

Over 300,000 at Funeral of World's Senior Kabbalist Rabbi
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By Hillel Fendel



Rabbi Yitzchak Kaduri, known as the "**Senior Kabbalist Elder**", passed away last night in Jerusalem. Over 300,000 people participated in his funeral.

<http://www.israelnationalnews.com/news.php3?id=97471>

Rabbi Kaduri, who commemorated his 105th birthday several months ago, had been in serious condition for the last two weeks in Bikur Cholim Hospital, where he was cared for by his personal physician.

Police closed off Jerusalem streets for the Sunday afternoon funeral, which became one of the largest ever in a city known for large funerals. The funeral began at noon at Yeshivat Nachalat Yitzchak, in the Bucharim neighborhood, between Geulah and Shmuel HaNavi. Rabbis Ovadiah Yosef and Mordechai Eliyahu eulogized him, as did President Moshe Katzav. Rabbi Kaduri was buried in the Mt. Menuchot cemetery.

Students of the righteous rabbi say that the blessing of the Ben Ish Chai (considered the leading rabbi of Sephardic Jewry, d. 1904) and that of the Lubavitcher Rebbe - both of whom blessed him that he might live to see the Final Redeemer - came true. The rabbi's closest followers say that Rabbi Kaduri told them he met the Messiah on Cheshvan 9, 5764 (Nov. 4, 2003). He reportedly said that the Messiah is not promoting himself, and that a study of his [Rabbi Kaduri's] words in recent months would provide hints of his identity.

"He is not saying, 'I am the Mashiach, give me the leadership.' Rather the nation is pushing him to lead them, after they find [in my words] signs showing that he has the status of Mashiach." So said Rabbi Kaduri to one of his close relatives.

Rabbi Kaduri was also quoted of late as saying that the imminent arrival of the Mashiach will "save Jerusalem from Islam and Christianity that wish to take Jerusalem from the Jewish Nation - but they will not succeed, and they will fight each other."

This past Yom Kippur, shortly after Hurricane Katrina, Rabbi Kaduri said, "Jews must come to the land of Israel to receive our righteous Mashiach, who has begun his influence and will reveal himself in the future."

Rabbi Ovadiah Yosef, spiritual leader of much of Sephardic Jewry in Israel today, announced, "We are in mourning over the Elder of the Kabbalists, a remnant of the Great Assembly, Rabbi Yitzchak Kaduri."

Chief Rabbi Yona Metzger expressed his great sorrow "over the taking of the great righteous Rabbi Yitzchak Kaduri, of blessed memory. He was a great and humble tzaddik [righteous person]. In his greatness, he dedicated his days and nights to blessing Jews, to pray for Israel, and he felt the pain of those who turned to him for all their troubles. Rabbis from around the country and the world admired him and asked for his blessing."

A statement released by President Moshe Katzav's office said the president "is pained by the death of the important and accomplished rabbi whose reputation is world-renowned. Rabbi Kaduri, one of the great rabbis of the Jewish People, was noted for his love of Israel and in his second-to-none expertise in Kabbalah, contributed to Jewish unity, and was a source of inspiration for the Jewish People in Israel and around the world."

Rabbi Kaduri came to the Holy Land in 1923, where he learned in Yeshivat Porat Yosef in Jerusalem. He studied Kabbalah under the tutelage of Rabbi Ephraim Cohen and Rabbi Salman Eliyahu (father of former Sephardic Chief Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu).

Rabbi Kaduri's son said there were only 60 Kabbalists in the Holy Land at the time, and that only one who prayed for 15 years with "Rashash intentions" was accorded that status.

When the Old City of Jerusalem was captured by the Jordanians in 1948, the Yeshiva was evacuated to the Bucharim Quarter. Rabbi Kaduri studied Kabbalah there until 1970, when such study was stopped in Yeshivat Porat Yosef. He also studied for many years in Yeshivat Beit El on Rashi St. in Jerusalem, and then moved with his students to found a new institution called Yeshivat Nachalat Yitzchak.

Rabbi Kaduri engaged in bookbinding. He perused all the books he bound, including many old manuscripts which he "photographed" in his memory. Graced with a phenomenal memory, he was said to have known the entire Babylonian Talmud by heart.

"In one instance," a source close to him relates, "in disagreement with a leading Halakhic authority of today, Rabbi Kaduri smiled in his inimitable manner, lifted his hand to the bookshelf and immediately opened to the right page, proving his point. The [other] rabbi was astonished at his familiarity with the [non-Kabbalistic] sources."