

The Missed Appointment

The lengthy ecstatic prayers of *Rosh Hashana* drew to a close. During the Kiddush that followed, **Rabbi Yehudah-Tzvi of Stretyn** made an enigmatic statement to his chasidim. "When the fifth night of Chanukah comes, after the lighting of the candles, if you will remind me at that moment, I will arrange a banquet for everyone!"

The chasidim stared at their master, perplexed. Some thought to themselves, "What is the connection between Rosh Hashana and Chanukah?" Others wondered, "Why a banquet only on the fifth night? Why not every night!?"

The fifth night of Chanukah came and the chasidim reminded their rebbe of his promise made on Rosh Hashana. His face lit up and he immediately ordered a banquet prepared for all the guests. After many "*L'chaim*"s were offered someone stood up courageously and asked, "Rebbe, what's the occasion of the banquet?"

The Rebbe explained in hushed tones, "I saw during the sacred prayers of Rosh Hashana that a *tzadik* of our generation would be appointed one of the judges of the heavenly court. I knew there were three possibilities. Either myself, the Rebbe of Butzchatch (see "Bio Notes" below), or the Rebbe of Dinov (**R. Tzvi-Elimelech, the *Bnei Yissaschar***).

"I prayed with all my heart to the Creator that I wasn't worthy to be a judge of the heavenly court. However, I knew it would not be clear to me what the heavenly decision would be until this moment, for as you all know, Chanukah is the final seal of whatever was decreed on Rosh Hashana.* Now I know that I will not be chosen. That is why I have made this banquet."

The Chassidim were awestruck by this revelation. A few weeks later, Rabbi Tzvi-Elimelech passed away, on the 18th of the Jewish month of Tevet. The holy Dinover Rebbe had been chosen to be a judge of the heavenly court.

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*Editor's note:*

\* This is commonly understood to take place on the last day of Chanukah. Perhaps all the instances of '5<sup>th</sup>' above should be changed to '8<sup>th</sup>'?

*Source:* Adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from the rendition in “Shabbos Stories for the Parsha” (Rosh Hashanah 5774) of the translation by Eliahu J. Klein from *Degel Machaneh Yehudah* p. 12 #32, and other Hebrew sources.

*Biographical notes:*

**Rabbi Yehuda Zvi-Hirsch Brandwein of Strettin** [of blessed memory: 5540 – 11 Iyar 5604 (1780 – April 1844 C.E.)] was the leading disciple of Rabbi Uri of Strelisk, whom he succeeded in 1826, and whom he resembled in his ecstatic mode of prayer. He was highly praised by many of the *tzadikim* of his generation. His teachings may be found in *Degel Machaneh Yehuda*. He was succeeded by his son Rabbi Avraham Brandwein of Strettin.

**Rabbi Tzvi Elimelech Shapira of Dinov** (1785 - **18 Tevet**, 1841), a renowned scholar, nephew of Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk and disciple of the "Seer" of Lublin and of Menachem Mendel of Rimanov. Best known for his scholarly and mystical work, *Bnei Yissaschar*, which includes a chapter for each month of the year.

**Rabbi Avraham-David Wahrman** [6 Adar 5531 - 29 Tishrei 5601 (1771-1840)] **of Buchach** (or Buczacz or Butzchatch) was recognized as a Talmudic genius when still a teenager. Before becoming a chasidic leader in his own right later in life, he was a disciple of Rebbe Levi-Yitzchak of Berdichev and Rabbi Moshe-Chayim of Sassov. He is the author of many scholarly books covering the entire spectrum of Torah, with *Eshel Avraham* and *Daas Kedoshim*, important commentaries on the first two of the four sections of Shulchan Aruch (Code of Jewish Law), being the best known.

*Connection:* Seasonal -- The 18th of *Tevet* (this year: Wednesday, Dec. 26) is the 177th *yahrzeit* of the *Bnei Yissaschar*.