



RAV YITZHAK
KADURI

BAGHDAD, IRAQ

5654 - 5766 / 1894 - 2006

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Dedicated in loving memory
Simha bat Yitzhak a”h
Mania bat Fayga a”h
Hershel Tzvi bar Haim a”h

May the merit of the readers’ inspiration, as they
read this book, elevate their Neshamot.

Yitzhak e” Batya Assayag



In honor of
Allen Azoulay

You make us so proud, and what an accomplishment!

We are certain that this is the beginning of many
great works to come in the near future!

&

May this chapter’s merit be in honor of
our dear departed grandmother

Sara Assor z”l

for whom this is dedicated.

Eli e” Perla Azulay e” Family

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RAV YITZHAK KADURI

Hacham Yitzhak Kaduri *zt"l* was born in Baghdad, Iraq in the year 5654/1894. The great *hachamim* of Iraq noticed his greatness when he was still very young. He was born on a Shabbat *Hol Hamoed Succot* (intermediate days of Sukkot). Little is known about Rav Yitzhak's life in Baghdad because his humbleness almost never allowed him to speak about himself. Even in his old age, he hardly ever spoke about his past.

Rav Kaduri was born into the world of nineteenth-century Baghdad, a bustling city that was home to hundreds of great *talmidei hachamim*. Rav Yitzhak learned in the Zilka Yeshivah in Baghdad and was a *talmid* of the Kerem Shelomo, the Bet Lechem Yehudah, and most notably, the Kaf HaHaim. When Yitzhak was still a young boy, the Ben Ish Hai often gave him the job of finding the *sefarim* that the *saddik* needed, pulling them from the bookshelves in the *bet midrash*, and bringing them to him.

As Rav Yitzhak grew older, he supplemented his studies of *Gemara* and *poskim* with a *sefer* in the great works of *Kabbalah*. In the year 1911, at the age of seventeen, he delivered a public lecture in front of many *hachamim*. They were so impressed with his knowledge that they begged him not to lecture publicly again, lest he bring the *ayin hara* (evil eye) upon himself.¹ That same year, Rav Yitzhak left Baghdad for Eretz Yisrael. There he quickly earned a reputation for being an outstanding *talmid hacham*. His teachers said of him that he was an *ari alah*

1. It is brought down in the *sefer Pele Yoetz* (R' Eliezer Papo *z"l*), in the section "*Derushim*", that a public speaker should use a *sefer* during a *derasha* in order to prevent any *ayin hora*.

mibavel, borrowing a phrase from the *Gemara* (Bava Kama 117a) that translates to “A lion ascended from Bavel (Iraq).”

Most of his life Rav Yitzhak was known only as *Yitzhak Korech* (Yitzhak the bookbinder) – a humble title that suggested nothing of his stature. When someone would bring him a *sefer* to bind, he would ask permission to learn the contents of the *sefer* while binding its exterior. When he returned the *sefer* to the owner, often after a month or so, he would apologize for the delay, explaining that he had just finished learning it. He committed many of these *sefarim* to memory, including some ancient handwritten manuscripts.

Following the Arab capture of the Old City of Yerushalayim in 1948, Yeshivat Porat Yosef moved to *Rehov Geulah*, where Rav Yitzhak continued to study, and also began to teach *Torat Hanistar*. He astounded both his students and his peers with his extraordinary talents, a quick mind, and a broad intellect. Rav Yitzhak came to be known as an expert in the writings of the *Ari’zal* and the *kavanot* of Rav Shalom Shar’aby (Rashash). His memory was literally a phenomenon. When people asked Rav Yitzhak for the location of an obscure statement of the *Ari’zal*, he was able to answer them immediately, without any hesitation.

The *Gemara* (*Berachot* 17b) relates that Rav Haninah was so poor that in his lifetime a *bat kol* would proclaim daily, “The entire world is supported because of my son, Haninah, while my son Haninah subsists on a small measure of carob.” When Rav Yitzhak died at the age of one hundred and twelve, the *maspidim* at his *levayah* portrayed him as a man who needed very little for himself, yet who never hesitated to pray for others to have everything that they desired.

Rav Kaduri is still survived by a wife, Rabbanit Dorit Kaduri, *tichyeh*, many children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. He left this world on the twenty-ninth of Tevet 5766/2006. His loss is another fracture in the chain that connects us to the *hachamim* of Baghdad and to the Sephardic traditions that

developed over many centuries in the Arab lands. Legend has it that the Ben Ish Hai blessed Rav Yitzhak with long life, and he surely did live a long and productive life!



R' Yitzhak Kauri giving a beracha to R' Ben-Sion Abba Shaul

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The Berachah of a Lifetime

A young man traveled from Eretz Yisrael to America. Late on the night that he arrived, he was sitting in a car talking with his friend. All of a sudden, someone knocked on the window of the car and said, “Rav Yitzhak Kaduri is here in America, and he needs a *minyán* for *Arbit*.” They decided to go inside the *bet haknesset* for *Arbit* and grab the opportunity to see this great *talmid hacham*.

Toward the end of the *tefillah*, Rav Yitzhak called the man over and asked him, “How old are you, and are you married?”

He answered, “I am twenty-four years old, and I am not married.”

Rav Yitzhak said, “What are you waiting for?”

The man said, “I have not yet found my *basheret* (person whom he is destined by Heaven to marry). May I have a *berachah* from the *hacham*?”

Rav Yitzhak Kaduri gave him a *berachah* and told him to say certain specific chapters of *Tehillim* for a month. “When you pray,” he said, “you should pray with all your *kavanah* (concentration and correct intentions).” The man was extremely happy that he had received a *berachah* from Rav Yitzhak.

A few days later, the man went home to Eretz Yisrael and his mother told him, “While you were away, I found a girl for you.” The man did everything exactly as Rav Yitzhak had told him, and exactly a month to the day that he had received the *berachah*, he was engaged.



Distributing Blessed Wine

Rav Yitzhak's concern for every Jew once led him to an ingenious plan. That year, before Pesah, Rav Yitzhak was notified that the Jews of Iran were having trouble obtaining kosher wine for the Pesah *seder*. This bothered him greatly. He knew that without wine the Iranian Jews would not be able to make *Kiddush* or drink the four cups of wine at the *seder*. Rav Yitzhak decided to take action.

Rav Yitzhak knew that one Iranian government official had especially great respect for him. Although this official was not Jewish, he had often come to the *hacham* to request a blessing from him. Rav Yitzhak decided to contact the official and explain that he (Rav Yitzhak) wanted to show his fellow Iranian Jews that he was thinking about them. Rav Yitzhak explained that he had special bottles of wine that he blessed and then distributed to his fellow Jews. If the Iranian Jews could receive the blessed wine, it would lift their spirits. Could the Iranian government official use his power to arrange for the shipment of this wine from Israel into Iran?

The Iranian government official was quite happy to show off his power to Rav Yitzhak. Within a short while, a shipment of "blessed" wine was received in Iran. It was distributed to many Jewish families a few days before Pesah.



Rav Kaduri the Sandak

A*mohel* told the story of a *brit milah* he performed with Rav Yitzhak as the *sandak*. The mother of the baby was an irreligious woman from Petah Tikvah who had been

married seventeen years without bearing any children. She finally conceived, only to miscarry in the seventh month. The doctors told her to give up, as they were worried that her life might be endangered by any further pregnancies.

The woman came to Rav Yitzhak to ask him what to do. Rav Yitzhak told her not to give up, and to come to him when she was expecting again. When she did conceive, the ultrasound showed that she was carrying triplets! The doctors insisted that she terminate the pregnancy, warning that she would not be able to carry even one baby to term - much less three. ♦

As agreed, the woman returned to Rav Yitzhak and asked him for further advice. Rav Yitzhak wrote her a *kameiyah*, and told her to wear it throughout the day. Sure enough, the woman gave birth to two healthy boys and a girl.

The woman was very wealthy, and she wanted Rav Yitzhak to come to Petah Tikvah for the *brit milah*, to the luxurious hall that she and her husband had rented. She requested that he serve as the *sandak* for one of the boys. Rav Yitzhak answered that he would agree to be the *sandak* - but only if the *brit milah* was held in his Yeshivah. The family gave in, and the *brit milah* was celebrated in grand fashion at the Yeshivah. The family was so moved by the entire experience that eventually they became religiously observant Jews.

Food for the Journey Ahead

Rav Yaakob Hillel *shlita*, presently the Rosh HaYeshivah of Yeshivat Hebrat Ahabat Shalom, once recalled a conversation that he had with Rav Yitzhak.

“Five years ago,” he said, “Rav Kaduri gave me an envelope filled with shekels and dollars. The shekels were for Rav Yitzhak’s yeshivah. The dollars he called ‘*tzedah laderech* - food for the journey ahead.’

“When I go up to *Shamayim*, I want some merit to accompany me,’ Rav Kaduri had explained. He wanted the money to be distributed to *tzedakah* after he would leave this world, so that the extra *mitzvot* would be a *zechut* for him.

“*He* needs extra! Imagine - such a great *talmid hacham*, and he is concerned that he does not yet have enough *zechut* to accompany him to Heaven!”

By the time Rav Yitzhak passed away, Rav Hillel had accumulated about fifty such envelopes from the *hacham*, containing cash totaling some one hundred thousand American dollars! Each envelope had a handwritten note inside stating, “This money is from Rabbi Yitzhak Kaduri, to be distributed as *tzedah laderech*.”

A Kameiyah From Rav Kaduri

One Motzaei Shabbat, a Yeshivah *bachur* in *Chutz La’aretz* (any country outside of Eretz Yisrael) received the diagnosis that he had a brain tumor, and the brain surgery took place the following Thursday. The boy and his father flew to Eretz Yisrael three weeks later to visit Rav Yitzhak before any further post-operative medical treatment could be done.

The young boy encountered all types of difficulties obtaining a private appointment with Rav Yitzhak, but was finally successful.

“We first spoke to his *gabbai*,” he recounted later, “who told us of our scheduled appointment with Rav Yitzhak. We waited in a room that was host to all different types of people, from a wide variety of backgrounds. After about five minutes, I was shown to Rav Yitzhak’s room. His *gabbaim* were very protective of him and were insistent that only the person receiving the *berachah* enter the room. My father was not allowed to enter. I sat down to the right of Rav Yitzhak. I did not know Hebrew very well, so I showed Rav Yitzhak a paper on which my father had written, in Hebrew, my entire ordeal. After reading the paper, Rav Yitzhak reached over to a pile of *klafim* (sheets of parchment) that was on the table.

“He proceeded to write something on the *klaf* and then blessed me. I did not understand what he was saying; it was in Arabic, and it was followed by ‘*Yevarechecha Hashem...*’ Later I recognized my name amid the cryptic writing.

“After exiting Rav Yitzhak’s room, I was given a paper with instructions for the *kameiyah* that I had just been given. I was instructed to dip the *kameiyah* in water twice a day for ten days, each time drinking the water afterward. I was told to roll it up from left to right, wrap it in plastic, sew it up in a cloth, and attach it to a string. I was told to wear it, but was not told for how long.”

When they were about to exit the building, Rav Yitzhak’s *gabbaim* asked the boy and his father to buy wine that was made by Rav Yitzhak himself. They said to use it for the *daled kosot* (four cups) on Pesah and that it would be a merit for him.

The boy recounted that after the interesting meeting with Rav Yitzhak, “We spoke to Hacham David Abuchatzera from Nahariyah, who told us that he was skeptical about most *kameiyot* - except those from Rav Yitzhak - especially if he had written it himself. He said that I must wear the *kameiyah* from

Rav Yitzhak, and that it would be a *zechut* for me. I have been wearing it every day since.”

The *bachur* returned to the United States and underwent the necessary chemotherapy treatments. About a month later, he could not find the *kameiyah*. He looked all over his house and his parents’ house, but to no avail. It was Pesah time and there were many garbage bags around. After searching every trash bag that lay inside and outside the house, they found the *kameiyah* in the very last one - in an outdoor receptacle. Somehow it had wound up in a used cream cheese container, protected from all the other garbage in the bag. Although the string was soiled, the *kameiyah* itself was perfectly clean, and he immediately hung it back on his neck.

Another day, as he was driving a car, he blacked out and crashed into a utility pole. “*Baruch Hashem* I walked away unscathed,” he says, “but I immediately realized that I had forgotten to put on the *kameiyah* that day.”

Baruch Hashem, the *bachur* survived the trying ordeal and is now learning in a *kollel* and has a beautiful family.



Berachot for Everyone

Rav Yitzhak’s love and concern for every single Jew was famous. Once, a group of secular Jews came to Rav Yitzhak for a *berachah*. Rav Yitzhak gave every one of them a warm *berachah*.

One of the members of the group had the audacity to ask Rav Yitzhak why he had given another man in the group a *berachah*. “After all,” said the man, “he is not religious.”

Rav Yitzhak responded with a bewildered look. “I do not understand the question; I am happy to give a *berachah* to a fellow Jew. Besides, I gave him a *berachah* that he should keep the holy Shabbat.”



Discovering the Culprit

One school in Yerushalayim had a constant problem with thievery. The matter spiraled out of the principal’s control so he approached Rav Yitzhak and told him about the situation. Rav Yitzhak told him, “Write down the names of all the students in the school on pieces of paper. Take every individual name, crumple it up, and bring all the papers to me.”

The next day, the principal gave a little bag full of all the students’ names to Rav Yitzhak. The *hacham* took a bowl of water and spilled out all the little papers into the bowl. He said a *pasuk* under his breath three times, and all the papers floated to the top of the water, except for one little paper that sank to the bottom.

Rav Yitzhak told the principal, “Put your hand in the water and take that paper out; it will tell you which student is causing all the mischief in the school.” When the principal returned to the school, he investigated the matter and caught the thief red-handed.