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**THE SOUL OF THE  
BAAL SHEM TOV**

A soul like that of the Baal Shem Tov comes into this world but once in a thousand years.<sup>1</sup>



**THE** soul of the Baal Shem Tov was so lofty that it would have been impossible for it to enter this world if his father had experienced any physical desire.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, his father was one hundred years old when the Baal Shem Tov was born. His desires had already abated, and the Baal Shem Tov was only conceived with G•d's help.<sup>3</sup>



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<sup>1</sup> In name of Rabbi Yisrael of Koshnitz (1740-1814), a disciple of the Maggid of Mezritch

<sup>2</sup> There is a classic teaching, stretching as far back as the Midrash, that the thoughts of the parents during marital relations affect the nature of the children who are born. The soul of the Baal Shem Tov so transcended physicality that he could only be born to elderly parents, individuals who no longer had physical desires. Rashis Chochmah, Shaar HaKedusha Ch. 17

<sup>3</sup> *Imrei Noam*

**THE** Zohar says, “If a person is worthy, Heaven gives him the nefesh-soul. If he is more worthy, Heaven gives him the ruach-soul. If he is even more worthy, Heaven gives him the neshama-soul. If he is still more worthy, Heaven gives him the neshama to the neshama-soul.”<sup>1</sup> Rabbi Mordechai of Chernobyl<sup>2</sup> said that the Baal Shem Tov attained this highest of levels.

It is known that the nefesh-soul comes from the spiritual world of Asiyah (Action), the ruach-soul from the spiritual world of Yetzirah (Formation), the neshama-soul from the spiritual world of Beriyah (Creation), and the neshama to the neshama-soul from the spiritual world of Atzilus (Emanation). The soul of Baal Shem Tov was from the spiritual world of Atzilus.<sup>3</sup>



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<sup>1</sup> Zohar 2:94b

<sup>2</sup> 1770–1837

<sup>3</sup> *Tzror HaChaim* in the name of the Trisker Rav