

## ENGLISH RESUME

# ON JEWISH RELIGIOUS LIFE IN BAATHIST SYRIA - THE LAST JEWISH BOOK PUBLISHED IN ALEPPO -

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Despite the gradual and continuous deterioration of the activity of Syrian Jews under a harsh regime, their ongoing voluntary activity persisted over the years in spreading the Tora and preserving the Jewish character of their community.

A typical example of such of and activity are the lectures addressed to the Aleppo (and Damascus) Jews by means of weekly bulletins. These bulletins were printed undercover and clandestinely distributed by volunteers to Jewish homes in Aleppo, and later in Damascus and Kamishly as well, where Jews were in a very bad state. The distribution of lectures commenced at Passover, 5742 Jewish year. Later, they were collected into a comprehensive book, which was published in several editions thus becoming the last Hebrew book to be published in Aleppo.

The third edition of the book was published in 5748. In 5754, the Aleppo Heritage Center published the book in a new edition, to assist with the spiritual absorption of Syrian Jews in Israel, and abroad after being permitted by the authorities to emigrate from Syria in 1992.

The author of the lectures was Hacham Edmond Cohen, a prominent figures in the Halab Community. He was born in Halab in 1920 to Moise Cohen, the President of "Bnei Brith" and a distinguished businessman. His uncle was Abraham Cohen "Efendi", who also served as deputy mayor and member of the city council. Edmond Cohen studied at "Talmud Tora", at the "Alliance" and at the "Mission Francaise" College. In his youth, he was involved in the family business, and later worked as a chartered accountant for large textile plants. In the frame of his public activity, he served as Chairman of "Va'ad Keter Tora" and was one of the founders of the Jewish social aid enterprises in Aleppo. He was also a committee member of "Talmud Tora" and of "Zdaka and Marpe" plant. He helped to rescue the Aram Zova "Crown" (Alepo Codex - Keter Aram Soba). In 1988 he immigrated to Israel and settled in Bnei Brag, where he is involved in educational and voluntary activity till this very day.



Hacham Edmond Cohen in Israel

The book is written in Arabic and entitled: Collection of Essays - Lectures on the Precepts of the Tora. Each lecture contains 6-8 compactly printed pages, which begin with a blessing and end with expressions of thanks and good wishes for health, success, happiness and "Zadikkim" sons for all those who had contributed and shared in the publication of the lectures.

In contrast to the Jewish practice customary in Moslem-ruled countries during the Middle Ages to write essays in Arabic using Hebrew transliteration, these lectures were written in Hebrew letters. The writer used ordinary Hebrew biblical terms but would transliterate them into Arabic. The lectures were typed on an old typewriter, and owing to the poor quality of the print and photocopies, they are sometimes difficult to read. Occasionally the writer made handwritten corrections which were not clear, and sometimes he even added whole sentences, mainly at the end of a page.

