

It Once Happened...

Baba Sali Didn't
Want to Frighten Her

by Rabbi Zivi Richie

Baba Sali the great spiritual leader, the Master of Loving Kindness that illuminated the skies of the Sephardic Jewry, was born in Tefillalet, the remote village community perched in the Atlas Mountains of Morocco. This place was the home of great tzaddikim and kabbalists since the destruction of the Temple 2000 years ago. It was also the birthplace of the Master of Miracles, Yaacov Abuchatseira.

After the War of Independence in 1948, Baba Sali moved to Israel to accompany and give support to all his sepharadi brethren migrating to Israel. He chose to settle in the small remote desert town of Netivot. From there his example of loving kindness and faith spread all over the land, sending healing and blessings to every receptive heart.

One of the ways Baba Sali was conveying his blessings was through the media of water. Miracle stories abound about his blessed drops of water restoring health and harmony in relationships as well as in seemingly hopeless situations. One story I vividly remember is when one drop of this water put in the mouth of a comatose patient that was given up by the doctors. He immediately opened his eyes and soon recovered.

Joshua and I met Baba Sali indirectly through our deep friendship with Rabbi Moshe Ben Tov. We were also privileged to hear the extraordinary story of a special friend.

Do you think angels are ethereal beings that are very rarely seen in our world? I have known angels in human form – they are the gentlest, most humble, deep, loving and caring human beings ever encountered in our busy, anxious, pragmatic world. Perhaps you have also met some, without realizing who they were.

I was fortunate to meet one of them a few years ago in Los Angeles. We both felt blessed with an immediate connection. A beautiful woman in every way, Rifka radiates an aura of grace, kindness and beauty. Her voice is melodious and comforting, her words filled with sparkling, inspired, unique healing thoughts and ideas. Her laughter is catchy, communicating a joyful lightness of spirit. In her company life looks like an exciting adventure filled with potential yet to be discovered.

Before I met her, life hadn't been easy for her. She had learned to survive an abusive husband, had given birth to five children, divorced, and being strong and courageous she lovingly raised her children on her own until they were grown. Then a spiritual awakening turned her life around. She focused in her search for what is the loftiest, most pure, loving and meaningful purpose in her life. With our help and encouragement as well as of a soul brother who was going through a similar spiritual process, she began to draw closer to her Jewish spiritual roots.

Reading about our great Tzaddikim (holy masters), Rifka felt especially drawn to the revered father of the Sephardic Jewry, the Baba Sali. "Baba", meaning father.

Unexpectedly, to Rifka's delight, people began to bring her photographs of Baba Sali, even though they didn't know anything about her deepening soul connection with this particular Tzaddik. More photographs kept coming her way from different sources.

Rifka came to settle here in Jerusalem alone with \$450.00 in her pocket, her entire savings. She was welcomed at the family home of our son David and wife Natanella. Roaming about Jerusalem, she was thrilled and awed by the holiness of the atmosphere of this city.

When Rifka's money had dwindled down to \$20, she gave it away to someone who seemed to need it more than her. The next day, an unexpected check arrived for her in the mail for \$20.

As soon as she could, Rifka took the bus with her spiritual soul brother to the desert town of Netivot to meet with Baba Sali. When she arrived at his home center, she was quite disappointed to hear that he was not seeing women at any time. Her soul brother reassured her that Baba Sali was just as effective in his connection and blessings towards women when he received their written request. So Rifka wrote down her request, gave it to the Gabbai (the personal attendant) and began to enjoy the people waiting there with her. She was fascinated to hear the stories of the healings which had occurred to them after they had connected with their holy master Baba Sali.

At one point, she asked for directions to the bathroom and walked her way through some meandering corridors. Suddenly, she saw an open door – inside the room there was Baba Sali sitting in deep meditative study, waiting for the next person who needed his blessing. Rifka just stood there transfixed, hardly daring to look at him. How long? It seemed a moment touching eternity. Then someone came bustling about and re-directed her to the bathroom.

Rifka felt that Baba Sali knew who she was, that he had directed her to him so that she wouldn't be too disappointed at not being able to see him in person.

A few days after receiving Baba Sali's blessings, Rifka found a small apartment in the Jewish Quarter of Jerusalem, as well as work as a caterer for a Yeshivah (study hall). She couldn't bear to give less than quality meals for the students, even though there was very little funding from the Yeshivah. She even went into debt buying the right kind of food for them. Aside from that, her kitchen was open to many young spiritually searching souls wandering through Jerusalem. Whoever she touched was uplifted and comforted.

In the meantime, the powerful, beloved master of loving kindness, Baba Sali, left this world. Many hundreds of thousands of Jews mourned his departure. He had been fasting most of his life, yet he died at 105 years of age. He left behind an awesome legacy: his radiance of loving kindness, of

powerful strength, humility, purity, clarity and wisdom, through his ceaseless, absolutely committed devotion to God and man. The countless miracles he engendered throughout his life were uplifting and strengthening the entire nation in many ways.

Almost a year later, as Rifka was returning home from an errand, she found her helper, a simple, humble and devoted man who was doing the food shopping for her, standing there looking a bit bewildered.

"Rifka," he said empathically, "you should lock your door."

"Why?" she responded. "There is nothing much here worth stealing. Besides, somebody might need a place to eat and rest."

"Nevertheless, I really think you should lock your door."

"Why?"

"I found someone sitting here in your rocking chair."

"So?"

"He was an old man, all dressed in white."

"That doesn't surprise me. There are all kinds of mystical souls roaming around here. You don't need to be worried."

Rifka's helper looked pensive and awed. He didn't say any more.

A few days later, Rifka was invited to attend a Hillulah (a Sephardic anniversary celebration in honor of a holy man) for Baba Sali. Rifka brought her humble helper along. When they arrived at the home that was hosting the celebration they saw a portrait of Baba Sali hanging on the wall at the entrance. The moment Rifka's helper looked at the portrait, he pointed to it. "That's him! That's him! The old man who was sitting in your rocking chair just a few days ago! He is the one who came to visit!"

Why wasn't Rifka privileged to see Baba Sali herself? My guess is that Baba Sali knew that if he would appear to her, she would have fainted on the spot! So he chose to appear to someone else and through this he was able to relay the message that he was with her, very much aware of the holy work she was doing. Perhaps he wanted to convey to her that he also wanted to be one of her guests!

Soon after, Rifka found her soul mate, a physician. She and her beloved husband now live in a beautiful home in Jerusalem. Rifka is now a counselor. How could it be otherwise? She counsels from a loving heart, a high spiritual vision, and a soul-healing inner strength.

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Editor's Note: Rabbi Yisrael Abuhatzeira, the Baba Sali zt"l's 39th Yahrzeit was Thursday, 4th Shevat – January 26th of this year



Y-GRAPHICS

Shabbat Times – Parshat Bo

	Candle Lighting	Motzei Shabbat	Motzei Shabbat ר"ת
Jerusalem	4:33	5:48	6:27
Tel Aviv	4:47	5:49	6:23
Haifa	4:37	5:47	6:23
Be'er Sheva	4:51	5:51	6:27



Ask Grandmother By Rabbi Shmuel Butman



The "Rayatz"



The Rebbe Rashab

Even at the tender age of five, the previous Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn (the "Rayatz"), had a fixed daily schedule. At eight o'clock in the morning, he jumped out of bed, and half an hour later he was in the synagogue praying with the congregation. From 9:30 until 10:00 was breakfast. Then, for four hours he studied in yeshiva. Then came lunch for an hour and another hour devoted to writing. From 4:00 until 8:00 there was yeshiva again, then supper and some free time to spend in his room, before retiring to bed.

Shabbat, of course, was different. Most of the morning was spent praying in shul. In addition, he had a special treat, a visit to his grandmother, his father's mother, Rebbetzin Rikva. There he would find the elder members of the Chasidic community, white-bearded chasidim who came to pay their respects to the "Grand Old Rebbetzin." They would stay for a while and relate stories about the lives of older chasidim or even of the Rebbe Maharash, the Previous Rebbe's grandfather (Rebbetzin Rikva's husband).

When everybody went home to eat the Shabbat meal, the boy would go back to the shul. There all the worshippers had long since finished their prayers and gone home - all except his father, the Rebbe Rashab. He sat with his head near the ark. He was still praying. Once, the boy approached his father quietly in order to listen to his prayers. His father prayed very slowly, as if he were counting the words. Sometimes he paused, and then would slowly continue.

The Rebbe's son wondered why it took his father so long with the prayers, which even he, a boy of five, knew so well and could read so fluently. But his heart throbbed as he listened to the soulful melody which his father hummed now and again, and the singsong of the words.

He asked his uncle, Rabbi Zalman Aaron, his father's brother. "Why does Father pray so slowly?"

His uncle smiled as he answered with a twinkle in his eyes, "Your father finds it difficult to read the words from the siddur very quickly. He has to say each word separately, and can't pray very fast. That's why it takes him so long."

The boy turned away without saying another word. But he felt a deep pain and a burning shame that his father couldn't pray more fluently.

The following Shabbat, he silently approached his father and listened carefully. His father was saying the Shema. "Shema Yisrael..." His father said slowly, then he paused. The son was startled to hear his father sobbing. His father said another couple of words, and sobbed again, and when he said "Hashem Echad - G-d is One" the words seemed to burst from his heart, with a flood of tears.

The son couldn't listen any more. His heart was bursting with pity for his father. He went home, and with tears in his eyes, appealed to his mother, "Mother, Father is crying in the shul. Why does he pray so slowly, and why is he crying? Come, see for yourself. I can't bear it."

"There is nothing to be worried about," his mother consoled her little son. "Go to your grandmother and tell her about it. She is a very wise lady, maybe she will be able to explain it to you."

The boy lost no time and went to his grandmother, certain that the wise, old Rebbetzin would find a remedy to help his father learn to read the prayers more quickly, perhaps even as quickly as all the other Jews in the synagogue.

When he came to his grandmother, the child told her about his poor father's difficulty saying the prayers. "Mother said that you could do something about it," he concluded hopefully. Grandmother looked at him seriously and said, "Your father is a great chasid and a righteous man. Before he reads any word from the prayerbook, he thinks about it carefully. What it means and to Whom he is saying it. And when he thinks about the holy words of the prayers, his heart is filled with love for G-d, just as a son loves his dear father who is near and yet far away. So your father longs to be closer to Him and the tears just come. I cannot tell you more now, but when you grow older you will understand this better, and you will know how it feels."

With his grandmother's explanation, the boy felt as if a tremendous weight came off his heart. So it wasn't that his father couldn't read the prayers quickly. It was because his father was such a great person that he prayed differently. Yes, he realized that his father was different, in the way he spoke, the way he acted, the way he studied, the way he prayed. That very day, the Rebbe Rayatz recounted, he resolved that as the only child of such a great person, he too must act differently, to merit being his child.

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Editor's Note: the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn ז"ל's 73rd Yahrzeit and the seventh Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson's inauguration 5711 (1951) is Wednesday, 10th Shevat - February 1st of this year

Were we liberated from one form of servitude, only to enter another?

In Parshat Bo, the Torah describes how Hashem commanded Moshe to appear before Pharaoh, King of Egypt. There he demanded in Hashem's name: "שלה את עמי ויעבדני" - Let my people go so that they shall serve me!"

Thanks to the miraculous intervention of Hashem we were redeemed from servitude in Egypt and, seven weeks later at Mount Sinai, we embraced a life full of Torah and mitzvot - an existence filled with servitude to Hashem.

Some people might wonder: what kind of freedom is this? Are we so free if there is a long list of do's and don'ts that we must comply with at all times? The Talmud in Pirkei Avot puts it as follows: "אין אדם חרוץ אלא מי שעוסק בתלמוד תורה - לך בן חרוץ אלא מי שעוסק בתלמוד תורה - There is actually no-one who is as free as the person who studies Torah."

How can we understand this? One of my favorite quotations, which is anonymous, goes as follows: "The slave to the compass has freedom of the seas. The rest must sail close to the shore."

The Torah is our compass.

The Torah provides us with an opportunity to lead lives of meaning and joy. There is so much room for individuality and spontaneity within the context of the 613 do's and don'ts of the Torah. Every responsible educator and parent knows how crucially important it is to raise our children to reach their own personal potential; to be able to achieve what they can as unique personalities within the context of a loving and healthy discipline. Without such discipline, without any inspirational compass, it is possible for a person to abuse their freedom and for their lives to be filled with mayhem.

We have so much to be grateful for. Thanks to the freedom that we attained when we left Egypt we were able at Sinai to receive the Torah and thanks to the Torah, we can utilize our freedom responsibly because the Torah is our eternally true and inspirational guide and compass.

So let's appreciate our freedom and join together to bless our soldiers and healthcare professionals, and Chevra Kadisha members worldwide, for peace and for those who need healing, shidduchim, children and parnassah and may we be blessed to have the most awesome, gorgeous, beautiful, peaceful, healthy, amazing, relaxed, spiritual and sweet Shabbat

Yossi

בא
חשבון

This week is sponsored
In memory of the
previous Lubavitcher Rebbe,
Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneerson ז"ל
Who's Yahrzeit is Wednesday
י' שבט

The Jewish Weekly's
PARSHA FACTS

NUMBER OF MITZVOT: 20
MITZVOT ASEH: 9
MITZVOT LO TAASEH: 11

NUMBER OF PESUKIM: 105
NUMBER OF WORDS: 1655
NUMBER OF LETTERS: 6149

HAFTORA: Yirmiyahu 46:13-28