

The Jewish Weekly

Chanuka Sorcery in Iran

By Rabbi Yerachmiel Tilles

They made their way slowly, their boots sinking in the mud that covered the path, and the wind whipping their faces. The two Jewish men had no choice but to pull their coats tighter and plod their way through the puddles. They still had a long way to go without any sign of a settlement where they would be able to find shelter.

It was the eve of Chanukah in Iran. The two men had hoped to reach their homes before the beginning of the holiday but the sudden storm ruined their plans.

Unexpectedly they saw lights in the distance. Hope flared up. They realized that that was the place where there should be a small village. The hope gave them strength to walk faster till they reached the village. They knocked on the door of one of the houses, shaking from cold.

The door was opened a crack and the Muslim landlord looked at them suspiciously.

"Please," they begged of him, "could we stay in your house till the end of the storm? We will pay you well."

To their joy the man agreed. He showed them to a small, dark and cold room. Having a roof over their heads, shelter from the storm, was enough for them to feel great relief.

They were now able to focus on another disturbing problem: it was the first night of Chanukah, how were they going to do the mitzvah of lighting the first candle?

They considered asking their host for candles but they were afraid to do so. At that time there existed a superstition among the gentiles that the Jews practiced witchcraft. The landlord had already lit a kerosene lamp in their room, asking for candles might cause him to suspect them of sorcery and throw them out of his house.

"Why are we depressed?" one of the men turned to his companion. "Let's davven (pray) to G-d that we will merit to fulfill the mitzvah. No doubt He will make us a Chanukah miracle and we will be able to perform the mitzvah with joy."

At the time he said this there was no realistic possibility of this happening. Still, his friend was inspired by his words and both of them davvened the evening prayer joyfully.

They had hardly finished their prayer when someone knocked on the room's door. The wife of their host was standing there. "Please help me," she said, "my sister-in-law lives next door. She is jealous of me and she harasses me without let up. I heard that you Jews are experts at spells and incantations. Please curse her for me and save me from her evil intentions."

The men were shocked by her strange request. What did they have to do with spells and incantations? But then, they realized: here was a perfect solution for their problem!

They went to a corner of the room and whispered together, while the woman waited with ill-concealed impatience to hear their answer. One of

the men called out to her, his expression serious, "You must realize that this is not a simple request."

On hearing this her face fell.

"Don't worry," he continued quickly, "we will try to solve the problem, but we will need several things."

Her eyes lit up. "I will bring you whatever you need," she exclaimed.

"In that case," he said decisively, "we will need candles, eggs and a vessel with glowing coals."

The woman hurried to get them what they asked for.

The men were ecstatic, their joy knew no bounds. They were experiencing a miracle!

They hurried to light the Chanukah candles, thanking the Al-mighty for making it possible for them to fulfill this great mitzvah.

After, they cooked the eggs on the coals and ate them with the bread from their bags. When they said the full 'Blessings After Meals' and came to the special section about the remembrance of the miracle of Chanukah, they said it with extra devotion, conscious of the miracle that they just experienced.

The candles were still flickering and casting dancing shadows on the wall of the room when there was again knocking on the door. Again the woman stood there, this time upset and frightened.

"Please stop!" she screamed. "Extinguish the candles! My sister-in-law is in agony; she has unbearable stomach pains and it looks as if she might die! I'm afraid that it will become known that I had a hand in this and her family will take revenge on me!"

The men stared at her, stunned. Realizing a second opportunity, they shook their heads. "We're sorry, madam," one of them said, "it is too late. The process cannot be stopped. We cannot douse the candles."

The woman burst out crying, stamped her feet on the ground in total panic. "I beg of you! I will give you anything you ask for. Just take away the curse you put on my sister-in-law!"

Again the men retreated to a corner of the room to discuss how to deal with this seemingly disastrous situation. After several moments they turned toward the woman and one of them addressed her, "Even though it is extremely complicated, we will do our utmost to relieve the suffering of your sister-in-law and affect her recovery. Bring us another package of candles, and more eggs and some potatoes, and let's hope that we will be successful."

The woman immediately brought them all they asked for. Now they had candles for all the eight days of Chanukah, and food too. Again they thanked the One Above for their personal "miracle of the oil" - truly something out of nothing.

A short time afterwards the woman returned to thank them for removing "the curse" from her sister-in-law; her stomach aches had ceased and she felt much better. As a result, the woman was convinced that she was hosting miracle workers. She treated them with great respect till the storm ended and they continued on their way.

Reprinted from an email of KabbalaOnline.org.

It Once Happened...

When the Chazon Ish Drew a Brain Diagram for a Doctor

A few weeks ago marked the first yahrtzeit of Rabbi Meir Shmuel Katz zt"l, who served as the menahel of Yeshiva Ohr Yisrael for many years. His family revealed how a sketch from the Chazon Ish guided a physician on how to perform a cranial surgery on their late father.

One of his sons recounted, "A few days before he passed away, my brother told him something about the Chazon Ish, and my father quietly said, 'I, too, had something with the Chazon Ish.' He then sealed his lips and said nothing more. During the shivah, a son of Rabbi Avraham Rein shared what he had heard from his father.

Rabbi Meir Shmuel Katz was born with excess fluid in his head, and doctors said that if he were to undergo surgery, he would die. Even if not, the chances were not high for him to survive. His mother traveled to the Chazon Ish together with Rabbi Rein, who was very close to the Chazon Ish. When they presented the case to him, the Chazon Ish said to proceed with the surgery. The doctor who heard this was visibly upset, questioning, "An old man who never studied medicine will give me advice?"

Following the mother's pleas, the reluctant doctor traveled to Bnei Brak to meet with the Chazon Ish. During their meeting, the Chazon Ish drew on a page, illustrating the brain and how to perform the dissection, where to enter, and so on. However, the doctor claimed that he was afraid to take responsibility for such a surgery. The Chazon Ish told him, "No one asked you to take responsibility. They asked you to perform the dissection."

The surgery was carried out, and with the help of Hashem, Rabbi Katz lived another 75 years until his passing a year ago.

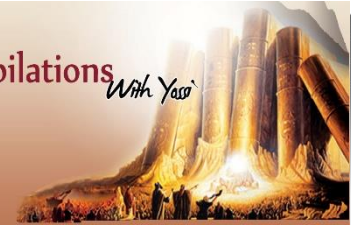
After the above story, the doctor became a follower of the Chazon Ish, consulting with him several times on additional surgeries. It is known that at least once, the Chazon Ish drew the surgical procedures for him. Rabbi Rein, who shared the story with the family, instructed Rabbi Schwartz not to have it revealed until after his passing.

Reprinted from the November 27, 2023 website of Matzav.com.



Shabbat Times - Parshat Vayigash

	Candle Lighting	Motzei Shabbat	Motzei Shabbat ר"ת
 Jerusalem	4:04	5:20	5:58
Tel Aviv	4:18	5:22	5:54
Haifa	4:08	5:19	5:54
Be'er Sheva	4:23	5:24	5:59



The Fire Fighter: One Miraculous Tale Leads to Another

By Rabbi Nissan Mindel

Once, Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi, known as the Alter Rebbe, came to a small town. During his short stay in that town, a fire broke out in one of the wooden houses. The local firemen had a hard time keeping the fire under control, and soldiers from a garrison stationed nearby came to help extinguish it. But a strong wind fanned the flames and sparks were flying in the air, threatening to set the whole town ablaze.

Several worried townspeople came to the saintly Rebbe and told him of the danger. Rabbi Schneur Zalman asked to be shown where the fire was, and he was led to the blazing house. He stood there for a few moments, leaning on his walking cane, and gazing intensely at the blaze.

Suddenly, the wind stopped and the fire began to subside. Within a few moments the fire was brought under control, and everybody breathed a sigh of relief. The town was saved! Everybody talked excitedly about the wonderful miracle which was brought about by the saintly Rebbe.

The soldiers returning to their barracks told their general of the miracle that the saintly Rabbi performed before their very eyes. The general sent his orderly to ask the Rabbi to appear before him.

The general greeted Rabbi Schneur Zalman with respect and reverence. "Are you, perhaps, a son or a grandson of the saintly Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov?" the general asked him.

"I am indeed his "grandson," but in a spiritual sense, for I am a disciple of his disciple," the Alter Rebbe replied.

"Well, then I was not wrong in my conclusion, and I am not at all surprised that you should have supernatural power." Saying this, the general brought out a leather-bound volume, and pointing to it, he continued:

"Let me tell you a wonderful thing that happened to my late father, which he recorded here in his diary. It happened when my father was stationed with his troops near the town of Mezhibozh. He had received no word from his wife for a long time, and he was very worried. Seeing how troubled the general was, some of his friends said to him: "There lives in this town a saintly Rabbi, who is known as the Master of the Good Name. People tell wonderful things about him, and say that there is nothing hidden from him. Why not go and see this saintly man?"

"My father, the general, decided that there was nothing he could lose by seeing that saintly man, and he sent his orderly to the Baal Shem Tov to arrange a time to visit him.

"The orderly returned and told my father that the Baal Shem Tov said he was too busy. This infuriated my father. He sent the orderly back again to the Baal Shem Tov to tell him that if he refused to see him, he (my father) would billet his soldiers in the Jewish houses, and there would not be a single Jewish home which would not have to provide food and lodging for one or more soldiers.

"This threat was very serious, for not only were the Jews of the town poor and unable to afford the burden, but it was also close to the Jewish festival of Passover, and the soldiers would bring chometz into the Jewish homes! But when the orderly returned, he brought the answer that although the saintly Rabbi is too busy, a time had nevertheless been fixed for my father's visit!

"Promptly at the appointed time, my father and his orderly came to the house of the Baal Shem Tov. Through an open door leading from the living room, they saw the saintly Baal Shem Tov sitting in his study, his head bent over a book. By force of habit, my father went up to a small mirror hanging on the wall to smooth his hair. As he looked into the mirror, a strange sight unfolded before his eyes.

Instead of seeing a reflection of his own face, he saw a familiar road, the road leading to his own home town. Not believing his eyes, and thinking that his imagination was playing tricks on him, he called his orderly to the mirror. The orderly was no less amazed. Presently, the road seemed to pass by them, and they found themselves on the familiar street where the general lived.

The door of the house opened and my father saw his wife sitting at her desk writing a letter. As if looking over her shoulder, they saw that she was writing a letter to him! In it she begged him to excuse her for not writing for so long, for she was occupied with the pregnancy and birth of his new child—a boy! Both she and the baby are fine, and she longed for him to come home and see his son!

"You can imagine how excited my father became. Forgetting where he was, he rushed back to his quarters, and there, on his desk, was a letter for him from his wife. He opened it and read it over again and again. It was exactly what he had seen in the mirror in the Baal Shem Tov's house!

"I am that baby about whom my mother wrote to my father in that letter!

You can see the whole story recorded by my father in his diary."

Concluding his amazing story, the general asked the saintly Rebbe to bless him.

"Be good to the Jews, and the Almighty will bless you," the Rebbe replied, "for so it is written in the Torah: 'They that bless you [Abraham] shall be blessed.'"

Reprinted from an email of "Chabad.org Magazine".

It took just two words to explain everything that had transpired in 22 years.

In Parshat Vayigash we read about the epic moment when Yosef revealed his true identity to his brothers and he did so by saying two words: "אני יוסף" - I am Yosef."

And the response of his brothers was: "כי נבהלו מפניו" - They were stunned into silence."

These two words explained everything that had happened since the moment that Yosef had left their presence, the ups and downs, the trials and tribulations, the hardships and the tragedies. Now suddenly, there was an explanation for it all.

The Chafetz Chaim teaches us that at the time of reckoning, when we reach the World of Truth, so too in a very simple and powerful way Hashem will suddenly reveal to us the truth of everything that has transpired to us throughout our lives. But that's not the only lesson.

You see, Yosef actually added three more words. He said, "אני יוסף" - I am Yosef," and then he said, "העוד אבי חי" - Is my father still alive?"

The Gemarah in Chagigah tells us that Rabbi Elazar taught that from here we realize the power of rebuke. You see, Yosef here was rebuking his brothers by saying, "Is my father still alive?" Really, it was aimed at his brother Yehuda. Yehuda had made these noble protestations about Binyamin. "If you take Binyamin away our father Yackov will die," he said. Yosef was asking where Yehuda's voice had been 22 years before when his other brother Yosef was to be taken from his father, to probably his certain death. Was he concerned about his father then?

Therefore he says: "העוד אבי חי" - Is my father still alive?"

Yosef was saying, "Can I really rely on a single word of yours?" What a rebuke to his brothers.

And therefore Rabbi Elazar teaches us that in a time to come when we reach the World of Truth, Hashem will rebuke us, and we will be ashamed of all our misdemeanors in life. So therefore, from these powerful words of Yosef, when he revealed his identity to his brothers, the Chafetz Chaim teaches us that just as Yosef was able to explain everything that had transpired in just two words, so too in the world of Truth, Hashem will explain to us, in a very simple fashion, why we have had so many extraordinary and sometimes tragic experiences on earth.

It will all just be explained in an instant.

Join me by praying with all our hearts for the healing of all those injured, for the safe return of those taken as hostages, as well as Divine Protection for our brave IDF soldiers, Police officers, medical professionals, Firefighters, ZAKA members, security personnel and all those citizens protecting us in Israel as well as around the world, and for those who need healing, shidduchim, children or parnassah and may we be blessed to have the most awesome, gorgeous, beautiful, peaceful, healthy, amazing, relaxed, spiritual, safe, quiet and sweet Shabbat.

ריגש
תורה

Sponsored in loving memory of
חיה ברכה בת ר' נפתלי משה
Mena Rabinowitz ob"m
Who's Yahrzeit was Wednesday
ה' טבת

The Jewish Weekly's
PARSHA FACTS

NO MITZVOT IN THIS PARSHA

NUMBER OF PESUKIM: 106

NUMBER OF WORDS: 1480

NUMBER OF LETTERS: 5680

HAFTORA:

Yechezkel 37:15 - 28

Laws & Customs: Asarah B'Tevet

According to Shulchan Aruch Harav, Mishna Berurah and Nittel Gavriel

All times listed are for Jerusalem only as per www.nyzmanim.com

Based on Rabbi Shmuel Lesches's Halachah Sheets

Reviewed by Reb Elimelech Rabinowicz שליט"א, Rav of Tzeirei Kehal Chassidim, Shaarei Chesed

Compiled by Yossi Fraenkel in memory of his grandparents

ר' ראובן בן הרב משה אליעזר הלוי ע"ה וחייה ברכה בת ר' נפתלי משה ע"ה רבינוביץ

ר' יוסף בן ר' אורי ע"ה ומלכה בת ר' יצחק צבי הלוי ע"ה פרינקל

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For the year 5784

ASARAH B'TEVET

On this day, Nevuchadnetzer besieged the city of Yerushalayim. His campaign culminated in the destruction of the first Beit Hamikdash.

WHO MUST FAST?

All must fast, including a Chattan and Kallah during the week of Sheva Brachot, and Baalei Habrit (i.e. the Mohel, the Sandak, and the father of the baby).

If one inadvertently ate during the fast, one must immediately resume fasting.

Mothers who are either pregnant or nursing, or have difficulty fasting while tending to their young children, should consult with a Rav. [One shouldn't be unduly strict in this regard, so as not to harm the wellbeing of mother and baby.] The ill/elderly should also consult with a Rav.

Anyone below Bar/Bat Mitzvah need not fast. From the age of nine upwards, the custom is to train children to fast for several hours, as per the child's abilities.

An individual exempt from fasting should eat in private only, and avoid delicacies or excessive intake. Similarly, children old enough to understand the concept of a fast should avoid delicacies.

EATING PRIOR TO THE FAST

One may eat and drink the entire evening until dawn (5:23am), provided that either of these conditions are met:

- One didn't go to sleep for the night. [Dozing off is not regarded as such.]
- One stipulated (preferably verbally) before going to sleep that he would eat upon waking. In this case, one recites the morning Brachot before eating.

LAWS OF FASTING

One shouldn't brush one's teeth nor rinse one's mouth. [If this will cause great aggravation, there is room to be lenient, provided that one leans forward to prevent any liquid from flowing down one's throat; that one uses substances unfit for consumption (e.g. Listerine); and that one rinses with less than 86 ml.]

One may take non-chewable pills for medical purposes, without water. A Rav should be consulted regarding other medicines.

One may shower, bathe and apply ointments and creams.

When a Brit occurs on a fast, the Seudah takes place at night, after the fast.

One may not taste food to determine whether it requires salt/spices. However,

when preparing food for a Seudat Mitzvah scheduled for the night following the fast, one may taste the food, provided that all these conditions are met:

- One expels it without swallowing.
- One tastes only an absolute minimum.
- One tastes less than 86 ml in total throughout the day.

The same applies when preparing for the Shabbat meals when Asarah B'Tevet occurs on Erev Shabbat.

CONDUCT ON A FAST DAY

One should learn Torah connected to the topic of the fast.

One should give increased Tzedakah, especially before davening. It is proper to give the value of the forgone meals – especially if one is exempt from fasting.

The purpose of fasting is to arouse one to do Teshuvah. Idling away one's time, or partaking in joyous or entertaining activities, is not in the spirit of the fast.

One should be especially careful not to become angered.

CHAZZAN'S RECITATION OF ANEINU

During Shacharit, only the Chazzan recites Aneinu. Therefore, a non-fasting individual shouldn't serve as Chazzan.

[In the unlikely event that the Chazzan is not fasting, or less than three congregants are fasting: Instead of reciting Aneinu between Goal Yisrael and R'faeinu, the Chazzan includes Aneinu in the Brachah of Sh'ma Koleinu, and concludes the Brachah regularly; i.e. Shomea Tefillah.]

A Chazzan who forgot to recite Aneinu:

- if he remembered before reciting Hashem's name at the conclusion of the Brachah of R'faeinu, he recites Aneinu immediately, and then repeats the Brachah of R'faeinu;
- if he already concluded the Brachah of R'faeinu, he recites Aneinu in the Brachah of Sh'ma Koleinu, and concludes the Brachah with a double conclusion; i.e. Ha'one B'ait Tzara V'shomea Tefillah;
- if he already concluded the Brachah of Sh'ma Koleinu, he recites Aneinu as a separate Brachah immediately after the Brachah of Sim Shalom.

SELICHOT & AVINU MALKEINU

One who is not fasting must still recite Selichot and Avinu Malkeinu.

One who davens without a Minyan omits the Yud-Gimel Midot-Harachamim.

If Tachnun is not recited (e.g. when a Chattan is present), Selichot is still recited, whereas Avinu Malkeinu is not recited.

TORAH READING

The passage of Vayechal is read, provided that at least three congregants are fasting.

A non-fasting individual must still hear Kriat Hatorah of Vayechal, but is not called up for an Aliya. [If he is the only Kohen or Levi, he should absent himself.] If he is called up, and abstaining will cause him discomfort or minimize the honor of the Torah, he may accept the Aliyah.

A non-fasting individual shouldn't serve as the Ba'al Koreh, unless there is no one else to serve as the Ba'al Koreh.

When the congregation recites the verses aloud, the Ba'al Koreh waits for silence before resuming. The one receiving the Aliyah begins these verses with the congregation, but ends with the Ba'al Koreh.

MINCHA

As it is Erev Shabbat, those who regularly recite Hodu and Posach Eliyahu should recite before Mincha.

Mincha is longer than usual (due to Kriat Hatorah and Haftorah); care should be taken to conclude before sunset (4:43pm) especially as it is Erev Shabbat.

Kriat Hatorah should not begin prior to Mincha Gedolah (12:07pm). The Amidah may certainly not begin before then.

After Haftorah, most communities return the Torah to the Aron Kodesh and then say Kaddish. The Chabad custom is that the Chazzan slowly recites Kaddish while the Torah is returned to the Aron Kodesh.

The Chazzan and the congregation recite Aneinu, even though it is Erev Shabbat.

As it is Erev Shabbat, Tachnun and Avinu Malkeinu are not said.

If an individual forgot to recite Aneinu in the Brachah of Sh'ma Koleinu, he may recite it in the passage of Elokai N'tzor, before the second Yih'yu L'ratzon. If one didn't remember until he concluded the Amidah, he does not repeat it. [A non-fasting individual does not recite Aneinu.]

The Chazzan recites Aneinu between Goel Yisrael and R'faeinu.

CONCLUSION OF FAST

The fast concludes at 5:10pm.

The congregation may begin Maariv early, in order to enable the congregants to recite Kiddush immediately at nightfall (5:10pm). One who takes this course of action should recite Shema after nightfall, before Kiddush.