

My Cousin Rafael



This is a picture of my cousin Rafael, the famous cantor in Israel with Moshe Dayan at a party. I don't remember the particulars of this occasion.

My cousin, Rafael, who was born in 1928, was educated in the Turkish schools in their neighborhood. He received his Talmud Torah lessons in Shishane at the Apollon Synagogue from Nesim Behar. [A neighborhood on the European side where Jews lived]. With this education, and the fact that he had a special voice and vast religious knowledge, he was appointed the only cantor in the Shishli synagogue [After Shishane, one of the newer neighborhoods where Jews lived].

My cousin Rafael married Klara, who was the cousin of his teacher Nesim Behar and who was the daughter of a rabbi around 1947 (unfortunately I do not have information about the family of Klara, I don't remember). (I cannot remember when or where they were married either). They had two daughters from this marriage. Rafael opened a small store selling supplies for tailors in Pangalti named "Inci" (Pearl) during the hours he had when he wasn't working as a cantor [A neighborhood on the European side that is part of Shishli].

During the events of Sept 6-7, he ran from his home to his store to protect it and started sitting at the door. The looters were destroying everywhere. Trusting Rafael's long beard, his long black coat and black top-hat, he had to show his circumcision to the looters who came to his store. In this way he saved both himself and his store.

Following this event, my cousin Rafael immigrated to Israel along with his mom and dad, his wife and daughters. They settled in Tel Aviv, in Yesof Hamala. They had another daughter and two sons in Israel. He continued to live as one of the most famous cantors in Israel, became an official at the Grand Rabbinate of Israel. He became responsible for the religious ceremonies in all of the official government events. In addition to this duty, he produced programs on the TV and the radio. In time, they built him a special Sephardic synagogue in Tel Aviv. Because the whole family was very religious, the daughters married orthodox sons-in-laws. Since the daughters gradually moved to Beneberak after marrying, Rafael also moved to Beneberak close to his daughters. Consequently

he left his synagogue in Tel Aviv. Afterwards, he was appointed to be the chief cantor of the Ashkenazi Synagogue in Tel Aviv. Nowadays all the children are married and if I am not wrong he has about 60 to 70 grandchildren, of course now these grandchildren also started getting married. Unfortunately, my cousin Rafael had a defective heartvalve from birth and he never wanted to undertake an operation. Because of this infirmity, he was unable to perform as a cantor after the age of 65. Regrettably, he died as a result of a heart attack he suffered due to the loud noise of a Scuttle missile that landed in Tel Aviv during the 1990 Gulf War. He was interned in Beneberak, in the cemetery where his mother and father are. His wife Klara is still alive, and lives with her children.