

Yosef Haim HaCohen

Rabbi Yosef Haim HaCohen (Hebrew: הרב יוסף חיים הכהן, 1851 Mogador, Morocco – September 25, 1921 Jerusalem, Mandatory Palestine) was the President of the Ma'araviim Community in Jerusalem, as well as the rabbi, dayan (rabbinical judge), shadar (fund raiser and emissary) and rabad (Chief Rabbinical Judge) of the congregation.

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Biography

Yosef Haim HaCohen was born in Mogador, Morocco in 1851, the son of Yehudah and Simha.^[1] In 1864, at the age of thirteen, HaCohen and his family immigrated to Ottoman Palestine. The family settled in the Old City of Jerusalem. He enrolled in the Maghrebi Jewish school for religious studies where his melamed (teacher) was Rabbi Mercado Presko, known colloquially as Hakham David. At the age of nineteen, HaCohen married Priha, a fellow Moroccan Jew but the union was childless. In 1897 Rabbi HaCohen took a second wife named Frida, née Shrem, from Aleppo, Syria, with whom he had four children.^{[2][3]}

HaCohen was head of Yeshivat ‘Touvy Yisbau’ in Jerusalem. He was a follower of the Mekubalim (Kabbalists) at ‘Beit-El’ yeshiva and synagogue and taught at Porat Yosef Yeshiva in Jerusalem. Later Rabbi HaCohen was involved in founding and heading “Oz L’Torah” Yeshiva, as he announced in the newspaper.^[4]

On 21 May 1900, HaCohen was elected Chairman of the Ma'araviim Community in Jerusalem, in addition to being deputy to the Rishon LeZion Chief Rabbi of the Sephardic Jews in Palestine, Nahman Batito. In 1915 after Rabbi Batito's death, HaCohen replaced him as Rabbi and President of the Moroccan Jewish community in Jerusalem. In 1919, HaCohen got hundreds of people to sign a petition requesting the Delegates Committee of the Zionist Organization to support Misgav Ladach Hospital in the Old City of Jerusalem which suffered from sub-standard health conditions in the aftermath of World War I.^{[5] [6]}

<div>Rabbi</div> <div>Yosef Haim HaCohen</div> <div>יוסף חיים הכהן</div>	
Title	 President of the Ma'araviim Community in Jerusalem
Personal	
Born	 Yosef Haim HaCohen <div>1851</div> Mogador, Morocco
Died	 September 25, 1921 (aged 69–70) <div> Jerusalem, Mandatory Palestine</div>
Religion	 Judaism
Spouse	 Priha, Frida Shrem
Children	 2 sons <div> 2 daughters</div>
Parents	 Rabbi Yehudah HaCohen <div> Simha</div>
Occupation	 Rabbi Judge and teacher
Buried	 Mount of Olives Jewish Cemetery in East Jerusalem
Dynasty	 HaCohen

Rabbi HaCohen worked as a religious emissary in a variety of countries. In 1894 he was sent to Jewish communities in Saudi Arabia, Uzbekistan and the Caucasus Mountains. In 1899 Rabbi HaCohen was sent to Bukhara, where he raised funds for the Jerusalem congregation and also endeavored to establish academic institutes to deepen the level of Torah studies, by arranging for Torah Scrolls to be delivered to those remote communities. He cooperated with the local scholars and philanthropists to publish books. ^[7] A letter sent by the Chief Rabbi of Bukhara, at that time Rabbi Hizkiya HaCohen Rabin to his colleague Rabbi Elazarov: “In the year 1899, the shadar arrived to Bukhara from the holy city of Jerusalem. Upon his arrival he informed the Bukharic Jewry of the sad news of Rabbi Nissim Baruch ZT”L, the rabad, Head Chief Judge from Jerusalem; and of Rabbi Eliyahu Mani ZT”L the chasid from Hebron” both passed away.^[8] During his lengthy stay in Bukhara he learned the native language of the Bukharian Jews. Rabbi HaCohen's final mission as a Shadar in 1903, was to Algiers (this mission is mentioned in the book *VaYa'an Shmuel* pages 131-136), and to Constantine, Algeria. In the preface of the second volume of his book *Minhat Cohen* (1910) HaCohen referred to his activity there while writing a response which he signed as cited: “while I was residing during Mitzvah mission. Kasantina month Adar year 5663...” Yosef Haim HaCohen died of a brief pulmonary infection on 22 Elul 5681 (25 September 1921).^[2] A vast crowd attended his funeral at the Aerialis lot, the Sephardic-Hasidic area on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem. The eulogy was carried out by Rabbi Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld, the Chief Rabbi of the Ashkenazi congregation in Jerusalem. ^[9]

Publications

The Rabbi had many of his writings and Halachic judgements published both during his life and after. Many of these writings, such as “Kohi V’Reshit Oni”, on masachtot, “Darcheyi Haim”, sermons and novelties on the Torah, are now lost to history.

Minhat Cohen was the only book published during HaCohen's lifetime. The book begins with a Rabbinic endorsement by Rabbi HaCohen and contains various Halachic judgements and discussions on Talmudic law.^[10]

Before his death, Rabbi HaCohen gave a manuscript of his work *Va’Yechalkhel Yosef* to his son-in-law, Rabbi Amram Aburbeh who edited, proofread and published it in 1966 as a *kuntris* (booklet) within his own book *Netivey-Am*. *Va’Yechalkhel Yosef* contains the Rabbi's responsa, as well as additional answers by Rabbis Solomon Eliezer Alfandari and Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld.^[11] ^[12] In 2008, a new edition of *Va’Yechalkhel Yosef* was published by HaCohen's grandson Ehud Avivi.^[13]

The Rabbi's views on Halachic matters were published in the *HaMe’asef* Toranic journal edited by Rabbi Ben Zion Avraham Cuenca, Head Judge in Jerusalem. ^[14] ^[15]

His students

Among his students were:

- Rabbi Amram Aburbeh (1894-1966), Talmud teacher in Porat Yosef Yeshiva and Sharey Zion Yeshiva in Jerusalem, Rabbi of the Nachlaot neighborhood in Jerusalem, founder of the Yeshiva and Or Zaruaa Synagogue, chief Rabbi of the Sephardic Community in Petah-Tikvah and a member of the Chief Rabbinate of Israel and author of *Netivey Am*.^[16] ^[12]
- Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Shloush (1888-1960), Rabad (Head Rabbinical Judge) of the Ma’araviim in Jerusalem and Rabbi Ezra Shrem of Porat Yosef Yeshiva

^[17] ^[18]

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