



The rise of the Abu Chatzeira family in Morocco (continued)

1. Yosi bar-Mocha, Dani Dor, *קדושים בע"מ* pg. 54-55

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

The story became known to the cities of Ourzazate and Dades and they rushed out to the road. They caught up to Rabbi Yaakov and asked him for mercy upon the bandits, who were from those towns. Rabbi Yaakov explained that he had not done anything; Gd was the one who paralyzed them. But after they continued to plead he set conditions before the tribal leaders, demanding that they commit not to attack travelers, whether Jews or Muslims. Only after they promised this did Rabbi Yaakov pray for the welfare of the bandits, and their limbs were released.

Rabbi Yisrael Abu Chatzeira, the Baba Sali (1890-1984)

2. *Taanit Dibbur*, Yisrael Saba Kadisha pg. 196

We should note that our master held many speech-fasts, and sometimes he would fast from both eating and speaking. Even on Shabbat and holidays, our master would seclude himself and fast from speaking all day, and only at night would he bring in guests and arrange a fourth meal for them, with great splendor and beauty.

3. The Baba Sali Calms a Raging Sea

https://www.torah-box.net/jewish-ethics-and-learning/our-sages/story-the-baba-sali-calms-a-raging-sea_1108.html

Once, the Baba Sali was on a boat on the way to Israel, with one of his disciples. On Friday night, while he was in his cabin and he was singing Shalom Aleichem, the boat began shaking because of heavy turbulence. The boat began to capsize dangerously and the captain asked the passengers to get on the rescue boats. His disciple went to warn the Baba Sali, but the tzaddik continued to receive Shabbat with plenty of Kedusha. He drank from the Kiddush wine, and then he asked his pupil to pour the remaining Kiddush wine into the sea. The student climbed onto the deck and, in front of everyone, he poured the wine. Immediately, to everyone's surprise, the sea calmed down. The captain asked what he had done special, but the pupil replied that it was his master who had sent him to spill the rest of the Kiddush wine. The captain went to see the Baba Sali and thanked him, but the Baba Sali replied as Yosef had answered Pharaoh: "It is not me, it is Hashem!"

Key Themes

4. Yosi bar-Mocha, Dani Dor, *קדושים בע"מ* pg. 107

Rabbi Yisrael Elizra, Chief Rabbi of Ashdod, learned in the Baba Sali's yeshiva in Budenib. He reports, "In the yeshiva there were six classes, and each class had about fifteen students. There were classes of young boys, classes of youths, and in evenings there were also lessons for adults. The main study was in ethics, *chassidut* and awe of Heaven. The graduates studied Talmud with its commentaries, and Jewish law. Baba Chaki taught in the yeshiva. We only saw the Baba Sali infrequently; he would come to test the students. The classrooms were clay buildings, and we learned there by candles and lanterns. The yeshiva stood in the mellah, and there were three synagogues nearby. The Baba Sali prayed in the central synagogue, and there he also remained most weekdays. All of life in the yeshiva focused on the studies. Life was not easy; we rose every day at 2 AM for *tikkun chatzot*, and then were involved in *bakashot* until it was time for *shacharit*, which was extended...

5. Yosi bar-Mocha, Dani Dor, *קדושים בע"מ* pg. 129

The Baba Sali had a fixed schedule. He would rise at 2 AM to recite *bakashot*. With first light he would go to the nearby synagogue, where there were several *minyanim* of local residents, who rose early and rushed to work. His *shacharit* extended for 90 minutes in general. He was careful that prayer not be rushed. Then the Baba Sali would continue to study with a partner, or read Tehillim with the elders who had come to the synagogue. Then he returned home, and at about 9 AM the doors of his home would open and visitors would be permitted to enter, one-by-one, to receive his blessing. Those who came were mostly people with hard luck, seeking from the *tzaddik* a blessing for livelihood, fertility or marriage. This would last until midday, when he would stop for a meal. If the visitors came from far away, he would invite them to join him for the midday meal...

6. *Kol hamitaneh nikra kadosh*, Yisrael Saba Kadisha pg. 192

Our master caused himself great suffering, and fasted many fasts. Every Monday and Thursday our master would hold a private fast, whether during short winter days or the hot, long summer days. Additionally, our master would decree private fasts for himself to prevent any suffering from befalling the Jewish people. And he would also decree a private fast for himself if he sensed that someone from the household had done something unworthy for the household of this pious, holy ascetic.

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

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 kadoshed 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.

8. *Umachnisei rachamim*, Yisrael Saba Kadisha pg. 208

Once our master's son-in-law brought him a Jew whose legs were paralyzed, who wished to receive his blessing. Our master told him to wait for the evening meal, so that during the meal he would bless him with joy. Our master indeed gave him a drink during the meal and blessed him to be able to pray while standing... and he should merit to marry. And so it was.

9. Yosi bar-Mocha, Dani Dor, *קדושים בע"מ* pg. 123

It would be an understatement to say that the Baba Sali did not like what he found in the land: public desecration of Shabbat, drafting women to the IDF, and the spread of secular schools – the same schools he had harshly fought against in Tafilalt...

10. Yosi bar-Mocha, Dani Dor, *קדושים בע"מ* pg. 122-123

Before he left he took counsel with the Rebbe from Lubavitch. The Baba Sali, like many other rabbis from his family, established a strong connection with Chabad *chassidut*. The connection began in Morocco in the early 1920's, when Chabad established a network of schools there. At that time the Lubavitcher Rebbe lived in France, and from there he sent emissaries to the most distant towns in Morocco, where they established a Chabad educational network. The Baba Sali, who led a constant war against the Alliance schools, supported the establishment of Chabad schools in the area of Tafilalt. After the passing of Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneerson, a good connection was formed between him and the new Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson...

Rabbi Shalom Messas (1909-2003)

11. Rabbi Shalom Messas, Introduction to *Mizrach Shemesh* (age 17)

All through my youth, I never knew what a silver coin looked like, and mountains of money were insignificant to me when compared to the great desire for learning the holy Torah.

12. HeChacham haYomi, <https://www.hyomi.org.il/view.asp?id=153>

Especially known is the great love of Hassan II, king of Morocco, for the rabbi. At events in the royal palace, when Hakham Shalom Messas blessed him, the king would bow.

13. Rabbi Shalom Messas, *v'Cham haShemesh*, Commentary to Parshat Terumah

It is known that the Beit haMikdash, and also the synagogue today during the exile, is the place of gathering for the entirety of Israel. There all of the families become beloved friends and one actual family, and from this is produced unity between Israel and their Father in Heaven as well as among themselves. If not for synagogues, one might not see another his entire life, and especially the poor and the wealthy would never gather together. Not so in the synagogue – it causes unity like the Beit haMikdash.

14. Rabbi Shalom Messas, *Shemesh uMagen* 1:45

In a new community with people from different sects – Germany, Morocco, Egypt, Tunisia – and there is no clear majority from one sect such that they might follow the majority... Since it is not possible to give separate space to each sect, they should then pray together, and each should pray with its own book, with its own liturgy – Ashkenaz or Sephard. And in the silent amidah each should pray in his own custom, and they should take turns leading, and the leader should read the repetition and the like in his own liturgy...

15. Rabbi Shalom Messas, *v'Cham haShemesh*, Commentary to Parshat Tzav

Among the beloved mitzvot of this holy holiday of Pesach is the mitzvah of tzedakah. It is inappropriate for one to take care of his own needs for himself and his family, and not pay attention to the forlorn needy people – and the needs of Pesach are great. And as we saw that our Sages enacted to collect flour for Pesach, and so we begin in the Haggadah, "All who are hungry, come and eat." And it is known what the Zohar says, that on holiday evenings Gd examines the population, and when He sees that they are lacking then He wishes to destroy His world. And the attribute of Justice prosecutes the wealthy, saying before Gd, "You gave the wealthy enough to eat, be full and fat, and to the needy You gave nothing, where is Your mercy?" Gd is pained by this, and He wishes to pour out His anger on them. Who causes this? The one who did not give tzedakah. By giving tzedakah one makes peace in the forces of Heaven...

16. Rabbi Shalom Messas, *Shemesh uMagen* 3:66

Regarding Hallel on Yom ha'Atzmaut: The Ashkenazi Rabbis of Israel enacted to recite it with a blessing, and many places follow them. Until now, when Rav Ovadia Yosef came and instituted not to recite a blessing, and now the rule of "when in doubt about a blessing, be lenient" applies. I have already written in my introduction to the *Sefer ha'Atzmaut* that where they have been reciting a blessing for many years because of the Ashkenazi Rabbis, they should continue in their custom of reciting a blessing, for nothing can come after a custom, even where there is doubt about a blessing. But those who do not have a custom to bless should not bless, as when in doubt about a blessing, be lenient.

17. Rabbi Haim Jachter, *Must Israeli Moroccan Jews Abandon Moroccan Practices?*

<https://jewishlink.news/features/22785-must-israeli-moroccan-jews-abandon-moroccan-practices>

Accordingly, the venerable Moroccan sage Ribbi Shalom Messas, who loved Rav Ovadia deeply and profoundly revered him, respectfully but pointedly rejects Rav Ovadia's insistence that Moroccan Jews abandon their unique practices.

Rav Messas argues that just as Rav Ovadia follows his traditions as to when it is appropriate to deviate from Rav Karo's rulings, so too Moroccan Jews are entitled to adhere to their traditions as to when they do not adhere to Rav Karo's rulings. In addition, Rav Yosef Karo himself wrote (Teshuvot Avkat Rachel number 212) that any community that comes to Israel and establishes its own beit kneset is obligated to maintain its prior customs.

Moreover, there is ample precedent for Ribí Shalom Messas's rejection of Chacham Ovadia's approach. Darke Abotenou records:

"Ribí Refael El'azar HaLevy ibn Tobu, author of Pekudat Elazar, came from Morocco to Jerusalem in the early 19th century and established a beit kneset that followed Moroccan customs. He writes (Pekudat Elazar 51:9) that a certain Ribí Moshe Nehemias suggested that they change the custom to that of Jerusalem, but in the end Ribí Refael El'azar HaLevy ibn Tobu ruled to continue the ancient Moroccan custom since Jerusalem is a city of many established communities and customs. When the Yemenites came to Israel [in the early 20th century], the same discussion took place involving Ribí Avraham Haim Nadoff. He writes that they kept their customs even though many advised them to change them."

Ribí Shalom's rebuttal of Rav Ovadia's ruling is most convincing. In fact, Rav Mordechai Eliyahu and Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv support Ribí Shalom's ruling. In practice, Moroccan Jews in Israel maintain their distinctive practices.

18. Dr. Joseph Ringel, *The Construction and De-construction of the Ashkenazi vs. Sephardic/Mizrahi Dichotomy in Israeli Culture: Rabbi Eliyahou Zini vs. Rabbi Ovadia Yosef*, Israel Studies 21:2 (2016) pg. 205, fn 74

I come across no evidence of a direct response on the part of Yosef, this apparent lack of response suggests that Yosef never regarded Zini as a serious threat to his own vision and did not want to give it more publicity. This hypothesis is backed up by Zini's claim (in the interview) that a number of Shas activists arranged to meet with the more well-known Shalom Messas once they found out that the latter wrote a letter of approbation for Zini's article on Hallel (Zini claims Messas stood by his approbation). Messas' approbation granted Zini's critique legitimacy due to the former's respected status in the Moroccan community. In that sense, Zini's critique has the capacity to galvanize major North African rabbis and is therefore significant enough to merit further study

19. Rabbi Shalom Messas, approbation for *Eitz Erez*, Vol. 1

ראיתי מאמר גדול על ענין אמירת הבלל בבאש חקש ובתול המוצר בסח . שחיבו הרב
המלא . וכתב ש' עולה . ורב אליהו גייט שליט"א . המאמר מנהג מניקו ועשרות
המטבח ולא הנוהג כמעט . שאומרים אותו בקולו . ובמקום לקרוא את הבלל . הקבית על
כולו כמעט . הקבית ינה . ונלית כי חקו יגז ומצא . מעבר וזר התפחות . מאכאוש לאש
ועד אחרות אחרות . יגז ומצא בני מרתו . ודרך כלל . את עמיתו עמו . של המקורות
שנהג בחובה לפני אומי אותו . והם מקובלים יחד בבב"ב שימשיכו לאומנו . כין שנהג
כך . אם ישנו לא נראה להם שאומרים הלל כמבנותי . אלא כקורא תהלים בלמא . וכך את
מורה ובא לכל הכוונות . ונת את מקבלי בבב"ב אשכנזי שאומרים אותו . וגם את
אומי אותו עמיתו בבב"ב . ונת אומי או אומי חבר חקו ובנוך . על החומי הנקול שמצא
וסידי אותו באופן נאות בתוספת ענין משלו . איישר תהיה לאוניותא . זה ישר
עצמו מקדש לבין תמיד אל האמת . החוכ יושלים עיהק תובב היום ה' עין תשר"ל נק'