

Two stories by ISAAC BASHEVIS SINGER

## The Jew from Babylon

**T**he Jew from Babylon, as the miracle worker was called, traveled all night in a wagon that was taking him from Lublin to the village of Tarnigrod. The driver, a small man with broad shoulders, was silent throughout the journey. He nodded and cracked his whip at the horse, which walked slowly, step by step. The old nag would cock her ears and look back with large eyes that expressed human curiosity and reflected the light of the full moon. She seemed to wonder at their strange passenger, dressed in a velvet coat lined with fur, a fur hat on his head. She even lifted her black upper lip, which formed a sort of horse smile. The miracle worker shuddered and murmured an incantation, which made the driver realize how dangerous this passenger was.

"Giddy up, lazy beast!"

The wagon passed plowed fields, haystacks, and a spinning windmill that emerged, disappeared, and reemerged. Its outspread arms seemed to point their way. An owl was hooting, and a shooting star tore itself away from the heavens and left a fiery wake behind. The miracle worker wrapped himself in his woolen shawl.

"Woe is me!" he groaned. "I no longer have any strength for them." He was referring to the nether-world creatures, the demons with whom he had waged war for a lifetime. Now that he had become old and frail, they had begun to take their revenge.

He had first appeared in Poland some 40-odd years ago — a tall man, lean as a stick, in a long yellow-and-white-striped robe, with the sandals and white stockings worn by Jews from Yemen and other Arabic lands. He called himself Kaddish ben Mazliach — a strange name — and maintained that he had learned the arts of clairvoyance and healing in Babylon. He could cure insomnia and madness, exorcise dybbuks, and help bridegrooms who suffered from impotence or from spells brought about by the Evil Eye. He also possessed a black mirror in which the vanished and the dead could be seen. He conducted himself as a pious Jew — on cold winter nights he even went to the unheated ritual baths, and he fasted on Mondays and Thursdays — but the rabbis and the community leaders shunned him, accus-

ing him of being a sorcerer and a messenger of the Unclean Host. There were rumors that he had a wife of ill repute in the city of Rome, just as the False Messiah, the cursed Sabbatai Zevi, had had in his day. In whatever town he visited, pregnant women were hidden from his sight and the girls were made to wear double aprons, one in front and one behind, as a protection. Parents did not allow their children to look at him. In Lublin, where he settled in his old age after many years of wandering, he was not permitted to live in the Jewish quarter, or to enter the synagogues and studyhouses, but was forced to find housing on the outskirts of the city in a broken-down hut. It pained one to look at him. His long face was brick red, and the skin was peeling. His scraggly beard pointed in all directions, as if a permanent wind blew on it. His right eye was closed, blinded by fear, it was said. His hands shook and his head bobbed like that of a newborn infant. Scholars and cabalists had warned him long ago that he was playing with fire and that the powers of evil would not let him get off easy.

**I**n the still autumn night, Kaddish curled up on his seat in the wagon beside the long shadow that traveled with him and mumbled, "An arrow in thine eyes, Satan, Kuzu Bemuchzas, Kuzu."

Born in the Holy Land, the son of a polygamous Sephardic Jew and of his young deaf-mute wife, a Tartar and a convert to Judaism, Kaddish ben Mazliach had wandered throughout the world with his cameos and incantations. He had visited Persia, Syria, Egypt, and Morocco. He had lived in Baghdad and Bukhara. He healed not only Jews but Arabs and Turks, and although in Lublin the Polish rabbis had excommunicated him and he was treated like a leper, he remained a healer and a magician. He had saved up a bagful of diamonds and pearls, which hung hidden around his neck. He had never given up hope that in his old age he would do penance and return to the land of Israel. But luck was not always on his side. A number of times he was robbed and beaten on the road and his money stolen from him. He married several times, but the women were afraid of him and dragged him to the rabbis for a divorce, and he left them.

Just now, when his health was failing, the Evil Ones

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had begun to torment him and take revenge for all the times he had dominated them with his sorcery. For several years he had not been able to stay asleep through a single night. When he dozed off, he heard female laughter and the sounds of mock-wedding melodies, sung by she-demons and played on fiddles. Sometimes goblins tore at his beard and tugged at his sidelocks or knocked at his windowpane. At other times they mocked him, moving his possessions from one corner to another. They tore threads from his fringed garment and prayer shawl. Naked and barefooted maidens with braids hanging to their waists sat on his bed giggling, revealing their white teeth in the darkness. They stole his gold coins — he could feel their fingers slipping into his breast pocket. They twisted their hair around his throat as if to choke him, whining and pleading with him to give himself to them so fiercely that he fainted.

“Kaddish,” they said, “either way you have lost the World to Come. Surrender and become one of us.”

**K**addish knew that hordes of lapiutes were waiting for his death so they could grab hold of his sinful soul and tear it to shreds. More than once when he examined the script of his mezuzah, he found that the sacred words on the parchment had been erased. His cabalistic books were eaten away by mice and moths. His phylacteries were cracked. Even though his hut on the outskirts of Lublin was heated, there was perpetual cold in the air and a cellar-like darkness in the rooms. To protect himself from theft, he hid his belongings in trunks covered with hide and enforced with copper rings, all to no avail. No Jewish maid or housekeeper was willing to work for him. The old Gentile woman who cleaned his house hung crosses on the walls, and brought in a wild tomcat and a vicious dog. In order to avoid non-kosher food, he did the cooking himself, but the spirits and imps threw handfuls of salt in the dishes so that he could not take the food into his mouth.

Things were always the worst on the Holy Days. Toward Sabbath eve, he covered his table with a stained cloth and lit two candles in tarnished candlesticks, but they always blew out. He dreamed of creating pigeons and tapping wine from the wall, using the power of the cabala, but of late his miracles succeeded less and less. His memory had deteriorated so much that he had forgotten it was forbidden to kindle a fire on the Sabbath, and he began to smoke his pipe. The dog snarled at him and tried to bite him. Even the woman's little rabbits, kept as pets, had become insolent and crawled into his bed. It was no wonder that, whenever he was asked to perform some magic or healing or divination, he accepted no matter how far or how difficult the trip.

“I am lost anyhow. Let me at least save a single soul,” he decided.

Now he was traveling to the village of Tarnigrod, to the rich Reb Falik Chaifetz, whose new home had sud-

denly begun to rot with fungi and wild mushrooms were growing on his walls. Even though he was sitting up in the wagon, Kaddish was napping. His head hung low with fatigue, and he snored with a thin whistle. At dawn the sky became all aglow, and the road was obscured with a dense mist, as if they were approaching the open sea. The driver now walked cautiously beside the wagon, step by step, since people had warned him not to sit too close to the magician. Only when the mare made trouble — standing up on its hind legs and neighing — did the driver whip and scold her: “Calm down, old carcass! No horse's business!”

**F**or a whole day Kaddish sat in Reb Falik Chaifetz's half-empty house, preparing the charms and amulets necessary for the purification of the dwelling's sickness. The rooms were damp and yellow spots covered the moist walls. Kaddish was sure that an evil spirit was hidden somewhere, perhaps in a kerchief with witch's knots, or in a cameo with unholy names, or in the hair of a mooncalf. As soon as he entered the house, he had got a whiff of the putrid smell. There was no doubt that the spirit of an enemy had lodged itself here, two-faced, unclean, and utterly vicious. Kaddish had searched in all the corners, holding a candle in his hand. He checked the chimney, the stove, and poked around between sooted cracks and nooks. He climbed the spiral stairwell to the garret and then went down to the cellar. Reb Falik accompanied him through the entire house. Kaddish set all the spiderwebs on fire, and giant spiders with white bellies slid off while his bluish lips were muttering spells. He spat on all sides where the unseen might lurk.

It was perhaps his last and most decisive battle with the Evil Ones. If they didn't surrender this time, how would they be driven away into the desert behind the black mountains forever?

Kaddish had come clandestinely to Tarnigrod. This is how it had been stipulated between him and Reb Falik Chaifetz. Nevertheless the townspeople had somehow learned of his coming. Even before his arrival, many of them gathered in front of Reb Falik's house. Women in clusters were pointing at him and whispering to one another. A few daring youths, climbing on each other's shoulders, tried to peek in between the racks of the closed shutters. Some peasants brought their cripples, epileptics, their mad and their lame to the miracle worker. A mother carried her child ill with a seizure, its eyes rolling in their sockets. A father dragged a lunatic son, bound like an animal to a wagon. One woman brought a wench with a growth of beard on her face.

Reb Falik Chaifetz came out and admonished the crowd that no cure would come from all this. He begged them to go away, but the mob grew larger. Kaddish opened a top-floor window, stuck out a disheveled head, and pleaded, “People! I have no strength left.

Don't torment me." He nevertheless received the sick and the lame all day long.

Kaddish was eager to leave town as early as possible. But suddenly the beadle came late in the evening and announced that the rabbi wanted to see him. Kaddish went with him to the rabbi's house, where the shutters were already closed for the night. The old rabbi was dressed in a black robe, his hat sat crooked on his head, and his waist was girded with a thick sash. He looked at the magician with fury, measuring him from head to toe, and asked, "Are you the infamous Kaddish ben Mazliach?"

"I am, rabbi."

"Your name, Kaddish, means holy, but you are unclean and defiled," the rabbi shouted. "Don't think that the world sleeps. You are a wizard who keeps company with the dead."

"No, rabbi."

"Don't deny it." The rabbi stamped his foot. "You conjure up demons. We will not endure this in silence."

"I know, rabbi."

"Remember, you will regret it!" the rabbi screamed, and grabbed his long pipe as if to hit Kaddish over the head. "For hundreds of years you will wander among devils and you will not even be permitted to enter hell. The world is not all chaos!"

Kaddish shuddered, attempted to answer, lost his tongue. He wanted to tell of the many people he had saved from death. He slipped his hand into a pocket where he kept letters from grateful patients, written in Hebrew, Ladino, Arabic, and even in Yiddish, but he couldn't move his fingers. He rushed out on shaky legs, hearing voices and laughter. He could not see where he was going.

**H**e decided to return to Lublin at once, but the coachman now refused to take him back. Kaddish had no choice but to stay for the night in the empty house where he had spent the entire day. Reb Falik Chaifetz's maid brought him bedclothes, a candlestick with a thick, wax candle, a kettle with hot water, bread, and a bowl of borscht.

The Jew from Babylon tried to eat, but he could not swallow. His head felt as if it were full of sand. An icy wind blew through the room, although the windows were shut. The candle flame flickered and shadows wavered in the corners, crawling like snakes. Large glossy beetles crept over the floor and a rotten stench was in the air. Kaddish lay down on his bed, fully clothed. As he napped briefly, he found himself in the cabalistic city of Sfat. His Yemenite wife knelt before him, took off his sandals, and washed his feet, drinking the water. Suddenly he was thrown out of the bed, as if an earthquake

had exploded. All the lights went out. In the darkness the walls appeared to expand, and all the rooms rocked and rolled like a ship in a stormy sea. Bearded images with horns and snouts were pushing him, circling around like wolves. Bats were flying over him. Everything creaked and knocked, as if the house were about to collapse. As always, when the creatures of the night took hold of him, he opened his mouth to exorcise them, but for the first time in his life he had forgotten all the names and conjurations. His heart felt as if it had stopped and he could sense his feet turning cold. The bag which hung around his neck was torn loose, and he heard the gold coins, pearls, and diamonds pour out.

When he finally managed to get outside, Tarnigrod seemed asleep. A bloody red moon glimmered behind the skin of the clouds. Beavies of dogs who slept in the day and prowled around the butcher shops at night barked at him on all sides. He heard the steps of a multitude in a tumult behind him. A sweeping wind caught under his coat, and he was flying. Lights seemed to flare up, and he heard music, drumming, screams of laughter. He realized it was a wedding and he, Kaddish, was the bridegroom. They were dancing toward him on stilts, calling, "*Mazel tov*, Kaddish!" It was clear that the demons were marrying him off to a she-demon. Aghast, and with his last strength, he managed to exclaim, "Shaddai, destroy Satan!"

He made an effort to escape, but his knees were buckling. Long arms embraced him, kneaded him and slapped him like baker's dough. He was the host of the celebration, its impure joy. They threw themselves at his throat, kissed him, fondled him, raped him. They gored him with their horns, licked him, drowned him in spit and foam. A giant female pressed him to her naked breasts, laid her entire weight over him, and pleaded, "Kaddish, don't shame me. Say, 'By this black ring I espouse thee according to the blasphemy of Satan and Asmodeus.'"

He heard with deafened ears a loud shattering of broken glass, a stamping of feet, lewd laughter, and squealing. A skeleton grandmother with geese feet danced with a braided challah in her hand and did somersaults, calling out the names of Chavriri, Briri, Ketev-Mriri. Kaddish closed his eyes and knew for the first and last time that he was one of them, married to Lilith, the Queen of the Abyss.

In the morning they found him dead, face down on a bare spot, not far from the town. His head was buried in the sand, hands and feet spread out, as if he had fallen from a great height. ■

*Translated from the Yiddish by the author and  
DEBORAH MENASHE*

# Logarithms

**T**hat Sabbath afternoon the talk turned to a merchant who set fire to his store in order to obtain the insurance money. I heard Aunt Yentl say, "Well, arson is arson. It was done before him and it will be done after him. Easy money is an evil temptation. All he had to do was pour some kerosene on the merchandise and light a match. The insurance company adjusters pretend to take the merchant at his word. It's not their own money they're paying; it all comes from the banks in Petersburg. In olden times, when a merchant could not repay a debt, they took possession of his house and business or the man was imprisoned. People went to jail for such deeds. Today one can easily declare bankruptcy. At the worst, one sets a fire. If luck is on his side, he'll be released in no time or he can run off to America."

"Just the same," our neighbor Bela Zyvia said, "to risk burning a whole marketplace, and half a town to boot, one needs the heart of a murderer."

"Women, this is not a subject for the Sabbath," Aunt Yentl said.

I heard my Aunt Yentl make this statement almost every Saturday, but she frequently broke her own rule to keep the Sabbath pure and gay and told stories which had the scent of gossip. She would tap her own lips and say, "Be quiet, my mouth" or, "Don't let me sin with my own words, Father in heaven."

Aunt Yentl went to the kitchen to bring refreshments. She returned with a tray containing cherries, plums, and a drink called kvass, and said, "A man himself is his own worst enemy. A hundred enemies cannot do to a person the damage he is capable of doing to himself." She sat down, stroking the colored ribbons which hung from the top of her bonnet and the golden earrings which dangled from her earlobes, and I knew she was about to tell a story.

Aunt Yentl drank some kvass and wet her lips with the tip of her tongue. After some hesitation, she began: "True, it is not a story for the Sabbath, but there is a lesson to be learned from it. When I lived with my first husband — he should intercede for all of us — in the town of Krasnystaw, we had as a neighbor a widow from Lublin named Chaya Keila. Her husband left her with a gifted son, Yossele. He knew half the Pentateuch by heart by the age of five. He was also a mathematical wizard. His father had left him a book entitled *The Study of Algebra*, and little Yossele pored over it day and night. His mother took him from house to house to show off his remarkable talent. He had calculated how many drops of water filled the town river. He asserted that in the dense forest behind the squire's castle there were two trees with an identical number of leaves, though no one had ever counted them. People gaped in astonish-

ment. Chaya Keila was in constant fear that the neighbors might give him the evil eye. Every two days, she took him to an old woman who knew how to exorcise malicious spirits. Before the beginning of every month, she gave the boy herbs to purge him of worms in his intestines. She had learned incantations written on parchment by the Preacher of Kozienice. Once, when Yossele became sick with fever, an old witch told the mother to dig a ditch behind the house, dress the sick boy in white linen, and make him lie in the ditch to fool the angel of death into thinking he was already buried in his shroud. When the rabbi heard about this, he sent his beadle to knock at her shutter and warn the frightened mother that this was an act of sorcery. Yes, overly protective mothers do bizarre things. The rabbi told the mother to give the boy two new names — Chaim and Alter, meaning 'life' and 'old age.' The mother called him by these two names for years, but strangers forgot them and still called him Yossele.

**"I** will make it short: Yossele grew up to be a genius in Torah and mathematics. At that time there was a Gentile apothecary in town who knew Latin better than most priests. Once when Chaya Keila brought Yossele to buy pills, the two conversed and suddenly the apothecary cried out to Chaya Keila, 'Congratulations, your son has already learned logarithms without a teacher.'

"I had never heard this word when his mother came running to our house with the good tidings. She repeated this difficult word so many times that I learned how to pronounce it myself. For weeks Chaya Keila spoke about nothing but logarithms — 'logarithms this,' and 'logarithms that!'

"Later Yossele learned how to play chess. He could beat all the town's chess players, Jews and Gentiles alike. He played chess with the apothecary's daughter, Helena, who smoked cigarettes and was as clever as a man. He even played with the Russian chief of police and with some Polish dignitaries. A few insisted on playing for money with the boy, thus helping his widowed mother make ends meet. Every day the mother announced the boy's latest victories. The squire of the town, who was a count, presented Yossele with a chessboard and figures made of ivory, after Yossele went so far as to checkmate the magistrate himself.

"Now listen to this: There was in our town a rich Jew named Wolf Markus, a timber merchant. From the Poles impoverished by the revolution, he bought large parcels of forest and let the trees, mostly oaks, be chopped down. In order to estimate how much lumber could be made from them, one needed mathematics. When Wolf Markus heard of Yossele's knowledge, he

invited him to his house and they discussed logarithms for hours with Wolf's bookkeeper. Everyone present knew mathematics and they all played chess, even Wolf's two daughters, Serele and Blumele. They all became enthusiastic about Yossele's scholarship and wisdom.

"Serele fell in love with him at first sight, as they say. He had come for an hour and conquered the world. In a small town everyone knows what's cooking in other people's pots. Chaya Keila came running to us immediately with the good tidings. But why elaborate? Wolf Markus had accumulated large dowries for his daughters and he spoke openly of his intentions. Fathers, even more than mothers, are eager to marry off their daughters. One day he spoke to Yossele of a match, and the next they wrote preliminary agreements. Two weeks later, all the relatives on both sides were invited to the engagement party. The town was boiling like a kettle. Wolf Markus went to Lublin and came back with a golden watch for Yossele. The boy was no longer his mother's son, but Wolf's. Chaya Keila laughed and cried from happiness. She almost died of fear that someone would snatch away her good fortune. I was invited to the celebration and I heard of the gifts Yossele would get — the golden watch, a silver watch, a Pentateuch in silk, a set of Mishnah bound in leather, an embroidered prayer shawl, and a fox-fur hat with tails. The one who wrote out the marriage contract had his own style, and got a percentage of everything he wrote. Chaya Keila had jewelry left from her own marriage and she gave it to the bride for signing the agreement, as was the custom. If someone had suggested she offer her head, she would not have hesitated a moment.

"It looked as if Yossele had fallen into a bed of clover, and the city reverberated with envy. Other mothers had also wanted to make brilliant matches for their daughters. Chaya Keila cursed them in advance. I heard her say, 'Was it my fault that I gave birth to a genius? It is written somewhere that the womb of a woman is like a drawer. Whatever you put in, you take out. Yossele's father, he should rest in peace, was a scholar himself. He had a great mind, and the apple does not fall far from the tree. But no one can lock people's mouths. They always search for something malicious, never for anything good.'

"I remember it all," Aunt Yentl said. "Envious people just could not stand it that a Jewish young man understood logarithms and married a rich man's daughter. It is written in the holy books that because of hatred and envy Jerusalem was destroyed. I was still a young girl then, but I was afraid that something terrible would happen to Yossele. The evil tongues went from house to house and maligned him. Even though he was a relative of mine, the evil tongues came to our house — but I am forgetting the main thing: Wolf Markus arranged for a

wedding which cost him a fortune. He brought musicians from Janok and Zamosc. Of course, he could not invite everybody, and those who were omitted burned with rage. Since Yossele had the name of a scholar, they called him up for the reading of the Torah, which was a sign of respect. And this inflamed the gossips even more.

"Now not far from Krasnystaw, in the town of Schebrshin, lived a Jew, Jacob Reifman. People considered him both a scholar and a heretic. He did not deny God, but it was said that he wrote books in German and sent them to the Maskilim — the enlightened Jews in Germany. The Hasidim and the Maskilim waged war among themselves, and the word was that Yossele and Reifman exchanged scholarly letters and made fun of the Hasidic rabbis. A yeshiva boy in our town spread the rumor that Yossele said that those who built the Holy Temple made mistakes in measuring the columns, the sacred vessels, and the altar. Immediately there arose in town a hue and cry that Yossele considered himself cleverer than King Solomon. When Chaya Keila heard this accusation, she was ill with fear. She came running to our house, crying bitterly that her enemies were trying to tear the crown from her head.

"One Sabbath, there was pandemonium in town. When Yossele was called up as the third one to the Torah, a stranger ran up to the reading table and tried to shove him away, screaming that Yossele was an apostate and a betrayer of Israel, who should be excommunicated with the blowing of the shofar in the light of black candles. Chaya Keila had come that Saturday to the women's section of the synagogue to pray. These vicious words about her beloved son made her utter a terrible scream, and she fell to the floor with a heart seizure. They tried to revive her with Yom Kippur drops, and massaged her temples, but it was all in vain. She was carried out on the stretcher which always stood at the door of the poorhouse. This was no longer a Sabbath but a day of mourning and fasting. In the bedlam which followed, butchers, coachmen, and horse dealers rushed into the synagogue and attacked the intruder who had reviled Yossele. The readings of Torah and the prayers were stopped immediately. The squire heard of the outburst, and a fear fell upon all the Jews. The community leaders had to send negotiators to apologize to the squire for the violence at the synagogue and pay a fine for the scandal.

"'Excommunication' is a word which creates fear even among the Gentiles. For generations such a thing never took place in Poland except when the false Messiah, Jacob Frank, converted with his wife and disciples and proclaimed in open court that the Jews used Christian blood for their matzohs. This didn't happen in my time, but I heard about it."

"But what happened to Yossele?" Bela Zyvia asked.

Aunt Yentl shook her head. "I don't like to say it on the Sabbath," she said, "but something terrible — even unbelievable."

"What was it?"

"He changed his gold coin," Aunt Yentl said.

"You mean he converted?"

"He went to the priest and married Helena, the daughter of the apothecary."

"He left his wife?" my mother asked.

"His wife, God, the Jews," Aunt Yentl answered.

"Did he divorce his wife?" my mother asked.

"The wife of a convert does not need a divorce," Aunt Yentl said.

"Yentl, you are mistaken," my mother said. "According to the law, a convert remains a Jew and his wife is considered a married woman and she needs divorce papers if she intends to remarry."

"This is the first time I've heard that," Bela Zyvia said.

"If one lives long enough, one hears many things for the first time," Aunt Yentl said. "Men look strong, but they are actually very weak."

"Well, this is the law of the Torah," my mother said.

"I know of a case where one of the rebels who tried to overthrow the Tsar converted while in prison. They had to bring a rabbi to the jail, and a scribe and two witnesses, and he divorced his Jewish wife according to the law of Moses and Israel while in prison. Men! What betrayers men are!"

"The Torah is like the ocean," Aunt Yentl said. "There is no bottom. Women, it's getting late. The sun is setting. We soon have to recite 'God of Abraham.'"

I turned my face to the west. The sun was setting, surrounded with glowing clouds. They reminded me of the river of fire where the wicked are punished in Gehenna. For a long while the women sat silently, with bowed heads, wiping their noses into their aprons. Then I heard Aunt Yentl reciting: "God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, protect the poor people of Israel and

Thine own glory. The Holy Sabbath is going away and the lovely week should come now. It should be with Torah and good deeds, riches and honor, charity and mercy. An end should come to the dark exile. The sound of Elijah's shofar should be heard and the Messiah, our redeemer, should come speedily and in our days. Amen selah."

"Amen selah," all the women answered in one voice. "I see three stars in the sky," Aunt Yentl said. "I think one is now allowed to light a candle, but where are my matches? Every Friday when I light the candles I put away the matches, but they get lost. Old age is not a joy."

**T**here was suddenly light. Aunt Yentl had found her matches. I looked up to the sky and saw that the moon had appeared with its face of Joshua, the son of Nun. My mother stood up and looked at me angrily, almost with contempt. Was it because I, too, was a man and might one day betray womankind as Yossele did? I had promised her many times not to come to Aunt Yentl's on the Sabbath, but her Sabbath fruit and stories were too great a temptation for me. I could not understand why I felt a great compassion arise in me for Yossele and something like a desire to know Helena, play chess with her, and learn logarithms. I remembered my brother Joshua in a quarrel saying to my father, "The other nations studied and learned, made discoveries in mathematics, physics, chemistry, astronomy, but we Jews remained stuck on a little law of an egg which was laid on a holiday." I also remembered my father answering, "This little law contains more wisdom than all the discoveries the idolaters have made since the time of Abraham." ■

*Translated from the Yiddish by the author and  
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