



The Voice of Israel's Channel I, gave a public broadcast of a special program entitled "Roots" - a Friday supplement on Halab Jewry folklore. The broadcast was performed by a panel at the Moriah Plaza Hotel in Jerusalem in the presence of an audience. Panel participants included: Menachem Yadid, Moshe (Moise) Cohen, Aliza Katzin, Dr. Yitzhak Askoff, Yacov Farashe, David Gindi and Itzhak Saad - all of whom are members of the Aleppo Heritage Center Management. Also participating in the program was songster Yossi Levi accompanied by band. The program was compiled and produced by Shabtai Bibi, with Naphtali Menashe as moderator. Below are selected pieces from this broadcast.

WHO IS A TYPICAL HALABI?

To say "Halabi" is to say - a man of the big world; to say "Halabi" is to say - a God-fearing Jew, often with no external signs of this; to say "Harabi" is to say - a linguist; to say "Halabi" is to say - a sociable person.

We used to say that not in vain did wise King Solomon say in the Song of Songs: "I drank my wine with my milk" ("Halabi" in Hebrew), in other words, the banquet was held by kings and wise men with the Jews of Halab and with them only.

To say "Halabi" is to say - a man with self-respect; you won't hear him shouting because he stands for modest behavior. He takes big chances, but does so quietly and modestly because he believes it is good for success. He is independent: able to make it on his own but will do everything for his brothers, the Halabis, wherever they may be.

Rafi Sitton

The city of Halab has special characteristics which have left an imprint on the sociological development of its Jews. This is the second largest city in Syria, but was for a long time considered the country's main business, cultural and ethnic center. It offered a diversity of ideas and views creating an atmosphere of openness and tolerance. The city has diverse ethnic concentrations - orthodox Christians, Greeks, Catholics, Protestants, Moslems, Jews, Armenians, Turks, etc. This combination of openness and tolerance has produced Jews with a cultural wealth.



The Jews themselves comprised an assimilation with "Moustaribims" ("Arab Jews"). Francos, Jews from Livorno, Jews from Irak and next to them Ashkenazi Jews such as the Hornstein, Goldman and Lerner Families. The common denominator was that all of them had assimilated in one melting pot - and this pot was the Halabi Jew.

Tolerance produced an interesting combination in Halab Jewry: Tora and Jewish religious laws on the one hand, and a worldly life style on the other hand. These two factors went hand in hand without creating a conflict, to the extent that the Halabis were always in the habit of saying that one should live according to the rule namely, "an hour for you and an hour for your God".

