



Baal Shem Tov Faith Love Joy: Mystical Stories of the Legendary Kabbalah Master

By Tzvi Meir Cohn

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The most famous master of Kabbalah and Jewish mysticism is the Baal Shem Tov (1698 to 1760). More stories are told about the Baal Shem Tov than about any other person in Jewish history. These stories have been passed down, primarily through an oral tradition, for over 250 years. More recently, books - and even more recently the internet - have been added as a means to continue the time-honored tradition of transmitting Baal Shem Tov stories from parent to child and from Chassid to Chassid. The Baal Shem Tov stories are indeed glimpses of the life and culture of downtrodden, 18th century, Eastern European Jewry. However to see the stories as only that is to miss their central role. In Chassidic life, Baal Shem Tov stories have formed the foundation of one of the most fundamental and important of Chassidic spiritual practices: telling stories about the Tzaddikim - the Jewish saints, as it were; literally, the "righteous ones" - the great Spiritual Masters. These Tzaddikim led and guided the various Chassidic dynasties through the dark Exile of European Jewry, from the time of the Baal Shem Tov. All Chassidim, irrespective of their particular allegiance - whether to Chabad, Brestlov, Belz, Satmar, Gerrer, Vishnitz, to name a few - share one common belief: that the basic facts of the Baal Shem Tov stories are just that - facts. There is an old Chassidic saying: "If you believe all of the Baal Shem Tov stories, you're a fool; if you don't believe any of them, you are a bigger fool." Today, the stories and teachings of the Baal Shem Tov are as relevant as they were in the past. They inspire and guide us. They nudge us towards intensifying our service to G-d. They teach us through example how to live our lives with a joyful attitude. They enable us to experience the flow of love that emanates from G-d.

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Tzvi Meir Cohn is presently a Patent and Trademark Attorney (www.CohnPatents.com). He attended Yeshiva Hadar Hatorah in Crown Heights, Brooklyn after completing his university studies in Engineering and Law. While studying at the Yeshiva, he discovered a deep connection to the stories and teachings of the Baal Shem Tov. More recently, he founded the Baal Shem Tov Foundation which is dedicated to spreading the teachings of the Baal Shem Tov throughout the world in order to hasten the coming of the Moshiach. To spread the teachings of the Baal Shem Tov, Howard created a website, BaalShemTov.com and publishes a weekly newsletter, The Baal Shem Tov Times. Also, Tzvi Meir initiated the World Wide Mezuzah Campaign (www.Mezuzah.net) as a project of the Baal Shem Tov Foundation. Tzvi Meir gives live presentations of his original music and Baal Shem Tov stories to welcoming audiences.

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