

The Baba Sali זצ"ל



The Baba Sali, Rabbeinu Yisrael Abuchatzeira, was born on Rosh Hashanah, 5680 (1889).

His parents were known for their Torah and *kedushah*. Rabbeinu Yisrael's father, Rav Masoud Abuchatzeira, rav of Tafillalt, Morocco, was a great tzaddik who was very careful to guard his eyes. Whenever he left the house, he would pull his hood over his eyes to avoid seeing anything improper.

When the Baba Sali was 13, he joined his father's yeshivah, where he immersed himself in learning. Some-

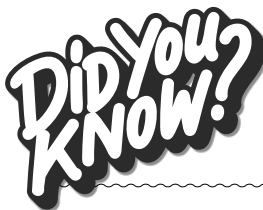
times he would learn for 24 hours straight! After several years, the Baba Sali became expert in *Shas*, *poskim* and Kabbalah.

Around 1923, Rabbeinu Yisrael became rav and *av beis din* of Tafillalt. Many people came to him for help, and the Baba Sali would spend hours davening and fasting on their behalf. Soon he became known for his exceptional *ruach hakodesh*, powerful *brachos* and incredible *yeshuos*.

In 1964, the Baba Sali moved to Eretz Yisrael, eventually settling in the

southern town of Netivot. He lived in a simple house that was open to everyone. Often, he hosted lavish *seudos* for the *hillulah* (*yahrtzeit*) of a tzaddik. He would make sure his guests were satisfied with food and drink, but he ate very little. Many people in desperate situations experienced open miracles when they received the Baba Sali's *brachos*, yet he remained humble. He would cry after his visitors left, "Why do they come here? What do they see?"

The Baba Sali was *niftar* on 4 Shevat, 5744 (1984).



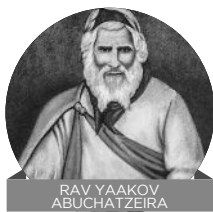
"Baba Sali" means "Praying Father" in Arabic, and indeed the Baba Sali prayed like a father for the many suffering people who asked him for help and *brachos*.

The Baba Sali was proficient in *shechitah*, *milah* and *safrus*. He wrote his own *sefer Torah* and used it to review the parshah every Erev Shabbos.

The Baba Sali would serve his visitors *arak* (a Moroccan liquor). He would wrap a towel around the bottle and keep pouring - and the bottle never emptied!

When the Baba Sali first moved to Eretz Yisrael, he settled in Yavneh. A local *talmid chacham* would visit him often. One day, the *talmid chacham* said something negative about the Ba'al Shem Tov. The Baba Sali became very upset and said, "I can't remain here if the holy Ba'al Shem Tov is spoken about like that!" That very day, the Baba Sali moved out of Yavneh!

Family Tree



The Baba Sali came from a long line of tzaddikim and *mekubalim*. His ancestor Rav Shmuel lived in Yerushalayim. Once, Rav Shmuel needed to travel to Turkey, but the ship going there refused to let him board. Rav Shmuel took a small carpet, laid it on top of the waves, sat down and sailed over the sea until he reached Turkey. He then returned to Yerushalayim the same way. When the miracle became known, people gave him the name *Abuchatzzeira* – “master of the carpet” in Arabic.

The Baba Sali’s grandfather, Rav Yaakov Abuchatzzeira, also known as the Abir Yaakov, was a renowned *mekubal* who wrote numerous *sefarim* on halachah, *hashkafah* and Kabbalah. His son, Rav Masoud Abuchatzzeira, rav of Tafillalt, Morocco, had three sons – Rav Dovid, the Baba Sali and Rav Yitzchak. Rav Dovid was a saintly rav who gave up his life to spare his community during a pogrom. Rav Yitzchak, also known as the Baba Chaki, moved to Eretz Yisrael, where he became chief rabbi of Lod.

The Baba Sali had several children, including two sons known as Baba Meir and Baba Baruch. Baba Meir was one of the leading roshei yeshivah in Morocco. He moved to Eretz Yisrael a few years after his father and settled in Ashdod, where he led a life of *avodas Hashem* hidden from the public eye. Baba Meir passed away in 1983, a year before his father.

Many of the Baba Sali’s grandsons are famous tzaddikim and *mekubalim*, including Baba Meir’s son Rav Dovid Chai, chief rabbi of Nahariya, and Rav Refael and Rav Yekutiel in Ashdod.

SOME OF THE BABA SALI’S ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

The Baba Sali served as rav and *av beis din* of Tafillalt for over 40 years. He delivered daily *shiurim* and encouraged the people of Tafillalt to remain loyal to Torah and mitzvos. As the *av beis din*, he became known for bringing shalom between people. Once, a rich man and a poor widow had a dispute over a large sum of money. The Baba Sali ruled that the widow owed the money to the rich man. But then he turned to the man and said, “*Tzedakah* is a great mitzvah too.”



The Baba Sali helped transform Netivot into a place of Torah. He strengthened the *bitachon* of many and helped his non-frum visitors do *teshuvah*. Often, when a suffering person came to him, the Baba Sali would say *tefillos* over a bottle of water, then tell his visitor to use the water and be healed. However, he would stress over and over, “It is not the water that will help you, but your *emunah* in Hashem.”



The Baba Sali traveled throughout Morocco to strengthen Torah and mitzvos. Once, when he visited the town of Erfoud, he found out that the local mikvah was no longer usable. The Baba Sali went to the broken-down mikvah, took a pail and started scooping out the dirty water. Soon, everyone joined in and the mikvah was empty. But where would they get new water for a kosher mikvah? Erfoud was in the desert where it rarely rained. The Baba Sali started davening – immediately it started raining and the mikvah filled up!



THE BABA SALI, Rabbeinu Yisrael, would often retell a story from his childhood. Once, he ran into his house upset. His father asked him, “What happened, my child?” Young Yisrael replied that another boy had taken something that belonged to him. Yisrael asked

for it back again and again, but the other boy refused to return it.

“So what happened?” asked Rav Masoud. Sheepishly, Yisrael mumbled, “I cursed him.”

Rav Masoud shook his head and scolded his son, “Your mouth has great power. You must teach yourself to only use it for the good – for Torah, for *tefillah*, for the good of others. Promise me that you will never curse – only bless.”

Young Yisrael never forgot his father’s words. Indeed, as he grew into the famous Baba Sali, he was careful never to curse his fellow Jews; he would only bless – and Hashem gave him the power to make his words come true.

Once, the Baba Sali went to a *hachnasas sefer Torah* in one of the communities in Morocco. At the *seudah* afterward, he started giving a *dvar Torah*. It was already late and people were fidgeting uncomfortably. Someone leaned over to the Baba Sali and whispered, “Rabbeinu, our town is powered by a generator and the electricity will turn off in a few minutes. Soon it will be pitch dark.

Can you please finish your speech?”

The Baba Sali smiled and replied, “Don’t worry! As long as we are speaking *divrei Torah*, the lights will not go off!” Reassured, the townspeople continued with their *seudah*. After a few hours, the *divrei Torah* concluded and people began discussing other topics. Immediately, the lights went off!

When the Baba Sali was living in Netivot, a man in a wheelchair named Eliyahu came crying to him. He was in great pain and the doctors had told him that he would never walk again. The only way to end his suffering was to amputate his leg. The Baba Sali asked Eliyahu, “Do you put on tefillin? Do you keep kosher? Do you keep Shabbat?” Eliyahu sobbed and admitted that, no, he didn’t keep any mitzvos. The Baba Sali then said, “If you agree to become *shomer Shabbat* and do *teshuvah*, then Hashem will heal you.” After Eliyahu agreed, the Baba Sali said, “Stand up!” Amazingly, Eliyahu stood up! In disbelief, he ran to the closest public phone and called his parents.

Many years later, Eliyahu, dressed as a *ben Torah*, came to visit Baba Sali again. He was now living a life of Torah and mitzvos, but he lacked one thing...

“Sidna (Arabic for tzaddik), I can’t find a good *shidduch!*” he cried. The Baba Sali said, “Go to Petach Tikvah.” Eliyahu boarded the next bus to Petach Tikvah, and there he found his *shidduch!*

Amazingly, Eliyahu stood up! In disbelief, he ran to the closest public phone and called his parents.

Try This!

We are far from the level of the Baba Sali, yet our words still have the power to uplift or destroy. How will you use your mouth today? If you say a *brachah* with concentration or cheer up someone who is sad, you can build worlds!

THE BABA SALI'S DVAR TORAH

The Right Way to Look at Tzitzis

We were given the mitzvah of tzitzis to remember and think of the mitzvos. In fact, all 613 mitzvos are hinted to within tzitzis: *Chazal* tell us that the word “tzitzis” has a *gematria* of 600 + 8 (strings) + 5 (knots) = 613 (Rashi, *Bamidbar* 15:39). If one thinks of the mitzvos when he sees his tzitzis, he will be *zocheh* to do them as well. This is like *Chazal* say: We should always have an eye on our tzitzis because this will help us remember the mitzvos, which will bring us to do them (see *Menachos* 43b).

Now, an important part of this is HOW one looks at his tzitzis. If he looks at them wanting to remember the mitzvos and do them, he will be *zocheh* to do so. However, if he doesn’t pay attention to his tzitzis or even dislikes wearing them, he’ll lose out on their full benefit. He will not remember all the mitzvos all the time and will not be led to do them. This is what the Torah means when it writes, *V’hayah lachem l’tzitzis... v’lo sasuru... Sasuru* is from the word *mitur*, which means spying (Rashi, *Bamidbar* 15:39). A spy pretends to be someone on the outside when in truth he is someone else. *V’lo sasuru* means you should not “be like a spy” toward your tzitzis – although you look at them, your heart is not with you. We should appreciate our tzitzis, using them to remember the mitzvos, so that we will be brought to do them all.

(*Hasabba Kadisha: Baba Sali, kerech 1, perek 24, Parshas Shelach*)