

as there was in the Christian world, or European-style anti-semitism. There was jealousy of success, envy of the foreigner who progresses faster; there were some violent characters who spread fear, but not much more than that. If, for example, we examine the famous "Damascus blood libel", we can clearly see that those who composed the plot and stirred it up were the Christian priests.

That does not make the Sword of Islam any less sharp. The Diaspora in Muslim lands was, nevertheless, Exile, and by its very essence could not bring ease and tranquility to Jews. But truth to tell, ours was not the most evil or cruel Diaspora, at least not during the time when I experienced it.

Before my father fell ill, when he began to lose customers due to the mechanization of his trade, my two oldest brothers were sent to find a new country for us. They left for Mexico several years before I was born. I never saw Yosef, the oldest, except in photographs. He passed away in Mexico when he was in his fifties, without our ever having met.

I "remember" him as a congenial person. I have a picture of his personality; a picture drawn from my mother's attitude toward him, and from that of my brothers who knew him, and of relatives and acquaintances who recall him with fondness and admiration. My second brother, Shlomo, lives today in Mexico City, engaged in trade. Forty-five years after my birth, a few years ago, we met for the first time. He came to visit me at the Kibbutz. Seeing him suddenly before me — that was something quite unique! Suddenly you see yourself in a mirror, but the mirror is distorted like those at the fairground; it is you yet it is not. A character quite the reverse of me. I saw myself in certain gestures of his hands, in the way he sat down and stood up and in the way he sighed. However, as soon as I began to speak to him, it became clear that his values, in the widest and deepest sense, were quite different from mine. I asked myself if we are truly brothers. I wondered what would have happened if I had immigrated after them to Mexico: would I then-live like him, think like him, behave like him and have the same outlook about the world, about men and society and education? Or are we perhaps, different from birth, and not merely differentiated by environment and conditions? In any event, it was a very disturbing experience, meeting him and attempting to understand his world.

Mother went to live with my brothers in Mexico, stayed there a few years, and then returned to us in Israel. She returned full of stories. She was a woman who knew how to tell a tale, and make it spicy. She told us many stories, but we did not always listen.

Mother was widowed while still young. She tells how she was taken straight from school to the *Hupa* (Bridal Canopy). There was a large age difference between her and my father, and although it was difficult for her to break away from the studies she loved, her love for Mussa Shamosh, and the honor of being his wife, overcame everything.

By my mother and father's generation the differences between the *Francos* and the *Musta'yim* had decreased. The community had blended wonderfully well, beyond recognition; I wish it were like that here in Israel. Mixed marriages were one of the most positive factors in this unification.

With the opening of the Suez Canal, a period of economic recession came to the city and the community there. Aleppo lost its importance as an international commercial crossroads. With their sharp wits, the canny and experienced Jewish merchants sensed in time what was about to happen and managed to utilize the recession for their own progress. They sowed shoots — sons and sons-in-law — in various new centers around the world; the most important of these in the Americas. Today there are flourishing Aleppo communities in Brooklyn, Mexico, Rio, San Paolo and Buenos Aires, each of which is both larger and economically stronger than the

