back. The debtor starts to explain calmly:

- "I've planted shrubs by the wayside... While sheep are passing by the bushes, their wool will be caught in them. I'll pick the wool on the bushes. My wife will spin it into thread and knit jumpers. She'll sell them in the bazaar. Thus I'll pay you my debt!..."

The creditor starts to laugh bitterly feeling annoyed. He almost attacks the debtor. Nasreddin Hodja, who hears what they've talked, says:

- "You shrewd fellow! When you hear about ready money, how cheerfully you laugh!"

Advice: We should pay back the money we borrowed at the earliest opportunity. However, sometimes we can meet with so many problems one after another that in spite of all our efforts, we fall into a hopeless case as this debtor does. In Islam, it is advised to pardon a Moslem who is under the pinch of necessity in order to help him/her. In the anecdote, it is obvious that Nasreddin Hodja speaks in a soothing manner.

172 **As our people don't understand Arabic**

A man from Akşehir stays in Arabia for about two years. He goes to Mecca & Medina; and performs the rites of pilgrimage. When he returns, his neighbours visit him and ask him the things they are curious about. With his little Arabic he attempts to translate and interpret the subjects that are beyond his capacity pretending to be a scholar.

One day Nasreddin Hodja and a few people from the attendance go to visit the man. This time he goes too far and translates the hadiths (Prophet Mohammed's maxims) wrong. The people who see that Hodja says nothing think the man learnt Arabic in a very short time. Someone from the attendance says:

- "Hodja, our friend learnt Arabic very well. If we go there, can we learn it too? Is Arabic easy?"
- "Don't worry! As our people don't understand it, you can speak concocted Arabic!" replies Hodja.

Advice: Our forefathers say, "The most cultivated is one who knows one's own defects." As Hodja says nothing, the man falls into the case of one who tries to sell cress to a cress-seller. (It is a Turkish idiom meaning "to try to teach one a subject one is an expert on.") That is he carries coals to Newcastle. We should be prudent about the subjects we are not an expert on.

173 Am I wrong to feel sad?

Nasreddin Hodja's wife, who is a devout believer, dies. They bury her. As life is going on, everybody is busy with their work. One month later, Hodja's donkey dies too. Hodja becomes very dejected and doleful. One day his friends, who see that he is very thoughtful, say:

- "Hodja, you look upset, but why?"
- "I'm sad about my donkey's death," says Hodja.
- "Hodja, you weren't so sad even when your wife died!" they say.
- "When my wife died, in the evening following the funeral, all of you were telling me 'Hodja, don't worry! We can find someone better than her and marry you.' One month has passed since my donkey's death, but none of you have come and told me 'Hodja, don't worry! We can buy you a better donkey'," says Hodja.

Advice: Life is a field of test for every man. We don't feel very sad for devout believers, who we think died having passed the test and so are travellers of Paradise. In those days, donkeys were used as a means of transport that made life easier; thus the lack of his donkey limits Hodja's acts. In the anecdote, it is also indicated that everybody acts more generously when something doesn't concern their purse.

174 **How can he lose his reason?**

A faithless fellow lives in Nasreddin Hodja's neighborhood. One day in the tea-house, someone from the attendance says that this man has lost his reason. After thinking deeply, Hodja says:

- "Anyway, that man has never had reason! I wonder how a person without reason can lose his reason! ..."

Advice: According to Islam, only those who have reason can be pious. Those who don't have reason are not responsible. That is to say, a faithless man who leads a devilish life has no reason at all.

175 Shall we camp in our vineyards?

On a summer day, Hodja and his friends talk about going to their vineyards a little far from Akşehir and staying there together for a few days. They dream of the beautiful days they'll spend there and speak fictitiously:

- "The lamb that will be broiled on the spit is from me."

- "I'll bring stuffed eggplants."

- "Baklava (a kind of lozenge-shaped sweet pastry, which is a very popular Turkish dessert) is from me."

- "I'll bring flans."

When it is Hodja's turn, everybody looks at him:

- "The prayers that will be said after the feast are from me!" says Hodja.

Advice: Do you think Nasreddin Hodja's contribution is less than the others'? We should never forget to praise Allah (God) and thank ones who treat us with something.

176 When you thread the needle

Nasreddin Hodja gives his daughter in marriage. After the wedding, the groom and his relatives set off to take the bride home on horseback. After they've advanced a good deal, Hodja starts to run after them. When he approaches them, he calls out:

- "Stop! I've got something very important to tell my daughter."

They stop and wait. Hodja comes near to his girl and speaks into her ear:

- "My girl, when you're sewing, don't forget to knot the end of the thread you've passed through the needle! Otherwise the thread comes out of the eye of the needle and you just have the needle in your hand!"

Advice: If we don't take the necessary measures in time even when we are dealing with something minor, some problems we never want to encounter may arise.

If a woman who is frying food in a pan in her kitchen doesn't grip the panhandle but holds it loosely, the pan may fall down or it may turn upside down. Then let's think about the problems she may encounter.

Nasreddin Hodja gives us an unforgettable piece of advice saying, "Don't forget to knot the end of the thread!" by which he means that "My girl, be on good terms with your new family and establish strong relations with them."

177 **I had my tooth taken out and got free from pain**

A man comes and tells Nasreddin Hodja:

- “I have a sore eye, Hodja. Can you breathe on me?”

- “A few days ago I had got terrible toothache. I went to the dentist. I had my tooth taken out and so I got free from pain. You go to an oculist. Have your eye taken out and get free from pain!”

Advice: We should definitely consult an expert to find the remedies we need. Our Hodja strikingly points out that one can lose even one’s eye when remedies are looked for in wrong places.

178 **Since you've got all of them**

Hodja goes and asks a well-to-do grocer from Aksehir who is ignorant of fasting and the divine service - the prayers performed at five appointed times a day in Islam:

- "Have you got flour?"
- "Yes," says the grocer.
- "Have you got butter?"
- "Yes."
- "What about honey?"
- "Yes," he says again.
- "Oh, man! Since you've got all of them, why don't you make and eat helva (a kind of popular Turkish sweetmeat), then?"

Advice: People sadly realize the value of the things they have only when they lose them. We understand that we could do lots of nice things with the boons we have been granted in life when we are old. Our estimable poet Cengiz Numanoglu asks in one of his poems: "...While you're waiting indolently in a corner, what opportunities you miss! Are you aware of that?" We should be careful not to miss the opportunities.

179 **Eat, my fur, eat!**

They invite Nasreddin Hodja to a feast. Hodja wears his casual clothes and goes there. Nobody cares him much. He goes home immediately, and puts on his newest and most ostentatious clothes. He puts on his fur too. He comes to the mansion where he has been invited for the feast again. As soon as they see him at the door, they welcome him with great respect. They take him upstairs and make him sit in the place reserved for the most honoured guest. They serve the best meals to him first.

Each time a dish is put before him, he says holding the collar of his fur coat attentively:

- "Eat, my fur, eat!"
- "Hodja, what is that? Does fur ever eat a meal?" they ask.
- "What can I do? The host is serving these meals to my fur. I warn my fur beforehand in order not to have a problem with it later on," Hodja replies.

Advice: One of our proverbs says, "Don't be deceived by appearance!" But man is a social being. It is necessary to wear suitable clothes for the place we are going to. On the other hand, what's important is the value of the thing that's in the package although first impression is got by appearance. Putting a piece of stone into a splendid package cannot improve its value, and putting gold or brilliant into a simple package cannot reduce their value likewise. The old generation used to say, "Don't look at the envelope, but the letter!"

180 **You apply starch too**

A sore forms under the tail of Nasreddin Hodja's donkey. As it hurts, the animal has difficulty in walking. An experienced man tells Hodja that it is effective to apply starch to the sore lightly.

When Hodja arrives at the bazaar, he buys some starch. He applies a bit to his donkey's sore. The suffering animal starts to walk quickly.

Then Hodja encounters one of his acquaintances on the way. The man has difficulty in walking and he is trying to go on foot after his donkey, which is going at the front its back empty.

- "Why aren't you riding your donkey?" asks Hodja.

- "Awful! I suffer from piles and it has become intolerable. I can neither ride the animal nor walk properly. I must find a remedy," replies the man.

- "My donkey was walking with difficulty too. I applied starch to its sore and its walking has improved. If you want, I can give you some too. After you apply it, you'll see how you walk quickly," says Hodja.

Advice: We should appreciate our health and always thank Allah (God). We should also look for remedies at the right addresses.

181 **Only two onions in all**

Nasreddin Hodja reserves a certain quantity of the vegetables he has sown in his garden beforehand as yearly alms for the poor. When the crops ripen, he harvests the ones grown in those parts and distributes them to the poor.

One day when he goes to see to his garden, he stoops down and pulls two onions which have newly grown green in the part reserved in order to be given as alms. When he is about to shake off the soil on them, a thunderbolt strikes a place nearby and then a terrible clap of thunder is heard. Hodja plants the onions in his hand in the garden again.

- "Thank God! I was about to be guilty just because of two onions. You, my God, have sobered me down," he says.

Advice: Our deeds are evaluated according to our intentions. Since Nasreddin Hodja reserves the share of the poor in the beginning, henceforth those crops are just entrusted to him. Angels record Hodja's intention of giving alms in the relevant book immediately. We are warned by a verse of the Koran, which says "Keep your promise." Also isn't it one of the most important qualities of Moslems to be reliable and to protect what's entrusted to them?

182 Neighbours

- “Can a hundred-year-old man have a child from his twenty-year-old wife?” they ask Hodja.

- “Yes, he can if they’ve got a neighbour who is about twenty-five or thirty years old,” Hodja replies.

Advice: One of our proverbs says,

«Don’t build a house in the bed of a stream,
floods take it away;

Don’t heap thrashed grain on top of a mountain,
winds take it away;

Don’t marry someone very young when you are
old, strangers take him/her away...»

We should behave in accordance with man’s
nature.

183 **Toward the place where you put your clothes**

A man wants to perform a full ablution in Lake Akşehir. He asks Nasreddin Hodja:

- “Toward which direction should I turn while I’m bathing? Toward Kaaba?” (Moslems turn toward Kaaba in Mecca, which is a holy place for them while praying.)

- “Turn toward the place where you put your clothes. Otherwise you may have all of them stolen and be left stark naked!”

Advice: One should do the things one’s going to do in order of importance. For instance, it is wrong to deal with extras and small details leaving off doing what’s obligatory. Neglect in acting prudently always causes harm.

184 A hammam in the gallery of the minaret

Someone from the attendance ascends the minaret to call for bedtime prayer. He starts to call for it in a hoarse voice. Only the ones at the bottom of the minaret can hear his voice. When the man comes down after finishing it, Nasreddin Hodja asks him:

- “We could hardly hear you from here. Didn’t you know that you’ve got a weak voice?”

- “Hodja, I went to the hammam (Turkish bath) yesterday. There was not a soul. I called for prayer there in such a booming voice!” the man says.

- “Please don’t call for prayer from the minaret again until a benefactor makes a hammam built in the gallery of the minaret,” Hodja says.

Advice: In those days, the present microphones and amplifiers hadn’t been invented yet. Ones who had a strong and deep voice, and knew the method and tune used to call for prayer. Due to the structure of hammams, voice echoes and sounds loud. Our forefathers say, “The stone is heavy in its proper place,” which means the value of a thing depends on its appropriate use.

185 **It resembles a hen**

The police magistrate of the town shoots a stork. He wants to embalm it, that is, he wants to empty it out and dry it, and then put the stork on the shelf after stuffing it again. He tries to balance the stork he has emptied out in an upright position. As its beak weighs heavy, he can't keep its neck erect; and as its legs are very long, he can't make it stand on its feet. He thinks up a solution. He cuts the stork's beak and makes it like a hen's beak saying, "How long the stork's beak is!" He also shortens its legs saying they are too long. He completes his work and puts the stork in his office.

One day Nasreddin Hodja goes to visit Police Magistrate.

- "What is this, Hodja?" Police Magistrate asks showing the embalmed stork standing on the shelf behind him.

- "Even a stork resembles a hen in your dexterous hands!" replies Hodja.

Advice: You know there are some clumsy people. They take fine materials in their hands and try to make something out of them. Each time, they cut some part of the material; they file and scrape some other part of it. Then they see that the huge material is of no use since they've made it as small as a bird.

Seeking a fault in creatures is because of one's own nescience and ignorance. As people gain knowledge, they become aware of the perfect design in creatures and admire it. One who has created them is omniscient and thoroughly knows every kind of creation.

Do you think the office of Police Magistrate, who is ignorant of natural disposition, makes him respectable?

186 The grace of Allah

One day Nasreddin Hodja is running home raising the skirt of his gown to protect himself from the heavy rain. His neighbour speaks out of the window:

- “Why are you running, Hodja? Does one ever run away from the grace of Allah (God)?”

- “I’m not running away from the grace of Allah, I’m just running not to trample it!”

Advice: Hodja’s neighbour uses the word <grace> in a narrow sense. Nasreddin Hodja, who gets soaking wet in the rain, cuts it short since he has to go home as soon as possible. <Grace> expresses all of the boons Allah, the Almighty, has granted us as a manifestation of one of His beautiful names, <Ar-Rahman, the All Compassionate and the Most Beneficent>. Only if we use or consume the boons as much as we need, they are beneficial to us. For example, we drink water as much as we need. It doesn’t make sense to drink a bucket of water.

In fact, the neighbour’s question isn’t wrong. If you were Nasreddin Hodja, how would you answer it? As you’ve read this book, you too can show that you’re Nasreddin Hodja’s grandchildren.

187 **An uncle like Timur Khan**

A man from Aksehir takes his donkey, which has grown very old and so isn't able to render a service any more, to the mountain; and sets it free there. He buys himself a new donkey. A few days later, Timur Khan goes out hunting. He sees the donkey that was left in the mountains. A cunning idea occurs to him.

- "Find and bring the owner of this donkey to me! Take the donkey to my imperial tent now!" he says.

They find and bring the owner of the donkey to Timur Khan's presence. Timur Khan orders:

- "You'll come here every day. You'll bring the donkey's fodder and barley. You'll curry it. You'll walk through the market place together with it and make it drink water from the fountain there. If the animal has difficulty in walking, you'll help it and you'll even take it on to your back. Otherwise I'll have you beheaded!"

The man obeys the orders, but at the same time, he becomes the laughingstock of the public. Sometimes he struggles to take the donkey on to his back dripping with sweat.

- "Look at this donkey, which is pleased with its life! It isn't even going to the water on foot. But I can't afford a donkey," someone in the market place calls out.

Hodja, who sees what's going on, can't help saying:

- "It isn't an ordinary donkey. It has got an uncle like Timur Khan! It can go on the back of anyone it likes whenever it wants."

Advice: They say <The suffering of the nightingale is due to its tongue>, which means <Talking too much is the source of one's trouble.> If the words of the man that makes allusive remarks reached Timur Khan's ears, the donkey, which is pleased with its life, might go on his back too. There may not always be a «Nasreddin Hodja» present, who warns those that are prating.

188 The burglar can never get away free and safe

A burglar breaks into Nasreddin Hodja's house. He steals some of his effects and goes out of the house. Somebody notices him as he's running away and calls out towards the inside:

- "The burglar who's broken into your house is escaping that way. Let's run and catch him!"

Hodja puts on his shoes, goes out and starts to run toward the graveyard quickly. They call out after him:

- “Hodja, you’re running in the wrong direction. The burglar’s escaped this way, not that way!”

- “I may not catch him up if I chase him in that direction. I’ll go to the graveyard and obstruct his way. I’ll certainly catch him there,” says Hodja.

Advice: There are certain stops from where people can never escape and be set free:

- The first stop is a cemetery, that is, our life in the grave.
- The second one is the aggregation of all people in Ararat –the supposed place of assemblage on the Day of Judgment.
- The third one is Divine Court.
- The fourth one is the place where the judgment of court will be fulfilled. The place of punishment is Hell; the place of reward is eternal Heaven.
- Even a thing as small as a mote won’t be able to be kept secret in Divine Court. One’s own organs will bear witness against one or in one’s favour as well, and one whose right was violated will definitely be given one’s right back.

Nasreddin Hodja was running in the right direction, wasn’t he?

189 **An atheist's forty questions**

An impious man who has unnecessary arguments with people asking them unnecessary questions comes to Aksehir.

- "I want to talk to the greatest scholar of this city," he says.

They take him to Nasreddin Hodja.

- "Effendi, I'm going to ask you forty questions. You must give only one answer to all of them," the man says.

- "OK, ask them!" Hodja says quite indifferently.

The man asks the forty questions successively. Hodja, who listens to him with all his ears, gives his answer when the questions come to an end:

- "I don't know."

Advice: Our Nasreddin Hodja gives a logical and definite answer to the questions of the man who wants only one answer to his forty questions. It is sometimes necessary to avert superfluous talk saying <I don't know.> We aren't obliged to answer every malicious and nonsensical question without fail.

190 **Those who don't fear their wives, stand up!**

Nasreddin Hodja says that he's going to talk about mothers' rights on their children and women's rights on their husbands in his sermon.

- "Attendance! Those who don't fear their wives, stand up!" Hodja says.

Everybody stands up. While Hodja is looking at them puzzled, someone from the attendance says:

- "Hodja Effendi, only you didn't stand up. So you are the only one who fears his wife!"

- "You're entirely right. Allah (God) has saddled pious women's husbands with such important responsibilities that I just stay put when I remember my responsibilities!"

Advice: We are in this world in order to be tested on the eternal life. Every person, man or woman, is going to answer the exam questions for each phase of his / her life. We are told that "Heaven is under the feet of mothers." Just as a devout woman respects her husband's rights on her to the fullest degree, every man must respect his pious wife's rights too. This is a high-marked exam question for men to pass the "Heaven test". How do you think those who stood up could be so sure that they gave the correct answer to this difficult question?

191 **The female trouble**

Timur Khan brings a male elephant to Akşehir. The elephant which is wandering freely in the gardens and fields does too much harm to the crops. This elephant, which nobody dares to touch as they fear Timur Khan, causes great trouble to the people of Akşehir. So they come together and go to Nasreddin Hodja.

- "Hodja Effendi, we are afraid to go and tell Timur Khan our problem. We are afraid to say something wrong and get into more trouble. Come with us tomorrow morning and be our spokesman. Let's tell our complaint to him," they say.

The next day about fifteen men meet. Hodja at the front and the others behind him set off. Nobody says a word. Nasreddin Hodja plans his speech to Timur Khan in his mind with great care. When they approach Timur Khan's imperial tent, Nasreddin Hodja looks behind to give his last instruction to the ones following him, but sees that there is nobody. They escape stealthily one by one because of their fear.

Just at that time Timur Khan, who has gone out of his tent, sees and calls Hodja. After some talk he asks Hodja the reason of his visit.

- "My Sultan! The people of Akşehir liked the elephant you brought very much. They see that the animal is bored on its own. They've sent me here to ask you to bring a female one as well," Hodja says.

Timur Khan is pleased with these words:

- "Give the people of Akşehir regards!, I'll do it."

When Hodja meets the ones who have been waiting for him excitedly in Aksehir, he says:

- “Timur Khan sends you his regards, and I’ve brought good news from him. The female trouble is coming!”

Advice: Do you think leaving one alone who sets off to do a difficult job for the others by request should be unpunished?

192 **Your geese are one-footed**

Nasreddin Hodja goes to visit Timur Khan. Timur Khan tells him that the people of Aksehir are doing some wrong things. Meanwhile, Hodja, who is sitting by the window, looks the outside and sees that the geese which are sunbathing are standing on their one foot. He turns to Timur Khan and says:

- “How astonishing! All of the geese here are one-footed.”

Timur Khan throws his walking-stick violently toward the geese. When the animals, which start to run away, use their both feet, Nasreddin Hodja ripostes:

- “If you were hit with Timur Khan’s stick, you would be four-footed!”

Advice: Fear and haste can make one do wrong things. If you want those under your command to be able to do right things, you should trust in them and give them some time.

193 To see clearly

One night Nasreddin Hodja awakes his wife in a hurry:

- "Give me my glasses quickly so that I can sleep wearing them as I'm still sleepy."

- "Oh, Effendi! What will you do with those glasses while sleeping?"

- "I had a very nice dream, but I couldn't distinguish some parts of it. If I can go back to my dream, I'll see everything clearly through my glasses."

Advice: Dreaming is an interesting phenomenon man tries hard to solve. One can sometimes go to faraway places and sometimes go many years back in a very short period of time while dreaming. Our dreams usually seem to be the same as real life till we wake up. We don't need any money or equipment to dream. Wearing glasses is only a witty remark.

194 **The mules of the cupsellers**

Nasreddin Hodja tries to explain life in the grave in detail:

- “When a dead person has been put into the tomb, the two questioning angels come and ask these questions: “Who is your God? What is your religion? Who is your prophet? What is your holy book? Where and how did you spend your life? Ones whose deeds weren’t good here cannot answer these questions even if they knew them in this world. Then they are tormented in their graves till the Doomsday, the big day of interrogation. Graves are either a garden of Paradise or a pit of Hell for us.”

Someone bold but foolish from the attendance makes a decision on his own:

- “In the evening I’ll go and lie down in a grave that has been dug. I’ll lie as if I’m dead. Let’s see whether the questioning angels will come and ask these questions!”

He enters a dug grave near the road and lies down in it. But he is afraid and stands up when he hears an uproar and bells ringing at dawn. The mules of the cupsellers who set off early to reach the bazaar in due time are frightened and start to rush about. So the cups, plates and vases they’ve been carrying are broken into pieces.

The cupsellers catch the man:

- “Who are you? What are you doing here?”

The man stammers in confusion:

- “I lay down here in the tomb last night. I wondered what the two questioning angels, Münkir and Nekir, would ask and do in the grave...”

The cupsellers say, “They would ask these questions and beat you like this as well!” They beat up the man till he has fainted and go away leaving him there.

While he is returning home, Nasreddin Hodja, who sees him in that condition on the way, asks curiously:

- “Oh, man! What happened to you?”

- “Awful, Hodja! I lay down in the tomb last night to learn what Münkir and Nekir ask and do in the grave,” the man says.

- “What did you hear and see there? Did Münkir and Nekir question you? What did they do then?” asks Hodja.

- “If I hadn’t alarmed the mules of the cupsellers, nothing would have happened!” replies the man.

Advice: If we don’t listen to what we are told carefully and learn our lesson well, what happened to the one who had alarmed the mules of the cupsellers can happen to us as well.

195 **What about the odour**

Someone who passes gas loudly in the presence of Hodja starts to rub his foot against the wood to conceal his fault. Hodja says smiling:

- "Let's say you've smoothed over the noise, but what about the odour?"

Advice: Being attentive to behave decently makes one more respectable.

196 **The 49th of Ramadan**

According to the lunar calendar, fasting starts when the Ramadan crescent is seen. (Ramadan is the ninth lunar month during which Moslems fast.) When the Shevval crescent is seen (Shevval is the tenth lunar month), people celebrate the Bairam (Moslems' festival).

Formerly, it couldn't be exactly known in advance when and where the moon would appear making astronomical calculations like the ones made today. Reliable people used to watch for the Ramadan crescent for everyone to start fasting and then celebrate the Bairam. Sometimes it was impossible to make these observations in cloudy weather. When it wasn't possible to see the Shevval crescent, the month of Ramadan used to be accepted as 30 days in order to celebrate the Bairam.

Nasreddin Hodja throws a stone into a pot every day so as not to lose count of the number of days. Someone puckish from the attendance notices that and secretly fills the pot with stones. On a cloudy day, he asks Hodja:

- “Hodja, which day of Ramadan is it today?”

Hodja goes and counts up the number of stones in the pot. They number 149. He understands it is a hoax and comes back.

- “Today is the 49th of Ramadan,” Hodja says.

- “Oh, Hodja! Is it ever possible?” says the puckish man.

- “Thank heavens it is the 49th of Ramadan! According to the pot calculation, today is the 149th of Ramadan!” Hodja replies.

Advice: In the 39th verse of Yâsîn - one of the surahs of the Koran – it is pointed out that the appearance of the moon is changed for us to know the time. The ancient Romans had accepted that a year was 354 days when they were using the lunar calendar. They added one month to three years in order to correct the difference, and so on. There is some deviation in the solar calendar too. (1 year is 365 days, 5 hours, 47 minutes, 46 seconds.) One day is added to February every four years. Some corrections are made for the remaining fractions sometime in centuries. For example, 10 days were deleted from calendars on October 4th, 1582. <Time> is perfectly calculated by today’s technology. We should evaluate this anecdote according to the resources of the 13th century.

197 **The donkey whose owner died**

One of the best hunters of Akşehir girds on his weapons and goes out hunting. Every time he goes out hunting, he shoots a few wolves as well. The hunter's son, who learns that his father hasn't returned yet although it is late in the evening, goes to search for him together with the neighbours. They hear his donkey braying in the forest. They rush toward that direction and see the hunter's cold body a bit further on. They understand that he died by natural death a few hours ago. His rifle is also present by him. They look towards the direction the cry of the donkey comes from and see that a pack of wolves is devouring the donkey having strangled it. As Hodja sees that there is nothing to do, he calls out towards the wolves that are devouring the donkey quickly:

- "Let it be so! Go on eating it! You're pleased to find a donkey whose owner died!"

Advice: If the hunter hadn't died, the pack of wolves couldn't devour the donkey; they couldn't even approach it. At least the hunter could shoot and kill some of them.

A note to the reader

The English alphabet doesn't have the letters “ç, ğ, ö, ş, ü”, which are in the Turkish alphabet.

We used some of these letters in our book when writing proper nouns such as Akşehir.

For example;

“ç” is pronounced “ch” as in “cheese” and “teacher”;

“ş” is pronounced “sh” as in “shell” and “fashion”.

*We are looking for
Contestants who can read this book
Without smiling and thinking!*

**Akşehir is in the centre of the world. If you
don't believe it, you can measure it.
Nasreddin Hoca 1208-1284**