The Halabi Jews in the Diaspora

These are influential Jews currently established in a number of major centres: New York, New Jersey, Panama, Mexico, Colombia, Brazil, Argentina, Milan, Manchester, Bombay and even Hong Kong. They are inter-connected by family and commercial ties. Any foreigner arriving in their midst is immediately examined, and in the event it turns out to be a Halabi, he/she will immediately receive a warm welcome and assistance that may be required.

A few Halabis have also travelled to other Jewish communities in the Diaspora and have influential immediately thereafter, to the point that you will hardly find a synagogue ultimately used as a community center where a Halabi hand does not "pull the strings". Here, too, the entrance of a Halabi is immediately revealed and gains sympathy.

My current surname in Israel is "Askoff" which is a soft of distortion of the original family name "Eskeff". At one point, I happened to enter a synagogue in New York for the first time, and when they heard me praying, they promptly identified me as a Halabi - by my manner of praying, reading and vocalization. Hence, I immediately enjoyed a hearty

welcome, although they did have some difficulty in deciphering the name "Askoff".

Dr.Yitzhak Askoff

A Bit Concerning Education, Women and the Family

Halab Jewry was renowned for its educational institutions. We might mention the "Talmud Tora" institutions in which holy studies were taught along with scientific subjects. Those primarily interested in secular education attended the "Alliance" chain. Very few studied at Christian schools. "Batei Midrash" for holy studies thrived there largely, thanks to those who went there to study Tora, but also to observant Jews who wished to complete their secular education by attending supplementary classes at the Batei Midrash. Graduates of these Batei Midrash went on to become distinguished Rabbis who left their imprint (both in Israel and worldwide, some of them also serving other communities - out of Halab.

From among the youth organizations in Halab, it is noteworthy to mention the "Scouts" movement, which existed until 1945 and was affiliated to the French EIF (Eclaireurs Israelites de France). There was also the "Maccabi" organization and "Beitar" - with our Menachem Yedid proudly walking around Halab dressed up in his Beitar outfit.

Rafi Sitton

The Jewish woman in Halab was endowed with greath wisdom. She earned the respect of her husband and knew how to reciprocate it. There were very few divorces and disputes among married couples.
The Halabi woman had a hand in establishing seasonal food
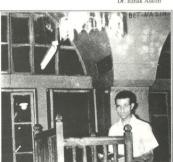
customs which struck roots all over the world. The "sanctity" of these customs is unquestionable: no Friday goes by without each Halabi family serving a meal based on rice and beans. The "Lubia" (string beans) at New Year - known in hebrew as the "rubiya" - is a must even if it costs a fortune, and the same applies to the "sil'iya" and the "kaftes" at Passover and the "riz be'halib" at the Feast of Shavuoth.

Aliza Katzin

And finally the Early Stage of Researrch on Aleppo Jewish Heritage

There is a large and rich archive in Halab itself which has not yet been discovered or investigated. This is in addition to various other treasures scattered throughout the world and still not explored. The Halabi heritage has always been a source of interest to leading Jewish scholars but has yet to be explored in a basic and comprehensive manner. Even the Rambam (Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon) lamented the generally grim situation of world Jewry, except for Aleppo Jewry which Rambam praised a lot.

Dr. Itzhak Askoff

We at the Aleppo Heritage Center are making persistent efforts to develop this research. For instance, I might mention that dozens of students receive from us each year study grants, in exchange for which they are required to collet and edit articles, record the elders of the congregation, gather documents and photographs. Our collection is gradually increasing and this material is of great significance to scholars.

Yacov Farashe