



## Menachem Yedid Corner

The Jewish settlement in Aleppo is one of the oldest in the history of the Jewish People. In the year 921 CE, Rabbi Saadia Gaon resided in the City. In the 11th Century CE, there was a well-established Jewish community in Aleppo, and we have evidence about scholars who lived there. The Head of the Community was Rabbi Barouch Ben-Yitzhak, one of the 'Talmud' commentators. In the second half of the 12th Century, the community maintained relations with the 'Yeshivah' of Baghdad, and Rabbi Berachyah Ben Berach'el of Aleppo served as president of the court of justice in Baghdad.

The scholars of Aleppo corresponded with Maimonides. One of the correspondents was Rabbi Yossef Ben-Yehuda, a disciple of Maimonides, to whom the teacher dedicated his book "Moreh Nevukhim". Rabbi Yehuda Al'harizi visited Aleppo in 1217. He writes about it in his lithurgical hymn and mentions the names of the greatest scholars of Aleppo, the leaders and holy persons of the community.

A lot more can be said about the visits of the great Scholars of Ashkenaz and their admiration of the Aleppo Scholars and their fluent Hebrew.

The history books teach us that during the Mameluke Era (1261 -1516) there was a time when great scholars lived in Aleppo. Today, I see fit to mention one of them in particular - Rabbi Shem Bar-Yefeth who wrote a book entitled "Hemdath Ha'Te'uda".

At this opportunity, I would like to give you the good news and inform you that the Research Committee under the chairmanship of Prof. Yaacov Shwekeh has resolved to publish and print the book, and the task has been assigned to Prof. Moshe Ourfali, who has undertaken to carry out the project gratuitously. From this important rostrum I congratulate Prof. Ourfali, I convey to him our thanks and appreciation and wish him success. I would like to mention that our distinguished friend Prof. Yitzhak Eskoff has written a doctorate thesis on which we congratulate him.

I am glad to inform you that we are now at the final stage of a great project that our Center has been working on - the publication of the Pentateuch with the 'Sharh.' Our distinguished Prof. Yitzhad Avishur worked hard and went to much trouble to bring it to print. We expect that soon, we shall have the pleasure of declaring the task complete. On the occasion of the opening of the Conference, I wish to pay special tribute to all the members of the Heritage Center Executive and its activists, particularly to the members of the Research Committee headed by Prof. Yaacov Shwekeh, and encourage my faithful friend Mr. Moshe Cohen, Chairman of the Center. It is a credit to all of us and I am proud that all members act voluntarily and grateuitously. Bless you.

I also wish to call your attention to the fact that we have started a collection of manuscripts of Aleppo scholars that were not printed and are waiting to be salvaged and preserved. The task was entrusted on an expert on manuscripts and we are waiting for the results. I hope and pray that the Heritage Center will succeed in publishing some of those books that are of great importance to the enhancement of the Law in many domains that rabbis wanted to impart to us.

And last but not least, I welcome the cooperation between the Babylonian Jewry Heritage Center headed by my distinguished friend, Mr. Mordechai Ben-Porat, Chairman of the Center - and the Aleppo Heritage Center. There is no doubt that this cooperation is advantageous and important, and hopefully it will continue.

From Manachem Yedid, Center's President, speech at the joint conference of Babylonian and Aleppian Jews - May 15, 2000