



חסידי הראשונים

Stories of the Early Chassidim

Chanukah Miracle in Siberia!

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When I was in jail in Siberia, the Reshoim took away everything from me. They stole my Tallis and Tefillin and also my Siddur. There were many Mitzvos that I was not able to do, but one mitzvah I managed to keep every year and that is the Mitzvah of lighting Chanukah Licht.

I did not have a fancy Menorah, or even a simple Menorah. What did I do? They used to give us bread to eat. From these pieces, I made a type of holder for the candles. Then I used to save up the margarine that they gave us to use for oil. For a wick, I managed to take out a bit of cotton from my jail clothes.

There was a danger in lighting the Menorah, and even in hiding the supplies that I was collecting. If the guards would find out – they would punish me very severely. But Hashem always helped me through one miracle or another, and I always lit my Chanukah candles.

This is the story of my last Chanukah in jail:

The 6th day of Chanukah was Shabbos. That means that on Friday afternoon, I had to light 6 candles. During the week, I would light the Menorah at a time that the guards were not around, but on Friday, I had no choice. I had to light at 2:00 pm (because the days are very short in Siberia), and the problem was that at exactly that time, the guard would come and check on the prisoners.

I was very worried. What if the guard would find my Menorah. He would punish me and everyone else in my bunk. They would put us into a room filled with mud and we would have to stay there for a month.

But Hashem helped me. All the people in my bunk told me to light my Menorah anyway. "Just daven to your Hashem for all of us," They said to me. They all helped me hide the Menorah as well as we could, but we were still scared. The guard might be able to hear the sound, or maybe smell the smell of the oil burning. But in the end, we decided to light the Menorah anyway.

When the time came, I was shaking as I lit the Menorah and asked Hashem to do a miracle for us just as he did to our fathers בימים ההם בזמן הזה.

And then, the guard entered. Now, this guard was very mean. Usually, when he would come in, he would spend his time and look into everyone's faces as he walked through the room. If he would have done so this time, he probably would have found out about the Menorah. Either he would have found it, or he would sense in people's faces that something "wrong" was happening.

But the miracle happened. This time, he seemed to be in a big rush. He just came in, ran through the room, and ran out, without even stopping to look in anyone's faces, and for sure he did not stop to look around the room.

As soon as he left, we quietly danced in our spots. We thanked Hashem that he once again helped us light the Chanukah candles and have our own Chanukah miracle.