



The Holy Light - Vadjih Nuseibe, Muslim, doorkeeper of the church of Holy Sepulcher Israel, Jerusalem, (2001)

*The **Holy Fire** (Greek Ἅγιον Φῶς, "**Holy Light**") is described by Orthodox Christians as a miracle that occurs every year at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem on Great Saturday, or Holy Saturday, the day preceding Orthodox Easter. It is considered by many to be the longest-attested annual miracle in the Christian world. It has been consecutively documented since 1106 A.D., with previous references being sporadic. The ceremony is broadcast live in Georgia, Greece, Ukraine, Russia, Romania, Belarus, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Lebanon and other Orthodox countries like Egypt. Furthermore, the Holy Fire is brought to certain Orthodox countries, such as in Georgia, Greece, Russia, Belarus, Cyprus, Serbia, Montenegro, Bulgaria, Romania, Moldova, Ukraine, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Macedonia, every year by special flights, being received with honors by state leaders at the respective airports. Source: Wikipedia.*



...The ceremony, which awes the souls of Christians, takes place in the Church of the Resurrection in Jerusalem. The date for Pascha is determined anew for every year. It must be a first Sunday after the spring equinox and Jewish Passover. Therefore, most of the time it differs from the date of Catholic and Protestant Easter, which is determined using different criteria. The Holy Fire is the most renowned miracle in the world of Eastern Orthodoxy. It has taken place at the same time, in the same manner, in the same place every single year for centuries. No other miracle is known to occur so regularly and so steadily over time. No other miracle is known to occur so regularly and so steadily over time. It happens in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, the holiest place on earth[2], where Christ was crucified, entombed, and where He finally rose from the dead...

A miracle that is unknown in the West: One can ask the question of why the miracle of the Holy Fire is almost unknown in Western Europe. In Protestant areas it may, to a certain extent, be explained by the fact that there is no real tradition of miracles; people don't really know in which box to place the miracles, and they rarely feature in newspapers. But in the Catholic tradition there is vast interest in miracles. Thus, why is it not more well known? For this only one explanation suffices: Church politics. Only the Orthodox Churches attend the ceremony which is centered on

the miracle. **It only occurs on the Orthodox date of Easter and without the presence of any Catholic authorities.**

At the both sides of the church gate

Vadjih Nuseibe: „When I was a young guy I get in the church on celebrations. My decrepit grandfather hobbled in advance. The elder pant with asthma but went hard on divine service although he could stay at home: my father Jakub would manage it himself. Father went, slowing down, so did not outstrip us - me and grandfather minced behind. I stand in the church for hours and remember the smelling of incense from youth. It pricked in nose pleasantly I liked it. It was long time ago. Since Allah called my grandfather and then my father. And I relieved. I am Vadjih Nuseibe - door-keeper and key-keeper of the church of Holy Sepulcher.

Yes, I am Muslim. From very old family. Our roots are in Madina. We resettled in Jerusalem already in VII century from there, from Arabia. The Nuseibe family have been mentioning in historical chronicles since this time. We adopted Islam almost the first. We recognized prophet Muhammad already when he escaped from infidels. My ancestors struggled for Muhammad and defended him. And in chronicles of Islam mentioned the name of one legendary woman. Her name was Umma-Omara al' Maazinia al'

Huzradgia min Banni-Amir al' Ansaria. Really, she was the founder of our family.

In general many known men origin from our clan. Do you know how many ministers, ambassadors and big chiefs use our name! Nuseibe had been mayors of Jerusalem till 1967. They are my natives too. But our family keeps the key from the church of Holy Sepulcher.

It begins in 638. At that time caliph Omar al' Hatab, the ruler of vast Muslim empire, sized Jerusalem after two years of siege. The Nuseibe family arrived here following their leader.

When Muslims entered Jerusalem, Orthodox Greek hastened to them. Patriarch Sofronios expressed desire for greeting of our elders. Then they made so reception as only at Byzantine court could. Then Sofronios welcomed caliph Omar and all his retinue in church of Holy Sepulcher. He shown the most precious Christian relics: the Stone of Unction, the Calvary.

They make a service in honor of the guests. Patriarch Sofronios suggested to the caliph to pray also but he refused. He get out of the church, took a stone from nearby pile of garbage and threw it up. There where the stone drop (some to the south) a wooden mosque of Omar was build.

And the Orthodox member of higher orders of clergy gave to unexpected guest keys from the city and in addition - the key from the main church abode of Christians. Caliph gave it to my ancestors. Since then our family have been serving as doorkeeper of the church of Holy Sepulcher. It is already 1363 years.

I live on the street of Herod. It is in two steps from the Old City. May be you know there in neighborhood with the Jaffa gate is a lunchroom "At The King Solomon". I live close by one. So it is a stone's throw from my house to the church of Holy Sepulcher. And every day I use to go here at for o'clock a.m. and open the gate of the church. I am often asked: is it difficult to open it - two huge door wings, six meters in height? No, really it is easy. What of it made? I even do not know. Of cause it is not of olive-tree, perhaps of oak-tree with admixture of other wood. That is more



surely. And, of course, from time to time it is repaired. But in 1818 after a strong fire it was almost completely replaced. The door is upholstered with iron from within. It is for strength. And this key has been here from Ottoman age. This means since 1524. It weighs half kilogram and is fifty centimeters long.



You can see cut in ring of cast iron on the left door wing, high from the earth-level. And if I strike with it three times, all should depart the church. I look round the church last time precisely at seven o'clock. I lock the door inside by this tremendous key and then I hang heavy bar.

That is my service. I clean locks three times per week to open them without difficulty. I put in order each wheel in a gear. But it is easy - I am engineer of electronic mechanisms. I had already worked for it for fifteen years, so I can manage with much more complex machines.

It is of course much more worries when celebrations occur. Especially before the Easter. It is impotent to prevent crush in front of the church gate on this day. So, I constantly control situation and check everything on my own. And also I unlock the gravestone of the Holy Sepulcher myself. With my own hands! Well, it is before Jerusalem Patriarch will begin to thanksgiving service about sending down the Holy Fire. Do you understand? **It is come out that Muslim Vadjih Nuseibe is the true witness of the Christian Miracle of Holy Fire sending down.** (bold added - ed.).



Well, so... What is the main thing in our work? Well, do not permit to get in anybody after seven o'clock p.m. And turn out everybody who tries to stay in the church after this time. Many men try doing so. But if they want I need a special permission from monks. If a man has no one than sorry. Sometimes I forced to ask for help police.“

Monolog was put down by journalist Tatiana Jurkova, who recently returned to Moscow after six years living in Israel. Tatiana tell about her impressions from Israel in her book "Notes of ambassadors wife".

Cited: © (text and photo). Tatiana Jurkova. At the both sides of the church gate // Magazine "House-spirit", (Russia) December 12, 2001 ã. (In Russian: Tat'jana Jurkova. Po obe storony khramovykh vrat // "Domovoj", 12 dekabrya, 2001 g.)

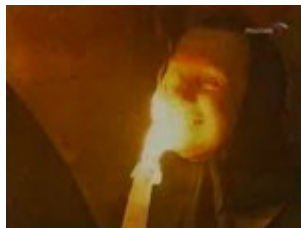
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Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

Matthew 5: 14-16



And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness.

Genesis 1: 4



Patriarch Theophilos of Jerusalem on the Holy Light



In an interview with the National Herald, Patriarch Theophilos of Jerusalem answered a few questions of interest regarding the annual miracle of the Holy Light (Holy Fire) which is celebrated in the Holy Sepulchre every Holy Saturday afternoon.

Regarding this Holy Light which although many say is a great miracle of Orthodoxy, others propose various theories to debunk this miracle, Patriarch Theophilos says the following:

"All the various perspectives and theories regarding the Holy Light come from people who are in complete ignorance, they have no religious sentiment even when they are disputed, and they do not want to receive the mystery of the divine economy, namely the Incarnation, beyond which I think all other things are redundant."

To the question about what exactly happens in the ceremony, he responded:

"The ceremony of the Holy Light is part of all the ceremonies and mysteries of our Church. The ceremony of the Holy Light is the sole and exclusive privilege of the Church of Jerusalem as this ceremony takes place at the specific site of the Crucifixion and Burial, and especially the Resurrection of Christ, in other words in the new tomb."

He further explained that the Touching of the Holy Light "is a Mystery of the Church, it is a ceremony."

To the question about what he feels when he is kneeling in prayer and this Touching of the uncreated light occurs, he responded:

"What occurs then occurs in the whole world, it is the experience which a person receives when they participate in the Mystery of the Divine Eucharist."

<http://www.johnsanidopoulos.com/2010/04/patriarch-theophilos-of-jerusalem-on.html>

