



1. Photos of some of the Ibn Attar graves in Morocco (courtesy of Rose Rahmani)

<https://torontotorah.com/ibnattargraves.jpg>

2. Rabbi Chaim of Sanz, Divrei Chaim Yoreh Deah 2:105

The Ohr haChaim certainly compiled his book with Divine inspiration – and not only him, but any author, even in our own time, if he is worthy of it, compiles his book with Divine inspiration, meaning that in his wisdom he concurs with the truth of Torah, as the Talmud says regarding Rabbi Evyatar...

Therefore, the teacher who contradicted the Ohr haChaim's Divine inspiration is a heretic, not believing in the leaders of the generation who testified that he was suited for Divine inspiration. He denies the fundamental principle of Divine inspiration and mocks the Talmudic statement in Bava Batra 12a [that prophecy was given to Sages after the destruction of the Temple]. You have done well in not leaving your children in his hands.

3. Prof. Moshe Idel, *Jewish Mysticism Among the Jews of Arab Lands*, J for the Study of Sephardic and Mizrahi Jewry (2007) [https://www.zefat.ac.il/media/3410/jewish\\_mysticism\\_among\\_the\\_jews\\_of\\_arab.pdf](https://www.zefat.ac.il/media/3410/jewish_mysticism_among_the_jews_of_arab.pdf)

R. Yehudah Hayyat left Lisbon sometime during the winter of 1492/93 together with his family and some two hundred others. Due to the plague widespread on the boat, it wandered at sea for over four months. Finally forced to anchor in Malaga after being refused by other ports, the boat was robbed by Basques. At the urging of the Christian authorities (or according to another version, the priests), a hundred of the exiles were convinced to convert, while some of the others, including Hayyat's wife, died. After being kept for two months more in Malaga, they were allowed to leave. Hayyat at last arrived in Fez, only to have a Moslem acquaintance of the Kabbalist initiate a libel against him (the precise nature of which is not totally clear). Fortunately, he was rescued by the Moroccan Jewish community to whom he gave two hundred books in return for the ransom paid on his behalf. After a short stay in Fez living in totally inhumane conditions, he left for Naples in the autumn of 1493, and then again for Venice, where he was very well-received by the "noble" Spanish refugees. The abrupt appearance of such a great amount of manuscript material in Morocco, apparently Kabbalistic in its majority, is a vital component of what often took place during the exiles' Southern trajectory in the Mediterranean area. Another important figure that is representative of the exiles' Southern trajectory is R. Yehudah Hallewah. A descendant of an important Jewish family from Spain—most eminently represented by the late 13th century R. Bahya ben Asher Hallewah—R. Yehudah arrived and stayed in Fez for an extended period, presumably following his expulsion from Spain. He then left for Safed a few years before 1545. There he composed one of the first ethical-Kabbalistic books written in the settlement, *Sefer Tsafnat Pa'aneah*, a text intended to guide the Jewish inhabitants of Safed in righteous behavior by emphasizing the consequences of such behavior for life in the world to come. He presents this strategy of guidance as the only alternative in an emerging community where the leading figures possessed little authority, particularly in contrast to the more organized way of Jewish life that had existed in Fez. This comparative remark testifies to the degree of cohesion characteristic of the Sephardi community in Fez.

An interesting testimony found in Hallewah's book comments on the transmigration of the soul of a Kabbalist who was active in the generation prior to the expulsion from Spain to Northern Africa. Hallewah tells a story he heard, apparently while in Fez, about R. Joseph della Reina's soul, which entered a body of a gentile woman as a punishment for his sinful life. In order to exorcize it, a Jewish magician, likely a Moroccan one, had been asked to help. This is the first case of possession (which will become better known under the later name of dibbuk) recorded by a Kabbalist in a Kabbalistic book, and it takes place a generation before the burgeoning surge of interest in the topic. Another story told in Safed reports about an event which took place in Northern Africa and has as its main protagonist a Spanish Kabbalist. These are just emblematic examples of the importance of the North African trajectory of Spanish Kabbalah, which plainly impacted the new center of Kabbalah in Safed already from its beginning.

4. Genesis 2:3

And Gd blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, for on that day He halted from all of His *melachah* which Gd had created to make.

5. Rabbi Chaim ibn Attar, Ohr haChaim to Genesis 2:3

Gd revealed the matter when He said (Exodus 20) in the Ten Declarations, "For six days Gd made the Heavens, etc." He revealed that at the time of the creation, Gd only created the world to endure for six days, for reasons known to Him, and known to those who know Truth. And Gd planned and created one day, known to Gd, and on that day Gd again sends a flow of life into the world, sufficient to maintain it for another six days, and so on in this way. Without this day, the world would be destroyed at the end of six days and return to emptiness, and Gd would need to create it a second time. Due to Shabbat, the world endures. This is the meaning of "on that day", meaning, "via that day Gd halted all of His *melachah*." What is that *melachah*? Creation itself, for He halted not only from improving activities, but also from Creation.

6. Deuteronomy 26:1-11 (adapted from Koren tr.)

<sup>1</sup>And it shall be, when you come in to the land which the Lord your Gd gives you for an inheritance, and possess it and dwell therein, <sup>2</sup>that you shall take of the first of all the fruit of the earth, which you shall bring of your land that the Lord your Gd gives you, and shall put it in a basket, and shall go to the place which the Lord your Gd shall choose to place His Name there. <sup>3</sup>And you shall go to the priest that shall be in those days, and say to him, I profess this day to the Lord your Gd, that I have come to the country which the Lord swore to our fathers to give us. <sup>4</sup>And the priest shall take the basket out of your hand, and set it down before the altar of the Lord your Gd.

<sup>5</sup>And you shall speak and say before the Lord your Gd: "An Arammian nomad was my father, and he went down to Egypt, and sojourned there with a few, and became there a nation, great, mighty, and populous: <sup>6</sup>and the Egyptians dealt ill with us, and afflicted us, and laid upon us hard bondage: <sup>7</sup>and when we cried to the Lord Gd of our fathers, the Lord heard our voice, and looked on our affliction, and our labour, and our oppression: <sup>8</sup>and the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with great terribleness, and with signs, and with wonders: <sup>9</sup>and He brought us to this place, and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. <sup>10</sup>And now, behold, I have brought the first fruits of the land, which You, O Lord, have given me."

And you shall set it before the Lord your Gd, and worship before the Lord your Gd. <sup>11</sup>And you shall rejoice in every good thing which the Lord your Gd has given you and your house, you, and the Levite, and the stranger who is among you.

7. Rabbi Chaim ibn Attar, Commentary to Leviticus 16:1

ואודיע למתבונן בפנימיות השכלת המושכל, שהשכלת ההשכל תשכיל ההשכלות, ובהשכל בהשכלתו, ישכיל, שמושכל מושלל ההשכל, וכשישכיל בהערת עצמו, ולא עצמו, ישכיל, שהמושכל מושכל ממושכל, בלתי מושכל מהשכל, והשכילו למשכילים ביהוד, השכלתו בסוד נשמה לנשמתו...

Rabbi Yisrael Abu Chatzeira, The Baba Sali: Introduction

8. Yosi bar-Mocha, Dani Dor, *קדושים בע"מ* pg. 100

His father, Rabbi Masoud, who also learned with his children, brought with him from one of his trips a beautiful *siddur* for prayer, printed with large letters. When young Yisrael saw the *siddur*, he asked his father to give it to him. Rabbi Masoud loved his middle son more than the others. He gave him the *siddur*, but first he told him, "See, my son, I read this *siddur* and I am careful to read it, beginning to end, without skipping a word. I am concerned that you will not do as I do, and then the *siddur* will complain against me for giving it away. Therefore, I ask you to act with this *siddur* as I do." Some time later young Yisrael came to his father, who said to him, "Today I asked the *siddur* and it said it is so happy that I gave it to you, and you do not skip any word or letter. Continue in this path of yours, and Gd will aid you."

9. Hevrat Pinto, Rabbi Israel Abouhassira – Baba Sali

[https://hevratpinto.org/tzadikim\\_eng/015\\_rabbi\\_israel\\_abouhassira\\_baba\\_sali.html](https://hevratpinto.org/tzadikim_eng/015_rabbi_israel_abouhassira_baba_sali.html)

Rabbi Israel traveled to Sefat in order to pray at the gravesite of the Tzaddikim, as well as to pray for the hastening of the Final Redemption. With a trembling heart he approached the tomb of the Saintly Arizal, and for the next hour he prostrated on it and cried. Then, after having immersed himself in the frigid waters of the Ari's mikveh, he asked to visit the synagogue where the Ari normally prayed.

To his great surprise, access was denied him. The Jewish caretaker of the synagogue, the one who held the keys to the place, told him that it had been several years since it had closed down, and that no one dared to enter.

"Those who dared to try never came out alive," he added, concluding his explanation.

Rabbi Israel reassured him, then asked him to kindly give him the keys anyways.

Trembling with fear, the caretaker gave him the keys, all while trying to persuade him that it was best to give up on his plan.

A large crowd began to form around the Ari's synagogue, all wanting to witness this event. Tense and fearful, they carefully watched what was about to happen. Rabbi Israel took the key and pushed it into the lock of the synagogue's door.

The door, which had remained shut for many years, opened with a piercing creak. The spectators' fear began to increase. Rabbi Israel turned towards his servant and said, "Grab my coat and follow me. As long as you hold on, no harm will come to you."

With emotions running high, the Tzaddik penetrated to the inside of the synagogue, followed by his servant who didn't dare let go of the side of his coat. Rabbi Israel moved towards the Holy Ark, pushed the colorful vale aside, and opened the doors of the Ark. He took out the Sefer Torah found inside, placed it on the table, then began to read. The servant's heart almost stopped, not knowing if he was asleep or awake. The synagogue then began to fill with a great light, luminous and pure. Rabbi Israel turned towards his servant and said, "You can let go of my coat now. Nothing will happen to you. From this day on, everyone can come into this synagogue without any worry."

All the Jews who were waiting outside were overtaken with joy when they saw the Tsaddik coming out of the synagogue. They had been witness to Rabbi Israel's great saintliness. One after the other, they approached the Rabbi to kiss the side of his coat and to receive his blessing.

### Moroccan Jewry, 18<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> centuries

#### 10. The European Intervention

<https://moroccanjews.org/home/jews-in-moroccan-history/the-european-intervention/>

In February 1860, Spain prepared to invade the city of Tetouan, in efforts to extend its political influence beyond the Mediterranean ports of Ceuta and Melilla. Tribes and unruly soldiers attacked the mellah, to protest the impotence of the Sultan against the Spanish. The entire city was pillaged the following day to prevent the Spanish from benefitting from Jewish wealth. In desperation, the Muslim leaders opened the gates of the city to the Spanish soldiers, who took control without fighting. Tetouan remained occupied for two years. During the occupation, the Spanish treated the Muslims harshly, but refused to apply Islamic legal restrictions on Jews. In this more liberal environment, some Jews developed close political and business relationships with the Spanish occupiers. To demonstrate their gratitude to the Spanish for having taken Tetouan and protected the Jews from further pillage, Tetouan Jews declared a special Purim, the Purim of the Christians.

After Tetouan was returned to Moroccan control in 1862, the Jewish population feared it would be attacked, given the close business relationships between some Jews and the Spanish. Taking advantage of this sentiment, European consulates encouraged the Sultan to protect Jews in Tetouan and throughout the country, because they saw the Jews as potential allies in increasing European financial, commercial and political control over Morocco. In response to reports of persecution of Tetouan Jews, the French Alliance Israelite Universelle sent an investigation mission to Morocco and concluded that life was very difficult for Moroccan Jews. They asked for the French Government to intervene. Moses Montefiore of the British Anglo-Jewish Association was asked by the Jews of Gibraltar to negotiate better treatment for Moroccan Jews. In February 1864, he visited Sultan Sidi Mohammed in Marrakesh and negotiated a royal declaration affirming that the Jews would be treated as equals under the law, with justice and impartiality, and that anyone mistreating them would be prosecuted. Some European consuls distributed this declaration to Government officials, indicating their readiness to protest any mistreatment of Jews.

#### 11. The European Intervention, 1870's-1912

<https://moroccanjews.org/home/jews-in-moroccan-history/the-european-intervention-1870s-1912/>

The Treaty of Fez was signed on March 30, 1912. On April 17, the Sultan's troops in Fez revolted, but they were unable to enter the European quarter, which was protected by French troops. Instead, the soldiers and a crowd following them pillaged the mellah, from which the French had previously confiscated all weapons. In order to force the rioters away from the mellah, French soldiers fired missiles and bombs, destroying houses and causing fires. As a result, Jews abandoned the mellah, which was pillaged the next day by villagers. During the three days of violence, 51 Jews were

killed and 72 were wounded. French troops had a similar number of casualties, while almost 1,000 Muslims were killed or wounded. A third of the mellah was destroyed, and 12,000 Jews found themselves homeless.

### The rise of the Abu Chatzeira family in Morocco

12. Yosi bar-Mocha, Dani Dor, *קדושים בע"מ* pp. 22-23

Why did the emissary strain to travel hundreds of kilometers back to Sefrou to convince the Elbaz family to join them? Because the Elbaz family were not only artisans and merchants, but also scholars. The Jews who settled in the area saw that they lacked halachic authorities and teachers, *chazanim* and slaughterers, and the Elbaz family was the answer to that deficiency. The emissary did not have to work hard to convince them. The strife regarding the laws of slaughter led to a rift between the family and the Jews of Sefrou, and the rift grew worse, almost to the point of ex-communication, and it affected their livelihood harshly. The emissary found the family on the brink of starvation....

13. Rabbi Avraham Mughrebi (son-in-law of the Baba Sali), *Maaseh Nisim*

Once Rabbeinu Shemuel needed to travel across the sea for a mitzvah. He prepared himself and all of his belongings, and he set out on the road. He came to the sea and there he found a boat travelling to his desired location. Our master approached the captain and asked him to take him on the boat. The captain said to him, "If you will pay me like all of the passengers, I will take you. If not, not." Our master told the captain that he did not have any money, and he urged him to take him for free. But the captain did not listen to Rabbi Shemuel's words, and all of his urging was like talking to a deaf ear, and he did not let our master travel with him.

Our master routinely travelled everywhere with a mat (*chatzeira* in Arabic). What did he do? He spread out the mat at the seashore and sat on it and began to study, waiting until the boat would set out. All of the travellers there saw this and wondered, thinking our master insane, Gd forbid, but he paid them no attention. How shocked all of them were, that when the boat began to travel, our master, sitting on the mat, travelled the sea gently, leaning on his pillow and learning.

14. Yosi bar-Mocha, Dani Dor, *קדושים בע"מ* pp. 54-55

From time to time the saint [Rabbi Yaakov Abu-Chatzeira] travelled to Marrakesh, travelling the same route he did as a young man but this time riding a mule bought for him by the local Jews. On one of these trips an emissary from Israel joined him. En route, before the city Ourzazate (Warzazat), bandits stopped the two travellers and demanded that the saint descend from the mule.

Rabbi Yaakov asked them, "What do you want of us?"

"Not much," the bandits replied, "only to take the mule and kill you."

The saint began to descend from the mule, while reciting Shema. Suddenly, the bandits went mute, and their legs and hands shriveled. The saint continued to pray, and the emissary stood off to the side, not believing what he was seeing. The saint asked him to help him ascend the mule, and the two continued on their way and left the armed bandits, frozen in the road...

One day, when he was in the village of Skoura, about thirty kilometers from Ourzazate, they brought a blind woman before him; she had been blinded after she fell and was injured. Rabbi Yaakov called her name and asked that she tell him what had happened, and where she had been going when this happened. "I was en route to my elderly parents to bring them food," the blind woman said.

Immediately the sainted rabbi rose and instructed her to rise from her place. The blind woman rose, holding her chair. "Not like that," scolded the rabbi, "rise and start to walk exactly as you walked before this happened. The woman girded herself and rose from her place, and suddenly she began to scream, "I see! I see!" And to the happy people of the village Rabbi Yaakov explained that this woman fulfilled the mitzvah of honouring her parents, and it is known that those engaged in a mitzvah are not harmed, and therefore Gd listened to his prayers.