

THE ARISTOCRAT

THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF HILLEL MENASHE SUTTON

A Journey of Faith and Spirit

ABRAHAM SUTTON

USA $25.95

ABRAHAM SUTTON skillfully recreates the past eras of Aleppo, Syria, with its glorious history of the Jewish community and its synagogues, rabbis, scholars, and merchants. His father, Rabbi Hillel Menashe Sutton, was an aristocratic, dedicated member of the community who contributed a lifetime of accomplishments in both physical and spiritual areas. The life history of Hillel and Bahia journeys from Aleppo to Jerusalem and New York. The ups and downs throughout their lives emphasize their strength and strong belief in G-d.

In a stunning portrait of his parents, Abraham Sutton's memoir offers a grand and sweeping story of faith and spirit, encompassing both tragedy and triumph.

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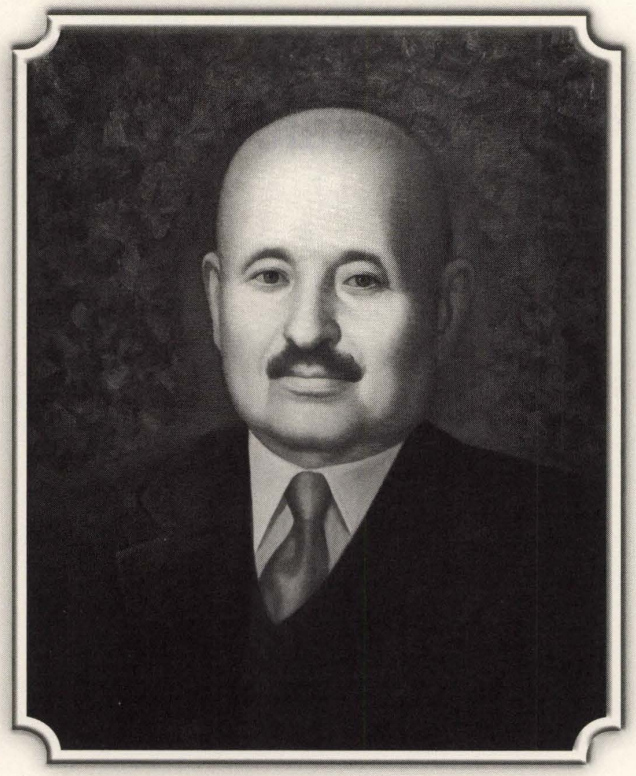
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THE ARISTOCRAT



Hillel Menashe Sutton
1870-1949

To my dear wife Paulette
and my children and grandchildren,

Barbara and Alan,
Jack and Claire Shweky
Debra and Henry, Paulette,
Stephanie, and Andrew Sutton
Ellyn and Jerry Sutton

And to the memory of
Hillel and Bahia Menashe Sutton

"איזהו עשיר השמח בחלקו"

"Who is rich? He who
is happy with his portion."

(אבות ד,א)

"גם זו לטובה"

"This, too, is for the best."

(תענית כא)

"שלח לחמך על פני המים
כי ברב הימים תמצאהו"

"Cast your bread upon
the waters for in the
long run you will find it."

(קהלת יא, א)

SAUL J. KASSIN, CHIEF RABBI שאול י. קצין

ב"ה
אייר תשס"ח

חייב אדם לכבדו אפילו אחר מותו (יו"ד רמ , ט)
One is obligated to honor his father even after his father passes away (Yoreh Deah 240,9)

The book, *Aristocrat*, was introduced to me by a very dear person, Mr. Abraham Sutton. I read a few pages, particularly the eulogy of Shafika o.b.m.

Al Sutton traveled and researched a great deal about the legacy of his father, especially since his father passed away when Al was only eleven years old. Al wrote a colorful history and biography of his beloved father, Rabbi Hillel Menashe Sutton a"h and his wife Shafika a"h.

The book describes in great detail the deeds of his parents and extended families. It also gives insight into the lifestyles of those living in Syria, Israel and America at that time. His father R' Hillel and Shafika were involved in the synagogues, institutions and people of their community, and devoted themselves to help whenever needed. They were people of dignity and nobility.

Al continues to follow in the footsteps of his family and the golden chain of his parents and ancestors. Several years ago he and his family dedicated a synagogue in Maimonides Hospital and also a Sefer Torah. This beautiful edifice is being used every single day by patients and visitors. It stands as a great merit to the souls of his parents and a daily blessing for the living families.

I enjoyed reading this book and highly recommend it. It will serve as a lesson of respecting and honoring one's parents in the proper way.

May the heavenly blessings be rewarded to Al Sutton and his family for this wonderful book.

Rabbi Saul J. Kassin
Chief Rabbi

Rabbi
Saul Jacob Kassin
Chief Rabbi of
Shaare Zion Cong.
&
Eastern Communities
Brooklyn, NY



BIRKAT YAAKOV

In Memory of Jack Adjmi ע"ה

Rabbi David Ozeri

Rabbi David Sutton

בס"ד

June 2008

Dear Al,

This letter really belongs in the Acknowledgments section of your book. Everyone involved in the book received honorable mention; the only one missing is the author himself, Mr. Al Sutton. I witnessed only part of your tremendous effort involved in the research, writing , editing, and graphic layout of the book. You traveled to Israel and interviewed the elders who remembered your father, you pored over manuscripts to extract the minor details of your fathers life. All of this was driven by one powerful force, the respect that you have for your father and the Menashe Sithon legacy.

I feel privileged to have been an impetus to your work. It all started when you were reading *Aleppo, City of Scholars*, a translation of the great work of Hacham David Laniado that documents the lives of our great Rabbis of Aleppo. Hidden in the biographical sketch of Rabbi Yehuda Dweck you saw a mention of a eulogy given for your father's wife, Shafika. You proceeded to find the Hebrew copy, you then translated it into English, and you did not rest until you understood the greatness of your father, who you only knew for a short time. Many people knew their fathers longer than you knew yours, but do not have the respect and reverence that you exhibit.

After reading about your father, it is no wonder to me that he left such a strong impact on you. He was truly a special man, enduring life's tests and never wavering from his faith and commitment to religion. The picture of him standing upright in front of that palm tree with his special smile says it all. As David Hamelech said in Tehillim, "The righteous flourish like the palm tree; he grows like a cedar in Lebanon. Those that are planted in the house of Hashem shall flourish in the courts of our G-d. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing." Your father continued to flourish and bear fruit in his old age, all because he was steadfast and planted in the courts of Hashem. He was truly a special man; I know many of the Hillels named after your father and they all have a special spark.

You made dedications to commemorate his name, you dedicated a Sefer Torah, the synagogue in the Maimonides Medical Center, and the list goes on. But as the saying goes "The written word is forever." This book will last for generations, and it was worth every moment of your time and effort. Perhaps only you will notice the work and fine detail. But I am sure your father knows how much you care and respect him.

You should be an inspiration to others in our community to reconnect with their past. And may your father continue to smile down from above upon you and your family.

Sincerely
Rabbi David J. Sutton

1032 Ocean Parkway • Brooklyn, NY 11230
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בס"ד

EDMOND J SAFRA
SYNAGOGUE

Rabbi Elie A Abadie, M.D.

June 12, 2008

Dear Mr. Sutton,

It is with great pride and appreciation that I acknowledge, and commend the tremendous effort that went in to creating the memoir of your family history entitled The Aristocrat. I have often asked who will become the historian of the Sephardic – Mizrahi community. The person to capture the Sephardic experience as it swept from the Middle East and transcended into the countries of departure. Rabbi Hillel Menashe Sutton, your father is an exemplary individual for our current generation to follow, and to admire so that they may understand the great traditions of our forefathers, and the struggles and triumphs that took place not so long ago. I enjoyed reading The Aristocrats, and became nostalgic as I experienced the life of your beloved Father Rabbi Hillel Menashe Sutton. I am hopeful that this important recounting of Sephardic history will be read throughout the Jewish community so that the stories and experiences of the Aleppo community are counted in the annals of Jewish history.

Hazzak U'Barukh,

Elie Abadie

Rabbi Elie Abadie M.D.

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shaare zedek medical center jerusalem

המרכז הרפואי שערי צדק ירושלים

Approbation by Prof. Yonatan Halevy
Director-General

I have examined the work "The Aristocrat: The Life and Legacy of Hillel Menashe Sutton" written by a dear friend of Shaare Zedek Medical Center in Jerusalem, Mr. Al Sutton. This book can only be described as a "labor of love" where the mitzvah of *"kibud av v'em"* comes alive and is exemplified on each and every page.

The odyssey of writing this book started out with Al Sutton asking a simple but profound question. "Did I really know who my father was?" Sadly, Rabbi Hillel Menashe Sutton, of blessed memory, had passed away when Al was eleven. Yes, he was well aware that his father was both a serious Torah scholar and a successful businessman who was held in high esteem by the members of his community. He also knew, from the broad smile on his father's face and the glistening in his eyes, that his father took great pride and joy in his children. But that was not enough. Al really wanted to know about his beloved father from the many people who were touched by his outstretched hand of kindness and Torah inspired outlook.

Mr. Sutton takes us on an extraordinary journey where he wonderfully and colorfully describes the characteristics of each Jewish community; from Aleppo, to Jerusalem, to Tel Aviv, to New Orleans to New York/Deal. We read of Rabbi Sutton's positive attitude, even during times of great hardship and tragedy; his inner contentment, his sterling reputation as well a strong, unbending emunah. Al also speaks passionately and with deep emotion about his beloved mother – both about her sterling character traits and values and intense joy in bringing the whole family together for s'machot.

What deeply impresses the reader are the countless acts of tzedekah and chesed of Rabbi Sutton. Imagine, during Israel's War of Independence, of walking five miles in Jerusalem, with the threat of snipers everywhere, because the hunger experienced by his neighbors deeply pained Rabbi Sutton; or, of first having a Seder with members of your family, and then walking to the orphanage to perform another Seder, with the same enthusiasm and gusto as the first one, so that the orphan children wouldn't go to sleep without seeing their adoptive "father." These are, of course, just two examples.

How beautifully has Al Sutton followed in the footsteps of his beloved parents. Throughout his career, his business office was a "stop" for visiting Rabbis, heads of Yeshivahs and social institutions, both local ones and those based in Israel. Together with his dear wife Paulette, in generously supporting Shaare Zedek Medical Center, Maimonides Medical Center and a large number of other community institutions, Al passionately carrys on the legacy of healing and hope set by his parents. In the merit of their wonderful acts of kindness and compassion, may Al, Paulette, the children, grandchildren and entire family be blessed with good health, happiness, peace of mind and much, much nachat.

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PROLOGUE

How This Book Was Born

"Do you know who your father was?" Those powerful words echoed in my mind, dancing before me during the workday and following me home in the rush-hour traffic from Manhattan to Brooklyn. A prestigious rabbi from Jerusalem had stopped by my office that day, beseeching me to patronize his institution. During our friendly conversation, he discovered that he had been acquainted with my father, Hillel Menashe Sutton ע"ה, years ago in Jerusalem. In a voice suffused with awe and respect he had asked, "Do you know who your father was?" That simple question made my heart swell with pride. Yes, I was proud to

be connected to a man who generated so much respect from such an honorable rabbi. I had spent a mere decade with my father; he had passed away when I was only eleven years old. My few memories of him had become faded and tattered as the years went by, but I had always heard stories from my mother illustrating his greatness. Even after his death, he still exerted a marked influence on my life. Did I know who my father was? At the time that the rabbi posed this question, I thought that I did.



In March 2005, Rabbi David Sutton published the monumental historical work, *Aleppo: City of Scholars*, describing the rich history and great rabbis of Aleppo. As I read the book, I came across a mention of a eulogy presented by the renowned kabbalist of Aleppo, Rabbi Yehuda Dweck HaCohen, at the funeral of my father's second wife. My curiosity was piqued. Rabbi Dweck had been a close friend of my father, and I was itching to discover exactly what the rabbi had spoken about regarding my father and my family. I just had to get my hands on the full text of the eulogy as soon as I could. After contacting Rabbi Sutton, I was soon perusing the actual Hebrew eulogy. The opening paragraph introduced my father as "the benefactor, the unique man of many attributes who supported every good enterprise, the honorable Rav Hillel Meir Menashe Sutton."

I drank in Rabbi Dweck's words, which portrayed my

father in glowing terms and sang his praises and exceptional qualities. "Who is like Hillel, my dear friend who is like my own self?" Rabbi Dweck had rhetorically questioned the hundreds of prominent community members who had come to pay their respects. This holy scholar felt that my father's traits and deeds were incomparable.

After eulogizing my father's wife, the rabbi offered his prayers on behalf of my father, whom he described as "...a man raised on high, an able man of deeds who fears G-d, holy from birth, a child of holy people, of ancient, lofty stock; who does acts of kindness, doing good to all who ask, the head of the organization 'Keter Torah'.... A man who tries with all his strength and energy to help others, awake by night as by day, in darkness as in light, a father to the orphans and to the miserable poor. He arises from his bed in the middle of the night to find doctors for the women giving birth, to give hope to those who are downtrodden; he shares the public burden with a generous spirit, supporting the poor with strength and money, the honorable Rav Hillel Sutton." (See Book three for the full Hebrew eulogy and translation.)

The words of the rabbi who had visited my office resurfaced in my memory. "Do you know who your father was?" No, I did not. What I had glimpsed of him until now was only the tip of the iceberg, an enormous iceberg that filled the ocean depths. I read the eulogy again and again. The tears that had crept into the corners of my eyes when I had begun reading the first paragraph now incessantly ran

down my cheeks. The eulogy taught me that my father wasn't only a special man; he stood high up on the mountain peaks amongst the world's greatest.

My mind churned for days after. If only I could learn more about my father. If only my entire family could truly understand who my father had been. And then one morning, after a sleepless night of tossing and thinking, a seed was planted in my brain. As the day went by, though, the daily distractions and obligations took over, and the idea was shoved into the faraway recesses of my mind. But during the quiet lulls, the rabbi's burning question persistently plagued me. *Do you know who your father was?* Those words just wouldn't leave me alone, and the tiny seedling stealthily took root and began to sprout. I silenced my doubts and was finally convinced: I would write a book describing my father's life and attributes, a book that would announce to the world who my father had been.

As I planned the actual logistics and technicalities, it dawned on me what a tough job lay ahead. Where would I begin? I was not born in Aleppo, where my father had spent the majority of his life, and I had only several years of personal memories of him. And to whom would I speak and from whom would I glean details? All my uncles and aunts had passed away; only a few cousins remained who had memories of my father. I berated myself for not researching and recording my father's life earlier, when it would have been so much simpler. So many unrecorded details are now lost forever; so many memories are buried with the past,

deceased generation. I had had so many opportunities throughout the years, but I had unconsciously let them just slip through my fingers. I wouldn't let these stones prevent my book from blossoming into fruition. I was prepared to unearth ancient records and trace any living rabbis, relatives, or friends who could provide some overlooked information about my father. And of course, I had my own few memories to rely on. As I tried to determine the most efficient plan of action, my mind wandered to my final memories of my father.





The Life and Legacy of Hillel Menashe Sutton



CHAPTER ONE

Simhat Torah

1949 — תש"י

Memories of the High Holidays with my father are stored in a special place in my heart. I have always been awed by the holy aura of the synagogue and the soul-stirring prayers sung in their rich traditional tunes. I especially relished the elaborate holiday dinners and lunches featuring a gala array of delectable dishes, always shared with family and relatives. Each holiday touched me in a unique way, but the one I have always delighted in the most was *Simhat Torah*. Its name connotes its joyous essence and atmosphere, and what could be more uplifting than rejoicing and exulting with the Torah?

The specific details of each *Simhat Torah* celebrated during my childhood are generally vague, but there is one *Simhat Torah* that is etched in my mind with indelible ink: the *Simhat Torah* of 1949, when I was a mere youngster of eleven. Closing my eyes, recalling that day, I can almost feel the warm rays of the Mediterranean sun as I accompanied my father and two older brothers to the *Ahavat Zion* Synagogue on Ahronson Street in Tel Aviv. The two-mile walk from our house led us up HaYarkon Street, which runs from the southern to the northern tip of Tel Aviv, parallel to the Mediterranean Sea. I can picture the scene so clearly. My father was dressed in his regal navy evening suit and tie, and my brothers and I were wearing our holiday finery. At the age of seventy-nine, my father was the epitome of perfect health; he stood erectly and walked with his usual briskness. Although my brothers and I were energetic youths, we had to struggle breathlessly to match his quick pace. Luckily, the weather was on our side; the sky was bright blue and cloudless, the sun was shining, and the temperature was comfortably warm. The clear weather reflected what we were all feeling inside: calm and carefree. After the turbulent war era, Israel was an independent Jewish state. At last, the British and Arabs were gone, together with the fears and hardship we had endured in the past years. All across the country morale was high, especially in our city of Tel Aviv, which hadn't experienced the devastation and fatalities of the fierce fighting in Jerusalem. On that day, we all perceived life as truly wonderful. As the sun smiled

down on us we sensed the promise of a secure and blissful future.

Upon arriving at the synagogue, my father settled down in his customary seat on the eastern wall next to the *hechal* (Torah Ark). My brothers Mike (Meir) and Buddy (Ovadia) and I sat diagonally across from our father. The synagogue was filled to capacity, yet my brothers and I all received the privilege of being called up to the Torah reading. Interestingly, we were called up consecutively, which I later found out is seldom or never done with family members. My father was honored with the prestigious *aliyah* of *Hatan Torah*. As he was called up to the Torah, the congregants sang for a few minutes. The entire *perasha* was then read by my father, something he derived great pleasure from. After he completed the reading and stepped down from the *tebah*, the congregation rose, and one by one each man shook his hand to congratulate him. Watching this scene, my cheeks flushed with pride. I felt so fortunate to call this honored, beloved, and respected man, my father. When my father returned to his seat, I proudly kissed his hand which he then lovingly placed on my head as he blessed me.

Following the prayers, the congregation broke into the lively dancing and singing of the *hakafot*. My father danced around the Torah with so much energy and enthusiasm that an onlooker would have thought he was at his own wedding. Although he was nearly eighty, his stamina was like that of a young groom. He read and sang the first *hakafa* in a voice so sweet and charming that all fell silent so they could hear

the richness of his voice. As my brothers and I danced with the Torah, I caught a glimpse of my father watching us with a broad smile. His blue eyes glistened with a special light that I can identify today as the glow of genuine satisfaction and pride. Now, after a life filled with suffering, he could finally reap the sweet fruits of his labor; my father's three romping boys were blossoming into mature young men. I believe that that was the happiest moment in my father's life. I had never seen him with a more joyful expression, and when I envision him today it is with that smile and those eyes.

The merriment of the synagogue escorted us on our walk back home. Sensing my excitement, my father asked me if I had enjoyed the prayers and dancing at the synagogue. I had so many feelings I wanted to share with him, but in the fashion of a typical youngster, I just smiled bashfully and nodded while staring down at my shoes. Together we entered the house and were greeted with a scene of holiday celebration. The table was set majestically with my mother's exquisite dishes and tableware. The mouthwatering aromas wafting through the house hinted to the delectable feast we would soon be treated to. After *kiddush*, my father offered all our guests a drink of *arak.* Feeling grown-up enough, I decided it was prime time that I have my first shot of *arak.* Although I remember the overwhelmingly potent taste of the liquor as I took a small sip, I don't recall managing to swallow it. The savory dishes that followed were definitely more up my alley. We all feasted our fair share as my

father sang holiday songs, read psalms, and regaled us with traditional stories.

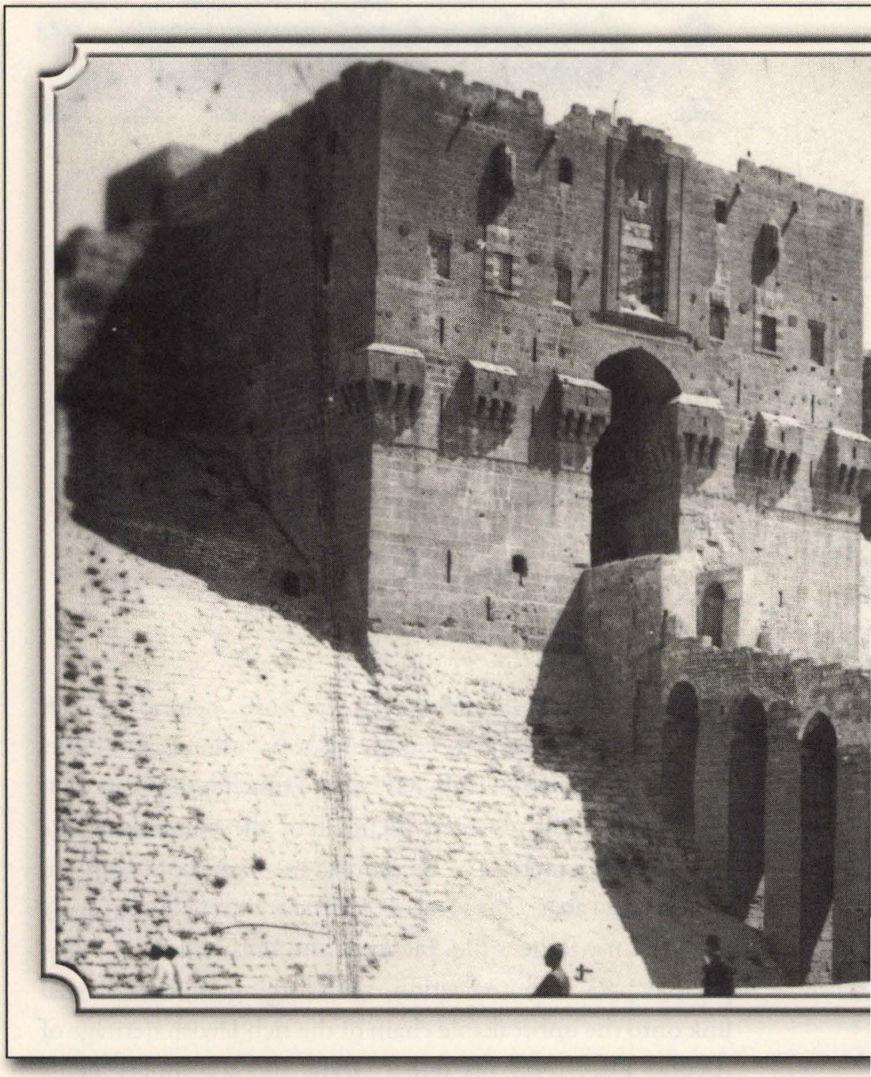
That *Simhat Torah* was spent in an atmosphere infused with warmth and good spirits. We were a content, close-knit family, appreciating each other's company and anticipating many more peaceful, joyful years together. As the day drew to a close with the night slowly spreading its darkness over us, I noticed a few drops of rain. Just that day we had begun to recite *Mashiv Haruach,* the prayer during the *Amidah* requesting rain, and this first rainfall since the spring was a sure sign that G-d had answered our prayers. Those little droplets were announcing that the bitterly cold, dark winter was looming ahead. And indeed, the following day my family was plunged into the most bitterly cold, dark winter we had ever experienced. The following day my father went to sleep and never woke up.



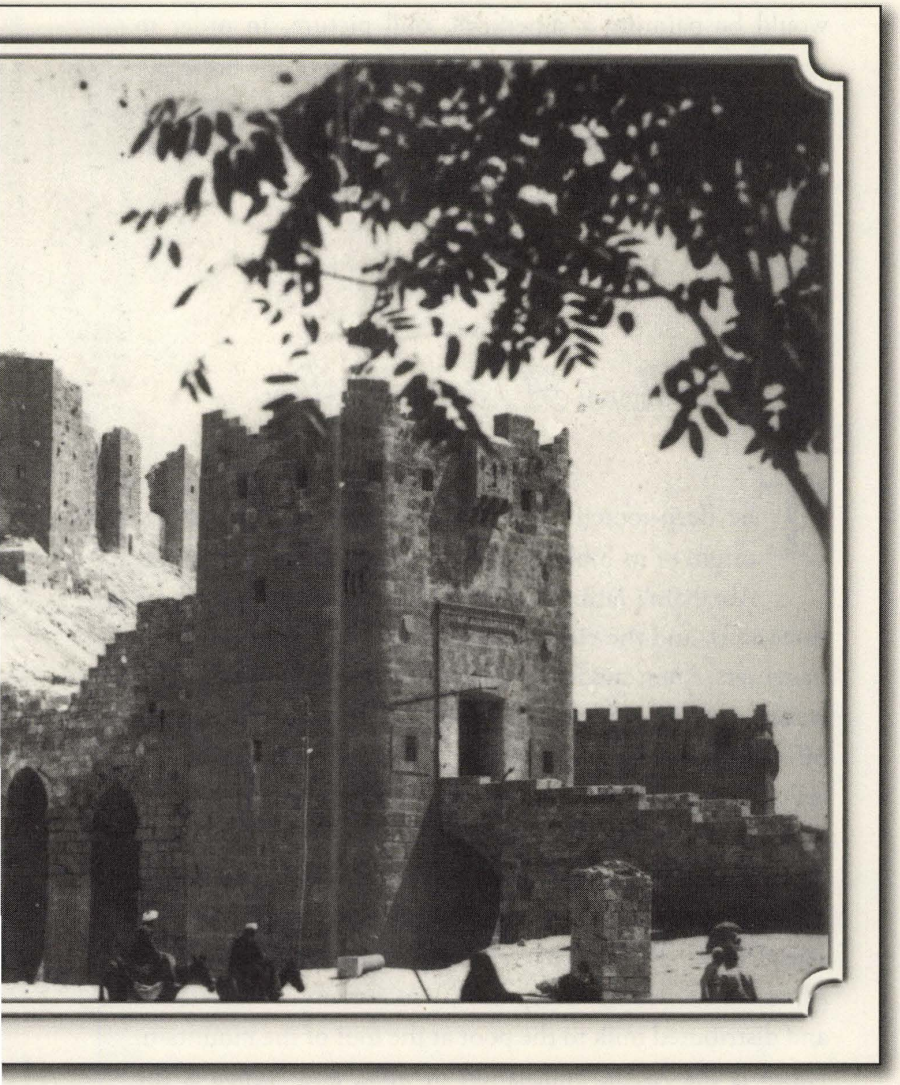
CHAPTER TWO

The City of Aleppo

When a man passes away, he leaves behind a bereft family and grieving friends. My father, Rabbi Hillel Menashe Sutton, left behind much more than that. As an active and devoted member of the community, he contributed a lifetime of accomplishments in both spiritual and physical areas. The ideals of Aleppo were reflected in every aspect of my father's life. He lived and breathed its nobility, perseverance, and dedication, thus forging another eternal link onto the unbreakable chain of the rich Jewish heritage of Aleppo. Describing my father's traits and accomplishments without first delving into the history and qualities of Aleppo



The Aleppo Citadel



would be painting a superficial, dull picture. In order to reveal the vibrant colors, shades, and depth of my father, in order to appreciate and understand him in all his glory and spirit, we must first delve into the rich history of his past: the history of the ancient city of Aleppo.



Aleppo: A Link to the Past

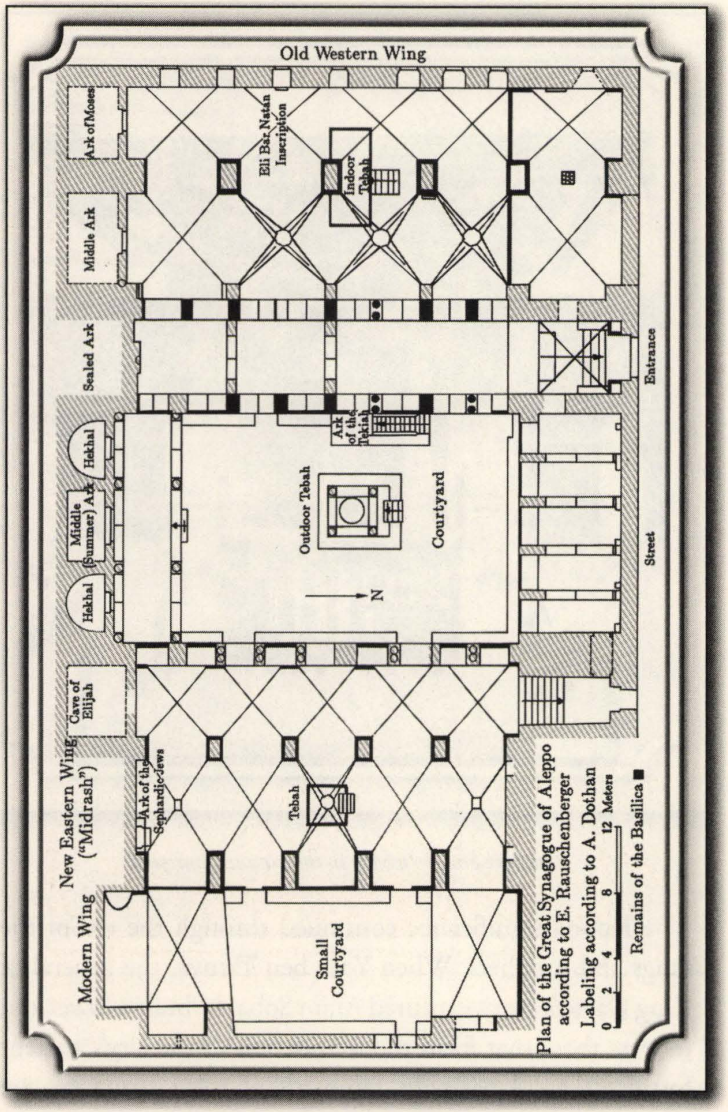
The deep-rooted history of Aleppo is evident in the origin of its biblical name, Aram Soba. In his old age, Abraham's father, Terah, had a son, Soba. Soba bore three sons, and the eldest, Aram, had twelve sons and three daughters. Aram and his brothers were blessed with abundant wealth and large flocks, and they settled in a fertile valley offering them a suitable amount of pasture. This settlement, called Aram, was the predecessor of present-day Aram Soba, or Aleppo.

To the Syrian community, Aleppo is known as *Haleb*, another possible indicator of Aleppo's early spiritual significance. R' Petachia of Regensburg explained that Abraham herded his sheep on the mountain of Aram Soba and distributed milk to the poor at the foot of the mountain. *Haleb* is the Arabic translation of *milk*, and *Aleppo* is the Italian equivalent of the word.

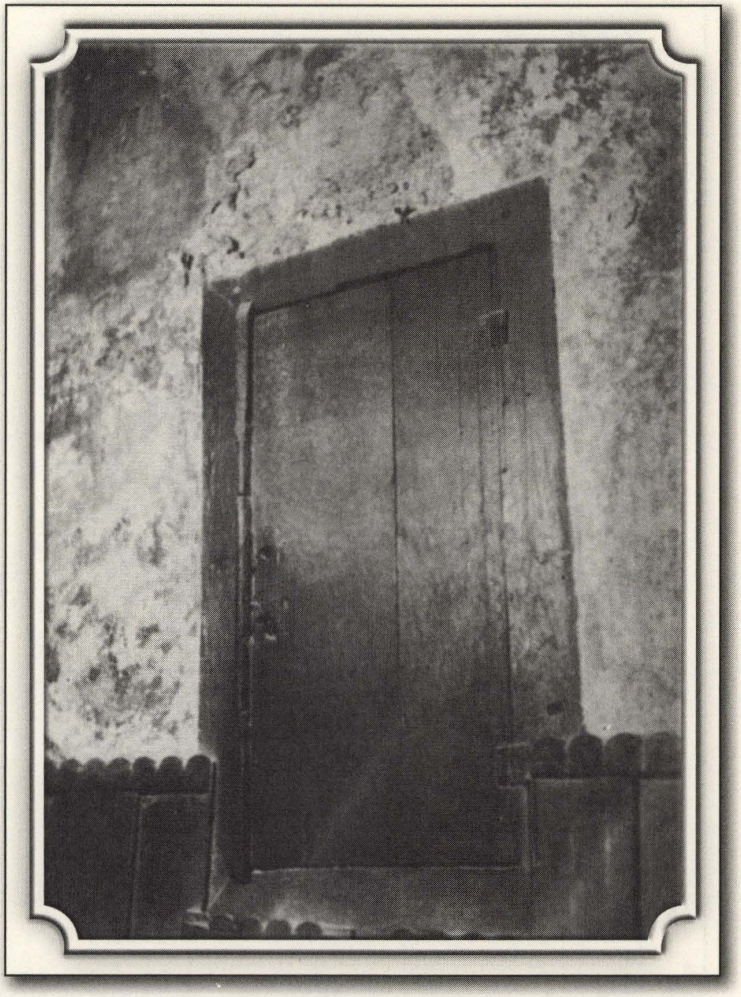


Outdoor bimah (tebah) in the summer courtyard

Aleppo's significance continued through the era of the kings and prophets. When Yoav ben Tzruya, the general of King David's army, captured Aram Soba, he built a tower and fortress there that form the foundation of the city's ancient fortifications. Amazingly, remnants of these structures are still visible today.

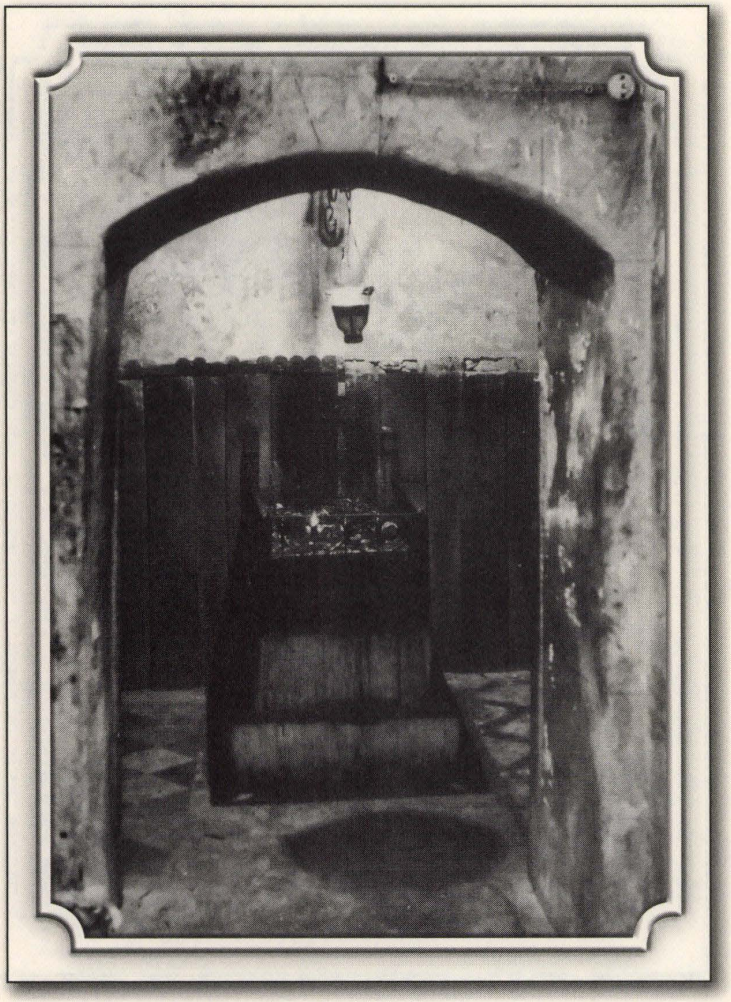


Plan of the Great Synagogue of Aleppo



The Ark in the "Cave of Elijah," where the Aleppo Codex was kept.

King David rewarded Yoav with the city of Aram Soba in return for his victory and loyalty. According to tradition,



The "Cave of Elijah"

Yoav then organized and oversaw the construction of a grand synagogue, later called the Great Synagogue of Aram

Soba. As the majestic structure neared completion, Yoav emotionally cried out, "Is it possible that Hashem will leave the great Temple which Shlomo is destined to build, and dwell in this house which I am building?" A heavenly voice answered him, "Yoav, Yoav, two temples are destined to be destroyed, but your house will stand." Indeed, this promise was fulfilled. The Great Synagogue survived the long years of exile and was reconstructed in 1405 after being destroyed by the Mongols. Seven *Hechalot* (sacred cabinets for the Torah scrolls) were constructed then to house the silver Torah scrolls. Although the synagogue was vandalized, desecrated, and set aflame during the riots of December 1947, it still exists today.

The community of Aleppo has always been inspired and encouraged by the continuous survival of the synagogue. It has given the Jews of Aleppo the push to keep flourishing and accomplishing even through trying times. Perhaps this is where my father drew his trait of perseverance, the strength to pick up the scattered pieces of his life, as his content and blissful existence was shattered time and time again.



Population and Growth

Throughout its long history, Aleppo represented one of the foremost urban centers in Western Asia, largely due to its strategic location on a vital commercial crossroads. A sizeable portion of the trade between the Mediterranean Basin and Asia passed through the city and augmented its wealth. Therefore, most of the inhabitants of Aleppo engaged in commerce and trade. In its heyday, from the 15th to the 19th centuries, the size of Aleppo's population placed it among the major cities of the world; in 1517 it had 70,000 inhabitants. (In comparison, London's population numbered 80,000 in 1545.) At the end of the 18th century, with 80,000 to 100,000 inhabitants, Aleppo's population was equivalent to that of the major cities of the time, such as Marseilles and Hamburg.

The economic and spiritual opportunities offered by Aleppo drew many foreign Jews to travel and settle in Aleppo. At the beginning of the 16th century, exiles from Spain, including outstanding rabbis and scholars, as well as prominent businessmen and community leaders, started to arrive in Aleppo. The exiles were labeled as *Sepharadim*, due to the Hebrew word for Spain, *Sepharad*. Instead of migrating to Syria in one mass group, they came gradually.

Generally, they first passed through several places, such as Italy and Turkey, sometimes living in these countries for a number of years before traveling to Syria and settling there.

In contrast to the *Sepharadim*, the native-born Jews of Aleppo were referred to as the *Mustaravim*. This Hebrew name is defined as "Arabs from Moses (or Musa)." The *Mustaravim* generally spoke Arabic and read Hebrew with an Arabic accent, while the Spanish Jews spoke Ladino, a mixture of Hebrew and Spanish. At first the Spanish Jews established their own community, separate from the native Syrians. Several centuries later, the two groups converged into one united community.

At the end of the 17th century, additional Jews, mainly from France and Italy, began to settle in Aleppo. These newcomers were called Francos, and unlike the previous *Sepharadim*, they did not establish a separate community. They held onto their European citizenship, and thus had the privilege of being protected by the European powers. The Picciotto family served as consular representatives of a number of European countries, giving them prestige in the Jewish community and beyond. Other notable Franco family names are Altaras, Ancona, Belilos, Lofez, and Silvera.

The immigrating Jews contributed to the burgeoning Jewish community in *Haleb*, and at its peak, the Jewish population reached about 10,000. The Great Synagogue, the most ancient synagogue in the city, had to be extended to accommodate the growing community and the newcomers. In addition, other synagogues were built, and in the latter

part of the 19th century there were eighteen synagogues in Aleppo.

Toward the end of the 19th century, the economic conditions worsened, resulting in the beginning of emigration. The Jewish population of Aleppo slowly declined and deteriorated, but the flame of Aleppo did not die out. The scholars and rabbis of Aleppo who immigrated to Jerusalem exerted considerable influence on the spiritual life there. Additionally, Jewish communities of Aleppo developed in many cities all over the world, including Cairo, Manchester, New York, Buenos Aires, Mexico City, and São Paulo. These communities continue to grow and flourish in the tradition of Aleppo.



Religious Life

The continuity and comparative stability of Jewish life in Aleppo were manifested in the cultural and religious spheres. Aleppo's rich religious, cultural, and social life led to the city's fame and prestige. It is speculated that Aleppo had the greatest concentration of rabbis, scholars, and learned individuals among the Jewish cities of the world.

By the 11th century, Aleppo had become a center of



Sifrei Eretz, Books of Aleppo's Rabbis, by Yaron Harel

religious learning to be reckoned with. Scholars visited and settled in the city, and its rabbis communicated with the leading rabbis of other Torah centers in the region. Maimonides, author of the influential *Guide to the Perplexed,* was inspired by the famous sages of Aleppo. In a letter written to scholars in France, he bemoaned the widespread decline of Torah study in the lands of the East, stating that the only city with remnants of devoted and learned Torah scholars was Aram Soba.

With the invention of the printing press in the 15th century, hundreds of books, dealing with all aspects of religion, were published and preserved for eternity by the



ספר

מלל לאברהם

מלמ ק. ליוורנו למהר"ר **אברהם סתהון** זצוק"ל אחד מרבני מה"ר
רבם גדול מדנן . הם כמה שני שכבר קיבלתו שמוש מקפלן כגן בגל
שרי ועלונן ובניהם מקרוב. כדיבה בני תולי מעלייתה זה ספר כתב תלמי
מכיוהים נבון . ומקרוב נ"ו קם כמהו כר כרים רמר פרב הכולל מור
גדול כמהר"ר **משה סתהון** נר"ו אשר הוא וזה מכים לטוטפת לפור
ויהי קו' פרב **מן** וכות קס"ק ויכות הרב פמקבר פעמוד לו ולזרעו
לעשם חיי שני ומשני וכיצחו"ר לנם שיזכה לגנוז כלהו שני לעלף דור
ורבו רבון תלכו :

L.E.O

פה **ליוורנו** יע"א

שנת ויעש **שמך אברהם** לפ"נ בו"ן

פיד אליעזר סנחם אושולינגי הי"ו

קדעים ומוכר ספרים

Con Approvazione.

Books authored by the Aleppo scholars of the Menashe Sutton family



ספר

ארכה דומרפא

(ירמיה ל"ג)

המכיל קבלתו כמה מהמרים, בחדוש עוקוה ומוסריס, בנוים על פי מחמרי רו"ל בירושלמי ובבלי ספרית, וספרי, ומכלתה ומדרשים נרוריס, עם לקוטים מהרמב"ם ז"ל ושאר ספריס, נתחבר בכוונ טעם ודעת, בעזר יוצר תוריס, ע"י הח' הנ' והכולל בעוס ורב

כמהר"ל הלל דוד סתהון זלה"ה

נמלקו כין כתביו סדוריס, לכן נהגדנו כניו יע"ו להדפיסס לעלוי נשמה הרב מר חביהס תבי לרורה נלרוך החייס זיע"ל ועל כל היסריס תכי"ר,

נדפס פה ארם־צובה יע"ה

שנה התרע"ג לנ"ע

בדפוס השלם של הר' עזרא חיים מרמשק סיו"

Imprimerie AL-KAMAL EZRA HAIM JOUEJATI - ALEP (Syrie)

Books authored by the Aleppo scholars of the Menashe Sutton family


ספר

כנסיה לשם שמים

הנכנס לבית הכ"נסת תהי מברך ברוך בפה הרוש .
הדור בתך ויגו זה ספר נעויעה של שמחה מטע ה'
כיהרוש . משום לפרושו מלסורע לוזקיה שמעטו לעקור
ולשרש מעשה כשפים לכל החוזש . הני כמי עקקיוות
הן תעשה ויהיו כלהטיהן וכו"ן וקטור לסר לורחותם
עקשים וגלוזש . תיקו' רבא לזיכא ליתא רע"ו ומרכית
העם עכרו ונעשה כדגים שבחוזש . ובסקכמ"ס עלו
כל חכמי וזיבני וגאוני הרב"ק ת"ו וג"ו ועוד כמה
מגדולי חכמי ישר"ל שמעורים:ש כחכמה וביראת החטא
ומסקנר עץ פרי וכל לרזים . לסקור תיקר לת המעשה
סדע מזה פתחו בקללות התלוזות בסר נרוש . סחל
ויחל ושומר ירו מעשות רע ברכות סחתום ויחולו על רשעו
וכשכר זלת ש חי יקבץ כדמ"ו תיחדים תפרוש . ותשב
תעבהלה לנהיר פיתיך ונעשה לפניך נדי עזוש . תכי"ר :

כעוי"ק **ירושלים** תובב"ג

כדפוס שיהו ומשה תי"ו בני תרב לכרתם ששון ושק"ל

תרל"ד

Books authored by the Aleppo scholars of the Menashe Sutton family


ספר

קהלת משה

משה בכמהר"י סתהון נר"ו

חלק ראשון

ארם צובה

הת"ר"ל ג

Books authored by the Aleppo scholars of the Menashe Sutton family

scholars of Aleppo. Printing a book involved tremendous costs and treacherous, lengthy journeys to the printing houses of Livorno (Italy), Salonica (Greece), and Constantinople (Turkey). Finally, in 1865, R' Abraham Sasson and his sons opened the first Jewish printing press in Aleppo, thus decreasing the challenges of publishing books. Aleppo now became a center for printing Hebrew books. Yaron Harel (ירון הראל) published several books about the Jews in Syria, among them a book titled ספרי אר"ץ, *Books of Aram Soba (Aleppo)*. It lists the influential books authored by the scholars of Aleppo, catalogued according to their authors and subjects. Reading the book, one is compelled to be impressed by the spiritual productivity and supremacy of Aleppo and its rabbis.

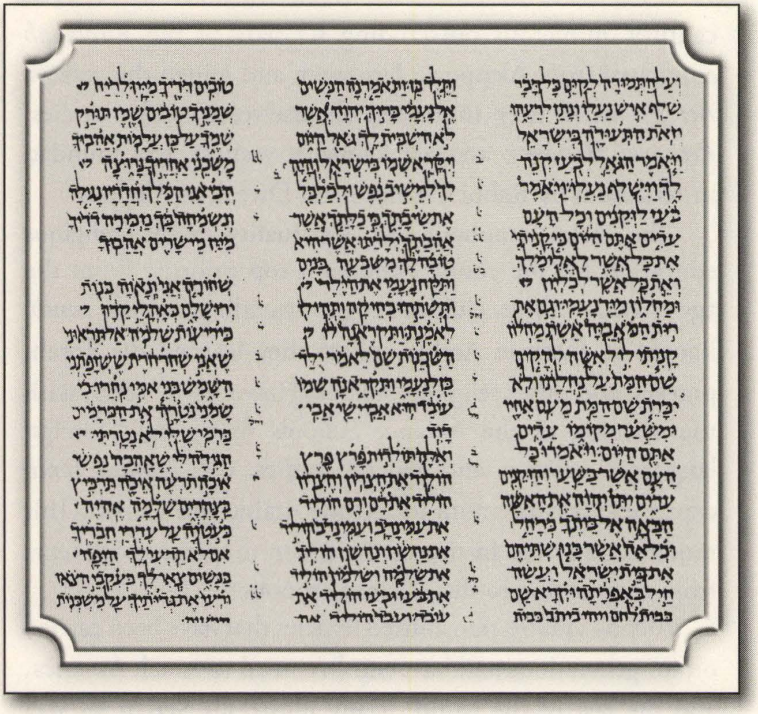
Among the many contributions of the rabbis and scholars of Aleppo was their learning of the *Kabbalah*, the secrets of the Torah revealed at *Matan Torah*. These secrets were passed down from generation to generation to select individuals until Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai wrote them down in his holy book, the *Zohar*. Only one on the most exalted level of spirituality and holiness can fully grasp this complex, mystical work. The mysteries of the *Zohar* remained obscure until they were unveiled by the Arizal during the 13th century, and from then on the study of *Kabbalah* spread. Aleppo became a center of this unique, in-depth style of learning. Many of its rabbis, such as Rabbi Nissim Harari-Raful and Rabbi Eliyahu Mishan were experts in *Kabbalah* and spent their days delving into the holy *Zohar*. In the 19th

century, numerous outstanding scholars of the *Kabbalah* emigrated from Aleppo to Jerusalem and joined the yeshiva *Bet El* where they immersed themselves in lofty studies. *Rechovot Hanahar,* another kabbalist yeshiva, was founded in Jerusalem by Rabbi Chaim Shaul Dweck of Aleppo.

The strict emphasis on spirituality made religious education for the young children a top priority. From the age of two to three, children began attending *Talmud Torah*, known as *K'tab* in Arabic, where they learned the Torah, prayers, and other religious studies. However, in 1869, with the opening of the Alliance Schools that taught foreign languages, science, and general studies, the *Talmud Torah* expanded its curriculum to include Arabic and French. This modification was instituted in order to prevent students from transferring to the Alliance schools.

Aleppo's rabbis transmitted legacies that have been carried on for generations and have mushroomed to Israel, America, and the rest of the world. Many illustrious Syrian *yeshivot* were established in Jerusalem, such as *Yeshivat Porat Yosef* in the Old City. Through the numerous holy books of Aleppo and its various communities, institutions, and *yeshivot* all across the globe, the spiritual history of Aleppo endures.





The Aleppo Codex

The Aleppo Codex

A source of pride to the Aleppo community was the *Keter Aram Soba* (the Aleppo Codex of the Bible), their most prized spiritual treasure, kept in one of the *hechalot* of the Great Synagogue. The Aleppo Codex (crown or *keter* in Hebrew) is the earliest existing manuscript

comprising the full text of the Bible. In all probability it is also the most authoritative, accurate, and sacred source document, both for its biblical text and for its vocalization, cantillation, and *mesorah* (a system of comments cross-referencing the spelling and the occurrence of particular words). The Codex was copied by the scribe Shlomo Ben-Buya'a in Palestine during the early 10th century. The text was then verified, vocalized, and provided with the *mesorah* by R' Aaron Ben-Asher, the last and most prominent member of the Ben-Asher dynasty. This was the manuscript consulted by Maimonides when he set down the exact rules and *halachot* for writing Torah scrolls.

At the end of the 11th century, the Codex was looted from Palestine and transferred to Egypt. It was then entrusted to the Aleppo community at the end of the 14th century, perhaps by the great-great-great grandson of Maimonides. The *Keter* was stored in a vault in the Great Synagogue, and for over six hundred years the rabbis and elders of the community guarded the *Keter* jealously, refusing access to almost everyone. As an extra protection in later years, the cabinet was locked with two keys, which were never possessed by the same person. Thus, it could only be opened in the presence of the two key holders.

In December 1947, following the United Nations' resolution to establish a Jewish state in Palestine, riots broke out against the Jews and Jewish property in Aleppo. The community's ancient Great Synagogue was put to the torch, causing damage to the Codex, which was kept in the

synagogue's "Cave of Elijah." Members of the community managed to rescue most of the Codex, and they concealed the salvaged section in several hiding places for about ten years. In 1957, two elders of the community, Hacham Moshe Tawil and Hacham Shlomo Zafrani, entrusted the surviving portions of the Codex to Mordechai Faham. He smuggled it out of Syria and into Turkey. In 1958, the Aleppo Codex was transferred to Jerusalem and handed over to President Ben-Zvi for safeguarding. The *Keter* was initially kept at the Ben-Zvi Institute in Jerusalem and later moved to the Israel Museum, where it is overseen by a board of eight trustees. Sadly, of the original 487 leaves of the Codex, only 259 remain today.

Being selected as the keepers of the hallowed manuscript stirs up self-satisfaction and esteem in the hearts of Aleppo community members. To this very day, all descendants of Aleppo feel a special emotional attachment and spiritual connection to the Codex.



Community Life and Culture

The Jews of Aleppo continued to thrive throughout the 19th century. Many had their own businesses, while others provided various necessary services. The textile

business was the most popular of occupations, as it was quite lucrative and enabled its owners to maintain a fairly affluent lifestyle. Fabrics were imported to Aleppo from industrial cities, such as Manchester, for local use and for export to the Middle East. In addition to its financial comfort, the community enjoyed nearly total autonomy and oversaw its own tax collection.

However, the community members didn't simply lavish their wealth on themselves and their families. As is still characteristic of our community today, they established many educational and philanthropic institutions to uphold and nourish those who were less fortunate. These institutions were mostly supported by the generous contributions of the wealthy families. In addition, there was a community tax placed on the residents based on their individual needs, to cover the salaries of the judges, clerks, and slaughterers, and to fund education and medical care for the orphans and the poor. The taxes were also used to purchase flour, *matzot*, and clothes for those who couldn't afford it. The following lists some examples of the numerous charitable organizations:

Guardians of the Sick . . . . . ביקור חולים

Help for the Needy . . . . . גמילות חסדים

Housing Guests . . . . . הכנסת אורחים

Burial Society . . . . . חברא קדישא

Clothes for the Poor . . . . . מלביש ערומים

Help for the Poor . . . . . מעוז לאביון

Charity and Cure . . . . . צדקה ומרפא

Rabbinical Court . . . . . בית דין

Synagogues . . . . . בתי כנסת

Hospital. . . . . בית חולים

Orphanage House. . . . . בית יתומים

In 1898 the *Sedaka U'marpe* (Charity for the Cure) extended its care for the sick by establishing a hospital. It expanded from having eighteen beds in 1903, to featuring a surgery room, three doctors, four nurses, five workers, and a pharmacy in 1923. This is a shining example of the tireless efforts of the community to service others. As they recognized a need for greater assistance, they increased the capabilities of the existing organizations and created new ones. There were warm feelings of fellowship and familial camaraderie reigning in the community, which in turn created an acute sense of responsibility for the welfare of every community member. One individual's troubles and struggles were the troubles and struggles of the entire community. The leaders worried about every member, ensuring that each was physically and emotionally comfortable. This legacy of charity and kindness still lives on in the present-day Aleppo communities all over the world.

The closeness within the Aleppo community isn't the only attribute that makes it so unique. There is something very exclusive and magical about the culture of *Halebian* Jews, especially felt when listening to the singing of *pizmonim* and *bakashot*, the hymns of Aleppo. This gift of song and music is traced back for generations. R' Yehuda

Al-Harizi, the Spanish Hebrew poet of the 13th century, wrote that a certain Syrian *hazzan* (cantor) conquered "the hearts of the holy people with his delightful song." Many inspiring and uplifting songs and melodies were composed by the prominent rabbis of Aleppo, spanning the spectrum from songs of *Shabbat* and the holidays to songs of the weekday and from songs of a birth or *Brit Milah* to songs of a *Bar Mitzvah* or wedding. Every yearly occasion and milestone comes alive with its designated songs and tunes. How privileged is the community of Aleppo to have been bequeathed such a musical legacy!

One of the most soul-stirring *minhagim* (customs) of the community was the recital of the *bakashot* in synagogues on Friday nights after midnight and before sunrise. This custom is still sustained by several synagogues in Israel, but it's nearly nonexistent today in America. Fathers and sons, old and young, used to gather together in the synagogue during the dark, wee hours of the morning to sing the *bakashot*. Although they sacrificed a restful and long Friday-night sleep, they were surely spiritually invigorated by this uplifting experience. Such was the spiritual dedication and rich beauty of the Aleppo culture.



CHAPTER THREE

The History of the Menashe Sutton Family

A man's character and qualities are molded by his lifetime of ambition, conscientiousness, and dedication to improving himself and his surroundings. Yet, there is another factor that plays an essential role: his family and upbringing. My father's sterling traits and devotion to both spirituality and the community were inherited from his illustrious family, the Menashe Suttons.

By tradition, the family name Sutton (סתהון) is a combination of two Arabic words: *siteh* and *hon*. *Siteh* can be translated as the number six, and *hon* can be translated as "here." Some claim that this name was established when the census takers were making their rounds to all the tents in Aleppo and were told by the family members of a specific tent, "*Siteh hon*!" or "Six here!" Another explanation for the name's origin is that *siteh* can also mean "grandmother" in Arabic, thus the name *Sutton* is translated as "grandmother is here." A story is told of a prominent Aleppo community member who became deathly ill, and just as everyone was giving up hope for him, he miraculously recovered. He attributed his amazing survival to a dream that he had had while he was on the brink of death. His deceased grandmother had appeared to him and promised that he would live through his illness. To commemorate this miracle, he requested that everyone call him Sutton, which means "my grandmother is here."

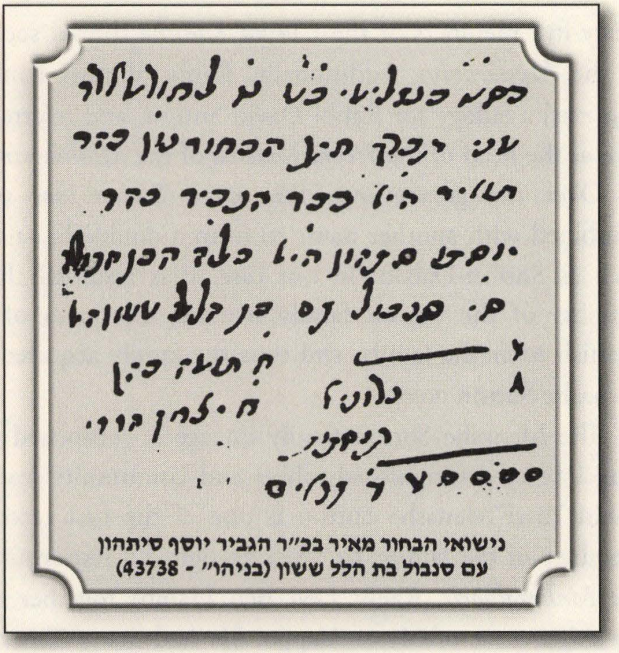
Extensive research shows that the Sutton family has deep roots in Aleppo, dating back to the early settlers, the *Mustaravim*. Some make a contradictory claim that the Sutton family originated from Spain and settled in Syria following the Spanish expulsion. They base their opinion on the book *Eretz Chaim* (ארץ חיים), in which Rabbi Chaim Sutton mentions Rabbi Yosef Menashe who arrived in Aleppo from the Spanish expulsion. This opinion can be refuted by the records found in the ancient Great Synagogue, which list the name Habib Sutton as one of the

thirty-five members of the *Chevra Kadisha* (burial society) of the *Mustaravim*. Additionally, Rabbi Shmuel Laniado delivered a eulogy for Rabbi David Sutton, and referred to him as the head of the *Hevra Kadisha* of the *Mustaravim*.

Over the generations, the name *Sutton* was often combined with another name to form a double last name, such as Sutton-Dabah. In our case, it is assumed that a member of the Sutton family married a woman of the Spanish Menashe family, and thus the family acquired the Menashe Sutton name.

The Menashe Sutton family lineage is comprised of a long line of distinguished rabbis and community leaders. Rabbi Yosef Menashe Sutton is one of the first recorded members of the family. In 1525 he signed a responsum of the *Maharalbach* (Rabbi Levi Ben Habib) together with the other great rabbis of Aleppo. He had many illustrious scholarly descendants, including Rabbi Matloub Sutton, who lived a life immersed in his studies and passed away in 1834. Rabbi Matloub's son was the renowned and respected Rabbi Menashe Sutton. He was proficient in all areas of Torah study, such as the workings of the Jewish calendar and Hebrew grammar. He wrote many important works, such as *Kenisiyah Leshem Shamayim, Pirchei Shoshanim, Klalei Dikdukei Hakriah*, and *Mateh Menashe*. He immigrated to Israel and was invited to serve as the Chief Rabbi of the Safed community.

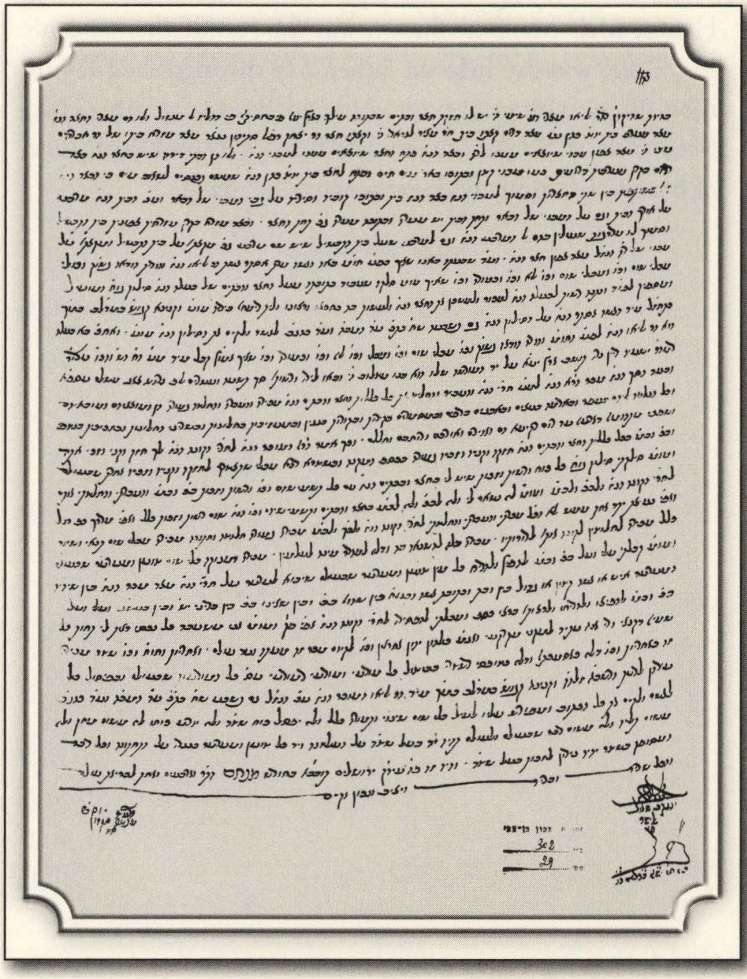
Rabbi Matloub Sutton's grandson, Rabbi Matloub Menashe Sutton, followed in his grandfather's footsteps and



The marriage record of Meir Menashe Sutton and Sinbol, the daughter of Hillel Sasoon

was an eminent scholar of Aleppo. Sadly, he passed away at an early age in 1929, while his father was still living. Rabbi Matloub Menashe Sutton had a brother, Yosef Menashe Sutton, who is mentioned in the book *Ze Ktav Yadi* (זה כתב ידי) published in תרל"ב (1872) by Rabbi Yeshaya Dayan. The author devotes a special thanks to Yosef for his noble generosity, and mentions Yosef's children, Yeshua, Meir, and Yaakov.

The ancient marriage records state that on the ninth of Adar II תרכ"ב (1862), Meir, the son of Yosef Menashe



Document signed by Rabbi Yosef Menashe Sutton

Sutton, was wed to Sinbol, daughter of Hillel Sasoon, in the presence of the witnesses Moshe Cohen and Yitzchak

Harari. Meir Menashe Sutton was my grandfather, and his son Hillel was my beloved father. My distinguished family roots fill me with great pride. After analyzing my father's life, I can truly attest that he emulated the piety and dedication of his special family with every move he made.

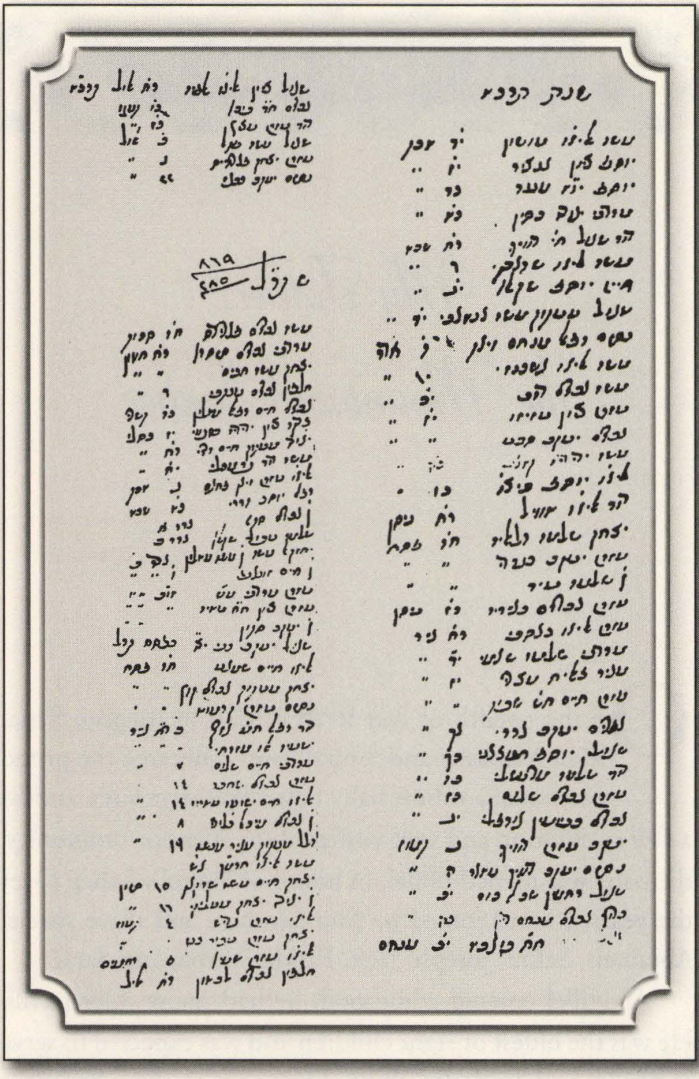


CHAPTER FOUR

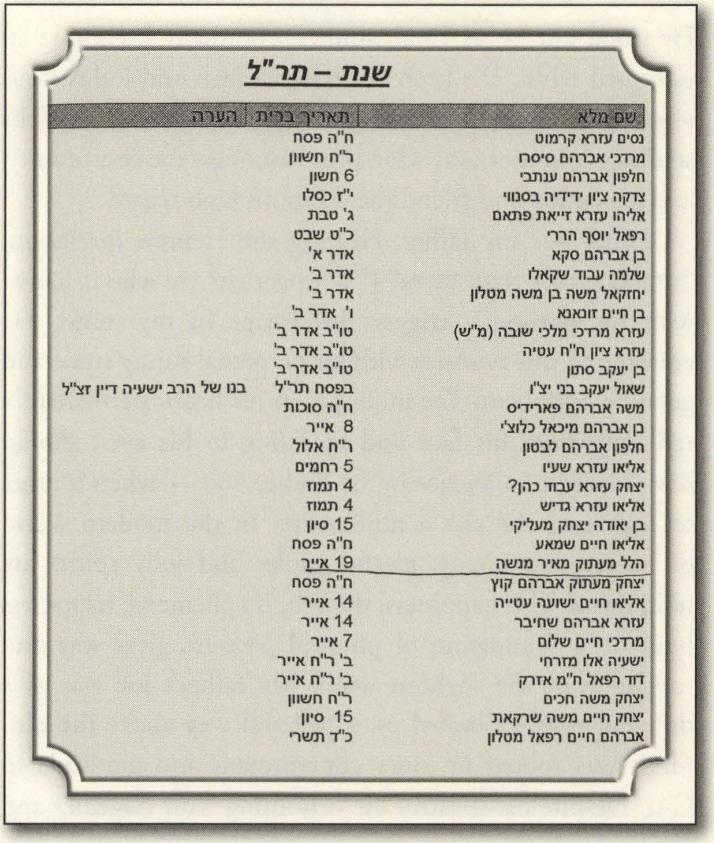
My Father, the Mountain Climber

On the twelfth of Iyar תר״ל (1870) in Aleppo, Syria, Meir Menashe and Sinbol Sasoon became the proud parents of a robust baby boy. Eight days later, amidst a *Brit* celebration and well-wishes of the Aleppo community, the baby was named Hillel, in honor of Sinbol's father. Over the years, he was joined by four brothers and three sisters: Abraham, Selim, Joseph, Jack, Farida, Nizha, and Sara.

As Hillel entered adulthood, he had many roles to fill. He was the oldest of eight children and was expected to serve as model and guide for them. Living up to the prestigious Menashe Sutton family name demanded diligent Torah



Brit Milah document of Hillel Meir Menashe Sutton



שנת – תר"ל

שם מלא	תאריך ברית	הערה
נסים עזרא קרמוט	ח"ה פסח	
מרדכי אברהם סיסרו	ר"ח חשוון	
חלפון אברהם ענתבי	6 חשון	
צדקה ציון ידידיה בסנוני	י"ז כסלו	
אליהו עזרא זייאת פתאם	ג' טבת	
רפאל יוסף הררי	כ"ט שבט	
בן אברהם סקא	אדר א'	
שלמה עבוד שקאלו	אדר ב'	
יחזקאל משה בן משה מטלון	אדר ב'	
בן חיים זוגאגא	ו' אדר ב'	
עזרא מרדכי מלכי שובה (מ"ש)	ט"ו אדר ב'	
עזרא ציון ח"ח עטיה	ט"ו אדר ב'	
בן יעקב סתון	ט"ו אדר ב'	
שאול יעקב בני יצ"ו	בפסח תר"ל	בנו של הרב ישעיה דיין זצ"ל
משה אברהם פאריד"ס	ח"ה סוכות	
בן אברהם מיכאל כלוצ'	8 אייר	
חלפון אברהם לבטון	ר"ח אלול	
אליאו עזרא שעיו	5 רחמים	
יצחק עזרא עבוד כהן?	4 תמוז	
אליאו עזרא גדיש	4 תמוז	
בן יאודה יצחק מעליקי	15 סיון	
אליאו חיים שמאע	ח"ה פסח	
הלל מעתוק מאיר מנשה	19 אייר	
יצחק מעתוק אברהם קוץ	ח"ה פסח	
אליאו חיים ישועה עטייה	14 אייר	
עזרא אברהם שחיבר	14 אייר	
מרדכי חיים שלום	7 אייר	
ישעיה אלו מזרחי	ב' ר"ח אייר	
דוד רפאל ח"מ אזרק	ב' ר"ח אייר	
יצחק משה חכים	ר"ח חשוון	
יצחק חיים משה שרקאת	15 סיון	
אברהם חיים רפאל מטלון	כ"ד תשרי	

study to develop Hillel's knowledge and spirituality. He was also required to master the ins and outs of the family textile business. Fabrics were imported from Manchester to *Haleb*, and then exported to Iraq, South Turkey, and Armenia, obligating Hillel to embark on frequent business trips to Turkey and Jerusalem. Not only did he triumphantly juggle all his obligations, he met every one of them to perfection.

He stood out in his Torah studies, eventually becoming an esteemed rabbi. His keen business acumen and industrious vigor were invaluable assets to the family business. His sterling reputation was widespread amongst the community, and his family and friends held him in high regard.

Hillel was my father. Hearing the Hebrew quotation, "איזהו עשיר השמח בחלקו" ("Who is rich? He who is happy with his portion"), triggers his image in my mind. He epitomized this *mishnah* with his perpetual sunny smile and genuine optimism. The inner joy in his heart, permanently radiating from his face and sparkling in his eyes, should have earned him a place in the Forbes 500 — when it came to happiness, he was a millionaire. In the modern world of luxury and plenty, gleeful smiles and jolly spirits are ubiquitous. This happiness, though, is ephemeral; happiness built on a foundation of physical pleasure gives way and topples with the slightest wind. My father's joy was of a different make, elevated on a pedestal way above the rest, for it was rooted in inner contentment and gratitude to G-d. Despite his stressful life brimming with tragedies and challenges, he was never bitter or resentful. He scaled every mountain obstructing his path with the identical beaming smile.

My father's early life progressed smoothly and uneventfully. He married Nizha Attia, and together they had four daughters: Jemille, Mazal, Emily, and Rachel. He was content with his lot. He had a loving wife and a wonderful family. Suddenly, without warning he encountered the



Hillel Menashe Sutton

first mountain in his life: his dear wife Nizha, so young and vibrant, passed away in 1916. Her youngest daughter, Rachel, was only three years old. The tragedy was devastating, but my father never lost faith. His love and devotion to his daughters gave him a reason to remain clear-headed and stable. In order to distract himself from the searing pain and loneliness in his heart, he immersed himself in attending to his family, assisting the community, and working in the family business. From where did he derive that strength? From where did he draw the resolve to persevere when the life he had been building so meticulously had just crashed down? He was a man of faith. G-d was his pillar, and he had the firm belief that nothing in the world transpired without G-d's consent.

Even in her later years, my father's mother, Sinbol, was a perceptive and dynamic woman. Sensing that young Rachel craved motherly love and care, she offered to provide a warm home for her. My grandmother treated Rachel just like a daughter, always making sure that she was comfortable and secure. A few years later, Jemille, Nizha's oldest daughter, took my grandmother's place and raised Rachel until she reached adulthood. In 1935, Rachel sailed to America, hoping to build a family and carry on her parents' tradition. Sinbol saw to it that each of her granddaughters was escorted under the wedding canopy. Jemille married my father's brother, Abraham Sutton; Mazal married Rafael (Raful) Sutton; and Emily married Yitzchak Tabush. After their marriages, they all moved to Palestine.

While Rachel was being cared for, and the rest of his daughters were blossoming into young women and establishing lives of their own, my father missed his wife terribly. He was still young, with a whole life ahead of him, and he needed a partner to share it with. He married a young and blooming woman named Shafika (שפיקה). As was customary at the time, the couple shared a large house, called a *hosh* in Arabic, with my father's extended family. A number of spacious rooms were designated to each family, while there was also an area of the house that was used by everyone. Thus, each family was able to live in comfort and privacy, while still maintaining a close bond with their relatives.

Shortly after their marriage, a baby girl named Soffie was born to my father and his new wife. Although my father was pleased at the birth of another child, he was still hoping for a son to carry the illustrious Menashe Sutton family name. When Shafika was expecting her second child, my father counted down the days in anticipation. Perhaps this birth would herald the long-awaited son. Shafika's labor was complicated and painful. The doctors and family members did everything in their power to save her life, and when medical interventions had reached their limits they did not despair; they prayed and beseeched G-d to perform a miracle. While trying to bring a new life into the world, Shafika returned her life to her Creator. Tragically, even the tiny ray of light was extinguished: the twin boys she gave birth to did not survive.

Shafika's daughter Soffie was still a young child. Once again, Grandma Sinbol stepped in and relieved her brokenhearted son by tending to Soffie. Jemille continued raising Soffie until Soffie's marriage to Tofik Djmal.



CHAPTER FIVE

A Match Made in Heaven

Losing a young wife is enough to throw a person into emotional turmoil and depression. Losing a wife a second time can shatter the resolve of even the toughest stoic. And losing two wives and twin sons? Only an angel can withstand such pain. I can't fathom how my father did it. I can't fathom how he managed to drag himself out of bed every morning to keep plodding through life. Not only did he continue living, he continued living happily, grateful for what G-d had given him.

When a flax-spinner refines his flax, he beats only the toughest stalks, for the flimsy ones would crack from the

force. When a pottery-artisan shows off the quality and durability of his wares to potential customers, he hits only the sturdiest vessels. The delicate ones would shatter from just one blow. When a farmer plows his field, he chooses only the hardiest oxen for the intense labor, for the frail ones would collapse. So too, G-d tests only a select few. He overlooks the weaker people who will snap under the slightest pressure. He only tests his pious and righteous servants; those whom he knows with certainty will have the stamina to pass with flying colors (מדרש רבה). In countless instances throughout my father's life, he proved to be among those pious and righteous servants of G-d. He accepted every trial with faith and love, never asking questions. I am positive that he was tested innumerable times only because he was so special.

Despite his iron faith, my father was lonesome. His longtime friend and protégé, Rabbi Ezra Shayo (Abadi), sensed this and resolved to act. Rabbi Shayo had a cousin Bahia who had reached marriageable age, and he was very impressed by her sweet demeanor and maturity. She had lost her father, Aboud Shayo, at a young age. Her three siblings and her mother Sara were neglected, bereft of their supporter and breadwinner. Life for the young widow Sara was unmanageably stressful. She had to fill the shoes of her late husband, while still remaining the cheerful and loving mother she had always been. Sara loved her children, and wanted to lavish them with only the finest. Her pride and dignity didn't allow her to turn to others for financial



Sara Shayo

support. She struggled desperately to make ends meet, but her meager earnings just weren't sufficient to provide for her children's basic needs. With no brighter prospects on the horizon, she was forced to seek jobs for her children in order to supplement her income. Bahia and her siblings sewed clothing for people. Although they were very young to be working, they weren't resentful. They knew that their mother loved them, and they pitched in faithfully.

Bahia was my beloved mother. Visualizing her childhood overwhelms me with a sense of awe and respect. Today, girls her age pass their days in carefree freedom, attending

school, vacationing, shopping, and socializing with their friends. My mother had none of that. She was never treated to fashionable clothes or updated toys, but she was still a princess. She worked tirelessly, with a sense of responsibility and devotion far beyond her years. And her efforts definitely paid off. Observing Bahia's kindness and dedication amidst the air of nobility that surrounded her, Rabbi Shayo was sure that she would be the perfect match for my father. He suggested that Hillel and Bahia meet. There was a big age gap between them: Hillel was fifty-four and Bahia was only sixteen. But when a match is made in heaven, numbers fade away and age differences don't matter.

My father was still awaiting the birth of a son to carry his family's name. Young Bahia could help realize his dream, while filling the void in his heart. In return, he could bestow on the orphan the warmth, stability, and emotional and financial support that she hungered for. She would be awarded with the social status of the wife of an esteemed and beloved member of the community. The happy couple married in 1924, and despite their large age difference they had a beautiful marriage of harmony and bliss.

Married life did have its trials, though. My mother was always my father's top priority and held a special place in his heart, but at the age of fifty-four he led a busy life crowded with obligations. Even as newlyweds, my parents had to compromise. With a pressing business deal that would wait for no one, their honeymoon wound up being

spent on a ship to Marcin, Turkey, where one of my father's offices was located. My father's involvement in the family business demanded frequent trips outside Aleppo, and my young, newlywed mother was often left forlorn to cope on her own. She never complained, though. She supported her husband's business ventures and was proud of his devoted involvement in both religious and social areas. While my father maintained his hectic lifestyle, my mother gradually grew accustomed to her new life.

The birth of my mother's first-born daughter, Sara (named after my grandmother, Sara Shayo), suffused her with amazement and delight. She marveled at the baby's tiny and perfectly molded features. She was certain that Sara was the most beautiful baby ever born, but some did not partake in her joy. Many of the Menashe Sutton family members were disappointed at the arrival of a girl. Some even refused to talk to her! To an unsure first-time mother, this family reaction was crushing.

Bahia's status in the family wasn't demoted forever, though. A few years after Sara's birth, the long-awaited son entered the family. As the tiny newborn baby was carried into the shul for his *Brit*, my father choked up with emotion. His whole life swam before his eyes. After losing two wives and twin sons, he had almost surrendered all hopes of ever having a son. But even when it seemed as if his dream had flown beyond his reach, he continued pursuing it. So many prayers, so many tears, but at last he was answered. The baby's wails shook my father out of his reverie. The Rabbi's

loud voice clearly announced, "ויקרא שמו בישראל מאיר בן הלל." My father was nearly sixty, and he was finally standing at the *Brit* of his son; the son who would carry on his father's name.

After Meir's birth, my parents relocated to Jemilya, a new neighborhood in Aleppo, to accommodate their growing family. Private houses, mostly built of stone and marble, lined the main street, "*Sect Il Jededa*" ("The New Road"). My parents were surrounded by many other Jewish families and relatives. Their neighbors were the Marcos family, whose daughter Marcel married my Uncle Albert Shayo, and the Kattans, whose son Yaakov married my cousin Bahira. My mother appreciated the spacious and charming house and the company of her relatives and friends. My father felt settled and satisfied, watching his young family and baby son thrive and develop. Soon, another sweet, cherubic daughter was born to them; she was named Chava. Too preoccupied with their lively family, my parents didn't detect the winds of change that were gently blowing across the community of Aleppo.

CHAPTER SIX

The Holy Land

As Aleppo's economic prosperity began declining, all eyes turned toward the West. The Western world, specifically the United States, was advancing technologically and provided endless financial possibilities. The once lengthy and treacherous trip across the Atlantic Ocean was becoming increasingly accessible through improved transportation. America now lay within reach. The young, single members of the Aleppo community foresaw the prosperous futures that awaited them in America. Unlike the older men, they had no families or responsibilities, making immigration to the United States fairly effortless.

Thus arose the new trend of sailing to America, the land of golden opportunity.

My father was aware of the tremendous prospects in America, but he knew that immigrating with his entire family at this point would be impractical. Instead, he arranged for his two youngest single brothers, Joe and Jack, to travel to America. He ensured that they were provided with the necessary funds and government permission in order to leave Syria. All other travel needs were taken care of at my father's expense. Upon setting foot on American shores, Joe and Jack didn't dismiss my father's benevolence toward them. In the future, they went out of their way numerous times to repay this favor.

Although my family relished the security of a settled lifestyle, it was slowly dawning on my parents that the time had come for a change. My father had never visited America, and he felt too old to venture out to a foreign country. Besides, the distance across the Atlantic was too vast to travel with such a young family. My father's brother Abraham had moved to Jerusalem together with my sister Jemilla, and they were followed shortly by my sisters Mazal and Emily. My father yearned to see his children once again. His heart was pulled toward Jerusalem. My mother too, had relatives in Palestine, which would make the adjustment much smoother for her. My parents were reluctant, though, to relocate their family to a new, unknown country. They had lived in Aleppo all their lives, and couldn't bear to abandon their familiar surroundings and community. My father had a

thriving business and many connections in Aleppo, and who knew which hurdles would confront them in Palestine?

In early 1934 my parents made their final decision: the time had come to proceed to Jerusalem. My father finalized all his unfinished business dealings, while my mother packed only the bare necessities for the journey. It was heartbreaking to part with their fine home and possessions. It was even more heartbreaking to take leave of their relatives, friends, and the close-knit community of Aleppo. The departure was emotional and tearful. As my parents watched Aleppo shrink to a tiny speck in the distance, they hoped that the future would prove that they had chosen correctly.

My family's trip to Jerusalem in 1934 wasn't like traveling to Jerusalem today. While reclining in cushioned airplane seats, we grumble that the ten-hour plane ride is endless and uncomfortable. What would we say to a day-and-a-half journey spent bouncing up and down, riding camels? My entire family, including the children and my mother, who was pregnant with my brother Buddy, rode on camels. The caravans of camels were led by Arabs, who had no patience for cranky children or exhausted women. Anyone who didn't comply exactly with their orders was at the mercy of their wrath. There were no overhead compartments to stow away the luggage. All the travelers' belongings were tied to the camels, making the ride even more cramped and miserable. The roads were hazardous and risky, and the riders' lives were constantly at stake. Once the caravan reached the borders, they had to spend the night at an Arab's house, and could

only cross the border into Palestine at dawn. There they were welcomed by nearby kibbutz members, who tried their best to make the newcomers feel at home.

My parents were relieved that they had reached Palestine with their whole family intact. Luckily no one had been injured or harmed, but their challenges were far from over. The British who were ruling Palestine at the time were extremely strict and cruel to Jewish immigrants. After a short while, my family's visa status expired and they weren't allowed to reside in the country any longer. Fortunately, they were granted a year's grace period due to the birth of my brother Buddy (Ovadia). My father hardly had time to celebrate the birth of a second son before my mother, with all the children, had to return to Aleppo to await an opening for permanent visas. My father, who was permitted to remain in Jerusalem, was invited to be a permanent guest at the home of Rabbi Ades.

Although the journey to Palestine had been treacherous and wearisome, the troubles had been mitigated by the consciousness that every step was leading my family closer to their new home. The return journey to Aleppo was more strenuous, though. My family was disappointed at the turn of events and didn't have the will to repeat the risky journey. My mother had to travel alone with her young family and newborn baby, and had no idea when she would be reunited with her husband. Dismayingly, the dream of settling in Jerusalem had been put on hold for a unspecified amount of time.

Upon arriving back in Aleppo, my mother was greeted by her sympathetic family and friends. They were overjoyed to see her again, but they shared in her chagrin and frustration. Although my father had presumed that my family would be able to receive visas in a short time, he was wrong. For months, while my father hoped and prayed, my mother made daily trips to the consulate to obtain the visas. She waited and begged, and waited and begged some more. Any other woman would have collapsed under such pressure, loneliness, and responsibility, but my mother had always been a tough woman. She just wouldn't surrender, and finally the visas were issued.

The third trip by camelback was not any easier than the first two, but my family didn't dwell on the hardships involved. They were all eagerly anticipating the reunion with their father. The separation had felt endless; baby Buddy had grown so much since my father had seen him last, and Mike had almost forgotten what my father looked like. As soon as the children saw my father, they laughingly ran and jumped into his outstretched arms. They had their Daddy back! Father, mother, and children were once again united, ready to embark on their future in the new land.



CHAPTER SEVEN

In the Footsteps of Our Forefather Abraham

Everything about Palestine was strange and alien to my mother and siblings, from the foreign culture and language to the neighborhoods and residents. My mother yearned for a familiar reminder of home in order to ease her intense longing for her beloved Aleppo. She craved the support and understanding that only close family could give. Although my parents' real destination was Jerusalem, my father agreed to temporarily join my mother's sister and brother in Tel Aviv, until she was prepared to settle in Jerusalem. My parents chose a cozy house that was situated on HaYarkon Street, south of Allenby Street, with a stunning

picturesque view of the Mediterranean Sea. My mother was able to recover from the emotional and physical strains of the numerous journeys while enjoying the company of her siblings.

On September 21, 1938, I joined my family. My parents were overjoyed to be blessed with another son. My *Brit Mila* and the *Brit Mila* of my first cousin Barry (Ovadia) Sitt were celebrated together in one joyous ceremony, planting the seeds of our childhood friendship. Barry and I, along with my cousin Ovadia Shayo, who was four months older than us, shared our youthful days together as cousins and best buddies. Childhood bonds stand the test of time, and though we were separated as we grew up, we always had warm feelings for each other.

My father named me Abraham, a name that he felt was significant to his present life situation. He and his family had emulated the ways of our forefather Abraham, exchanging their former home and family for a life in *Eretz Yisrael.* I wasn't the first son born in Palestine, but my arrival was the first that could be celebrated with lightheartedness and peace of mind. Now our entire family could settle permanently and legally. The predictions of a rosy future in Jerusalem infused my parents with excitement and happiness, and my birth was the ribbon and wrapping around their joy. I have no memory of the early years in Israel, but I always feel fortunate that I was granted the privilege of being born and bred in the Holy Land. I wear the epithet "sabra" with genuine pride.

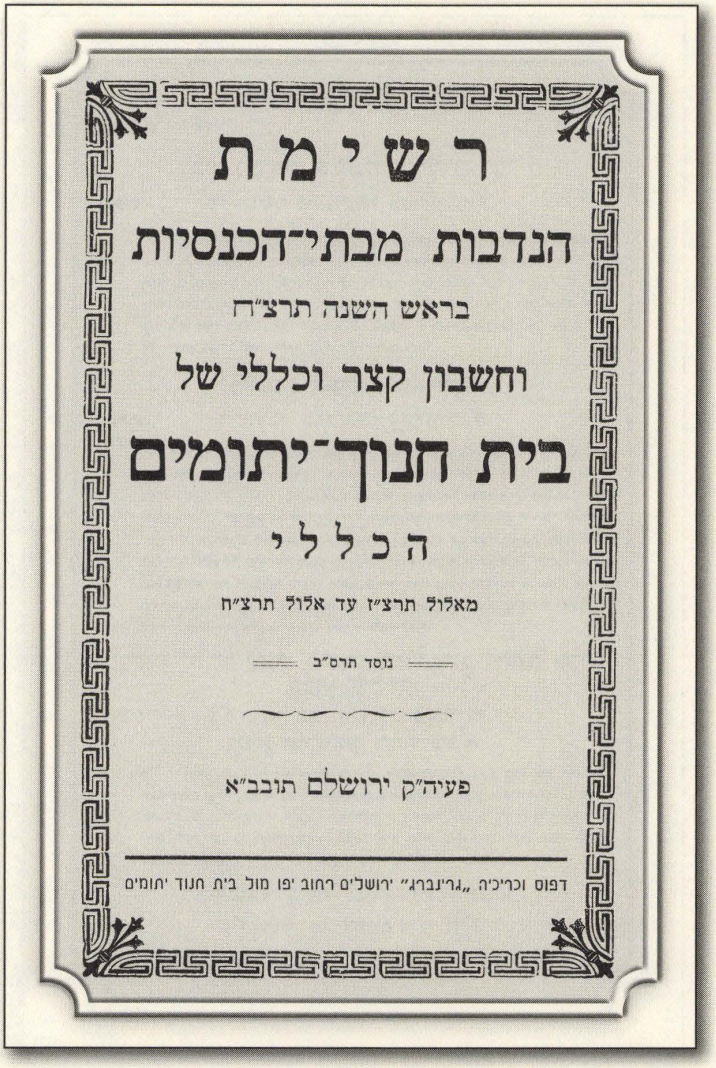
In 1940, two years after my birth, my parents were ready to move to Jerusalem and reunite with the rest of my father's children and family. Jerusalem was no strange place to my father, for he had traveled there several times on business and was acquainted with the rabbis and the community. Searching for the neighborhood that would be most familiar to my mother, he chose to live in the *Halebi* section of Jerusalem. Its location in the heart of the city, on David Yellin Street (רחוב דוד ילין) made it very convenient. The street featured several synagogues and yeshivas. Therefore, many rabbis and yeshiva leaders resided there, and until today its population is mostly religious. We also had many relatives living there, including my Uncle Abraham, my sister, and my mother's cousin Shlomo Toussia HaCohen. A couple of my father's colleagues from Aleppo had settled there before him, and he also forged warm friendships with the neighboring Shrem, Attia, Ades, and Raful-Harary families. The *Halebi* section of Jerusalem was as close to home as we could get.

Jerusalem is a city of Torah learning and teaching, and its rabbis and leaders serve as guides of Judaism to the entire world. My father was one of those guides, taking advantage of the endless spiritual opportunities offered by the Holy City. As we settled into our new home, he instantly regained the outstanding esteem he had earned in Aleppo. His reputation of high intellect and scholarly expertise in the *Kabbalah* and the *Zohar* spread throughout the community, amassing him many followers. The study of *Kabbalah* is considered dangerous for the average person,

and my father's proficiency in this area further attests to his greatness.

People generally associate with peers who equal them in caliber; my father had the opportunity of being in the company of some of the most prominent rabbis in Jerusalem, and today he is still remembered by the children of those illustrious leaders.

My father's devoutness was not limited to learning and studying. It was rooted there and then it sprang forth to encompass philanthropy and kindheartedness. He viewed the physical needs of others as his spiritual needs. As soon as his family was comfortable in its new home, he felt responsible to reach out and lend a hand to the poor, sick, and orphaned of the community. Orphaned children were a charity that had always been especially close to my father's heart, perhaps because he had helplessly watched five of his daughters orphaned of their mothers at a young age. He joined in the leadership of the orphanage house, *Bet Hinuch Yitomim* (בית חינוך יתומים) in Jerusalem, ensuring that the orphans were well-supervised and cared for. A considerable amount of his time and energy was devoted to raising funds for the orphanage house. This was an arduous task, as the Jerusalem population was poverty-stricken. A list of the funds raised for the orphanage house in the countless small synagogues in Jerusalem during the years 1940-1943 shows a total sum of about three thousand liras, today's equivalent of ten thousand dollars. The measurement of the individual donations by *mills* (pennies) as opposed to *liras* (dollars) is



ר ש י מ ת

הנדבות מבתי־הכנסיות

בראש השנה תרצ״ח

וחשבון קצר וכללי של

בית חנוך־יתומים

ה כ ל ל י

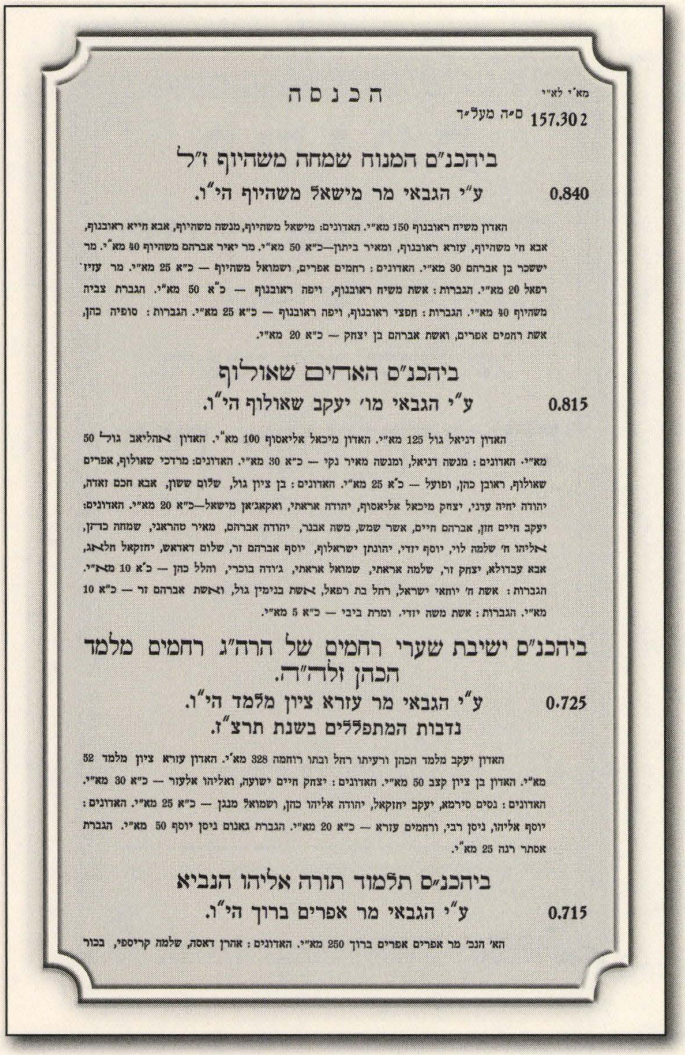
מאלול תרצ״ז עד אלול תרצ״ח

נוסד תרס״ב

פעיה״ק ירושלם תובב״א

דפוס וכריכה „גרינברג" ירושלים רחוב יפו מול ב״ת חנוך יתומים

Synagogues' collections for the Bet Hinuch Yitomim
(The Orphanage House)



מא' לאייר

הכנסה

157.302 סיה מעל"ד

ביהכנ"ס המנוח שמחה משהיוף ז"ל

0.840 ע"י הגבאי מר מישאל משהיוף הי"ו.

הארון משיח ראובנוף 150 מא"י. האדונים: מישאל משהיוף, מנשה משהיוף, אבא חייא ראובנוף, אבא חי משהיוף, עזרא ראובנוף, ומאיר ביתן—כ"א 50 מא"י. מר יאיר אברהם משהיוף 40 מא"י. מר ישכר בן אברהם 30 מא"י. האדונים: רחמים אפרים, ושמואל משהיוף — כ"א 25 מא"י. מר עזיז רפאל 20 מא"י. הגברות: אשת משיח ראובנוף, ויפה ראובנוף — כ"א 50 מא"י. הגברת צביה משהיוף 40 מא"י. הגברות: חפצי ראובנוף, ויפה ראובנוף — כ"א 25 מא"י. הגברות: סופיה כהן, אשת רחמים אפרים, ואשת אברהם בן יצחק — כ"א 20 מא"י.

ביהכנ"ס האדים שאולוף

0.815 ע"י הגבאי מר יעקב שאולוף הי"ו.

הארון דניאל גול 125 מא"י. האדון מיכאל אליאסוף 100 מא"י. האדון אהליאב גול 50 מא"י. האדונים: מנשה דניאל, ומנשה מאיר נקי — כ"א 30 מא"י. האדונים: מרדכי שאולוף, אפרים שאולוף, ראובן כהן, ופרעל — כ"א 25 מא"י. האדונים: בן ציון גול, שלום ששון, אבא חכם זאזה, יהודה יחיה ערני, יצחק מיכאל אליאסוף, יהודה אראתי, ואקאבאן מישאל—כ"א 20 מא"י. האדונים: יעקב חיים חזן, אברהם חיים, אשר שמש, משה אבנר, יהודה אברהם, מאיר סהראני, שמחה כדאן, אליהו מ' שלמה לוי, יוסף יזדי, יהונתן ישראלוף, יוסף אברהם זה, שלום דאדאש, יחזקאל חלאג, אבא עבדולא, יצחק זה, שלמה אראתי, שמואל אראתי, גיודה בוכרי, והלל כהן — כ"א 10 מא"י. הגברות: אשת מ' יוחאי ישראל, רחל בת רפאל, אשת בנימין גול, ואשת אברהם זר — כ"א 10 מא"י. הגברות: אשת משה יזדי. ומרת ביבי — כ"א 5 מא"י.

ביהכנ"ס ישיבת שערי רחמים של הרה"ג רחמים מלמד הכהן זלה"ה.

0.725 ע"י הגבאי מר עזרא ציון מלמד הי"ו.
נדבות המתפללים בשנת תרצ"ז.

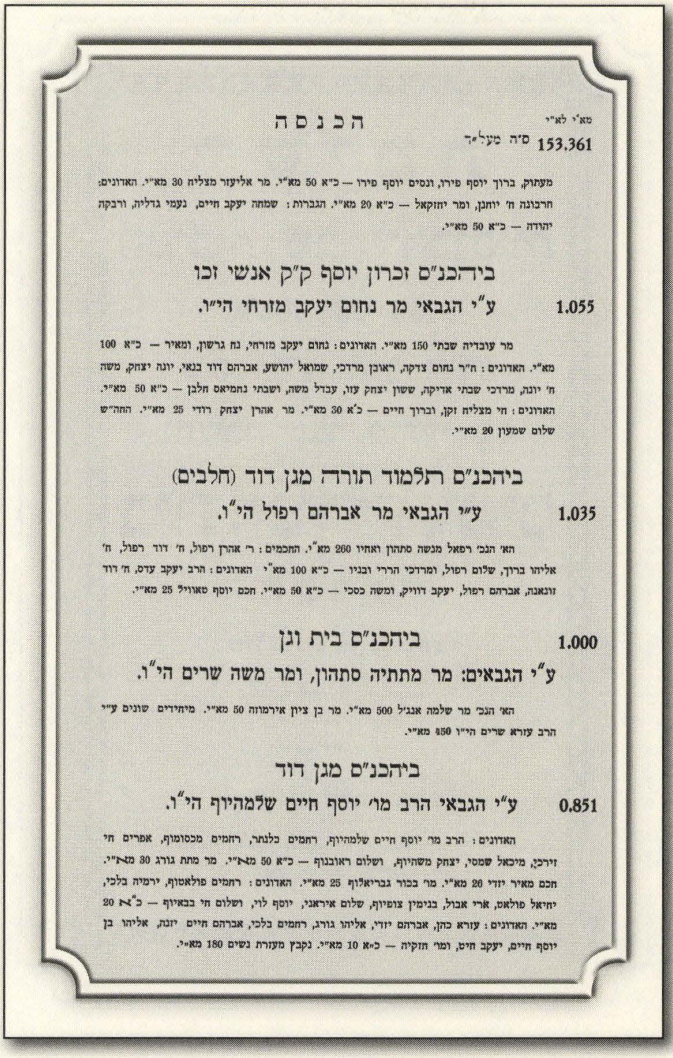
הארון יעקב מלמד הכהן ורעיתו רחל ובתו רוחמה 328 מא"י. האדון עזרא ציון מלמד 52 מא"י. האדון בן ציון קצב 50 מא"י. האדונים: יצחק חיים ישועה, ואליהו אלעזר — כ"א 30 מא"י. האדונים: נסים סירמא, יעקב יחזקאל, יהודה אליהו כהן, ושמואל מנגן — כ"א 25 מא"י. האדונים: יוסף אליהו, ניסן רבי, ורחמים עזרא — כ"א 20 מא"י. הגברת באנום ניסן יוסף 50 מא"י. הגברת אסתר רנה 25 מא"י.

ביהכנ"ס תלמוד תורה אליהו הנביא

0.715 ע"י הגבאי מר אפרים ברוך הי"ו.

הא' הנכ' מר אפרים אפרים ברוך 250 מא"י. האדונים: אהרן דאסה, שלמה קריספי, בכור

Synagogues' collections for the Bet Hinuch Yitomim
(The Orphanage House)



מא"י לא"י

הכנסה

153.361 סה"כ מע"ד

מעתוק, ברוך יוסף פירו, ונסים יוסף פירו — כ"א 50 מא"י. מר אליעזר מצליח 30 מא"י. האדונים: חרבונה ח' יוחנן, ומר יחזקאל — כ"א 29 מא"י. הגבירות: שמחה יעקב חיים, נעמי גדליה, ורבקה יהודה — כ"א 50 מא"י.

ביה"כנ"ס זכרון יוסף ק"ק אנשי זכו

1.055 **ע"י הגבאי מר נחום יעקב מזרחי הי"ו.**

מר עובדיה שבתי 150 מא"י. האדונים: נחום יעקב מזרחי, נח גרשון, ומאיר — כ"א 100 מא"י. האדונים: ח"ר נחום צדקה, ראובן מרדכי, שמואל יהושע, אברהם דוד בנאי, יונה יצחק, משה ח' יונה, מרדכי שבתי אדיקה, ששון יצחק עזו, עבדל משה, ושבתי נחמיאס חלבן — כ"א 50 מא"י. האדונים: חי מצליח זקן, וברוך חיים — כ"א 30 מא"י. מר אהרן יצחק רודי 25 מא"י. ההה"ש שלום שמעון 20 מא"י.

ביהכנ"ס תלמוד תורה מגן דוד (חלבים)

1.035 **ע"י הגבאי מר אברהם רפול הי"ו.**

הא' הנכ' רפאל מנשה סתהון ואחיו 260 מא"י. התכמים: ר' אהרן רפול, ח' דוד רפול, ח' אליהו ברוך, שלום רפול, ומרדכי הררי ובניו — כ"א 100 מא"י האדונים: הרב יעקב עדס, ח' דוד זונאנה, אברהם רפול, יעקב דוויק, ומשה כסכי — כ"א 50 מא"י. חכם יוסף טאוויל 25 מא"י.

ביהכנ"ס בית וגן

1.000 **ע"י הגבאים: מר מתתיה סתהון, ומר משה שרים הי"ו.**

הא' הנכ' מר שלמה אנג'ל 500 מא"י. מר בן ציון אירמוזה 50 מא"י. מיתידים שונים ע"י הרב עזרא שרים הי"ו 450 מא"י.

ביהכנ"ס מגן דוד

0.851 **ע"י הגבאי הרב מו' יוסף חיים שלמהיוף הי"ו.**

האדונים: הרב מר' יוסף חיים שלמהיוף, רחמים כלנתר, רחמים מכסומוף, אפריים חי זירכי, מיכאל שמסי, יצחק משהיוף, ושלום ראובנוף — כ"א 50 מא"י. מר מתת גורג 30 מא"י. חכם מאיר יזדי 20 מא"י. מר בכור גבריא'וף 25 מא"י. האדונים: רחמים פולאשוף, ירמיה בלכי, יחיאל פולאש, ארי אבול, בנימין צופיוף, שלום איראני, יוסף לוי, ושלום חי בבאיוף — כ"א 20 מא"י. האדונים: עזרא כהן, אברהם יזדי, אליהו גורג, רחמים בלכי, אברהם חיים יזנה, אליהו בן יוסף חיים, יעקב חיים, ומר חזקיה — כ"א 10 מא"י. נקבץ מעורת נשים 180 מא"י.

Synagogues' collections for the Bet Hinuch Yitomim (The Orphanage House)



ר ש י מ ת

הנדבות מבתי־הכנסיות

בארבעת ראשי השנים

ת"ש תש"א תש"ב ותש"ג

וחשבון קצר וכללי של

בית חנוך־יתומים

ה כ ל ל י

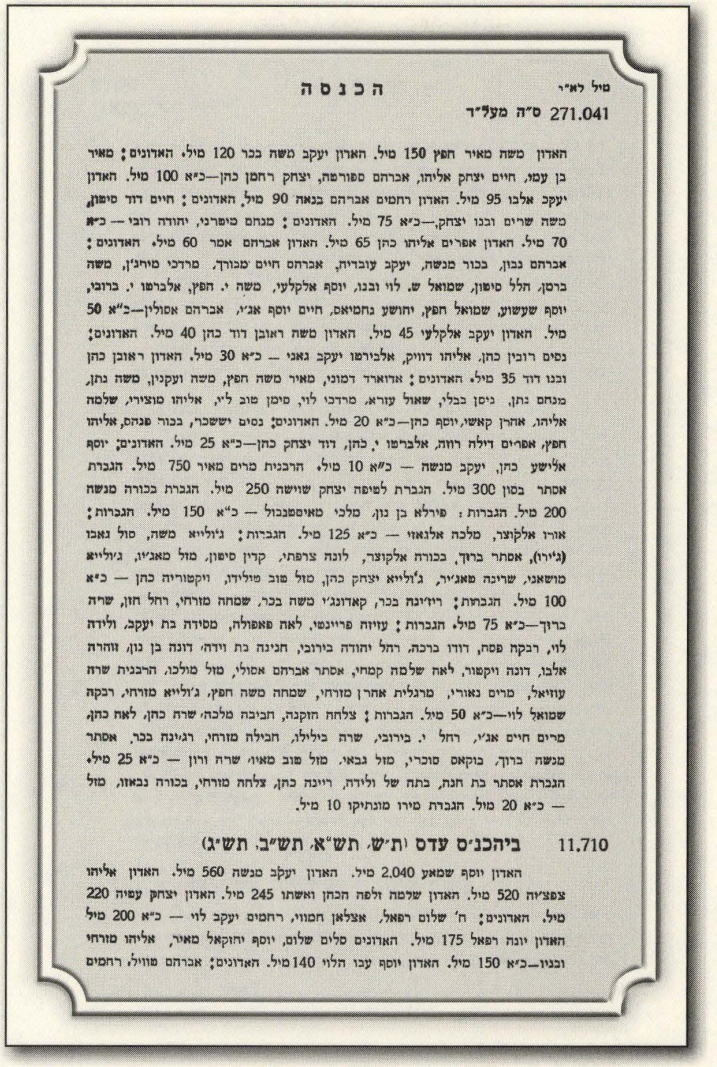
מאלול תרצ"ט עד אלול תש"ג

נוסד תרס"ב

פעיה"ק ירושלם תובב"א

דפוס „קדימה", ירושלים

Synagogues' collections for the Bet Hinuch Yitomim
(The Orphanage House)



טיל לא"י

הכנסה

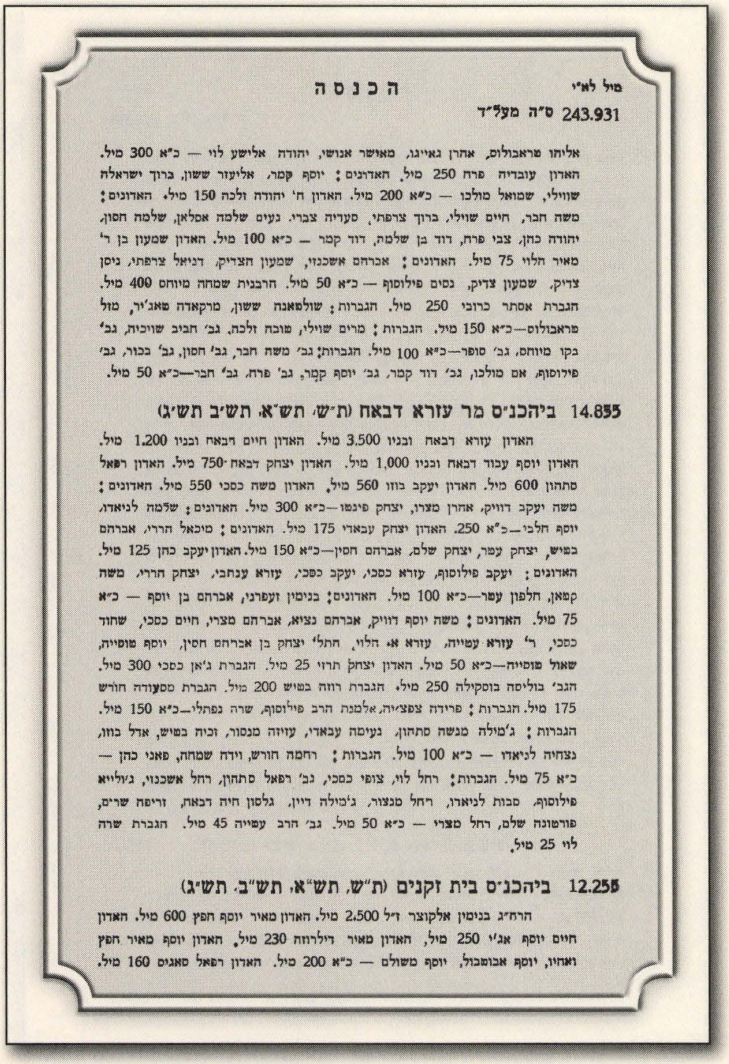
271.041 ס"ה מע"ד

האדון משה מאיר חפץ 150 טיל. האדון יעקב משה בכר 120 טיל. האדונים: מאיר בן עמו, חיים יצחק אליהו, אברהם ספורטה, יצחק רחמן כהן—כ"א 100 טיל. האדון יעקב אלבו 95 טיל. האדון רחמים אברהם בנאה 90 טיל. האדונים: חיים דוד סיטון, משה שרים ובנו יצחק,—כ"א 75 טיל. האדונים: מנחם כיסרני, יהודה רובי — כ"א 70 טיל. האדון אפרים אליהו כהן 65 טיל. האדון אברהם אסר 60 טיל. האדונים: אברהם נבון, בכור מנשה, יעקב עובדיה, אברהם חיים מכורך, מרדכי מיוחס, משה ברסן, הלל סיטון, שמואל ש. לוי ובנו, יוסף אלקלעי, משה י. חפץ, אלברטו י. כרובי, יוסף שעשוע, שמואל חפץ, יהושע נחמיאס, חיים יוסף אנג'י, אברהם אסולין—כ"א 50 טיל. האדון יעקב אלקלעי 45 טיל. האדון משה ראובן דוד כהן 40 טיל. האדונים: נסים רובין כהן, אליהו דוויק, אלברטו יעקב גאני — כ"א 30 טיל. האדון ראובן כהן ובנו דוד 35 טיל. האדונים: אדוארד דמוני, מאיר משה חפץ, משה ועקנין, משה נתן, מנחם נתן, ניסן בבלי, שאול עזרא, מרדכי לוי, סיטן טוב ליי, אליהו מוצירי, שלמה אליהו, אוהרן קאשי, יוסף כהן—כ"א 20 טיל. האדונים: נסים יששכר, בכור פנחס, אליהו חפץ, אפרים דילה רוזה, אלברטו י. כהן, דוד יצחק כהן—כ"א 25 טיל. האדונים: יוסף אלישע כהן, יעקב מנשה — כ"א 10 טיל. הרבנית מרים מאיר 750 טיל. הגברת אסתר בסון 300 טיל. הגברת לסיפה יצחק שושה 250 טיל. הגברת בכורה מנשה 200 טיל. הגברות: פירלא בן נון, מלכי מאיספנבול — כ"א 150 טיל. הגברות: אורו אלקוצר, מלכה אלגאזי — כ"א 125 טיל. הגבירות: ג'וליא משה, סול נאבו (ג'ירו), אסתר ברוך, בכורה אלקוצר, לונה צרפתי, קדין סיטון, סול מאג'יו, ג'ולייא מושאני, שרינה מאג'יר, ג'וליא יצחק כהן, סול טוב פולידו, ויקטוריה כהן — כ"א 100 טיל. הגברות: רוזינה בכר, קאדונג'י משה בכר, שמחה מזרחי, רחל חזן, שרה ברוך—כ"א 75 טיל. הגברות: עזיזה פרוינסי, לאה פאפולה, מסידה בת יעקב, ולידה לוי, רבקה פסח, דודו ברכה, רחל יהודה בירובי, חנינה בת וידה, דונה בן נון, זוהרה אלבו, דונה ויקטור, לאה שלמה קמחי, אסתר אברהם אסולי, סול מולכו, הרבנית שרה עוזיאל, מרים נאורי, מרגלית אהרן מזרחי, שמחה משה חפץ, ג'ולייא מזרחי, רבקה שמואל לוי—כ"א 50 טיל. הגברות: צלחה הזקנה, חביבה מלכה, שרה כהן, לאה כהן, מרים חיים אנג'י, רחל י. בירובי, שרה בוילילו, חבילה מזרחי, רג'ינה בכר. אסתר מנשה ברוך, בוקאם סוכרי, סול גבאי. סול טוב מאיר, שרה ורון — כ"א 25 טיל. הגברת אסתר בת חנה, בתה של ולידה, רייזה כהן, צלחה מזרחי, בכורה נבאזו, סול — כ"א 20 טיל. הגברת מירו מונתיקו 10 טיל.

11.710 ביהכנ"ס עדס (ת"ש, תש"א, תש"ב, תש"ג)

האדון יוסף שמאע 2.040 טיל. האדון יעקב מנשה 560 טיל. האדון אליהו צפצ'יה 520 טיל. האדון שלמה זלפה הכהן ואשתו 245 טיל. האדון יצחק עשיה 220 טיל. האדונים: ח' שלום רפאל, אצלאן חמווי, רחמים יעקב לוי — כ"א 200 טיל האדון יונה רפאל 175 טיל. האדונים סלים שלום, יוסף יחזקאל מאיר, אליהו מזרחי ובניו—כ"א 150 טיל. האדון יוסף עבו הלוי 140 טיל. האדונים: אברהם שוויל, רחמים

Synagogues' collections for the Bet Hinuch Yitomim (The Orphanage House)



מיל לאי"י

הכנסה

243.931 סה"כ מע"ד

אליהו מראבולוס, אהרן גאיגו, מאושי אנושי, יהודה אלישע לוי — כ"א 300 מיל. האדון עובדיה פרח 250 מיל. האדונים: יוסף קטר, אליעזר ששון, ברוך ישראלה שווילי, שמואל טולכו — כ"א 200 מיל. האדון ח' יהודה זלכה 150 מיל. האדונים: משה חבר, חיים שוילי, ברוך צרפתי, סעדיה צברי. נעים שלמה אפלאן, שלמה חסון, יהודה כהן, צבי פרח, דוד בן שלמה, דוד קטר — כ"א 100 מיל. האדון שמעון בן ר' מאיר הלוי 75 מיל. האדונים: אברהם אשכנזי, שמעון חצריק, דניאל צרפתי, ניסן צדיק, שמעון צדיק, נסים פילוסוף — כ"א 50 מיל. חברנית שמחה מיוחס 400 מיל. הגברת אסתר כרובי 250 מיל. הגברות: שולפאנה ששון, מרקאדה מאג'ור, מזל מראבולוס—כ"א 150 מיל. הגברות: מרים שוילי, שוכה זלכה, גב' חביב שוכיה, גב' בקו מיוחס, גב' סופר—כ"א 100 מיל. הגברות: גב' משה חבר, גב' חסון, גב' ככור, גב' פילוסוף, אם טולכו, גב' דוד קטר, גב' יוסף קטר, גב' פרח, גב' חבר—כ"א 50 מיל.

14.855 ביהכנ"ס מר עזרא דבאח (ת"ש, תש"א, תש"ב תש"ג)

האדון עזרא דבאח ובניו 3.500 מיל. האדון חיים דבאח ובניו 1.200 מיל. האדון יוסף עכור דבאח ובניו 1.000 מיל. האדון יצחק דבאח 750 מיל. האדון רפאל סתהון 600 מיל. האדון יעקב כוזז 560 מיל. האדון משה כסכי 550 מיל. האדונים: משה יעקב דוויק, אהרן מצרי, יצחק פינסו—כ"א 300 מיל. האדונים: שלמה לניאדו, יוסף חלבי—כ"א 250. האדון יצחק עבאדי 175 מיל. האדונים: מיכאל הררי, אברהם בשיש, יצחק עטר, יצחק שלם, אברהם חסין—כ"א 150 מיל. האדון יעקב כהן 125 מיל. האדונים: יעקב פילוסוף, עזרא כסכי, יעקב כסכי, עזרא ענחבי, יצחק חררי, משה קטאן, חלפון עטר—כ"א 100 מיל. האדונים: בנימין זעפרני, אברהם בן יוסף — כ"א 75 מיל. האדונים: משה יוסף דוויק, אברהם נציא, אברהם מצרי, חיים כסכי, שחור כסכי, ר' עזרא עשייה, עזרא א. הלוי, חתל' יצחק בן אברהם חסין, יוסף סוסייה, שאול סוסייה—כ"א 50 מיל. האדון יצחק תרזי 25 מיל. הגברת ג'אן כסכי 300 מיל. הגב' בוליסה בוסקילה 250 מיל. הגברת רווה בשיש 200 מיל. הגברת מסעודה חורש 175 מיל. הגברות: פרידה צפצייה, אלמנת הרב פילוסוף, שרה נפתלי—כ"א 150 מיל. הגברות: ג'טולה מנשה סתהון, נעימה עבאדי, עזיזה מנסור, זכיה בשיש, אדל בוזז, נצחיה לניאדו — כ"א 100 מיל. הגברות: רחמה חורש, וידה שמחה, פאני כהן — כ"א 75 מיל. הגברות: רחל לוי, צופי כסכי, גב' רפאל סתהון, רחל אשכנזי, ג'וליא פילוסוף, סבות לניאדו, רחל סנצור, ג'טולה דיין, גלסון חיה דבאח, זריפה שרים, פורטונה שלם, רחל מצרי — כ"א 50 מיל. גב' הרב עסייה 45 מיל. הגברת שרה לוי 25 מיל.

12.255 ביהכנ"ס בית זקנים (ת"ש, תש"א, תש"ב. תש"ג)

הרח"ג בנימין אלקוצר ד"ל 2.500 מיל. האדון מאיר יוסף חפץ 600 מיל. האדון חיים יוסף אג'י 250 מיל. האדון מאיר דילרוזה 230 מיל. האדון יוסף מאיר חפץ ואחיו, יוסף אבומכול, יוסף משולם — כ"א 200 מיל. האדון רפאל סאגיס 160 מיל.

Synagogues' collections for the Bet Hinuch Yitomim
(The Orphanage House)

yet another indication of how penniless the community was at the time. Despite their impoverished state they all gave whatever they could, and, considering their dire financial situation, their pledges were generous. Most notably, they contributed from the depths of their hearts.

Aside from collecting funds for the orphans, my father worked tirelessly to raise money for the destitute families of Jerusalem. He was deeply involved in the community's distribution to the needy of food items, housewares, clothing, health needs, and religious books and articles. In Aleppo, my father had been the paragon of benevolence and charity. With his move to Palestine, he transferred these traits to the *Halebi* community of Jerusalem.



CHAPTER EIGHT

Jaffa Road — Jerusalem

Our family was balanced out by my youngest sister Ruth's birth in 1940. We now numbered three boys and three girls and were outgrowing our residence on Yellin Street. Although our present neighborhood featured the religious atmosphere and companionship of the *Halebi* community, the cramped quarters were becoming unbearable. My parents opted to move into a more spacious home on Jaffa Road (רחוב יפו), one of the longest and oldest streets in Jerusalem. Originally paved in 1861 as part of the highway to Jaffa, the road quickly became a focal point for the 19th-century expansion out of Jerusalem's



Street sign of the famous Jaffa Road

Old City walls. Just as Broadway in New York runs from northern uptown to southern downtown, Jaffa Road begins at the Jaffa Gate in the Old City and runs from east to west until the outskirts of the city. During the period of the British Mandate, the street was further developed with the establishment of many central institutions including the city hall, the city's central post office, and the Anglo-Palestine Bank.

Our new home was situated on the west side of the city, next to the Wallach Hospital (Moshe Wallach was the first director of Shaare Zedek Hospital). The house had

been built in the 1930s by Ibrahim Kattan, a Christian Arab businessman and real-estate builder. It was called Kattan House (בית כתאן) to commemorate its builder, and its address was simply Kattan House, Jaffa Road, Jerusalem, with no house numbers needed. Its two stories were constructed in the fine, attractive Mediterranean-villa style, with large blocks of Jerusalem stone and intricately designed balconies. Its beauty was enhanced by a wide back garden blooming with colorful, exquisite flowers and a field of bright greenery. The first level consisted of restaurants, cafes, and shops, where the Arabs smoked "nargilas" and played cards. We occupied the entire second floor, which afforded my family the necessary comfort and living space.

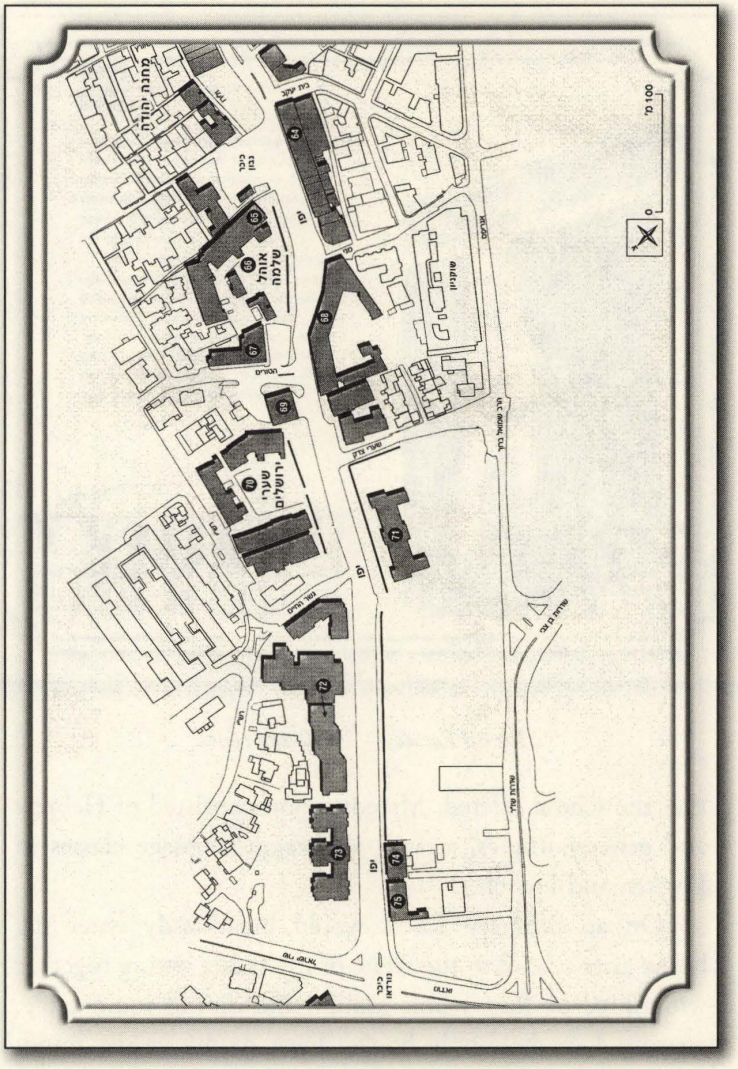
The new neighborhood was quite a transition from Yellin Street, where we had lived previously. The striking difference became obvious after only a short stroll down the street. Whereas our former street was a constant hustle and bustle of activity and noise, this neighborhood was peaceful and quiet. On Yellin Street the religious families and yeshiva boys were the sole occupants of the block. Now we lived in a mixed neighborhood, populated by both Jews and Arabs.

Our home on Jaffa Road signals the beginning of my childhood memories. Up until that point, I have relied on the stories and memories of others, but now I can supply a first-person account of my family's life. My oldest brother Mike attended the Tahkimony (תחכימוני) School, which



List of the establishments on Jaffa Road

was predominantly religious, while my brother Buddy and I went to the Alliance Israelite Universelle (called "*Kol Yisrael Chaverim*" in Hebrew). My legs almost ache when I relive the seemingly endless walk every morning from our house, straight down Jaffa Road to number 97, our school building. It was quite a distance for a youngster like me, but I relished the stimulating and challenging studies



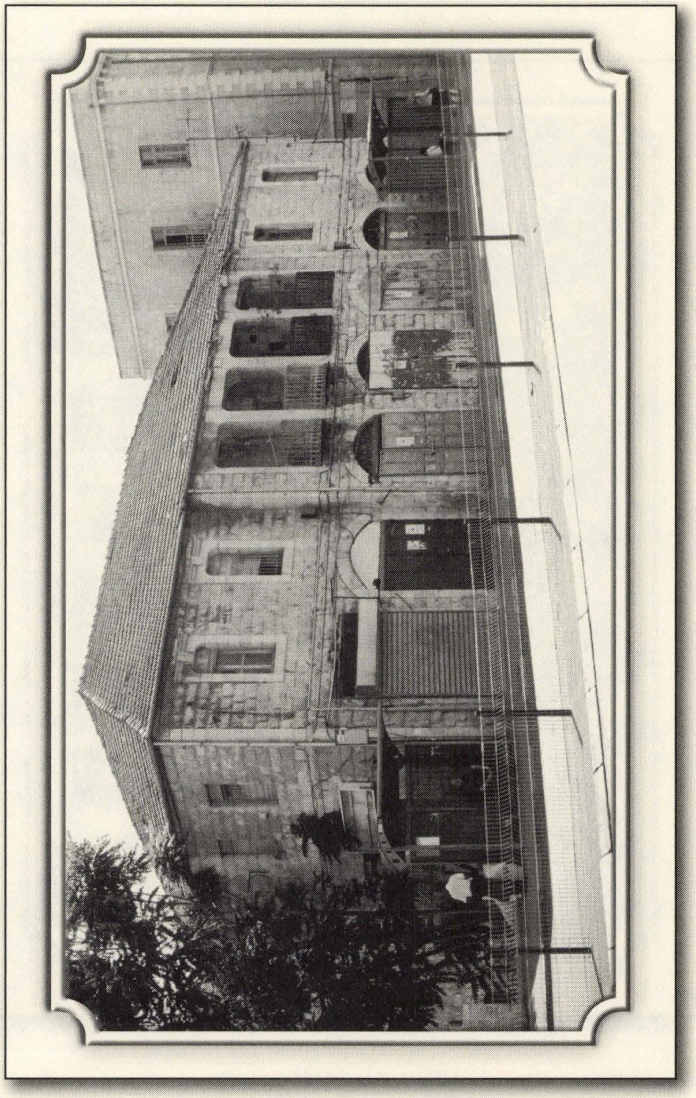
Plan of the establishments on Jaffa Road
(Number 74 on the map is Bet Kattan, the Kattan House.)



The Bet Kattan — The Kattan House.

that the school offered. My education consisted of Hebrew and general studies, as well as foreign-language classes in English and French.

On an ordinary day I would breathlessly enter my home after school to the scene of my father sitting together with three or four rabbis around the dining room table, engrossed in their holy books. Even to my young mind, it was obvious that they were delving into complex and lofty subjects. Perceiving their greatness, I always made



The Kattan House today is a landmark and is ready to be restored.



Alliance Israelite Universelle



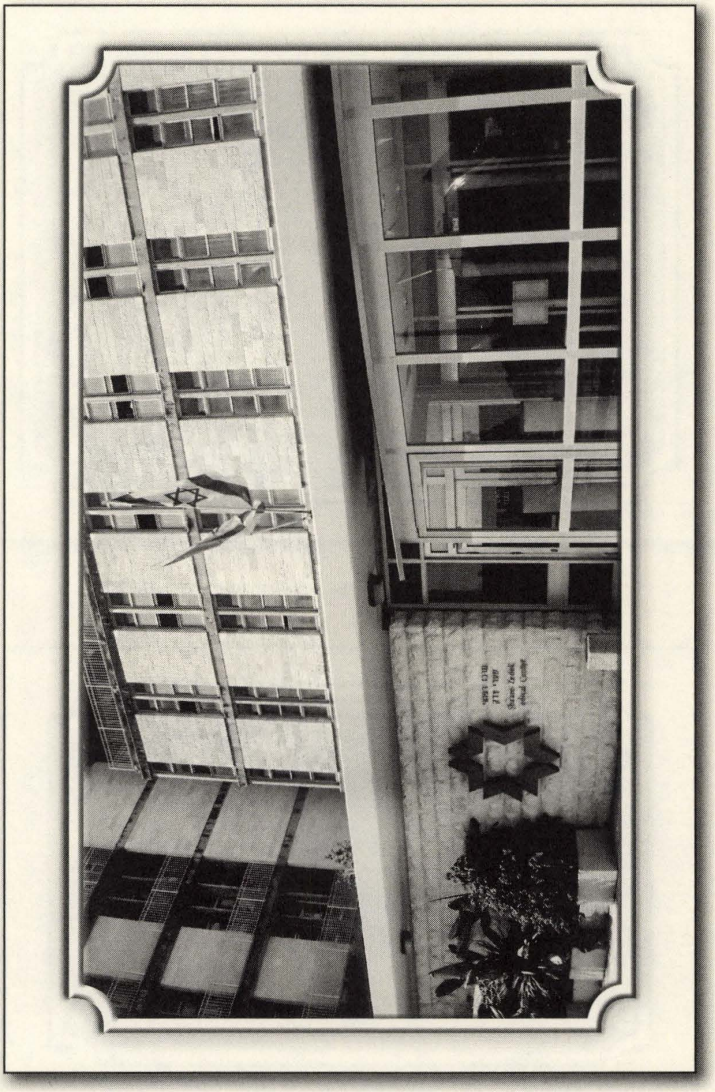
The construction of Shaare Zedek Hospital in 1896



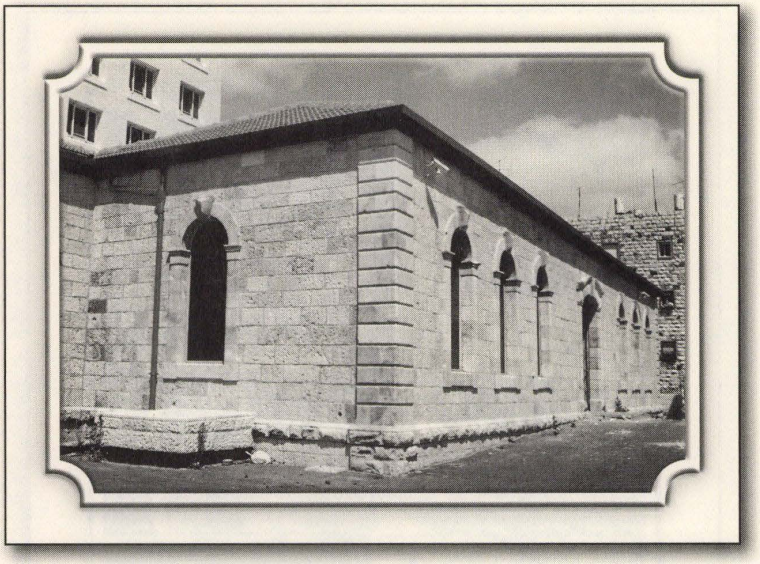
A street named for Moshe Wallach
Corner of Jaffa Road and Bet Kattan



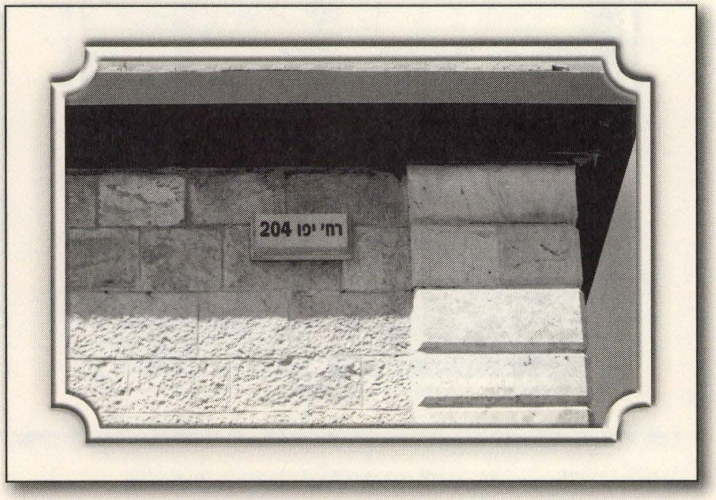
The new Shaare Zedek Medical Center in Jerusalem



The new Shaare Zedek Medical Center in Jerusalem



The remodeled Bet Hakeneset Bet Zekenim at 204 Jaffa Road





The new dedication of the remodeled Bet Hakeneset Bet Zakan

sure to behave courteously. I often sat in a nearby room, wary not to make a peep, hoping to catch some of their words of wisdom. Although I couldn't grasp what they

were discussing so heatedly, I enjoyed listening to their spirited debates. Rabbis learned in my home on a daily basis, and to me it was simply part of the constant activity around me. I have always remembered the names of these frequent visitors: Shrem, Attia, Ades, and Raful-Harari. Only later, when I was much older, did I discover that they were prominent, learned rabbis with intense admiration for my father and his vast intelligence. They were esteemed scholars in their own right, but they constantly came to our house to study with my father and glean from his wisdom. Although I didn't recognize the extent of their greatness at that time, I was nonetheless impressed that these rabbis were seeking my father's company. My father became my idol, and I promised myself that when I grew up, I'd study diligently and devote myself to attending to the poor, sick, and homeless, just like my father did.

My father supported the old-age home in the area, and became an active leader and a senior member of its synagogue, *Bet Hakeneset Bet Zekenim* (בית הכנסת בית זקנים). My brothers and I accompanied him to the synagogue every week. He had the first seat at the eastern wall next to the *hechal,* and my brothers and I sat beside him in absolute silence. We conscientiously followed the prayers and paid close attention to every movement and nuance of the services. Often, my father led the prayers in his loud but mellifluous voice. My brothers and I would listen proudly as the entire congregation recited the prayers

after him. During those moments my only wish was to be like my father, standing tall in front of the congregation and singing the prayers so impressively.



CHAPTER NINE

Shabbat and Holidays in Jerusalem

Every adult treasures the memories of the Shabbat and holiday celebrations of his childhood. Most of us have experienced the holy and sublime aura that surrounds those days, but that doesn't diminish the value and preciousness of my own childhood recollections. The scenes of my memory carry all that was near and dear to me: my cherished family, the carefree bliss of my youth, and most of all, my aristocratic father who was a master at making every aspect of each Shabbat and holiday so unique and memorable.

The inherent holiness of Shabbat is only intensified by the holiness of Jerusalem. The peaceful atmosphere of the day started early in the holy city. Friday was a half-day; there was early dismissal at schools, shops locked their doors at around 2-3 o'clock in the afternoon, and all the city's busy activity reached a halt by late afternoon. When I came home from school on Friday afternoons, my nose was tickled by all the delicious smells floating around the house. The Shabbat delicacies were simmering on the stove and baking in the oven, and every corner of the house was shined and scrubbed in honor of the arrival of the Shabbat Queen. As I stood at the entranceway to the kitchen, sniffing the mouthwatering smells and conspiring how I could sneak a little taste, my mother would catch sight of me and rush me to my room to prepare for Shabbat.

My siblings and I donned our special Shabbat clothing and walked to the synagogue for the Friday-night prayers. As soon as we arrived home, we headed straight to the dinner table where my mother and sisters, often joined by Grandma Sara Shayo, were already seated. The table was set for a royal reception, with an elegant lace tablecloth and my mother's finest dishes and flatware. As my brothers and I found our places around the table, my father greeted his wife, children, and guests with a warm and welcoming "Shabbat Shalom." He then began singing *Shir Hashirim* (שיר השירים) and *Shalom Alechem* (שלום עליכם) in the traditional melody. My brothers and I chimed in with our youthful voices, lending harmony to the songs, and the ladies and girls listened

quietly. After the final verses were sung, my father recited *Kiddush*. To this day, I remember his *Kiddush*. Everything about it was so regal and flawless: the smooth melody, the clear voice, and the loving expression and smile.

As a culinary connoisseur, my mother cooked up a storm and outdid herself week after week. The Shabbat dishes always had a unique flavor, and the food was plentiful and satisfying. On Saturdays, too, we were treated to a savory spread of various types of Syrian appetizers and salads. After we had all eaten our fill, my mother served a hot lunch of the choicest meat and chicken. We boys always made a point to compliment the ladies on their efforts and hard work in preparing such scrumptious meals.

Sitting at the Shabbat table, surrounded by his beloved family, heightened my father's usual liveliness and merriment. He would indulge in a shot of *arak* and circulate the bottle amongst his guests. Then began the highlight of the meal: my father's melodious singing. He sang Shabbat song after Shabbat song with gusto, until he had no energy or voice left. He invested his whole heart and soul into all he did, from community charity to singing on Shabbat.

Jerusalem has been the home of Jews for thousands of years. Prior to the destruction of the Holy Temple, Jews from every corner of the globe made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem to celebrate the holidays. The awareness that we were adhering to their tradition infused our holidays in Jerusalem with extra emotion and purpose.

There is one family ritual that is conjured up in my mind during the High Holiday season. My father had the custom of visiting the Wailing Wall every year before the High Holidays, together with his wife and children. My siblings and I would follow my father, squeezing through the narrow alleys and winding mazes of streets until we reached the Wall. In solemn silence we watched my father open his prayer book and passionately beg his Creator for a sweet new year.

Today, it is accepted to visit and pray at the Wall during trips to Israel. Many of our *Bar Mitzvahs* are celebrated there amongst the throngs of other Jews and tourists praying at the *Kotel.* Security is tight, making us feel protected and secure. Sixty years ago, when my family and I visited the desolate Wall, it spanned only thirty feet wide. We were usually the sole worshipers there, and the surrounding area was deserted and still. Peeking around, I always noticed about a half-dozen Arab boys scowling at us from a distance. I was too young to understand the danger of this annual family outing. Later on, after I read the history of that era, I was amazed at the risk my father took year after year to pray at the holy site. Although it was legal for Jews to pray at the *Kotel*, the hostile Arabs were provoked at what they believed was an invasion of their rightful property. It was commonplace for Arabs to riot at the Wall, seeking revenge against the innocent Jewish worshipers.

My father wasn't a lax or reckless person, carelessly bringing himself and his family to a place of danger. He

recognized the risks involved, but he had faith that G-d would protect His devoted worshipers. He wouldn't let his fear of humans stand in the way of his passion to pray at the holiest site in the world. Fear of G-d was the only fear he had.



CHAPTER TEN

The American Dream and the Israeli Nightmare

In the years following World War II, Britain's control over Palestine became increasingly stringent. Many restrictions were set on the Jews, including frequent sudden curfews. The Jews were no longer free to roam the streets at their leisure. They were irrationally harassed by the government, and many young Jewish men were arrested or even killed on the basis of false or minor accusations. Life as a Jew in Palestine was fraught with danger and apprehension; ambushes lurked around every bend, poised to assail a

passerby at any given moment. Underground groups, such as the Hagana, Etzel, Lehi, and Hapalmah, were formed to attack the British officials, their armed forces, and various strategic locations, in hopes of driving Great Britain out of Palestine. These attacks further strained the relations between the British and the Jews, and the general condition in the country grew tenser by the day.

Although my father had grown much attached to his home and community in Jerusalem, he was a calculating individual who was concerned with his family's safety. He realized that the present situation in the country would only deteriorate further with time. With so much political conflict thickening the atmosphere, war was imminent. His wife and children had braved so many trials during their lives, and he did not want them to have to encounter any more. The only way to escape the dangers hovering over Palestine was to flee the country. My father had gotten wind of the flourishing *Halebi* community in New York, which drew his attention to settling there. Planning to pick up his entire family once again was a bold move. My father was already in his seventies, an age when most people want to relax and enjoy life in familiar surroundings. He had performed more than his share of lifetime work, but he wasn't ready to take it easy yet. His own comfort and pleasure weren't on his mind. His only worry was his family's protection.

Joe and Jack, my father's two younger brothers whom he had helped send to the United States, had been blessed with

good fortune in their new home. Although the vast Atlantic Ocean lay between them, my father maintained constant communication with his brothers. He was always worried about them and took an interest in their progress and welfare. He had assisted his brothers tremendously in the past, and now the time had come for them to reciprocate. Before immigrating to America, my father needed his brothers to sponsor visas for his family. My uncles were thrilled to be able to repay my father's favors, and readily agreed to the sponsorship.

The next requirement for the journey was passports. We all applied for passports and had our passport photos taken. One by one, we posed in front of the camera, trying to immortalize our best smiles. Then someone enthusiastically suggested photographing a group family portrait. We were all gathered together anyway, making this a perfect opportunity to preserve the moment for eternity. I cuddled up next to my mother and my baby sister sat beside my father, while my older sisters and brothers lined up behind my parents. Our family made a charming picture, as our sweet youthful faces smiled in unison toward the bright future ahead of us. (My father's individual photograph is featured at the beginning of the book.)

All we needed now was the final legal approval. Our journey to America was just around the corner. Little did we imagine the earth-shattering future events that were going to thwart our plans. We were about to watch history in the making.



Family Portrait (1947)
Right to left seated: Father, Ruth, Abraham, Mother
Right to left standing: Meir, Sara, Ovadia, Chava

On November 29, 1947 the United Nations approved a plan to resolve the Arab–Jewish conflict by partitioning Palestine into two states, one Jewish and one Arab. The explosions of joy amongst the Jewish community were counterbalanced by the expressions of discontent amongst the Arab community. Violence broke out, killing dozens of victims on both sides. The bloody situation was only escalated by the fact that no one intervened to stop it. By the end of March, the fighting had left 2,000 dead and 4,000 wounded.

My father watched the dangers facing all the innocent residents of Palestine and prayed that his family would soon be safely across the ocean. His prayers were answered, but not during his lifetime. On May 14, 1948, the Jewish leadership, led by the future Prime Minister, David Ben-Gurion, declared an independent State of Israel. It was quickly recognized by the Soviet Union, the United States, and many other countries, but not by the surrounding Arab states. Over the next few days, approximately 1,000 Lebanese, 4,000 Transjordanian, 5,000 Syrian, 5,000 Iraqi, and 10,000 Egyptian troops invaded Israel. They were aided by corps of volunteers from Saudi Arabia, Libya, and Yemen. Seventy million Arabs were fighting against 600,000 Jews!

Our dream of resettling in America was crushed. Instead, we were caught in the midst of a fatal war. In present-day United States, when a war is fought on foreign soil, the lives of Americans progress pretty smoothly. At the average moment, most American citizens fail to remember that

their country's troops are constantly dying in some war-torn faraway country. Living in Israel sixty years ago during the War of Independence made it impossible for even a young boy like me to forget that a war was raging in my country. The war had seeped into every part of our lives and conquered every trace of happiness and freedom. Schools closed their doors for the year. The streets that had once been alive with activity were empty. Everyone was afraid to walk outside unnecessarily. Who knew what dangers were lurking there? Our activities were always being interrupted by the persistent sound of the wailing siren, warning everyone to seek shelter. The distant sounds of shooting pierced straight through my childhood security, and my pounding heart could have drowned out the explosions all around us. "Abba!" I would cry in terror, "The bombs are coming down at us! I hear the shooting! Abba, I'm scared!"

He would look at me with his tranquil eyes and squeeze my hand. "*Gam zo l'tova* (גם זו לטובה) — This too is for the best," was his firm reassurance. "Don't worry, honey, one day you'll understand that this is only good." What could be good about war, bombs, and shooting? What could be good about being trapped indoors day in and day out, because venturing outside is too dangerous? What could be good about the gnawing hunger pains in my stomach because we had so little to eat? I was placated knowing that my father believed it was all good, but try as I might I just couldn't understand this positive outlook. Today I understand. I still don't have the answers, but I understand so clearly. "*Gam*

zo l'tova" was my father's motto. It did not logically explain why the dangers and fatalities of a war were good. Neither did it explain why losing two wives and two newborn children was good. But it did indicate that there is Someone up there Who is solely good. He orchestrates every event that occurs in this world, and every one of them, whether we humans can grasp it or not, is essentially good. My father understood this. His *Emunah* (אמונה), a steadfast belief in G-d, accompanied him through times of fortune as well as times of crisis.



CHAPTER ELEVEN

The Angel Connection

During the 1948 War of Independence there was a period of sixty days during which Jerusalem was blockaded by the Arabs. There was no water or other fluid available for cooking, and food was scarce. Each family was allotted a meager quarter of a loaf of bread every week. It was impossible to feed a family for one day on such rations, let alone for an entire week. My parents wisely stocked up on food and essentials, and I can still visualize the stacks of canned food that lined one whole wall in our house. The food supply was quickly depleted by our large family, though. Our main sources of sustenance then were the food

packages that my Aunt Esther Sitt and Uncle Albert Shayo had sent us before the blockade.

The fierce fighting forced our family, along with the other tenants in our building, to relocate to an underground shelter. We passed most of the days and nights in the shelter, and mattresses were spread out across the floor for sleeping. My family had enough food to survive on, but my father couldn't feel content watching others starve. Every morning during the sixty days of the blockade, he walked five miles from our home to the Angel Bakery in Bayit Vegan. Rafael Angel, one of the owners of the bakery, was married to my father's niece Rose, the daughter of Mazal and Raful Sutton. Rafael was generous and willing to provide my father with bread. At around lunchtime, my father would return to our shelter carrying a sack containing six loaves of fresh bread. As he handed a loaf to each family in the shelter, there was a roar of thanks and appreciation. My father had just risked his life, walking on the streets when no one else would. The bombs were falling nonstop, and he could have been hit at any given moment. But nothing could repress his drive to sustain others. When the families expressed appreciation to him, he wouldn't even take the credit. With a modest wave of his hand he answered, "May G-d bless the Angel family."

And G-d has certainly blessed them. It has been eleven generations since the Angel family fled Spain in 1492 during the expulsion of the Jews. They gradually made their way through Lavorno, Italy; Salonika, Greece; Izmir and



Rose Sutton Angel

Istanbul, Turkey, before settling in the land of Palestine in the 1800s. Known as the Angels of Levorno, the family first resided in the Old City of Jerusalem, where they eventually became flour sellers through the entrepreneurial initiative of Avraham Angel, born 1873, who married Estreya Kastel from Hebron, and their sons, Solomon, Rafael, Nissim, and Leon Angel. By 1926 the Angels had purchased a bankrupt bakery in a Jerusalem neighborhood from one of the family's flour clients, establishing a family business that would continue to thrive for the next eighty years.



Rose Sutton Angel

As the business grew, Rafael and Leon moved to Haifa, where the bakery progressively expanded until it was sold. Leon moved to the United States. Rafael, my Cousin Rose's husband, passed away, and today Rose lives in Haifa in poor health. Rose's children, Avi, Amnon, and Udi, are in flourishing businesses throughout the world.

As the first Israeli bakery to go public on the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange, Angel's is still primarily controlled by the family. Solomon Angel's son, Danny Angel, at the age of eighty-eight is going strong as the company's director.

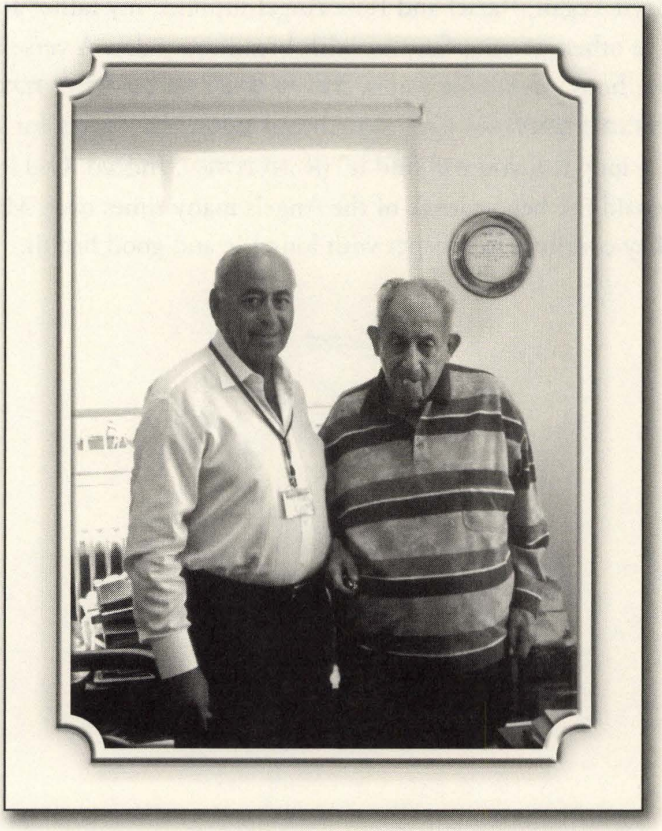


Ram Rafael and Rose Angel

Danny is a remarkable human being, as reflected in his life story. He began working for the business by the time he was thirteen. He was designated the task of collecting money from neighborhood groceries in which Angel breads were sold. On Thursday nights, he helped bake the braided *challah* loaves eaten during Shabbat. "It was a small city in those days," reminisces Angel. "All the Sephardic families in Jerusalem would buy from us, because we were also Spanish. That's how things worked back then."

After the war, Israel developed as a nation, and the Angel Bakery kept pace with the country. From a small shop with twenty-five workers, Angel Bakery now has 1,800 employees, as well as four major baking plants, in order to supply bread to more than 6,000 stores, hotels, and army bases throughout the country. The bakeries produce more than one hundred types of bread, with a half-million loaves and rolls baked daily, as well as 250 types of cakes and cookies. "Angel is a name in Israel," says Danny Angel. "Our motto used to be, 'Good bread is Angel bread.'"

Work became a soothing balm to Danny's aching heart after his oldest son Ariel was killed in 1970 while battling in the War of Attrition over the Suez Canal. Danny still works ten to twelve hours a day, puffing on an ever-present cigar to keep him alert. Fluent in seven languages, he is the last member of the family who can converse in Ladino, which he used to speak with his grandparents. Danny served as a lieutenant colonel in the Israeli Defense Forces, carrying on his reserve duties until 1982. He has always been an active member and participant in matters pertaining to the city of Jerusalem; he has been a member of the Jerusalem Foundation and has been selected as a notable person of Jerusalem and a notable industrialist. He has also served as the chair of the Manufacturers' Association of Jerusalem and as the president of Variety Club Israel and Rotary Club Jerusalem. Additionally, he has constantly contributed to various philanthropic institutions throughout Israel, never deserting his ancestry or his national roots. And while he



Danny Angel in his office, with a cigar in his mouth (2007)

says he doesn't notice the scents and smells of the bakery below his office, he loves nothing more than ripping apart and eating a loaf of fresh bread.

Today Angel's is one of the most prosperous bakeries in Israel. Sixty years ago, when it was only a small bakery in

Bayit Vegan, Rafael and Rose Angel supplied my father and five other starving families with bread every day. A verse in the book of *Kohelet* states, "שלח לחמך על פני המים כי ברב הימים תמצאהו — Cast your bread upon the waters for in the long run you will find it" (קהלת יא, א). Indeed, G-d has repaid the benevolence of the Angels many times over. May they continue to prosper with long life and good health.

CHAPTER TWELVE

The War's Aftermath

Nineteen-forty-eight was a rough year for my family and me. Today, when I read of the statistics and details of each battle, I realize that it was truly miraculous that my family emerged physically unscathed. My siblings and I were permanently transformed. War robbed us of our youthful innocence, but I still believe that it was all worth it; experiencing the creation of the State of Israel firsthand was a fair exchange for our security. As young children, we witnessed the sacrifice and perseverance that molded our country.

After almost a year of feverish fighting between the Jews and the Arabs, Israel's weapon and ammunition supply was low, and the Arabs were running out of steam. In 1949 a

cease-fire was declared and temporary borders, known as the Green Line, were instituted. Jordan annexed the West Bank and East Jerusalem, and Egypt took control of the Gaza Strip. The cease-fire also provided communications for commercial and civil segments between Jerusalem and the Tel Aviv area. On May 11, 1949, Israel was admitted as a member of the United Nations. The State of Israel was born.

How such a small, inexperienced army had triumphed over the masses of Arab troops is a wonder. The fledgling state of Israel had fought with every fiber of its being to maintain its independence, and, against all odds, it survived. The victory could only be attributed to a miracle. G-d was on His nation's side.

The residents of Israel were euphoric. For two thousand years the Holy Land had been thrown from the hands of one foreign ruler to the next. It had witnessed so much cruelty and hatred; its earth was soaked with innocent Jewish blood. The shackles that had been binding the people of Israel for so long had finally been torn apart. Now the Jews were free to live in peace.

Young and old swarmed through the streets on Israel's first Independence Day. Celebration swirled through the air, and jubilant dances broke out in every corner of the city. Songs and chants of victory echoed through the streets as security and tranquility descended. People could walk outside without fear of falling bombs. Normal daily life resumed: men attended the synagogues, women shopped at the market, and children skipped down the street

clutching their books on their way to school. A new era had begun.

My parents had struggled to remain strong for their family during the perils of the war. They had tried to provide a secure environment for us when insecurity was ruling the streets. They were our invincible protectors and supporters; in my young eyes no harm could befall us in their presence. The superhuman efforts and self-control they had mustered in order to maintain a calm and serene facade while their hearts shook in terror were concealed from us. Today, as an adult and parent, I understand what pressure it must have been for them. Now I grasp why my family relocated soon after the war was over. Throughout her life my mother had endured so much. She was a determined woman, but the jeopardy of the war had taken its toll. Jerusalem constantly reminded her of the daily terrors she and her family had just been subjected to. As long as she remained there, her scars from the war could not heal. Only with a total change of scenery could she reestablish a stable and pleasant home for her family.

Over the course of the war, Tel Aviv had been safer territory than Jerusalem. It had not been shattered by the bombshells and machine guns as much as our neighborhood had. Living there, my mother would be able to block out the traumatic war memories. As another plus, several of my mother's close relatives lived in Tel Aviv. My father was sure that the seashore city was just what my mother needed: a peaceful haven, far enough from Jerusalem, surrounded by her dedicated family.

A *shayara* (caravan) of trucks, buses, and cars, under United Nations supervision, had been formed between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. My mother grabbed this opportunity to safely travel to Tel Aviv and explore the possibility of moving there. I was crowned with the privilege of being her only travel companion. Being all of ten years old, the youngest of her three sons, I didn't really make the most capable or responsible partner. Till today, I wonder why she chose me, but I am definitely glad that she did. The awareness that my mother had favored me over the rest of my siblings infused me with a sense of pride and confidence. I was the youngest boy, but I was worth so much in my mother's eyes, and that's what counted to me. These warm, gleeful thoughts bubbling inside of me escalated the excitement of the trip.

My mother and I traveled on a bus, with a UN jeep leading the way. It wasn't often that we left the city, so the ride was a rare adventure. I treasured every moment. It was one of those experiences that are never forgotten, the kind that earns a page in the memory album of childhood. The details are so vivid. I still remember how enthralled I was by the courageously heroic Israeli passenger in the leading jeep. He fearlessly stood up the entire way! And there were no four-lane paved highways stretching straight to Tel Aviv; we bounced over bumpy dirt roads, taking detours through various Arab villages, including Ramalla. Today a ride from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv spans forty-five minutes; it took us nine hours. I had never sat still for such a long span of time, and to me the ride felt like an eternity.

Once we arrived in Tel Aviv, we headed to my Aunt Esther Sitt's house where we received a grand welcome. Before exploring her options, my mother needed a good night's sleep to rest up from the tiring journey. The next morning, she made a few inquiries, which led her to the south side of the city, just blocks away from my birthplace. Before the war, Arabs had resided in that area. They fled at the sound of the first gunshot, leaving their spacious homes intact. Now that Israel had been victorious, they were definitely not returning, and their houses were empty and available. A large two-family house with a delightful balcony and an open veranda especially caught my mother's eye. It was very well-maintained and its size suited my family. She secured an apartment on the second floor of the house, putting the final seal on the decision to move.

Back in Jerusalem, there were transactions and travel arrangements to attend to. Although I was relatively young to be entrusted with matters of such importance, my parents employed me for many of these tasks. This must have been one of my parents' wise child-rearing tactics. They never read any parenting magazines or books, but the love in their hearts guided them. My self-esteem and confidence were nurtured and developed, because I saw that they trusted me. They fostered my sense of responsibility and selflessness without any long-winded speeches or threats of punishment. I believed in myself, because they believed in me.



CHAPTER THIRTEEN

The Calm Before the Storm

My parents oversaw the arrangements quickly and efficiently, and in a short time we were living comfortably in Tel Aviv, becoming acquainted with our new surroundings. Everything was so different from the crowded, busy Jerusalem. Our home was now set in a peaceful seashore city that boasted a very diverse and modern population. Stores, restaurants, cafes, and cinemas lined the main streets of the city, and various synagogues and schools were found in every neighborhood. The city of Tel Aviv was a hub of religious and cultural life and development.

Moving from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv was a well-calculated decision. There were schools of high academic standards there,

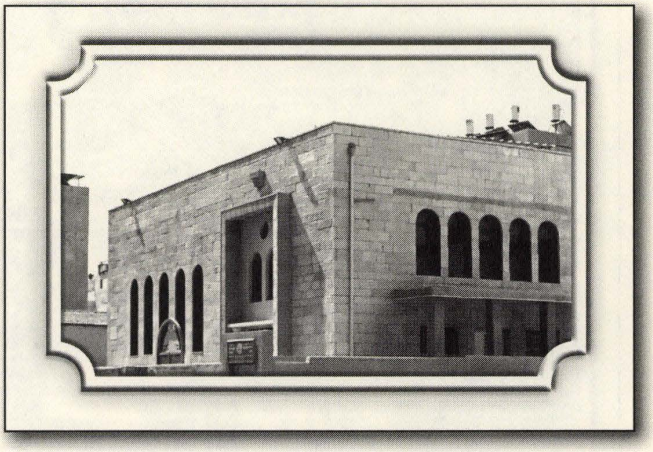
allowing my brothers and me to obtain a solid education and compensate for the time lost during the months of the war. In no time, we adjusted smoothly to the social and academic upheavals we faced after the move.

The war had dimmed the sparkle in my mother's eyes and stolen the genuineness of her smile. As she eased into her new routine in Tel Aviv, the former sparkle and warmth returned. Once again, she devoted all her time and energy to caring for her aging husband and growing family. She ran the house with the utmost particularity and was famous for her impeccable homemaking skills. Quite often, I have heard my aunts Esther Sitt עיה and Marcel Shayo (may she live long) praise my mother on her cleanliness and immaculate home. And it wasn't only the relatives who were amazed at her efficiency and expertise. Anyone who was ever acquainted with my mother is quick to rave about her perfection. "She was very, very clean and kept her house in tiptop shape," Yvette Dabah, my mother's close friend and relative, once mentioned. And, no, my mother did not have a housekeeper or even a day worker. Neither did she have a vacuum cleaner, dishwasher, washing machine, or dryer. She had to dust and shine every nook and cranny herself, wash and iron the laundry, scour the pots and dishes, and tidy up after her children. Our spotless house was all her doing.

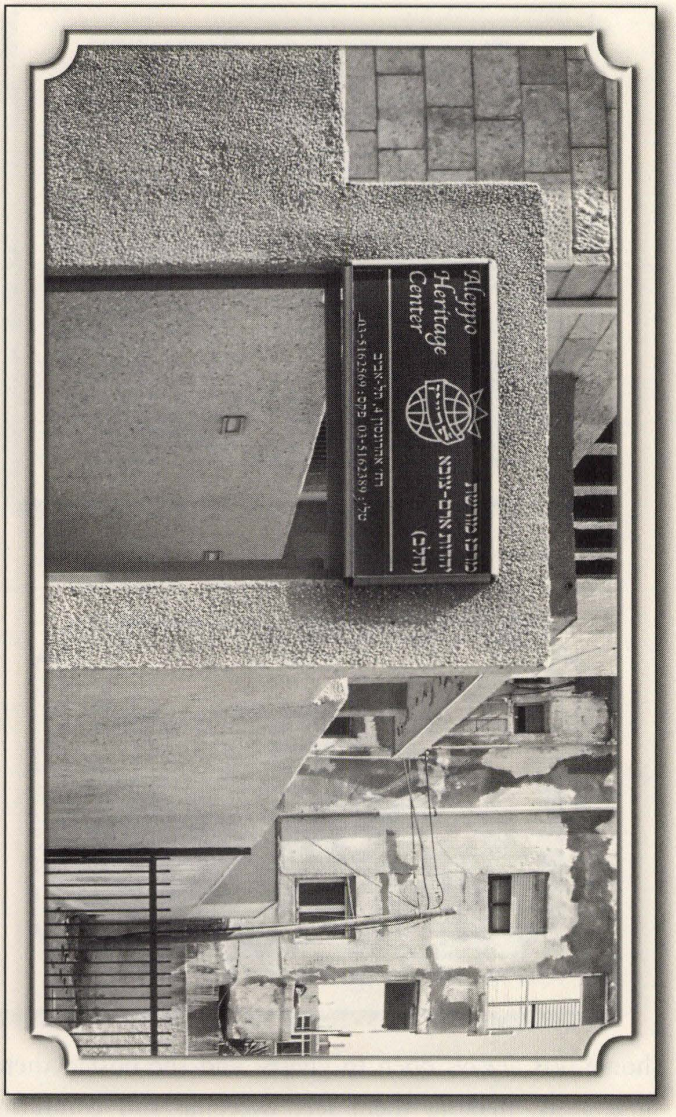
Cleanliness was only one item on the long list of my mother's homemaking talents. Hospitality was her trademark, following her until her last days in the United States. Her



Synagogue Tiferet Rafael where Ahavat Zion once stood



home was always open to guests, and she hosted them so graciously, making them feel welcome and comfortable.



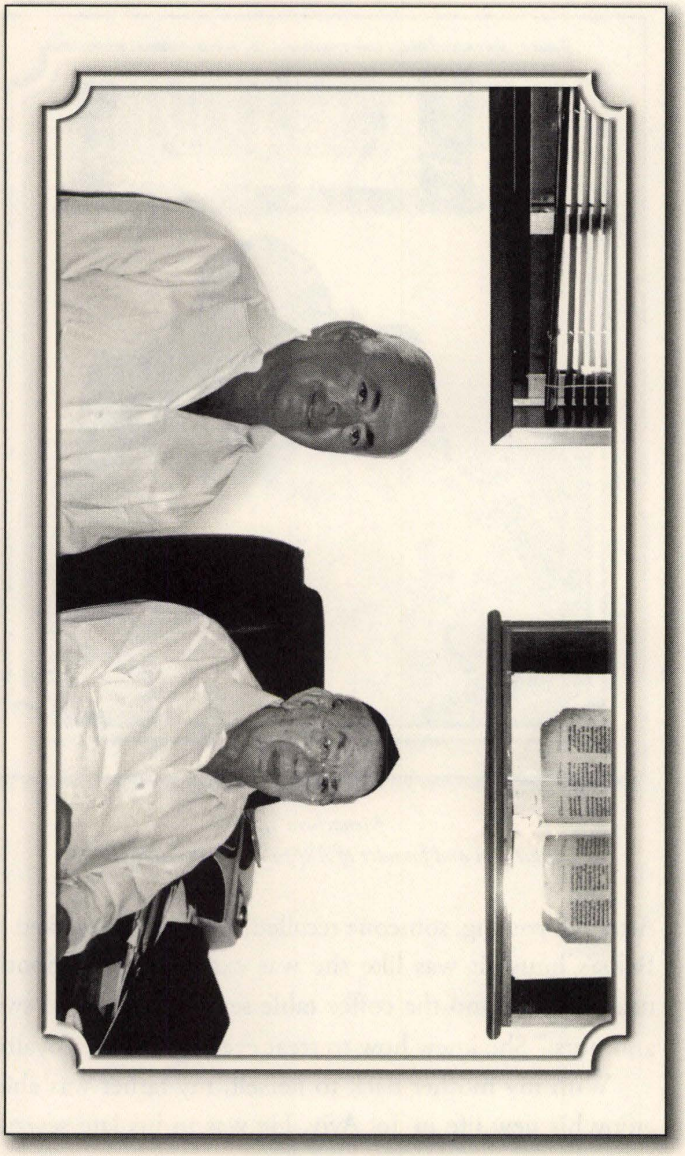
The offices of the Aleppo Heritage Center



Menachem Yedid,
chairman and founder of Aleppo Heritage Center (2007)

After her passing, someone recalled, "When you walked into Bahia's house it was like she was expecting you. Spotless, neat, orderly, and the coffee table set with the usual sweets and nuts." She knew how to treat every guest like royalty.

With my mother back to herself, my father was able to enjoy his new life in Tel Aviv. He was in his late seventies,



Menachem Yedid with Abraham Sutton

but watching his content children blossom and thrive made him feel younger than he had felt in years. A change of environment, though, did not signal a change in his religious routine. He maintained his daily Torah study sessions, only with different study partners. Just as in Jerusalem, I would enter my home to the sight of rabbis and scholars sitting around our dining-room table, poring over their books together with my father.

My father joined the nearby synagogue, *Ahavat Zion,* situated right off HaYarkon Street and the Mediterranean seashore, two blocks south of the famous Allenby Street. The members of *Ahavat Zion* welcomed my father cordially, deeply touched that such an esteemed member of the community had chosen to pray with them. They accorded him the proper honor and granted him and his sons seats on the eastern side of the synagogue, next to the *tebah.* In the 1950s, this old synagogue was torn down and rebuilt as a large magnificent structure, including a yeshiva and offices for the traditional culture of the Aleppo Jews. It was then renamed *Tiferet Rafael* by Albert, Morris, and Jack Nasser and their families in memory of their father.

My father immediately adapted to the city of Tel Aviv, merging into the *Halebi* community there and becoming an integral member. The journey to Tel Aviv had definitely led him home. Over his life he had embarked on so many journeys, and he hoped that this one would be the last.



CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Darkness Descends

Indeed, the journey from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv was the final journey of my father's life. The morning after *Simhat Torah* 1949 (תש״י), he awoke at his customary early hour to don his two sets of *tefillin* and pray. When he finished praying, he casually mentioned that his chest was hurting. My grandmother, who was staying with us at the time, was extremely concerned. She rubbed his chest with alcohol and suggested that he go to bed to rest until the pain subsided.

There was no school that day, as it was the day after the long holiday of *Succot.* Everyone was home, and the air of celebration and excitement that had filled our home over the past week still lingered like the scent of fragrant perfume.

The house bustled with noise and activity. Though we were reluctant to return to mundane routine the next day, we were all in especially cheerful moods.

My father had been napping for an hour when my mother went to check on him. He was lying in bed with his eyes wide open, staring at the ceiling, but he was motionless. To my mother's horror, he wasn't breathing. She summoned the doctors in hope that there was still something they could do to revive her husband. After just one look, they shook their heads in stony silence. My father had passed away in his sleep!

Sensing the commotion, a large group of concerned neighbors formed in front of our house. Numbly, my mother assigned each of her children the sad task of breaking the news to the various families we were close with. My brother Mike was in touch with our Jerusalem family members over the phone, while my brother Buddy and I circled Tel Aviv on foot to spread the news to our local relatives. It took us many hours to reach all the uncles and aunts who lived in various areas of the city. At the end of the day we collapsed at our doorstep, exhausted. The house was full of rabbis, friends, and family, but instead of my father sitting in their midst, full of spirit and passion, he was lying lifeless in a corner. He was covered by a white sheet, and two bright candles flickered on either side of him. Staring at those tiny flames that bathed the room in a dim light, I wondered if our house would ever be bright again. How could it, if our tall and warm ray of light had been extinguished? Sounds

of learning, sweet sounds of song and joy, used to permeate our home. But now all was silent and still. The talented and skilled conductor who had once led those glorious songs had disappeared backstage. And he would never return.

Arrangements were made for the funeral, but there were long delays while we waited for family members to arrive from all parts of the country. Due to the long distances, some relatives were even late to the funeral.

Just one day before that, my father had walked down HaYarkon Street to pray in the synagogue. Now he was being carried along that same route in a funeral procession to his final resting place. He was no longer wearing his navy suit, nor was he walking tall and erect with his energetic, swift gait. His eyes would no longer twinkle with kindness, nor would his wide smile warm the hearts of all who saw him. Crowds of mourning community members walked alongside my family to pay their final respects to the esteemed Hillel Sutton. The synagogue of *Ahavat Zion* was packed with over one thousand people, attesting to how beloved my father had been by so many. The masses overflowed into the courtyard and onto the street outside, as one rabbi after another spoke of my father's greatness. He had truly led an outstanding life.

When the services came to an end, I was handed a book opened to the page of *Kaddish*. I was a sweet, innocent, orphaned eleven-year-old when I recited the Mourner's *Kaddish* for the first time. Although I was too young to be counted in a *minyan* of ten men, my *Kaddish* was mandatory.

As a native Israeli, I understood the Hebrew sections of it. I had learned that the *Kaddish* is primarily a prayer of praise and homage to G-d. It appeals to G-d to reveal and enhance His honor among all who worship Him and to increase faith in Him throughout the world. I had heard the *Kaddish* hundreds of times while attending the synagogue with my father. But this *Kaddish* was different; I was not listening and answering with the proper phrases in unison with my father's deep voice. I was reciting it *for* my father. In the following year, I said the mourner's *Kaddish* three times daily, during the morning, afternoon, and evening services. And every time, I subconsciously speculated why my father's voice wasn't among the responding congregation.

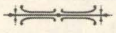
My beloved father was buried outside of Tel Aviv in Kiryat Shaul, as *Har Hazetim* (Mount of Olives) was in Jordanian hands at the time. The era of Hillel Menashe Sutton (הלל מנשה סתהון) had come to a close. It was an era that was born in Aleppo, spread to Manchester and Turkey, and planted its roots in the holy Land of Israel. It was an era of journeys; an era of faith, devotion, perseverance, and love. It was once a flourishing era, but now it has become history. All that is left is a rich legacy of Torah study and community involvement. My father is gone, but the hospitals, institutions, and synagogues that he had patronized outlive him. The refined family he had raised perpetuates his memory.



CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Who My Father Really Was

The mental picture I had of my father before I wrote this book was a sketchy outline. Delving into my father's life has filled in the spaces to create a realistic portrait. After learning about the numerous adversities my father confronted, every deed and accomplishment is magnified. When I reread the eulogy that had been the driving force behind this book, the words contain a more profound meaning. Previously, my father's qualities were just a list of black words on a paper. Today they are passionate and alive, breathing my father's essence. Each trait mentioned in the eulogy could now be expanded into a volume of its own.



The Benefactor

A benefactor is defined as "a financial supporter; somebody who aids a cause, institution, or person, especially with a gift of money." My dear father's support exceeded beyond this definition. His gifts were more than monetary handouts; they were gifts of steadfast devotion, gifts of overwhelming love, and gifts of sage advice and emotional sustenance. His assistance to the institutions he upheld had far-reaching effects; many individuals are currently receiving succor from these institutions.



The Unique Man of Many Attributes

Some are hardworking, prosperous businessmen with a keen sense for lucrative deals and potential customers. Others are diligent scholars, toiling over their studies and scaling lofty spiritual heights. My father was unique; he had the attributes of both. He was an affluent businessman

supporting his large family, and a rabbi whose proficiency encompassed even the complex study of the *Zohar* and *Kabbalah*.



Who Supported Every Good Enterprise

In the 19th and 20th centuries, the Jewish community of Aleppo had established numerous organizations serving and supporting the sick and needy (as listed in Chapter Two). The kabbalist, Rabbi Yehuda Dweck, announced that my father had supported every one of these. Only a charitable man could open up his wallet again and again to any worthy cause whose representative knocked at his door. And he didn't just contribute; he contributed handsomely.

Generosity was my father's trademark. Years after this eulogy was given, my mother recounted an annual tradition of my father's that truly reflected his unusual generosity. On the holiday of Purim, my father carried a pouch stuffed with gold coins. He presented a gold coin to every person in the house, from the little children to the elderly grandmothers. My mother estimated that the gifts must have totaled about

one hundred gold coins, today's equivalent of $80,000 (at gold's present value of $800 an ounce).



The Honorable Rabbi

During my interviews with family members, I was astounded at the way they described my father. My cousin Bahira (may she be blessed in good health and long life), remembers him vividly. Regarding his spiritual qualities she stressed that he was "very, very religious," and she recalled that he "put [on] two [sets of] *tefillin* every morning."

"He was King. Everyone was afraid of him. The whole family looked up to him," she marveled, referring to the respect and honor everyone accorded him. Community leaders had a genuine regard for him, and they constantly sought his sage advice and extensive knowledge.

It is not easy to stand at the top of the ladder and pay attention to those at the bottom. Although my father was treated with so much adoration, it didn't go to his head. Everyone knew him as "The *Anav*" (ענו), for he was always humble. Despite his shying away from the respect and honor that he was entitled to, the honor and respect chased after him.



Who Fears G-d

My father was unusually brave; he wasn't a naturally apprehensive man. But through years of devotion to learning and teaching religion, he inculcated a fear of G-d within his heart. Religion dictated his every move, and the image of G-d was always present before him. Through the misfortunes, hardships, and war he was never alarmed by external or physical threats; his fear of G-d surpassed all other natural fears. Although praying at the *Kotel* was dangerous during the years before the war, my father never relinquished this yearly custom.



A Child of Holy People

The venerable Rabbi Dweck called my father's parents "holy people." Indeed, they were special individuals. My cousin Bahira remembers sharing a house with about thirty children in the *Bahsita* section of Aleppo on a street called "Saa El Hawa." My father's parents and entire family resided there, too, and while negative qualities can be exposed by

living in such close proximity to others, Bahira only sings my grandparents' praises.

My father's mother, Sinbol, was a unique and outstanding woman. She was the leader of the family and exerted her influence on all her children and grandchildren. Even though she was no longer a young, energetic woman, she cared for and raised my father's orphaned children. She was always on the move, traveling to Jerusalem as well as to America to visit her family. Aside from her stamina, she was also known for her astuteness and tact, solving conflicts and upholding the peace in her family.

Taking pride in his holy and exceptional parents wasn't sufficient for my father. He emulated their ways, and he too climbed the ladder of piety and wisdom.

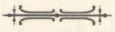


Of Ancient, Lofty Stock

My father's elite genealogy did not begin with his parents; they were preceded by a long line of aristocratic and holy community leaders and rabbis. He was one of the ancient Menashe Sutton family, a respected family that had been integral to Aleppo for generations. They were among the pioneering settlers of Aleppo, boosting and

establishing it into a glorious and culturally rich Jewish center.

In an introduction to *Tzedaka U'marpe*, a religious book written by Rabbi Hillel David Sutton, an esteemed rabbi of the Menashe Sutton family, Rabbi Ezra Batzri describes the family as "one of the glorious families of Israel that produced generations of scholars and judges in Aleppo, Tzfat, Tiberias, and Buenos Aires.... Besides their greatness in Torah, the rabbis of this family had their minds and hearts in warning the nation to follow the ways of the Torah and its commandments, and they explained to them the gravity of sins so that they shouldn't stumble because of them." After studying my father's life, I know with certainty that he wasn't worthy of being called a Menashe Sutton only by virtue of birth; he was truly worthy of belonging to this family through his selfless actions and spiritual deeds.



Who Does Kindness, Doing Good to All People

Many perform kindnesses, but how many really accommodate every person who crosses their path, whether relative, close friend, acquaintance, or stranger? Being

solicitous to everyone is physically and emotionally taxing, demanding tremendous energy, time, and money. My father never discriminated between people. If someone was needy, he made it his business to assist that person.



The Head of the Organization "Keter Torah"

As described in Chapter Two, the *Keter Aram Soba* (Aleppo Codex of the Bible) was a treasure of the Aleppo community for generations. Only upright and reputable members were entrusted with the task of guarding and protecting the Codex. My father was chosen as one of the guardians, further indicating how trusted, responsible, and honored he was in the community.



Father to Orphans

My father had a large family, but that didn't hinder

him from stepping out of his home to care for the children of others. He headed the orphanage house in Jerusalem, constantly collecting funds to support it. In addition to dispensing of himself financially, he dispensed of himself physically and emotionally as well. My mother would always tell us that after spending time with the family and conducting an awe-inspiring *Seder*, *Rosh Hashana*, or holiday meal, my father wouldn't retire to his bed for a well-deserved rest. He would leave his family and venture out into the cold night, because he had other children besides his biological children. He didn't want his "children" at the orphanage to sit around a holiday table neglected, without a father at the head. So he would pass his evening at the orphanage, conducting a *Seder* or holiday meal with the same zest and energy that he had invested in his own family. It must be in the merit of these selfless deeds that G-d cared for us when my father passed away.



And to the Miserable Poor

When my father lived in Jerusalem, the city was poverty-stricken. My father was a busy man, but nevertheless he sacrificed many hours and efforts in collecting for these

impoverished, hungry families. Rain and snow, bitter cold and sweltering heat, my father circulated through the city's synagogues and homes to solicit funds. When donating money to my father, everyone was confident that the entire sum would be distributed to a worthy cause, because he investigated the recipients to ensure that they were all authentically in need.



Awake by Night as by Day

My father never permitted himself to rest or relax, even at night. If anyone was in trouble at any hour of the night, they knew which address to turn to. My compassionate father was always glad to assist them, as if it was the middle of the day. "Why waste time sleeping?" he would wonder aloud, with a glimmer of humor in his eyes. This attitude allowed him to accomplish so much; in his seventy-nine years he had performed the work of five men his age. He was constantly occupied with serving others and learning with rabbis, but he was still able to make his family feel like he had endless time for them.



Arises in Middle of the Night to Find Doctors for Women Giving Birth

In the days before Hatzolah, many women were forced to have emergency births without the aid of a doctor. This never happened, though, if my father was aware of the situation. He would interrupt anything, even his sleep at night, to locate a doctor for the woman. So many women and babies of Aleppo survived because of my father. Tragically, his young wife died in childbirth.



He Shares in the Public Burden with a Generous Spirit

My father considered anyone's burden his own. He couldn't be at ease while a neighbor was crying in pain or distress. He couldn't be in good spirits while another stranger on the street was heartbroken. He wouldn't find peace until he had done everything in his abilities to ease a fellow Jew's burden, even putting himself in danger. During

the blockade in the War of Independence, he did not think twice about taking the risky five-mile trek to the bakery to supply his family and neighbors with bread. And all this was done without fanfare, in modesty and humbleness. My father never took credit for his selfless actions.



Supporting the Poor with Strength and Money

My father mastered the art of giving. He courteously distributed to the destitute in a tactful and discreet manner, taking extra caution not to make them feel awkward or inept. Instead of feeling that they needed him, he presented them with the feeling that he needed them. And in truth, he did. Giving was his essence; he desperately needed to give.





Hillel Menashe Sutton
LIVES ON



CHAPTER SIXTEEN

My Mother the Widow, My Mother the Heroine

After the first week of mourning, our family members returned to their homes. Our house suddenly felt so empty. It only echoed the emptiness in all our hearts. How would we continue living? The dreary winter days melted into each other in darkness, void of even a splash of color. Shabbat and holidays were bland without my father's special spice. My brothers and I walked to the synagogue alone, bereft of our favorite companion. The synagogue looked so strange without my father praying in his usual seat, shaking hands with the rabbis and his friends. Whenever I recited the *Kaddish*, my father's image appeared before me;

the same image that appears before me today. I see the soft expression of kindness and love in his eyes and his genial smile, the look his face wore whenever he spoke to me. I see his erect posture and brisk walk, and I hear his melodious songs, prayers, and words of infinite wisdom. The real live image is lost, but my memories remain forever.

Most children mature into adults through a gradual metamorphosis. I grew up over night. I was only eleven, but I was an orphan. My brothers and I had to transform ourselves into the men of the family, protecting our vulnerable mother and sisters. Through the trying periods, we all learned to depend on one another for guidance and emotional strength. It was my father's legacy that gave us the drive to forge ahead. Throughout his life, he had been a fighter, always persevering and prevailing despite his hardships. We were determined not to let him down. We would continue living the way he would have directed us. We would make him proud.

My mother was forty years old when my father passed away, but her age should have been doubled by the life experiences she had endured. Orphaned of her father in early childhood, she began sewing clothes in order to sustain her family. At sixteen, she married my father and stood at his side for twenty-five years, through a journey to an unknown land and through a perilous war. When it seemed as if her challenges were finally over, she was confronted with the most grueling challenge of her life. Through the trials of the past years she had leaned on my father for support. Now she was

all alone. All alone, running the household and managing the finances. All alone, raising her young orphaned children and striving to create a happy and favorable future for them.

During her marriage, my mother had been crowned with the title "*Eshet Hayil* (אֵשֶׁת חַיִל) — Woman of Valor." Now the title "The Great *Eshet Hayil*" was more befitting. She had excelled at being a wife, and now that she was a widow she redirected that energy to raising her beloved children. Her love for us infused her with powerhouses of emotional strength. With never-ending care and warmth, she filled the void we felt. The spark of life in our hearts was reignited by her words of encouragement and unwavering confidence in us. We began to hope for brighter days, and with my mother's guidance and effort, we all weathered the storm.

My oldest sister Sara worked as a legal secretary, while also pitching in with the household chores. My brother Mike was fulfilling his army duty. I attended school together with the rest of my siblings, Buddy, Chava, and Ruth. My mother gave us everything. Thank G-d, my father was the only thing that was absent from our lives.

The summer of 1951 was a season of change for my family and me. Mike had finished his army duty, and dreamed of planting his future in America. He was issued a student visa, and began packing up. My mother was not anxious about sending her oldest son so far away, because she was confident that America was the optimum place for him. As the day of his departure drew nearer, ambivalent

emotions churned within us. We were so thrilled for him, yet we knew that our family just wouldn't be the same. We would miss him terribly.

While my family prepared for Mike's trip, I was also on the brink of experiencing a transformation. My thirteenth birthday was approaching, and it wasn't just an ordinary birthday. I was going to become *Bar Mitzvah* and enter the responsible world of manhood. As a youngster, when I would envision my future *Bar Mitzvah* celebration I always pictured my father's face glowing with pride as I put on my *tefillin*. With his passing, that part of the picture had been sorrowfully blacked out. But I knew he would be there, and although I wouldn't see it, he would be smiling at me in approval.

An elaborate party was thrown by my mother in our home, in honor of my *Bar Mitzvah* and as a good-bye party for Mike. All our aunts, uncles, cousins, and several friends were invited to partake in this merry occasion. True to her trademark, my mother baked and served bountiful amounts of every type of mouthwatering pastry and dessert. The cheerful atmosphere, the abundance of food, and the presence of all our family and friends evoked in many of the guests' minds the holiday celebrations in our home while my father was alive. With her clever tact and expertise, my mother had indeed succeeded in creating a memorable party, just as she had done when her husband was with her. I had lost my father, but she didn't want me to lose my *Bar Mitzvah* celebration.

After I donned my *tefillin* and recited the appropriate prayer, I had my photo taken. My *Bar Mitzvah* ceremony didn't commence with prayers at the Wailing Wall (which was then in the Jordanian hands), nor was it followed by a gala Waldorf Astoria party. It was simple, but so joyous.

The next day my entire family traveled to the port city of Haifa to see my brother off to America. He boarded the *La Guardia* ship, while we stayed at my Uncle Albert Shayo's apartment on the Mount Carmel. The apartment gave us a perfect, breathtaking view of the Haifa harbor and the surrounding Mediterranean Sea. At around eleven p.m. we heard the ship's foghorn sound to signal its departure. Our eyes followed it as it left the harbor and sailed farther and farther away until it was swallowed by the darkness. Mike was on his way to America! Tears of joy sprang to my mother's eyes, and before long we were all sniffling, glad that Mike was embarking on a new life.

On the return trip to Tel Aviv, my mind was spinning. I had watched Mike sail off into his future, but where was I headed? In the following year I would be attending high school, and I would have to choose between the various educational options available. My mother insisted that her children get a prime education. Herzelia and Geula were the only two private high schools in Tel Aviv. Both schools maintained an extremely high academic level, comparable to a college education in the United States. Herzelia, which was situated on the northern tip of Tel Aviv, specialized in sciences and medicine. Geula, on the other hand, was located

in the center of town and was recognized for its excellence in general studies, such as political science and commerce. It was particularly prestigious, and was attended by many Israeli dignitaries such as Shimon Peres, Yitzchak Rabin, and Yigal Alon.

After weighing the options, my brother Buddy and I opted for Geula. The admission process was tedious, and tuition was very expensive. Finances were tight for my widowed mother, but she was determined that her children attend the top school. She had to arrange for three scholarships in order to gain enrollment for my brother Buddy and me. Obtaining the scholarships was a time-consuming and energy-draining task, requiring her to make countless trips to various agencies and government offices. She did all this by herself without breathing a word to us about it, as she didn't want us to feel guilty for putting her through so much trouble. She was richly rewarded for her sacrifice and hard work as she watched us thriving academically and socially.

During my school years, I earned some money by tutoring students in the afternoon. It was a very fulfilling experience for me. I loved granting the struggling students a chance to excel, and the money I was paid was an extra incentive. As meager a salary as it was, it gave me a sense of independence and satisfaction.

While I was flourishing in school, my siblings were reaching new milestones in life. My sister Sara became engaged to Moshe Michael, and their marriage was celebrated with a lovely wedding. My brother Buddy graduated and

was off to serve in the army. My mother's bustling nest was gradually emptying out, and her offspring were flying off into their futures. With prayers and blessings on her lips, my mother waved a heartfelt, affectionate good-bye as each of her capable orphaned children confidently entered the adult world.



CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

New Horizons

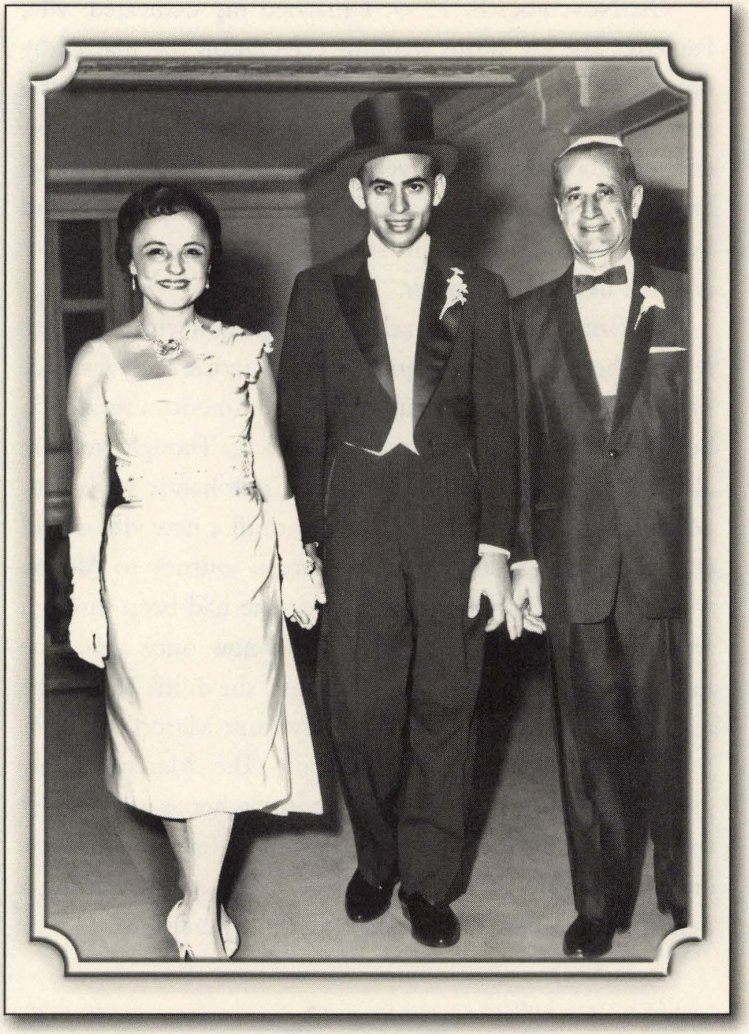
In 1957 I graduated Geula High School. The entire world was spread out before me, but I wasn't sure which path especially appealed to me. The immediate plan that came to mind was loyally fulfilling my duty to my country by enlisting in the army. That was what my two older brothers, Mike and Buddy, had done. But my perceptive and ambitious mother had other ideas for me. She believed that my future lay in America. I had always trusted her in the past, but this time I just wasn't convinced. What about my army duty, and how would I scrape together the means to travel to America?

When my mother made up her mind, nothing would get in her way. She would turn over every stone and dig

through every mountain until she found the gold. The necessary affidavits for my support and studies in the United States were submitted by my uncles, Joe and Jack. My mother appealed to her first cousin from Jerusalem, Shlomo Toussia HaCohen, for assistance in obtaining permission for me to travel to the United States as a student. He was a prominent, reputable attorney who maintained offices in both Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, and she knew that he had the necessary power in his hands. I recall making dozens of trips to his office with my mother, sometimes waiting hours for his arrival. The mission seemed impossible, but my mother managed to pull it off. Many people are dreamers. My mother was a dreamer, but she was also an achiever. Her power and stamina, coupled with her love and devotion, were the secrets to her success.

As I boarded the El Al plane to America on August 23, 1957, I made a pledge to bring my mother and siblings to the United States as hastily as I could. When I first arrived in New Orleans, my Uncle Joe Sutton asked me what I was called. Until then, I had been called Abie by all my acquaintances, but Uncle Joe shook his head and stated, "In New Orleans we cannot call you Abie. Your name is Al." And until today I am called by that name.

I invested two years in completing my education at Tulane University in New Orleans, while working at my Uncle Joe Sutton's store after school. During that time I was able to arrange for Buddy and then Ruth to travel to the United States as students.



Uncle Joe and Sister Rachel with Abraham
at Abraham and Paulette's wedding (November 8, 1959)

On November 8, 1959, I married my dedicated wife, Paulette. The joy of our wedding celebration was marred by one glitch: my mother's visa wouldn't be approved until a few weeks later and she couldn't attend our wedding. Soon enough, though, she arrived in America, and our whole family was united once again. With her children around her, establishing their own families and futures, my mother couldn't have been happier.

My family's move to Israel had been fraught with obstacles. My mother's move to America followed in the same fashion. Her visa expired, and I couldn't get her American residency, because I still wasn't an American citizen. Though we were all devastated at the turn of events, our hands were tied. My mother had to travel to Mexico until a new visa would come through, a déjà vu of her return journey to Aleppo when my family's visas had expired. She had been through so many travels and separations, and now once again she had to leave her family. To her fortune, she didn't have to be a guest at the home of strangers. My Aunt Marcel's brother, Joe Marcos, lived in Mexico City. The Marcos family graciously hosted my mother, welcoming her as an honored friend. After several weeks, my mother's visa came through and she traveled back to New York, eventually becoming a permanent United States resident with my assistance.



CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Ima the Queen

In the early 1960's, my brothers and I created our own business and we quickly prospered. Ima had grown up as a destitute orphan and then struggled financially after losing her husband. She had never splurged on any luxuries, and now that we had the means, we were resolved that our mother live as a queen. After saving pennies for most of her life, she deserved to be spoiled.

My mother's sterling traits of love, respect, friendship, and good family values stemmed from her emphasis on family unity. She was always busy cooking up excuses to get the family together. We each had our own homes and growing families, but her apartment remained the center of family gatherings during Shabbat, the holidays, and any

regular day. Ima (אמא), as my siblings and I and our children lovingly called her, refused any help. She insisted on doing everything herself, from the cooking to the cleaning. Her apartment was tastefully decorated by my wife, and Ima maintained it immaculately with her high standards of cleanliness.

My wife was in charge of shopping with Ima for her wardrobe. Together, they scoured the racks for any clothing item that my mother needed, from fashionable dresses, tailored suits, and dazzling gowns to mink coats. Whatever caught Ima's eye was purchased, no matter the price. All our lives she had provided us with only the top-of-the-line. In return, we now wanted to ensure that she was dressed in only the top-of-the-line.

Ima had a private house in Deal, which was also elegantly decorated with my wife's exquisite taste. In the front of the house bloomed hundreds of flowers, ranging from impatiens to perennials in gorgeous hues of pink, red, and white, my mother's favorite colors. At the back of the house a victory garden was planted with tomatoes, cucumbers, eggplants, zucchini, and any other vegetable Ima fancied. During the heat of August she picked baskets of shiny, ripe, red tomatoes from her garden, and offered each of us a brimming basket. Giving was her utmost joy.

She loved hosting her children and grandchildren. As soon as someone would arrive, the coffee table would fill up with an assortment of goodies, from candies, nuts, and homemade pastries to fresh sliced fruit. If a guest refused



Mother at my son Henry's Bar Mitzvah
at the Waldorf Astoria (May 1, 1975)

to at least taste a little bite of something, Ima would be very offended. With her incredible generosity and hosting abilities, it was no wonder that her friends would flock to her home rather than anywhere else for their get-togethers and card games. Ima was a social butterfly; she adored people and reveled in the constant activity and socializing in her home.

Throughout the years, my brothers and I would travel with our children to various vacation spots in Florida, the Caribbean, Europe, and Israel. We always invited our mother to come along, and she joined us whenever she could. She thrived on adventure and got a thrill from touring and sightseeing in new places.

During my years of business travel to the Orient I usually devoted the last afternoon to shopping. Falconer, the jewelry store in the Peninsula Hotel in Hong Kong, was my favorite one-stop shop. There I would purchase necklaces, bracelets, and rings for my wife and daughter and watches and cufflinks for my boys, but my ultimate pleasure was selecting jewelry for Ima. She had a distinct taste, and I quickly caught on to her favorite colors and styles. To show her appreciation she would proudly wear the pieces on all special occasions.

My wife and I were blessed with many reasons to celebrate, and over the years our home was the scene of countless parties and joyous events. We threw lavish anniversary parties for my wife's parents, opulent engagement parties for our children, and simple but sumptuous dinner



Mother at my daughter Barbara's wedding
at the Pierre Hotel (June 14, 1987)

parties. My family even managed to surprise me with an extravagant fiftieth-birthday bash. These events and the other family parties and weddings were the pinnacle of Ima's happiness. She was always at the center of the celebration,



Mother at Paulette and Abraham's twenty-fifth wedding anniversary (1974)

and her glowing smile proved that she savored every moment of it.

I think she derived the most pleasure from my son

Henry's *Bar Mitzvah* in 1975, the first *Bar Mitzvah* of her grandchildren. It took place at the Waldorf Astoria with seven hundred family members and friends present. While greeting the guests at the party, I couldn't help but flash back to my own *Bar Mitzvah* as an orphaned boy in Israel. Since that occasion, my mother and siblings had come a long way. Thank G-d, we had soared beyond our vulnerable and pitiful orphaned state of the Tel Aviv days.

When my daughter Barbara became engaged, my wife and I planned a noon wedding at the Pierre Hotel to celebrate her marriage. My wife had always dreamed of making a day wedding, and now she would fulfill her dream to perfection. One thing interfered: my mother was vexed with the notion of a day wedding. "Why a day wedding, Al?" she persisted. "You cannot afford an evening affair?" All our explaining and convincing just wouldn't sway her opinion. The wedding was on a clear, sunny spring day. The classy atmosphere was enhanced by Peter Duchin playing at the piano, accompanied by dozens of his talented violinists and musicians. The bride and groom were ecstatic, and an air of merriment permeated the ballroom. When the party was over, my mother seemed to be satisfied.

I often backtrack mentally to the times my family and I spent together with Ima. I wonder if perhaps I didn't do enough for her. Was there anything she was missing that I could have given her? After doing and checking my accounts, I rejected those doubts. We treated Ima with honor and respect; she was our queen. We lavished her

with her heart's desires. The one regret that plagues me is having not followed her advice on numerous occasions. She had incredible foresight. In the end, she was always proven right!

My mother's motto was "*Hamdala*," Arabic for "thank G-d." And this wasn't only a phrase that passed through her lips. It emanated throughout all her actions. With every step of the way, she was thankful to G-d for the good He bestowed on her. After a grueling life's journey, Ima had finally landed at a peaceful, blissful destination. America was kind to her. She now lived comfortably, surrounded by loving family and admiring friends. Everything seemed perfect. If only my father could be there, standing proudly at her side. If only he could see his wife and children's happiness. All that had mattered to him his whole life was his children's success, and although he wasn't there to witness it, I am certain that he is still silently cheering us on.

On September 7, 1990, י״ז אלול תש״ן my mother passed away. Her passing very much resembled my father's passing away. Just a few days before, she was dancing at her great-granddaughter's engagement party. My mother left a legacy of a life filled with tragedy, triumph, and joy. She is missed every day of my life.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

In the Footsteps of My Father

As a young boy, I was a first-hand witness to my father's constant charity and benevolence. Then and there I pledged to myself that when I would grow up, I would emulate my father; I too would provide succor to the needy and contribute to every charitable cause. Later on, so many of my father's modest, hidden deeds rose to the surface, but the true extent of his generosity is still beyond our imagination. I aspired to live up to my promise, but I don't think my deeds even come close to my father's.

When I arrived in America I did not desert the families and institutions I had left behind in Israel. Following my

father's example, I contributed to the orphanages in Israel, as well as to the renowned *Yeshivat Porat Yosef* and Rabbi Meir Baal Haness. My business office at the Empire State Building was a stop for many visiting rabbis, heads of yeshivas and social institutions, government officials, and politicians. They were all welcomed graciously to my private offices and I did my utmost to assist them in any way possible. "I remember your father — such an aristocratic man," was a regular comment at the end of our meetings. No matter how many times I heard that phrase, I would gloat through my tears.

I generously donated to institutions that I felt my father would have approved of and endorsed. Contributing was my pleasure, but I also believed it was my obligation. I had to fulfill my childhood pledge.

When *Yeshivat Porat Yosef* was rebuilt in the Old City of Jerusalem, a synagogue was added by the magnanimous Edmond J. Safra ע"ה. I dedicated a chair in that synagogue in honor of my parents. As a memorial of my father's favorite spot in the synagogue, I specified that the chair be situated on the eastern wall facing the *Kotel*. During my frequent visits to *Porat Yosef*, Rabbi Abraham Shrem ע"ה would lead me to the synagogue and I would sit in the seat dedicated to my parents, close my eyes, and pray. The uplifting feeling of such a sublime experience enveloped my entire being, especially when, after praying, I would open my eyes to the sight of the *Kotel* directly facing me.

When I bought my summer house in Deal, New Jersey in 1969 there was no synagogue in town. Instead, the police

station provided the Jews with a room for prayers, a very kind gesture on the part of the Borough of Deal. But as more and more community members moved into Deal, building a synagogue became essential. The Synagogue of Deal was founded in 1973 under the tireless efforts of Charles Cohen (may he be blessed with long life), and I gladly granted the necessary assistance. The synagogue was built in a relatively short time, and it was inaugurated in July in a grand celebration with *Sifrei Torah* that were encased in silver and gold.

My brothers and I contributed openhandedly in order to dedicate the new synagogue's *tebah* in memory of my father. Of course we also purchased permanent seats for all the members of our families. The *tebah* dedication was celebrated on a Saturday morning. A special program was prepared, and I commissioned the renowned and talented Cantor Meir Levy to conduct the prayers. All the Jewish residents of Deal attended the synagogue that week to hear the rich melodious services. Even the critical and discerning weren't disappointed, as the prayers were sung in the most harmonious tunes I had ever heard. Uncle Joe Sutton, who sat beside me in the second row next to the *hechal*, was invited by Rabbi Shmidman עי"ה to perform the *petihat hechal* (opening of the Ark), while my brothers and I were called to stand at the *tebah*. After the prayers I hosted a gala *sebet* in a huge tent outside my house. Hundreds of community members, relatives, and friends attended the luncheon that lasted for hours, as all enjoyed the delightful melodies of Meir Levy.

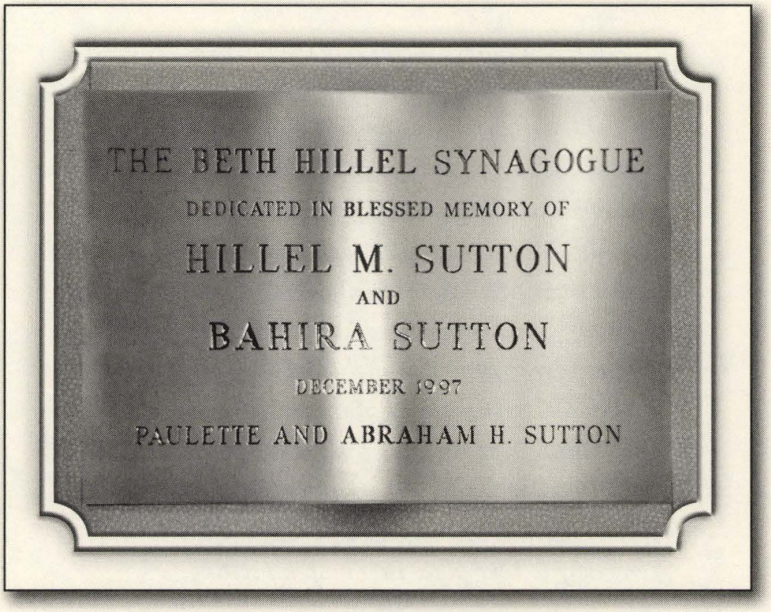
A few years after the synagogue was established, Rabbi Isaac Dwek assumed its leadership. He recognized the pressing need for a yeshiva in Deal, and instantly acted on the matter. I attended a parlor meeting at the house of Eli Ashkenazi (may he be blessed with long life), in which Rabbi Dwek spoke passionately of the urgency for providing our children with a Jewish education. Saul Ashkenazi (may he be blessed with long life), entreated all the participants to donate liberally. After a few large contributions were announced, I raised my hand and dedicated a classroom in memory of my father, something I am sure he would have urged me to do. The school was named Hillel Yeshiva, and I find it an honor that my father's name is shared with a yeshiva where he is remembered.

Twenty-five years ago, my nephew Manny Haber approached me for help in building a yeshiva to be headed by his brother, Rabbi Hillel Haber (named after my father) who had just arrived from Jerusalem after long years of intense study. Of course, I did not hesitate to contribute in memory of my father. I bless the Haber family with long, healthy, and happy lives, so they can continue in their selfless work for the community.

Following my father's footsteps isn't easy; his steps branch off in all directions, spanning miles. But keeping to the trail he had blazed is always my aim. In addition to contributing to orphanages, yeshivas, and synagogues, my father designated time for visiting and tending to the sick. When I was invited to join the board of trustees of

Maimonides Hospital in 1984, I knew that by accepting this position I would be furthering my father's legacy. Helping to manage an essentially Jewish hospital that caters to our community is an endeavor my father would have dreamed of pursuing. As his son, I enjoy sitting on the board of this reputable hospital and watching it expand over the years.

In 1998, I was able to fulfill two of my father's passions by establishing the Beth Hillel synagogue at Maimonides Medical Center. A synagogue in a hospital in memory of my father is a befitting honor to him. He had prayed religiously all his life, and that was the last activity he had done before his death. He had also been devotedly involved in efforts to



help the sick in Aleppo and Israel. Through the Beth Hillel synagogue, his actions echo on.

A Sephardic *Sefer Torah* was brought over from Israel and donated to the hospital in honor of the inauguration of the synagogue. The memorable occasion is described in detail in *Men of Faith and Vision*, a book by Sam Catton ע"ה.

Beth Hillel Synagogue
at
Maimonides Medical Center
An Excerpt from *Men of Faith and Vision*
By Mr. Sam Catton

Al H. Sutton is a member of the Board of Trustees at the Maimonides Medical Center, a position he holds for over twenty-five years. In 1998, Mr. Sutton made a major contribution to the Hospital and chose to dedicate a Synagogue in memory of his parents. It is named after the noted scholar Rabbi Hillel Meir Menashe Sutton, ob"m.

On Sunday, June 7, 1998, the Jewish community of Brooklyn celebrated the dedication of Beth Hillel Synagogue at Maimonides. A Sephardic Sefer Torah was brought from Israel and donated for the occasion. While it is customary to make such presentations at a synagogue, this was the first such ceremony to take place in a hospital setting.

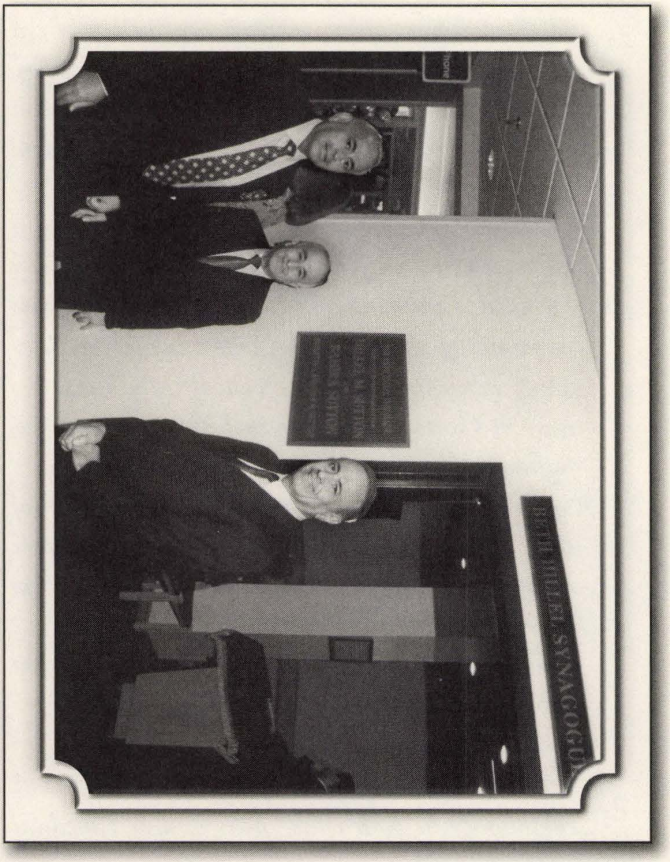
Mr. Sutton, whose parents are memorialized in the synagogue's name, expressed his family's joy. "What better way to remember my parents than by linking their memory to a place dedicated to preserving physical health and spiritual health?"

Over 500 people attended the reception in a large tent erected for the occasion. The ceremony included a jubilant procession through the streets surrounding the Medical Center, while the Sefer Torah was carried under a canopy. Music and the voice of Cantor Rabbi Yehezkel Zion accompanied joyful proclamations throughout the festivities.

Martin D. Payson, Maimonides' Chairman of the Board, thanked the Sutton Family and other members of the Sephardic Community for honoring Maimonides with the extraordinary gesture.

Maimonides is a world-class teaching hospital in the heart of Brooklyn, staffed with some of the best doctors in New York. It is located less than ten minutes from Ocean Parkway and serves our community in both emergencies and best medical care.

Beth Hillel Synagogue is located in the lobby of the main building. It is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and used for morning, noon, and night prayers, and is used by patients and visitors alike.



Meir (Mike), Ovadia (Buddy), and Abraham (Al) in front of the Beth Hillel Synagogue

In the fall of 2003, the Shaare Zedek Medical Center in Jerusalem hooked up with me, and I contributed to them unreservedly. After all, the home I had lived in as a child in Jerusalem was next to the old Wallach Hospital in Jerusalem, the predecessor of the present-day Shaare Zedek Medical Center. The hospital had blended into the neighborhood



Rabbi Dweck with Mike, Buddy, and Al with Sonny Laniado



Sylvia and Sonny Laniado with Shari and Manny Haber

scenery I viewed every time I had peeked out of my window. Helping the hospital revived a piece of my childhood, and was also an honor to my parents. In appreciation for my donation, Shaarei Zedek presented me with the Jerusalem



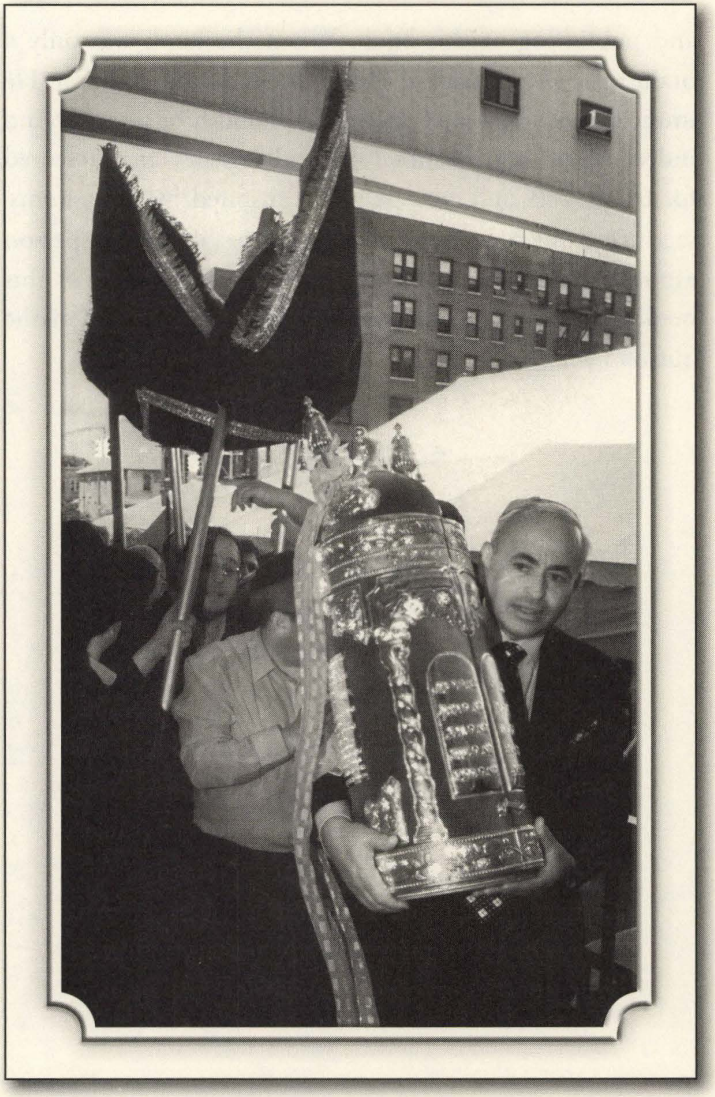
Sefer Torah dedicated in memory of Hillel and Bahira Sutton
(My mother was called Bahia in Aleppo, but when she moved to Israel she acquired the Hebrew name Bahira.)



Martin D. Payson, chairman of the Board of Trustees,
Stanley Brezenoff, president of Maimonides Medical Center
with Paulette and Abraham Sutton at the dedication, with the Sefer Torah

Award for aiding in the health care needs of the people of our Holy City and my home community. I accepted the award at a dinner affair attended by nearly one thousand supporters, including a wide range of celebrities, politicians, and doctors.

All my life I have jumped at opportunities to honor my dear parents. Their names are inscribed on the walls of countless institutions. The lives of so many have been reformed through my contributions in my parents' memory. But my most significant accomplishment of all is the writing



Abraham Sutton carrying the Sefer Torah during the procession

and publishing of this book. When the book was only a brainstorm, I approached Rabbi Dwek for his opinion. He immediately and firmly answered, "Publish or perish!" And indeed, now my parent's lives and legacies are preserved for eternity. If only one person is inspired by my parents' sacrifice, dedication, and sterling qualities, if only one person aspires to emulate their ways, then the publishing of this book will have been worthwhile. Hillel and Bahia Menashe Sutton live on!



CHAPTER TWENTY

My Brother Buddy's Memories of Our Father

This is in memory of my dear and beloved father, Hillel Menashe Sutton ע"ה זצ"ל.

When I backtrack mentally to my childhood days under my father's influence, his respect, honesty, and humility shine out. He was a charitable, religious, and happy man. Wherever he went, he was highly respected by his friends, rabbis, and family. All rose to greet him and he responded with respect to each person he encountered. My aunts, Terra Sitt and Marcel Shayo, along with their husbands, always came to my father for advice or a blessing.

In Jerusalem we prayed at the synagogue *Bet Zekenim* on Jaffa Road, a few blocks from our home. My father had the front seat in front of the *tebah*, and my two brothers and I sat next to him. He was well-respected and honored by all the congregation members.

On Friday nights, before *Kiddush*, my father would recite *Shalom Alechem, Eshet Hayil,* and *Atkeenu Seudata* while we all followed along. Saturday mornings after shul the whole family would gather together and partake in a delicious lunch prepared by my dear mother. After the meal, my father would seat me next to him on the sofa and read the *Book of Tehillim*. As a young boy, I would try to rush the reading, but my father would gently ask me to slow down.

Every day my father would walk to the market to buy that day's groceries. He didn't want to burden my mother with such work.

When I was five years old, my father enrolled me in *Yeshivat Magen David* on David Yellin Street in Jerusalem. He walked me to school in the morning, and my sister Sara would pick me up in the afternoon. I didn't like the school and lasted there for less than a year. Later, I attended the private Alliance school. After I completed the first grade, I earned an excellent report card and was promoted to the third grade. When my father read my report card, he was very pleased. As a reward, a few days later he took my brother Mike and me to Mahane Yehuda and bought wallets for both of us. I still remember how much nicer Mike's wallet was, which irked me at the time.

In 1948, war broke out between the new State of Israel and all its Arab neighbors. We were living in Jerusalem in Romema. The bombs and shells were falling on our neighborhood twenty-four hours a day. The fierce fighting forced us to move to a shelter in the next building. We dragged our mattresses to the shelter and brought along whatever food we had. We lived that way for months. While the war was raging around us, my father would walk the dangerous streets for miles in search of the Angel Bakery in Bayit Vegan in order to buy some bread for his hungry family. He had no regard for his personal safety; his only concern was feeding his family.

Every morning my brother Al and I would run out of the shelter. The surrounding Arab armies had shut off all water in Jerusalem, and the one main functioning water line in the city was directly in front of our house. Trucks would come to pick up barrels filled with water to deliver throughout the city. Being so bored in the shelter without any school or outdoor play, I would climb on top of the water trucks, making myself a prime target for the shots of the Arab legions. My father, beside himself with worry, would forbid these actions, but of course I continued my wild rides.

After the cease-fire in Jerusalem we returned to our apartment and tried to resume a normal life. I was nearly thirteen, and I began preparing for my *Bar Mitzvah*. My father accompanied me to the synagogue *Bet Zekenim* on the day of my *Bar Mitzvah*, and I read a portion of the weekly

perasha. I put on my *tefillin,* but I didn't know how to fold it. When we came home my father clearly demonstrated the process to me, and that is exactly the way I do it now, sixty years later. I think of my father every time I put on *tefillin*.

It was my father's custom not to start Shabbat lunch until the whole family was present. As a young boy, I preferred watching a soccer game in the arena near our home to sitting down to a family lunch. After shul on Saturdays, I would find myself sitting on the bleachers observing the game. From my seat I had a perfect view of anyone approaching the stands. Week after week, I would spot my father searching for me and I would quickly skip off the bleachers to meet him before he reached the arena. I felt like I was getting the best of both worlds: I got to watch the game and then spend time walking home alone with my father. After lunch on Saturdays my father would sing *pizmonim*. He had one favorite song, which he always loved to sing.

We soon moved to Tel Aviv and began a new life. My brother Al and I attended school, while our older brother Mike enlisted in the army. My sister Sara went to work and my youngest sister Ruth was a student in school. My sister Chava stayed home to help out my mother. The synagogue in Tel Aviv wasn't far from our home, and my father prayed there every day. Even as a newcomer, he was respected by the congregation and he was still able to get his usual first seat on the right side of the *hechal*. He was active and maintained his earlier habits, continuously caring for his family and community.

My final memories of my father are in 1949 on the last day of *Succot*, the holiday of *Simhat Torah*. He joyously danced with the Torah in shul, with a look of perfect happiness on his face. He died the following day. Although I spent only a short time with my father and so many years have passed, I treasure the memories I have of him and pray for his blessings for my family.





THE EULOGY



CHAPTER TWENTY ONE

The Eulogy — English Translation

The following is a eulogy and *derasha* (exposition) that the rabbi and teacher, the light of our eyes, the G-dly Kabbalist, Rabbi Yehuda Dweck, HaCohen, (may Hashem guard and protect him) said in public on the occasion of the death of the young woman שפיקה (may she be blessed among the modest women), who, having died in childbirth, was taken to her eternal rest. May her soul be bound in the bond of eternal life. She was the wife of the benefactor, of an aristocratic tribe, the unique man of many attributes who supported every good enterprise, the

Honorable Rav Hillel Meir Menashe Sutton (may Hashem guard and protect him). May Hashem comfort him and bring him happiness, and may he know no more sorrow. May Hashem fill his house with blessing, and may he rejoice with children and grandchildren, with much prosperity, tranquility, and honor, Amen.

And you shall therefore keep this ordinance in its season from days to days. And you shall therefore keep, etc. And it shall be when the Lord shall bring you into the land of the Canaanites, as he swore to you and to your fathers, and shall give it to you (*Exodus* 13:10-11).

The Gemara (Talmud) says in *Berachot* (5b):

R. Elazar fell ill and R. Yohanan went in to visit him. He noticed that he was lying in a dark room, and he bared his arm and light radiated from it. Thereupon he noticed that R. Elazar was weeping, and he said to him: Why do you weep? Is it because you did not study enough Torah? Surely we learned: The one who does much and the one who does little have the same merit, provided that the heart is directed to heaven. Is it perhaps lack of sustenance? Not everybody has the privilege to enjoy two tables. Is it perhaps because of [the lack of] children? This is the bone of my tenth son! He replied to him: I am weeping on account of this beauty that is going to rot in the earth. He said to him: On that account you surely have a reason to weep; and they both wept.

In the meanwhile he said to him: Are your sufferings welcome to you? He replied: Neither they nor their reward.

He said to him: Give me your hand, and he gave him his hand and he raised him [from his illness].

What an awful, terrible day is that day! A day of darkness and clouds! Distress, trouble, anguish, and anger! For she who was the apple of our eye, the perfection of beauty with no flaws — she is gone! Oh, women who are at rest, lift up your voices and cry. Hear my voice and hearken to my words: Eulogize and cry out, make your voices heard in high places, over this beauty that is going to the earth!

For these I cry, mourning and lamentation; our eyes pour forth water, lamentation and bitter weeping, like flowing water.

How terribly sad I am for you, Hillel, son of the morning star! Over this I eulogize and cry. I am pained to the depths of my being over this bad news which is so depressing, sad, and bitter, and which causes us to sigh with anguish. The informing voice informs and delivers its message. When we hear such news, all we can say is, *Baruch Dayan HaEmet*, blessed be the True Judge.

I saw your tears; I heard your words. "A voice said, 'Call out!' and I said, 'What should I call?' " (*Isaiah* 40:6). When I came here I saw there was no peace, and we dreamt a dream. For all my beloved friends and close relatives stood off from afar and were silent. Not one opened his mouth to share good news — therefore I was afraid, and in a bitter voice I cried, My only one, my beloved! I came here to be informed of your wellbeing, not of your death! I did not know that your time had come. How terrible is your passing, how

terrible is your leaving! In a brief moment you have left us; I have searched for you and did not find you, my beloved one, my perfect, gentle one!

"Is there no balm in Gilad? Is there no doctor there?" (*Jeremiah* 8:22). Why did you not get well? Why was there no cure for your illness? Open the floodgates of sorrow!

What can I respond and what can I say, when my heart is broken and bitter? My soul cries out for you, but my tongue is silent. Who here is like Hillel, my dear friend who is like my own self? A fire burns inside me; I speak out of the bitterness of my spirit. About whom shall I cry — this one or that one: About the loss of one's first wife, the mainstay of one's home, the loss for which even the Altar sheds tears? Or about the loss of your two sons born to you, untimely births that did not see the sun?

With what can I comfort you? Who has gone through an experience equal to yours? Happy events have turned to sighs; joy and gladness have turned to mourning and anguish. O, cruel Death, how did you not have mercy? You slaughtered, cut down, and grabbed away. How did you not pity her youth, the best years of her life? Her pains came upon her, the pains of a woman giving birth. What is this great anger?! She has gone from the highest places to the lowest, from the lofty heights to the darkness of the depths, to a place of darkness and the shadow of death.

It is pleasant and proper to praise [the person who passes away]. I don't know what to tell; truthfully, there are no words on my tongue. Therefore it is best to speak briefly,

and at any rate one is supposed to tell only a small part of a person's praise in their presence.

I would like to share two good, faithful testimonials: 1) She was modest in her deeds; "the entire honor of the daughter of the king is within" (*Psalms* 45:14). 2) She walked in righteousness, saving from her earnings and from the work of her hands to give to the poor. The verse, "She stretches forth her hand to the poor, and her hands she sends forth to the needy" (*Proverbs* 31:20), is accurately applied to her.

Indeed, "A woman who fears Hashem is to be praised" (ibid., 31:30). The woman שפיקה of the house of Sutton was among the righteous, pious women, whose soul is in Eden, may her soul be bound in the bond of eternal life in Eden, the garden of Hashem, in the tent of the upright.

May my prayer be offered to He Who is awesome in His deeds on behalf of this holy congregation which has acted toward her properly and according to good etiquette; on behalf of her father, her mother, and all her relatives; and on behalf of her husband, a man raised on high, an able man of deeds who fears G-d, holy from birth, a child of holy people, of ancient, lofty stock; who does acts of kindness, doing good to all who ask, the head of the organization *Keter Torah*, may Hashem be praised. A man who tries with all his strength and energy to help others, awake by night as by day, in darkness as in light, a father to orphans and to the miserable poor. He arises from his bed in the middle of the night to find doctors for women giving birth, to give hope to

those who are downtrodden; he shares in the public burden with a generous spirit, supporting the poor with strength and money, the honorable Rav Hillel Sutton. May Hashem watch over him, him and his brothers, my pleasant friends, those who are near and those who are far. May their years be extended and life added on to them; may nothing bad ever come near them. May there be many more like them in Israel, children of the righteous!

Who am I and what am I worth, that I have come before my brothers to eulogize, to arouse crying and lamentation, in the presence of the brave leaders of Israel, the holy pearls, who are whispering about me, for I have never been a man of words, and I have no experience in such matters. It would be right to remain silent, especially since she has already been properly eulogized by the esteemed Master, mighty of the mighty, who is greater than Moshe? So why should I aggrandize myself? Why should I, Yehuda, speak extraneously and trouble everyone to listen to me?

But truthfully I will tell you that I could not hold back, because of the great love and brotherhood I feel. I am so sad for you, my dear friend whom I love as myself. In a place where great joy, happiness, and song were expected, I have come to chant a bitter elegy with bitter cries. Would that you had not been my brother, as the *sefer Yad Yosef* commented on the verse, "How sad I was for you, my brother Yonatan" (*II Samuel* 1:26), that King David was saying, "I regret the brotherhood; would that you had not become my brother and I would not suffer so upon your

death." This is why David said, "My brother, Yonatan," and not "Yonatan, my brother," because the close feelings of brotherhood were a major reason for his pain. (Till here are the words of *Yad Yosef*.) So my hurt is very great, and I can say as David said about Yonatan, Your love to me was wonderful, surpassing the love of women (ibid.), these two women who are hidden with "caves of the earth" (*Isaiah* 2:19) on their heads.

About this I say, "Oh that my head were water, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!" (*Jeremiah* 8:23). The word *slain* is in the plural, implying two [as here, too, both the mother and the children have died]. Furthermore, "the man is not in his house" (*Proverbs* 8:19). For now the news came; now she died, now she was taken away. And the death of her two sons has come upon him, for she did not merit to nurse her son and he died, and she did not merit to see his circumcision or his redemption as a first-born. And now her travails have turned upon her: this day which we anticipated that we would rejoice and be glad, instead grievous troubles have surrounded us; suddenly came death, suddenly came destruction. This day has arrived, and she has been taken for burial with those who live in the dust, hidden from the view of all living things.

Therefore this is my obligation and I shall fulfill it; though I am small I jump to the front in order to console and comfort. May it be the Divine will that they shall not languish in sorrow any more; that desolation and destruction

should no more be heard in his border and He should lift his hands up high. Amen, so may it be His will.

The Gemara says in *Berachot* (17a): Rab said to R. Hiyya: Whereby do women earn merit? By making their children go to the synagogue to learn Scripture and their husband to the *Bet Hamidrash* to learn Mishnah, and waiting for their husbands till they return from the *Bet Hamidrash*.

The following question has been asked: Why does the Gemara ask how women earn merit? Why would their portion be less, and why would their good deeds and acts of righteousness and their merits not suffice? Indeed, in other places we find that a woman's merit is greater than a man's, as we find (*Taanit* 23b) regarding the wife of Abba Hilkiya that when both prayed for rain, the cloud came from her side and not from his, and the Gemara explains this was because the poor receive more immediate benefit from a woman than from a man, in that a woman gives the poor person bread, while a man gives him money.

It is possible to explain this based on the following: It is known that there are 248 positive commandments and 365 negative commandments, corresponding to the 248 limbs and 365 sinews in the body. Each *misvah* (commandment) corresponds to a specific part of the body, and by fulfilling that *misvah*, one prepares for oneself a (spiritual) garment for that part of the body. It is also known that every *saddik* (righteous person) receives 310 worlds in the World to Come, as the verse says, "That I may cause those who love me to inherit wealth; and I will fill their treasures" (*Proverbs* 8:21);

the word for wealth in the verse is יש, the numerical value of which is 310 (in *gematriya*). The Sages explained that the 613 Biblical *misvot* plus 7 Rabbinic *misvot* equals 620, like the numerical value of the word כתר meaning *crown*, and that the 620 is divided equally between husband and wife, each receiving 310. This then is what the verse means: "That I may cause those who love me to inherit wealth יש and I will fill their treasures" — the verse is written in the plural (those who love me; their treasures) to indicate that husband and wife each receive 310 worlds.

Based on the above, we can understand why the Gemara asks how women earn merit. The Gemara wants to know how women receive the specific merit of the many *misvot* that do not apply to them, such as *sissit* and *tefillin* and the rest of the time-bound positive commandments. How do women merit the spiritual garments for the World of Souls, for the world of the Revival of the Dead? How do they merit that every limb should have merit to be brought back to life? To this question the Gemara gives the answer, "By making their children go to the synagogue to learn Scripture and their husband to the *Bet Hamidrash* to learn Mishnah, and waiting for their husbands till they return from the *Bet Hamidrash*." By doing so, women share equally in all the merits of their husbands and children. They earn this merit. It is theirs by right, based on justice; it is not an unearned gift from Hashem. Man and woman each earn 310 worlds.

The expression in the Gemara that women wait for their husbands alludes to the fact that they sit at home, waiting

expectantly and patiently. The pious woman's legs do not wander outside and take her to the streets, seeking thrills and drifting like immodest women of low character. Rather she acts as modest women do, and through this she can certainly protect her household. Such women, who bring satisfaction to their husbands and cause them to be involved constantly in Torah, serving Hashem and being among those who bring merit to themselves and to the world — such women certainly share in the merit of their husbands.

Based on this, we can explain the verse, "Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine in the recesses of your house; your children like olive shoots around your table. Behold, thus shall the man be blessed who fears the Lord" (*Psalms* 128:3-4). At first glance it seems difficult to understand why the verse says, "Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine in the recesses of your house" instead of simply, "in your house."

What is the meaning of the expression, "in the recesses of your house"? And what is the meaning of, "thus shall the man be blessed"? And what is the intent behind comparing a woman to a vine and her children to olive shoots?

The intent behind comparing a woman to a vine is that Hashem has compared the Jewish People to a vine, which cannot be grafted with another species. Therefore the verse says, "If your wife will be like a vine" that does not accept any grafting from another species, i.e., she is modest (for as Radak explained, their practice was to plant the vine inside the house, but its shoots extended outside; similarly, the

woman is to remain modestly in the recesses of your house and not leave the house), then in this merit your children will be like olive shoots, like a tree planted by the water whose leaves will not wither; they will always be around your table, and behold, thus shall the man be blessed with children and grandchildren, with abundant blessings of the house.

Another possible explanation of "Behold, thus shall the man be blessed" is based on the following Gemara in Tractate *Taanit* (5b-6a): R. Nahman and R. Isaac were sitting at a meal. When they were about to part, [R. Nahman] said: Pray Master, bless me. He replied: Let me tell you a parable. To what may this be compared? To a man who was journeying in the desert; he was hungry, weary and thirsty and he lighted upon a tree the fruits of which were sweet, its shade pleasant, and a stream of water flowing beneath it; he ate of its fruits, drank of the water, and rested under its shade. When he was about to continue his journey, he said: Tree, O Tree, with what shall I bless thee? Shall I say to thee, May thy fruits be sweet? They are sweet already; that thy shade be pleasant? It is already pleasant; that a stream of water may flow beneath thee? Lo, a stream of water flows already beneath thee; therefore [I say], May it be [G-d's] will that all the shoots taken from thee be like unto thee. So also with you. With what shall I bless you? With [the knowledge of] the Torah? You already possess [knowledge of] the Torah. With riches? You have riches already. With children? You have children already. Hence [I say], May it be [G-d's] will that your offspring be like unto you.

This is what is alluded to in the verse, "Happy is every one who fears the Lord; who walks in His ways" (*Psalms* 128:1). This alludes to wisdom, for if there is no wisdom there is no fear of Hashem. The next verse, "For you shall eat the labor of your hands," refers to wealth, for one who benefits from the labor of his hands and does not need to accept charity, and is satisfied with what he has, is rich, as the Mishnah says, "Who is wealthy? He who is satisfied with his portion." On the surface it seems very hard to understand the Mishnah's question, "Who is rich?" Isn't it obvious that whoever has a lot of money is rich? But in truth, not all wealth is the same. The opposite: There are riches kept for their owner to his hurt (*Ecclesiastes* 5:12), namely wealth which is not used to benefit others, as the *Zohar* says (on the opening phrase of the same verse), there is a grievous evil that rules over a person and does not leave him alone, that even he himself does not have the ability (lit., control) to make use of and enjoy his own property. All the money will not help a man who is so stingy, and at the end he will lose his wealth.

This is what the Sages meant when they said, "Who is wealthy? He who is satisfied with his portion," and such a person will surely benefit from his labor, in this world and the next. For being satisfied with one's portion is the opposite of the phenomenon by which one who has 100 desires another 100 and thus feels that he is lacking 100; one who has 200 desires another 200; and one who has millions will be lacking ever so much more, and will be extremely poor.

It is possible to explain further that this is what the Sages meant when they said (*Eruvin* 86a) that Rebbe (Rabbi Judah the Prince) used to honor the wealthy. He used to honor those who were wealthy in the sense of being satisfied with what they had, as he was, taking satisfaction in his ability to be good and to do good for others. About such as this the verse says, "You shall eat the labor of your hands," meaning he should not be so stingy that he himself does not enjoy his money, and certainly he will not give to others. Rather, he should eat and give to others to eat. About such as this the verse concludes, "You shall be happy and it will be good for you."

And perhaps this is what Jacob meant when he said, "And He shall give me bread to eat and clothes to wear" (*Genesis* 28:20), i.e., with a generous eye, and may that grievous evil not rule over me such that I will not be able to enjoy the labor of my hands.

If a person fulfills all we have said, certainly about him the verse says, "You shall be happy and it will be good for you," which (as the Sages explained) means that you shall be happy in this world and it will be good for you in the next world. Your wife will be as a fruitful vine, meaning she does not allow anyone else to join (graft) with her, but to the contrary, she sits in the recesses of your home, i.e., she doesn't leave the house but stays home modestly; and your children like olive shoots around — certainly regarding such a man the verse says, "thus shall the man be blessed," that his descendants should be like him.

Alternatively, the verse, "thus shall the man be blessed who fears Hashem," refers to the following: It is known that one hundred people were dying each day from a plague, (see end of *II Samuel*), so King David stood and established that every Jew should recite one hundred blessings each day so they should not die. Our Sages found a basis for this practice hinted at in Scripture in the phrase describing King David, הוּקַם עָל, "who was raised on high" (*II Samuel* 23:1), in that the word עָל has the numerical value 100 in *gematriya*. This is what David said, "Your wife is as a fruitful vine, and your children are like olive shoots," meaning that they are alive and well. They are alive through fulfilling the next verse, "thus shall the man be blessed," etc., which reads in Hebrew, כִּי כֵן יְבֹרַךְ גָּבֶר the words כִּי כֵן have the numerical value of 100, and the word יְבֹרַךְ can be read ,יְבָרֵךְ, meaning, "he should bless," i.e., each man should bless 100 blessings.

Let us return to our topic. Righteous, pious women are the ones who help their husbands. By so doing, their portion is not reduced (as it might otherwise have been because women have fewer *misvot*), and through their good deeds, righteousness, and purity of heart, they share equally with their husbands.

But we still have to understand why the Gemara mentioned three separate things: 1) By making their children go to the synagogue to learn Scripture, and 2) their husband to the *Bet Hamidrash* to learn Mishnah, and 3) waiting for their husbands till they return, etc. Why is one of them not sufficient?

When a righteous man departs from the world three companies of ministering angels go out to greet him. One exclaims, "Come in peace"; the other exclaims, "They shall rest on their beds," while the third exclaims, "He who walks in his uprightness," (*Ketubot* 104a, citing three phrases in *Isaiah* 57:2). Parallel to these three, women were given three good deeds to do so that in the merit of these good deeds, the three companies of angels should go out to greet them as well, and women should not lose out on anything.

Let us return to the passage we cited (from *Berachot*) in the beginning of this essay: When R. Yohanan bared his arm, light radiated from it. Why did R. Yohanan's face not radiate light, for certainly his face was able to do so?

The explanation is as follows: "He saw R. Elazar lying in a dark room" means that he was going to a house of darkness and the shadow of death; "he revealed his arm" means he prayed for him with all his might by the arm of his strength (*Isaiah* 62:8); and he brought him from death to life, which is the meaning of "light radiated."

R. Yohanan then said to R. Elazar, "Are your sufferings welcome to you?" and he replied, "Neither they nor their reward." Why would his sufferings be welcome? The truth is that our eyes see only the bitter sufferings, but do not see that the purpose and end result of the sufferings are for the good. R. Yohanan therefore asked him if his sufferings were welcome, i.e., because they enabled him to expect ultimate good, and R. Elazar responded, "Neither they nor their reward."

This is similar to that which I saw in the newly printed sefer, שיח יצחק. He brings the Gemara (*Berachot* 17a):

When R. Yohanan finished the *Book of Job*, he used to say the following: The end of man is to die, and the end of a beast is to be slaughtered, and all are doomed to die.

Rabbi Sar-Shalom Hedaya (may Hashem protect him) explains this passage in a beautiful way; I will copy it here in order to fulfill our Sages directive to quote one's sources. What is the intent of, "When he finished the Book of Job," etc.? What is the connection between the two? (He raises a number of other points as well.) And these are his words:

The point of this holy passage that R. Yohanan came to teach us is that upon finishing the *Book of Job*, one finds that Iyov's end was much better than his beginning. Iyov suffered the loss of all his property and his children and all that he had, and suffered terrible bodily afflictions as well. But all this was for his benefit, in order to give him good at the end. From Iyov we can learn that all losses in life are for the ultimate good, and for the benefit of man and of every living creature.

This is also evident to the eye, for the rule of nature that Hashem built into creation is that end of man is to die and the end of a beast is to be slaughtered. What is the difference between man and beast? Why is a beast slaughtered (for food) instead of just dying? R. Yohanan is informing us that the losses that the animal experiences are in fact for ultimate purpose, both for itself and for others. For itself because

while alive, it was in the category of "Living," but not of "Speaking" [because it was not human]; it then is slaughtered and is raised to the higher level of "Speaking" [by being eaten and becoming part of a human being]. Similarly, a person's losses are for ultimate good, in order that he should be able to reach a higher level in death than he was able while alive in this world, for then he will reach eternal life in the World to Come, where there is no more loss.

And this is the esoteric meaning behind the saying, "*Saddikim* are called alive even when dead, because their souls are still alive and remain alive eternally." When they were still alive, their lives were only temporary lives, which is not true life; one cannot apply to them the term *life* since they were going to die eventually. All people and animals are therefore considered as dead, because they will eventually pass away, according to the law that G-d has engraved for all created beings. But their losses are all for ultimate benefit. (Up till here are his words.)

Accordingly, this is why R. Yohanan asked R. Elazar, "Are your sufferings welcome to you?" For it is possible for the end result of sufferings to be like the case of Iyov, whose end was more blessed than his beginning; similarly the end result of R. Elazar's sufferings could well be peace and tranquility, wealth and honor. But R. Elazar responded, "Not them and not their reward."

I return to my earlier topic. In the introduction to this piece, I cited the verse, "You shall therefore keep this ordinance from days to days" (*Exodus* 13:10). My intention

was to allude to our Sages' advice, "Return one day before you die." The obvious question is that no one knows how long he will live. And the answer is that is correct; a person should return (make *teshubah*) today because he may die tomorrow; and the result will be that person will return every day of his life. It was said about the Talmudic sage Rav that he never looked beyond his four cubits, meaning he never looked beyond the four cubits he would have in the grave; every day, every hour, every minute, every second he contemplated his death. "You shall therefore keep this ordinance in its season" (*Exodus* 13:10) is a hint to this unalterable fact, for G-d has decreed that every creature has its time. [A man works hard, as it says] "Has not a man a hard service upon earth?" (*Job* 7:1), but [when his time comes to die] it says, "None can save from My hand" (*Deuteronomy* 32:39).

The end of the verse (in *Exodus*), "from days to days," alludes to how our Sages expounded the verse, "the day of death [is better than] the day of one's birth" (*Ecclesiastes* 7:1), where the expression "the day of death" is juxtaposed in the verse to the expression "the day of one's birth," to teach that from the moment of birth, one is close to the day of death. "From days" means every day from the day one is born; "to days" means that one should always think of the appointed day one will die and never turn one's attention away from it. Thus he will spend every day making *teshubah*, for no person knows his appointed time, and no man has authority over the day of death (*Ecclesiastes* 8:8). Today one is here

and tomorrow one is in the grave, for in a brief moment, suddenly desolation and destruction can come.

[This is alluded to in various verses such as] "Will you set your eyes on it? It is already gone" (*Proverbs* 23:5) [and] "He is gone for Hashem has taken him" (*Genesis* 5:24). Like this happy woman, against whom a crime was committed by Death, for in an instant the robber came upon her, and before she could give birth safely, cruel Death expressed his anger at her and did not have pity on her youth and on her best years; cruel Death did not allow her to nurse her young; cruel Death did not leave her to rejoice in her progeny. Woe, woe! We awaited and expected to rejoice in her childbirth with joy and song; instead we have come now to cry, to lament, and to eulogize her with a very bitter heart, with lamentations and bitter weeping. May it be the Divine will that Hashem should turn this sadness to gladness and rejoicing, and, with pleasant voices, we will joyfully sing a great song of praise to Him.

[In the introduction to this piece] I cited the verse, "You shall therefore keep this ordinance in its season from days to days" (*Exodus* 13:10) a second time. My intent thereby was to allude to what the Gemara says in *Masechet Niddah* (30b):

R. Simlai delivered the following discourse: What does an embryo resemble when it is in the bowels of its mother? It eats what its mother eats and drinks what its mother drinks. A light burns above its head and it looks and sees from one end of the world to the other. It is also taught all the Torah

from beginning to end. As soon as it comes into the world an angel approaches, slaps it on its mouth, and causes it to forget all the Torah completely. It does not emerge from there before it is made to take an oath, "Be righteous, and be never wicked; and even if all the world tells you, 'You are righteous,' consider yourself wicked. Always bear in mind that the Holy One, blessed be He, is pure and that the soul which He gave you is pure; if you preserve it in purity, well and good, but if not, I will take it away from you." This may be compared to the case of a priest who handled over some *terumah* to an ignoramus and told him, "If you preserve it under conditions of cleanness, well and good, but if not, I will burn it in your presence."

This passage is what I was hinting at by citing, "You shall therefore keep this ordinance," which is a reference to the Torah which you learned; "from days to days" refers to the days between conception and birth. Alternatively, "this ordinance" refers to the oath that the Torah must be preserved in purity; "in its season" alludes to the requirement that the soul should leave the world in the same state of purity it was in when it entered the world, just as you accepted the Torah in purity from days to days, i.e., while in your mother's womb.

[The concluding verse cited in the introduction is also a metaphor:] "And it shall be when the Lord shall bring you into the land," is an allusion to the holy land on high (i.e., heaven); "as He swore to you and to your fathers" [alludes to the oath G-d makes the embryo swear that it should leave

the world] in purity; [if that oath is fulfilled] the verse then says, "and He shall give it to you," alluding to the fact that G-d will return your soul to you at the time of Resurrection, and then you will merit to behold the beauty of the Lord. As the verse says, "and with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and she who labors with child together" (*Jeremiah* 31:7), which teaches that when they arise at the time of Resurrection, they will arise as they died, i.e., with the same infirmities, and after they arise [they will be healed, as it says], "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped" (*Isaiah* 31:5) in Eden, Amen.

[Kabbalah]

The verse, "You shall therefore keep this ordinance, from days to days" (*Exodus* 13:10) also tells us to expectantly await the salvation of Hashem, "this ordinance" referring to the time of our Redemption, that End which is hidden from all living creatures. It is an ordinance before Him, Who alone knows the secret things, as Hashem said, "I have revealed it [only] to My heart" (*Sanhedrin* 99a). "From days to days" means that every day one should look forward to the true time of our Redemption.

[Kabbalah]

He shall fix the world under the rule of G-d, and He shall gather the dispersed of Judah from the

four corners of the earth. "And those shall come who were lost in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem" (*Isaiah* 27:13), and "We shall no longer say, 'Our G-d' to the works of our hands" (*Hosea* 14:4). Rather [than worshipping idols] "You shall set apart to the Lord all that opens the womb, the males shall be the Lord's" (*Exodus* 13:12), referring to the holy nation of Israel who are called the first of the womb, as it says, "My son, My firstborn, Israel" (*Exodus* 4:22). [The continuation of *Exodus* 13:12,] "and every firstling that comes of a beast," refers to the other nations whom Hashem has allotted to the world. [The conclusion of the verse,] "the males shall be the Lord's" teaches that all shall come together to worship before Hashem. Alternatively: "The males (זכרים) shall be the Lord's" means that all shall mention (זוכרים) Hashem's Explicit Name, as is written, "And Hashem will be King over all the earth, Hashem will be One, He will be complete, and His throne will be complete." May Hashem be blessed forever, Amen.



CHAPTER TWENTY TWO

The Eulogy

מנחת יהודה דרוש ד

הספד ודרוש שאמר בקהל מע׳ הר׳ המו׳ והכבוד ה׳ מלא המקובל האלהי כקש״ת כמהר״ר יאודא דויך הכהן יצ״ו לפטירת הגברת הצעירה מרת נפש שבעוה״ר נלב״ע בהקשותה בלדתה מרת שפיקא תמ״א נ״ע תנצב״ה. אשת הנדיב גזע אצילים אחד מיחידי סגולה רב המעלה מחזיק בכל מפעל טוב המשנו״ח כה״ר הלל מאיר מנשה סתיהון יצ״ו ה׳ ינחמהו וישמחהו ולא יוסיף עוד לדאבה וביתו ימלא ברכת ה׳ ויגיל בבנים ובני בנים ברוב עושר ושלוה וכבוד ויקר אמן.

ושמרת את החקה הזאת למועדה מימים
ימימה ושמרת וכו׳ והיה כי יביאך וכו׳

גרסינן בפ״ק דברכות דף ה׳ רבי אלעזר חלש על לגביה רבי יוחנן חזא דקא גני בבית אפל גלייה לדרועיה ונפל נהורא חזייה דקא בכי א״ל אמאי קא בכית אי משום תורה דלא אפשת שנינו אחד המרבה ואחד הממעיט ובלבד שיכוין לבו לשמים, ואי משום מזוני לא כל אדם זוכה לשתי שלחנות ואי משום בני, דין גרמא דעשיראה ביר, א״ל להאי שופרא דבלי בעפרא קא בכינא, א״ל על דא ודאי קא בכית ובכו תרוויהו, אדהכי והכי א״ל חביבין עליך יסורין א״ל לא הן ולא שכרן יהב ליה ידיה ואוקמיה ע״כ.

מה נורא ואיום היום ההוא, יום חשך ענן וערפל, דא עקא צוקה ומצוקה אף ועברה צרה כמבכירה, על כי היתה לאין חבת העין, כלילת יופי שאין בה שום דופי, נשים שאננות קומנה ותשאנה קולן ותבכנה, שמענה קולי האזינה אמרתי, ספדו והלילו קול ברמה השמיעו, על האי שופרא דבלי בעפרא, על אלה אני בוכיה תאנייה ואנייה ועפעפינו יזלו מים נהי בכי תמרורים כמים הנגרים.

מה מאד צר לי עליך הילל בן שחר על זאת אספדה אלילה מעי מעי אוחילה על לא טובה והשמועה המדכאת המעצבת המדאבת אנחה שוברת אמריה ממררת, קול מבשר מבשר ואומרת על שמועות רעות אומרים ברוך דיין האמת, ראיתי את דמעתיך שמעתי את דבריך, קול אומר קרא ואמר מה אקרא, קול מדבר ואומר כי בבואי הלום ראיתי אין שלום ונחלמה חלום, כי על מה זה אוהבי ורעי, אדונתי אמי אחי וקרובי מרחוק עמדו, וכלם יחד נאלמו ולא אחד מהם פתח פיו לטובה על כן דחלתי, ובקול מר צעקתי יחידתי רעיתי באתי להתבשר מטוב שלומיך ולא להתבשר במיתתיך, ולא ידעתי כי בא עת פקודתיך, היפה בנשים כלה יפפיה ברה כחמה מה איומה פקידתיך מה איומה גויעתיך מה איומה פרידתיך, ברגע קטון עזבתיך בקשתיך ואל מצאתיך, יונתי תמתי העדינה איך לא מצאו ליך חנינה, הצרי אין בגלעד אם רופא אין שם מדוע לא עלתה ארוכתיך ואין מזור לשבריך נחלה מכתיך, לכן שעו מני אעורר בבכי פתחו צערים.

מה אענה ומה אומר בלב נשבר ולבי חמרמר נפשי לך יהמה ולשוני לך תדמה, מי כאן הלל ידידי אשר כנפשי, אש תוקד בקרבי אדברה במר רוחי, למי אבכה הזה או זה על העדר נו״ב הראשונה שאפילו מזבח מוריד דמעות, או על פקידת שני בניך הנולדים לך אשר לא ראו אור נפל אשת בל חזו שמש, או על אבל כבד זה האחרון, במה אנחמך מה אשוה לך, השמחות נהפכו לאנחות, הגילה והרינה לאבל יגון ואנינה, אהה מות אכזרי איך לא חמלת טבחת גדעת קטפת, ואיך לא חסת על ימי נעוריה מבחר עלומיה, נהפכו עליה צירים וחבלים חבלי יולדה, מה חרי האף הגדול הזה, מאגרא רמה לבירא עמיקתא מראש עליות לבור תחתיות מרום למחשכים במצולות מקום חושך וצלמות ולא סדרים.

מה נעים נאוה תהילה אם באתי לדבר איני יודע לספר, ובאמת יהגה חכי כי אין בלשוני מלה, לכן טוב לקצר ואמרים מקצת שבחו, וידעתי עדים נאמנים טובים, השנים שהיא צנועה במעשהיה כל כבודה בת מלך פנימה, וגם שהולכת צדקית ומקמצת מפרנסתה וממעשה ידיה ונותנת לעני ולאביון, ועליה יצדק כפה פרשה לעני וידיה שלחה לאביון אשה יראת ה׳ היא תתהלל, מנשים צדקנות וחסדניות מרת **שפיקא** לבית **סתיהון נ״ע תנצב״ה בעדן גן אלקים באוהל ישרים.**

תערוך תפלה אל מול נורא עלילה בעד הק״ק הזה שעשו לה כראוי וכנמוס, ובעד אביה ואמה וקרוביה כל הקרב הקרב, ובעד בעלה הגבר הוקם על איש חיל ירא אלקים קדוש מבטן זרע קדושים גזע ישישים מן הרמתיים, גומל חסדים טובים זוכה ומזכה טוב ומטיב לכל שואל, ראש לחברת ״כתר תורה״ ת״ל. משתדל בכל עוז ותעצומות, לילה כיום יעיר כחשיכה כאורה, אב ליתומים לעניים האומללים, בחצות לילה יעיר משנתו יקום ממטתו להמציא רפאים ליולדות ולהחיות לב נדכאים, נושא בעול צבור בעין טובה ורוח נדיבה, תומך יד עני ואביון באון והון, המשנו״ח כה״ר **הלל סתיהון** יצ״ו הוא ואחיו ידידי הנעימים הקרובים והרחוקים יחד כולם שנים יאריכו חיים יוסיפו להם, לא ישמע עוד שוד ושבר בגבולם ירבו כמותם בישראל זרע ישרים.

מה אני ומה חיי כי קרבתי הלום, לאחים בהספדה ולעורר בכי וקינים בפני ראשי אלפי ישראל אראלים ותרשישים כולם קדושים עלי מתלחשים, כי לא איש דברים אנכי גם מתמול גם משלשום ומימי לא נסיתי באלה ושתיקה יפה, ובפרט כי כבר נספדה כדין וכהלכה ע״י מעלת מור ניהו רבה שכיות החמדה אבי התעודה אביר שבאבירים מי לנו גדול ״ממשה״. א״כ אפוא איך נפשי אשא אנה אני בא יאודה ועד לטורח ולמשא, אבל באמת אגיד כי לא יכולתי להתאפק מצד רבוי גודל האהבהת והאחוה, צר לי עליך ידידי חביבי אשר כנפשי, במקום אשר מצפה לשוש ולשמוח ולגיל בשמחה ובשירים עתה באתי לקונן מספד מר בכי תמרורים, והלוואי שלא נעשת אחי, וכמו שפירש בס׳ יד יוסף על פסוק צר לי עליך אחי יהונתן וז״ל הריני מתחרט ומיצר על האחוה, כי מי יתן והיה שלא נעשת אח לי ולא אצטער עליך, זהו שאמר אחי יהונתן ולא אמר יהונתן אחי כי צרתי זאת אעקרא דמלתא, וגם על האחוה שנעשת ביני לבינך ונעמת אתה לי מאד עכ״ל. על זה גדל הכאב לי מאוד, ונפלאת אהבתך לי מאהבת נשים, הני תרתי נשי דסתרן דמטמרן במחלות עפר על ראשם, על זה אני אומר מי יתן ראשי מים ועיני מקור דמעה ואבכה יומם ולילה את חללי בת עמי תרי במשמע, ועוד בה כי אין האיש בביתו כי כעת באה השמועה עתה מתה עתה נקצפה עתה נקטפה ונתעורר עליו מיתת שני בניה כי לא זכתה להניק את בנה והנה מת ולא זכתה לשמוח במילתו ולא בפדיונו, והנה עתה נהפכו עליה צירייה, זה היום אשר קוינוהו להיות נגילה ונשמחה בו, צרות רבות סבבונו פתאום בא המות פתאום בא השבר, היום כאן והיא לקברות הובלה במערות עם שוכני עפר, ונעלמה מעיני כל חי, לכן חובתי היא ואעשנה להיות קטן קופץ בראש לנוד לו ולנחמו, יהי רצון שלא יוסיף לדאבה עוד ואל ישמע עוד שוד ושבר בגבולו וידיהו ירים אמן כי״ר.

גרסינן במסכת ברכות דף י״ז ע״א א״ל רבל רבי חייא נשים במאי זכיין, א״ל באקרויי בניהו לבי כנשתא ובאתנויי גבריהו בי רבנן ונטרן לגברייהו עד דאתו מבי רבנן ע״כ. והקשו על זה דמאי קשיא ליה נשים במאי זכיין, דלמה יגרע חלקם ולמה לא יספיק מעשיהם

הטובים וצדקותיהם וזכיותיהם, ובמקום אחר מצינו דהאשה זכותה גדול יותר מן האיש, וכמו שמצינו באשתו של אבא חלקיה דקדים ואתי עננא מצד אשתו ולא מצד אבא חלקיה, ואמר ליה הטעם דהא מקרבא הנאתה קודם מן האיש, יען דהאשה נותנת פת לעני והאיש נותן מעות, ואפשר לפרש על לפי מה שידעו דכל אחד ע״י כל מצוה ומצוה שהוא עושה מתקן חלוקא דרבנן נגד רמ״ח מצות עשה ושס״ה מצות לא תעשה והם כנגד רמ״ח אברים ושס״ה גידים כל מצוה מתקן חלוקא נגד אבר. עוד ידוע שלכל צדיק וצדיק יש לו ש״י עולמות שנאמר להנחיל אוהבי יש ואוצרותיהם אמלא. ופירש ז״ל דתרי״ג מצות דאורייתא וז׳ דרבנן הרי תר״ך כמנין כת״ר וחלקו וחלק אשתו הרי לכל אחד ש״י. וזהו דקאמר להנחיל אוהבי י״ש כלומר ש״י והש״י האחרים ואוצרותיהם אמלא שהוא נותנם לאשתו איש ואשתו שזכו כל אחד ואחד ש״י והיינו דקאמר ואוצרותיהם אמלא, ולפי זה היינו דקא מקשה הני נשי במאי קא זכיין בהאי חלוקא דרבנן בעולם התחיה עולם הנשמות, כיון שאין מחוייבין בכל המצות ציצית ותפלין ושאר מצות עשה שהזמן גרמה מאין להם להשלים חלוקא שלהם לכל אבר ואבר מצוה השייך לה, ועל זה תריץ יתיב דשפיר זכו, באקרויי בניהו ובאתנויי גברייהו ומנטרן לגברייהו עד דאתו מבי רבנן, ואם כן שפיר זכו בחלקם ואכלי מדידהו חלק כחלק יאכלו ובדינא קא זכו ולא מתורת חסד, ש״י לאיש וש״י לאשתו והא דקאמר ונטרן לגברייהו לרמוז שהן ישובות ומצפות על דא ענייא זו לשוא שמורה, כלומר שהיא שומרת ואינה יצאנית בביתה לא ישכנו רגליה פעם בחוץ פעם ברחובות הומיה היא וסררת כאחת הנבלות וכנשים הפרוצות, אלא כנשים הצנועות בודאי יכולה היא שתגן, והני נשי כמו שעושים נחת רוח לבעליהם והם גורמין לבעליהם שיהיו תמיד על התורה ועל העבודה להיות זוכים ומזכים להיות חלקם עם עמלי תורה אלו הוו בודאי מדידהו קא זכו.

ולפי זה יבואר הכתוב אשתך כגפן פוריה בירכתי ביתך בניך כשתילי זתים סביב לשחלנך הנה כי כן יבורך גבר ירא ה׳. ולכאורה קשה הבנת הכתוב אשתך כגפן פוריה בירכתי ביתך ולמה לא קאמר בביתך

ומהו בירכתי ביתך ומהו כי כן יבורך גבר ומה היא הכונה שהמשיל האשה לגפן והבנים לשתילי זתים, אלא הכונה בזה שהמשיל האשה לגפן כידוע שהקב״ה המשיל את ישראל לגפן שאינו מקבל הרכבה ממין אחר, ולזה קאמר אם תהיה אשתך כגפן פוריה שאינה מקבלת שום הרכבה ממין אחר שהיא צנועה וכמו שפירש הרד״ק ז״ל שכינה האשה לגפן שהיו דרכם לנטוע הגפן בבית ולהוציא נטיעותיו לחוץ, דהיינו גם שהיא בירכתי הבית תהיה צנועה שאפילו בפתח הבית לא תצא ובשכר זאת יהיו בניך כשתילי זתים כעץ שתול על מים ועלהו לא יבול, ויהיו תמיד סביב לשלחניך הנה כי כן יבורך גבר בבנים ובני בנים ברכת הבית ברוב.

או יאמר הנה כי כן יבורך גבר על פי מאי דאיתא במסכת תענית רב נחמן ורב יצחק הוו יתבי בסעודתא כי הוו מפטרי מהדדאי א״ל לברכן מר א״ל אמשול לך משל למה הדבר דומה לאחר שהיה מהלך במדבר והיה עייף ורעב וצמא מצא אילן נאה ואמת המים עוברת תחתיו ופירותיו מתוקים ישב בצלו ואכל מפריו ושתה ממימיו, כשקם לילך א״ל אילן אילן במה אברכך אם פירותיך יהיו מתוקים הרי פירותיך מתוקים ואם יהיה צלך נאה הרי צלך נאה ואם אמת המים תהיה עוברת תחתיך הרי אמת המים עוברת מתחתיך, אלא יה״ר שיהיו כל נטיעות שיהיו נטועים ממך יהיו כמותך, אף אתה במה אברכך אם בכבוד הרי לך כבוד אם בעושר הרי לך עושר אלא יה״ר שיהיו צאצאי מעיך כמותך.

ולזה בא הרמז אשרי כל ירא ה׳ ההולך בדרכיו דהיינו חכמה דאם אין חכמה אין יראה יגיע כפיך כי תאכל הרי עושר שנהנה מיגיע כפו ואינו צריך לבריות שהיא עשיר השמח בחלקו, על דרך שאמר התנא איזהו עשיר השמח בחלקו, ולכאורה יפלא מאי איזהו עשיר קאמר, כל מי שיש לו נכסים רבים הון ועושר זהו עשיר, אלא דבאמת לאו כל אפיא שוין דאדרבה יש עושר שמור לבעליו לרעתו דמי שאינו נהנה ומהנה מנכסיו לאחרים, וכמ״ש בזוהר דיש רעה חולה שהיא שולטת על האדם ואינה מניחתו שאפילו איהו גופיה אין לו שליטה שיהנה מנכסיו, ולאיש רע עין כזה בודאי שלא יועיל לו ההון והעושר, וסוף סוף אבד העושר

ההוא וע״ז קאמר איזהו עשיר השמח בחלקו, ולאיש כזה ודאי נהנה מיגיעו בעה״ז ובבא. כי מי שהוא שמח בחלקו לא כמו מי שיש מנה מבקש מנה, ויחסר לו מנה יש לו מאתים מבקש מאתים ואם יש לו אלף אלפים דינרי זהב עוד יחסר לו יותר ויותר ויהיה עני ביותר.

ואפשר לפרש עוד שעל זה קאמר רבי היה מכבד את העשירים השמחים בחלקם כמוהו להיות טוב ומטיב לטובים, ועל זה נאמר יגיע כפיך כי תאכל ולא יהי צר עין שאפילו איהו גופיה לא יהנה מממונו וכ״ש לאחרים אלא אוכל ומאכיל ע״ז נאמר אשריך וטוב לך, ואפשר שעל זה כיון יעקב אבינו ע״ה ונתן לי לחם לאכל ובגד ללבוש בעין יפה ועין טובה, ולא תשלוט עלי ההיא רעה חולה ולא אוכל להיות נהנה מיגיע כפי, ולאיש אשר אלה לו בודאי שעליו נאמר אשריך וטוב, אשריך בעוה״ז וטוב לך לעוה״ב אשתך שהיא כגפן פוריה שאינה מקבלת הרכבה מאיש אחר, אלא אדרבה היא בירכתי ביתך והוא שאפילו לפתח הבית אינה יוצאת והיא יושבת בבית צנועה ובניך וכשתילי זיתים סביב, בודאי לאיש כזה נאמר לו כי כן יבורך גבר, כלומר כמו כן שיהיו צאצאי מעיו כמוהו.

או יאמר הנה כי כן יבורך גבר ירא ה׳ על פי מה שידוע שהיו מתים בכל יום מאה נפשות, עמד דוד הע״ה ותקן להם לישראל שיהו מברכין בכל יום מאה ברכות ולא היו מתים, ואסמכוה אקרא הוקם על ע״ל בגי׳ מאה. וזהו אומרו אשתך כגפן פוריה ובניך כשתילי זיתים שהם חיים וקיימים, על ידי שהנה כ״י כ״ן בגימטריא מאה יבורך גבר אל תקרי יבורך אלא יברך.

נחזור לענייננו שהנשים הצדקניות והחסדניות הן העוזרות והמסיעות לבעליהן, ובשביל כך לא יגרע חלקם ויזכו בכל מעשיהם הטובים וצדקותם ויושר לבבם כאשה כבעלה, עוד יש להבין למה נקט הני תלתא באקרויי בנייהו לבי כנשתא ובאתנויי גברייהו ומנטרן להו עד דאתו וכו׳, למה לא תסגי בחד מנייהו.

והנראה לומר כי ידוע שבשעת פטירת הצדיק לשלש כתות יוצאות לקראתו, אחת אומרת לו יבוא שלום ואחת אומרת לו ינוחו על משכבותם ואחת אומרת לו הולך נכוחו, ולעומת זה מצא להם להני נשי תלתא עובדין טבין, וכנגד זה ג״כ יוצאין לעומתם שלש כתות של מלאכי השרת ולא יגרע חלקם כלל, ובזכות הני שלשה זכיות הני נשי זוכות לשלש כתות מה״ש.

נחזור למאמר הנצב פתח השער כי רבי יוחנן גלייה לדרועיה נפל נהורא בביתא ולמה לא האיר הארת פניו ובודאי הארת פניו של ר״י יכולה היא שתאיר, ופי׳ דר״י חזייה לרבי אלעזר קא גני בבית אפל כלומר שלא יקום מחליו והוא הולך לבית אפל חושך וצלמות, גלייה לדרועיה כלומר שהתפלל עליו בזרוע עזו ועוצם גבורתו והצילו ממות לחיים היינו דנפל נהורא. א״ל חביבין עליך יסורין א״ל לא הן ולא שכרן, כדי להבין כוונת שאלתו כי למה יהיו היסורין חביבין ומה היא חבתן, אך באמת ידוע כי בעינינו הרואות היסורין קשים ומרים אבל תכליתם ואחריתם לטוב הן משום הכי אמר ליה חביבין עליך יסורין להיותו מקוה לתכלית הטובה א״ל אל הן ולא שכרן.

כמו שראיתי בס׳ שיח יצחק הנדפס מחדש היבא האי מאמר מאי דאתמר במסכת ברכות רבי יוחנן כי הוה מסיים ספרא דאיוב סוף אדם למות וסוף בהמה לשחיטה והכל מיתה הן עומדין.

ופירש מאמר זה מע׳ הרב שר שלום הדאיה יצ״ו בדרך נאה ויפה ואעתיקו כדי לומר דבר בשם אומרו, כי מה היא הכוונה כי הוה מסיים ספרא דאיוב מה שייך קשר זה בזה ועוד העיר איזה הערות וז״ל, והוא כי תכלית המאמר הקדוש הזה בא להודיענו ר״י כי הוה מסיים ספרא דאיוב אשר מצאנו בו דהטיב אחרית איוב מראשיתו אחרי שסבל העדר והפסד כל רכושו וקנינו ובניו וכל מה שהיה לו וגם שלט ההפסד גם בגופו עד דכדוכה של נפש, וכל זה היה לתועלתו כדי להטיב אחריתו מראשיתו, ממנו נלמוד כי ההפסד וההעדר הוא לתכלית הטוב ולתועלת האדם ולכל נברא, וגם זאת נראה לעין כל כי חק וטבע אשר חקק אלהים

בעת הבריאה כי סוף האדם למות וסוף הבהמה לשחיטה, ומדוע הבדיל השי״ת בין האדם לבהמה, אשר סוף הבהמה לשחיטה ולא למיתה, כי אם להודיע כי כאשר גמר אומר סוף בהמה לשחיטה. אמר ההפסד וההעדר שלה לתכלית התועלת לה ולזולתה, לה כאשר היתה בבחינת חי בלתי מדבר, ועלתה ונכנסה בבחינת חי מדבר מעולה ממה שהיתה, כן האדם הפסדו והעדרו הוא לתכלית הטוב, אשר ישיג כדי לעלות במעלה יותר ממה שהיה עודנו חי בעוה״ז, כי אז ישיג להחיות חיי העוה״ב חיים הנצחיים אשר אין אחריו הפסד והעדר, וז״ס צדיקים במיתתן קרויים חיים, חיי הנפש חיים נצחיים וקיימים לעד לעולם, אבל כאשר הם היו חיים בעוה״ז החיים שלהם אינם קוריים חיים אמתיים כי אם חיי שעה, ואין לייחס להם תואר החיים כיון דלמיתה הן עומדין, מאדם עד בהמה גם הם נחשבין למתים, כי סוף סוף נעדרים כפי חק אשר חקק אלקים בכל מיני הברואים, אבל הפסדם והעדרם הוא לתכלית לתועלת הטוב עכ״ל. ואם כן לזה א״ל חביבין עליך יסורין כי אפשר אחרית היסורין כמו איוב שבירך אותו אחריתו מראשיתו גם אחרית היסורין השקט ושלוה ועושר גם כבוד, ואמר ליה לא הן ולא שכרן.

הדרי בי לנשאי מקדם ושמרת את החקה וכו׳ כוונתי לרמוז עפ״י מה שאמרו רז״ל שוב יום אחד לפי מיתתך ומי ידע כמה חיי, ומשני אין הכי נמי ישוב היום שמא ימות למחר ונמצא כל ימיו בתשובה. ואמרו על רב שמימיו לא נסתכל חוץ לארבע אמותיו, כלומר שלא נסתכל חוץ לארבע אמותיו שיש לו בקבר אלא בכל יום ויום ובכל עת ובכל שעה ובכל רגע תמיד המות לא יזוז מנגד עיניו, וזהו ושמרת את החקה הזאת למועדה כוונתו לרמוז החקה הזאת זה חוק ולא יעבור כתיב חקה חקק גזרה גזר אשר הוא מועד לכל הלא צבא לאנוש עלי ארץ ואין מידי מציל כתיב, מימים ימימה לרמוז ע״ד מה שפרשו ז״ל ויום המות מיום הולדו משעת הלידה קרוב הוא ליום המות כלומר מימים בכל יום ויום מימים ראשונים מיום הולדו. ימימה תמיד יהיה שומר המועד לנגד עיניו לא יסיח דעתו ממנה ולא יזוז מנגד עיניו ואז יהיו כל ימיו בתשובה כי לא ידע האדם את מועדו ואין שלטון ביום המות היום כאן ומחר בקבר,

אשר ברגע קטן פתאום יבוא השוד והשבר התעיף עיניך בו ואיננו כי לקח אותו אלהים כמו המאושרת הזאת, כי כפשע בינה ובין המות בפתע פתאום בא השודד עליה כי בטרם יבא חבל לה והמליטה, המות האכזרי קצף עליה, ולא חמל על ימי נעוריה ועל מבחר שנותיה, המות האכזרי לא עזבה להניק את גוריה, המות האכזרי לא עזבה לשמח בצאיצאי מעיה, אהה אהה במקום שהיינו מצפים ומחכים לשמח ולגיל ולשוש ולהתענג בשמחתה ובלדתה בשמחה ובשירים, עתה באנו לבכות ולקונן בימי אבלה ואנחתה ולעשות לה מספד מר בלב חמרמר נהי וקינים בכי תמרורים, יהי רצון שיהפוך אותו ה׳ לששון ולשמחה ונאמר לפניו הלל הגדול בקול נעים בשמחה ובשירים.

חזרתי ואמרתי את החקה הזאת למועדה מימים ימימה, כונתי לרמוז עפ״י מאי דאיתא במסכת נדה בפרק המפלת למה הולד דומה במעי אמו אוכל ממה שאמו אוכלת ושותה ממה שאמו שותה ונר דלוק על ראשו וצופה ומביט מסוף העולם ועד סופו ומלמדין אותו כל התורה כולה וכיון שבא לאויר העולם בא מלאך וסטרו על פיו ומשכחו כל התורה כולה, ואינו יוצא משם עד שמשביעין אותו תהי צדיק ואל תהי רשע, ואפילו כל העולם אומרין לך צדיק אתה היה בעיניך כרשע, והוי יודע שהקב״ה טהור ונשמה שנתן לך טהורה היא אם אתה משמרה בטהרה מוטב ואם לאו הריני נוטלה, משל לכהן שמסר תרומה לע״ה א״ל אם אתה משמרה בטהרה מוטב ואם לאו הריני נוטלה ממך ושורפה לפניך. וזהו שרמזתי ושמרת את החקה הזאת היא התורה שלמדת, מימים ימימה מעת העבור מבטן ומהריון, או יאמר החקה הזאת שתשמרנה בטהרה למועדה שתהיה יציאה כביאה כמו שקבלת אותה בטהרה מימים ימימה. והיה כי יביאך ה׳ אל ארץ הקדו׳ ארץ העליו׳ תהיה בטהרה כאמר נשבע לך ולאבותיך ואז ונתנה לך שיחיזר לך נשמה עת התחי׳ ואז תזכה לחזות וגו׳, וכמ״ש בם עָוֵּר ופסח הרה ויולד׳ יחדו היינו כשקם בתח״ה קם כמו ששכב ואח״כ אז ידלג כאיל פסח ותרון לשון אלם בעג׳ אמן.

חזרתי ואמרתי ושמרת את החקה הזאת למועדה כו׳ לרמוז עפ״י מ״ש הרב בספר ע״ח ע״פ ולא אבא בעיר שנשבע הקב״ה שלא יכנס

בירושלים של מעלה היינו זווג דנקודות חכמה עם חכמה עד שיכנס בירושלים של מטה, וכתב בש' הזזוג פ"א שיש זווג שלים וזווג דלא שלים כי זווג דג"ר הוא זווג שלים ואו"א זווג דפנימיו' או"א עלאין להוליד נשמות חדשות בעולם והוא נפסק בעו"ה מעת החרבן שנשבע הקב"ה ולא אבא בעיר שלא יכנס בירושלים של מטה עד וכו' שהוא זווג ג"ר דג"ר דאו"א. ועוד כתב בש"ה דרושי ק"ש ובס' ע"ח שער כ"ד בשער מוחין דצלם כשהזווג הוא לחיות העולמות אין צריך להקדים לו זווג עליון ממנו אבל כשהזווג הוא להוליד צריך בתחלה לזווג עליון ושימשך כח לפרצוף התחתון כדי שיוכל להזדווג וכן מפרצוף לפרצוף עד רום המעלות. גם ידוע כי כל פרצוף נקרא בן לפרצוף העליון, וזהו שרמזו ושמרת את החקה הזאת להיות יושב ומצפה לתשועת ה' החקה הזאת קץ גאולתינו ופדות נפשנו קץ הסתום ונעלם מעיני כל חי והוא חק לפניו יתברך דוקא יודע תעלומות וכמ"ש ללבי גליתי וכו', מימים ימימה בכל יום ויום יהיה צופה עת האמתי גאולתינו ופדות נפשנו, והיה כי יביאך ה' כשיהי' זווג עליון של הויה הכללים יו"ד בה"א וא"ו בה"א אל ארץ הכנעני היא ארץ העליונה מלכות עלאה כאשר נשבע לך היינו ג"ר דג"ר דזו"ן ולאבותיך ג"ר דג"ר דאו"א עלאין ונותנים מוחין עלאין ונשמות חדשות ונתנה לך ע"י זווג עליון יתקן עולם במלכות שדי ונפוצות יהודה מד' כנפות הארץ יקבץ והאובדים בארץ אשור והנדחים בארמ"ם והשתחוו לה' בהר הקודש בירושלים ולא יאמר עוד אלקנו למעשה ידינו אלא והעברת כל פטר רחם הזכרים היינו עם קדוש ישראל הזכרים שהם נקראים פטר רחם וכמ"ש בני בכורי ישראל וכל פטר שגר בהמה היינו שאר העמים אשר חלק ה' הזכרים לה' יבא כל בשר להשתחוות לפני ה' או יאמר הזכרים לה' שיהיו זוכרים בשם ה' המפורש ככתוב והיה ה' למלך על כל הארץ ה' אחד ה' שלם והכסא שלם בילאו"א.



EPILOGUE

Family Tributes

A Tribute to My Dear Sister Rachel Haber

On the evening of August 24, 1957, my El-Al flight from Tel Aviv, Israel, landed at Idlewild Airport (the present day JFK). The flight had been long, making stops in Athens, Rome, Paris, London, and Shannon. In the airport, I was greeted by my brother Mike, whom I had not seen since his departure from Israel in 1951. All it took was the taxi ride from the airport to shock me into reality; the streets of America were not paved in gold. The unattractive Brooklyn scenery was actually very disappointing to me.

As we pulled up to East Fourth Street, one thing did meet my expectations: my meeting with my dear sister Rachel. I had seen her once before during her trip to Israel, but I was again amazed by her warmth and beauty. Although I had left my country and family, Rachel made me feel at home just minutes after my arrival. Raymond, Rachel's husband, wasn't well at the time and was suffering from a recent stroke, but his sweet smile and charm still remain in my heart. We exchanged the recent family news, and I briefly recounted the details of my trip. Noticing how exhausted I was, Rachel directed me to my private bedroom upstairs. That night was one of the longest nights of my life; I lay awake crying from mixed emotions of sadness and joy.

I moved to my apartment, but Rachel's house was one of my frequent destinations. I ate many Friday-night dinners there and often dropped by just to say hello. Rachel always greeted me with a smile and entertained me with her charm, class, and charisma. Within a short while, I left to New Orleans to attend Tulane University, returning to New York in 1959. During that summer I met Paulette and we became engaged. Rachel was at my side, taking the place of a mother and helping me with all the engagement and wedding preparations. She led me from the meeting of the family all the way to the wedding, arranging every minute detail without my knowledge.

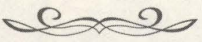
Soon after my wedding I discovered that Rachel was not well. She was admitted to Mount Sinai Hospital, and I left my store on many afternoons to visit her. She always



Rachel Haber ע"ה

appreciated spending time with me, but seeing her so sick pained me to no end. Within weeks, Rachel passed away. She had been like a mother to me. No words could describe my grief.

Rachel will always be in my heart along with the memories of her beauty, smile, wisdom, and especially her kindness and good heart. May G-d bless her soul and give a long life to all her children.



A Tribute to My Dear Uncles Joe and Jack Sutton

Uncle Joe (יוסף) and Uncle Jack (יעקב) were fine, soft-spoken, and well-mannered. They generously supported many good causes anonymously; they contributed with the sole goal of assisting the needy, and not in order to receive honor and respect. They had many connections with influential individuals and were friendly with congressmen, senators, and governors, such as Governor Long of Louisiana. These friendships were utilized to intercede on the behalf of others, including my family.

Ever since I was a little boy, I recall my father mentioning the names of Uncle Joe and Uncle Jack. They were his two youngest brothers, my father being the oldest, with two siblings between them. When Joe and Jack had matured into adulthood, my father had believed that it was the opportune time to send them to America, because soon they would become too entrenched in Syria. He had arranged for these

two single boys to board a ship to New York. Upon their arrival they had struggled, but with time they prospered, building families, establishing businesses, and living up to the Sutton name.

There was an ongoing exchange of letters between my father and his brothers, and my father always praised them highly during daily conversations for the help they gave us during our hard years in Israel. Although I didn't personally know my uncles then, and I hadn't seen any pictures of them, I had an image of them in my mind: rich and powerful tycoons.

After my father's passing, and once I completed my schooling in Israel, I wrote to Uncle Joe for assistance in getting a visa to the United States for the purpose of studying at a university there. The positive answer came quickly, along with the necessary affidavit of support. Soon I was on my way to America.

My first meeting with Uncle Joe was in New York, in his Broadway corner office on 26th street, boasting the name "J. M. Sutton & Sons." As I was about to enter the office, I was overcome with chills and shivers. I was actually going to meet my father's brother! And suddenly, there he was, facing me with a broad smile across his tanned face. I had pictured him big and tall, just like my father, but he was a medium-sized man. He was dressed like the president, sporting a diamond pin on his lapel. Now I understood why his nickname was "The Senator." We kissed and began talking, when he hurriedly interrupted me. "You are going

to New Orleans tomorrow," he stated authoritatively. I was shocked, but not fazed. I calmly explained to my uncle that I had already enrolled in New York University for the fall semester, but I would be happy to go to New Orleans at the year's end.

When I arrived in New Orleans, Uncle Joe rented a spacious apartment for me on Saint Charles Street. It was located in a very affluent area, conveniently near Tulane University, and only a ten-minute trip by street car to downtown Canal Street where "Sutton's Fairyland" store was. I would be working for my uncle in that store after school. Uncle Joe generously instructed me to shop for suits, ties and clothes and then send all the bills to him. I remember picking out my entire wardrobe at the Felix Brothers store. When I showed my uncle the bills from my shopping spree, he was quite surprised. "I don't even buy my own clothes at Felix," he explained. "They're really expensive." I had to return all my purchases the following day and compromise on shopping at the Holmes and Maison Blanche department stores.

The deal was that Uncle Joe would pay for my tuition in Tulane, rent my apartment, and provide me with an allowance of thirty-five dollars a week, in exchange for my work in his store after school hours. The driving force behind our deal was that my uncle needed a family inside person to eventually manage his stores. Such a position was attractive, and by working in the store I would gain the necessary business skills and training. The arrangement worked out

very nicely. The cost of living was cheap, and therefore I managed quite well.

Time passed quickly, and I was in good company. Becky Harary עיה, my cousin in New Orleans, kept on throwing me reminders that my future lay in New York, not in New Orleans. "Whom are you going to marry here?" she questioned, and chided me, "This place is not for you!" It took a while for her reasoning to register. When I graduated Tulane I informed my uncle that I would like to settle in New York. "Absolutely not!!!" was his firm answer. By that time in 1959, my brother Buddy was also in New Orleans studying at Tulane. I remember conspiring with him to buy tickets for the Eastern Airlines flight leaving at 5:35 P.M. to New York, without telling Uncle Joe. Once we were safely at the airport, we called our uncle and shared our plans with him. "Good luck," was his response. Although he would miss us, he understood that leaving New Orleans was the best thing for us. The clearest proof of the sensibility of the decision was when I called him two months later to tell him I was engaged and there would be a meeting of the family over the weekend. Not wanting to miss out, he flew to New York the next day to join me on my happy occasion.

My years in New Orleans gave me the opportunity for an excellent educational and business experience. At the age of twenty-one I was probably more qualified than most of my American-born peers. There is one encounter that I had with my uncle that's still stuck in my mind today. While in New Orleans, I didn't have a car and Uncle Joe's green Buick

parked in a garage around the corner from his store looked appealing. I had a brainstorm. Uncle Joe usually left the store at around four o'clock in the afternoon to attend the New Orleans athletic club around the corner, and then at around eight or nine o'clock he would drive to his apartment. I was confident that I had his schedule figured out to the millisecond, and when the store closed at six o'clock I would take my uncle's car from the parking lot and go for a spin. The guards at the parking lot knew me well, and they never gave me a problem.

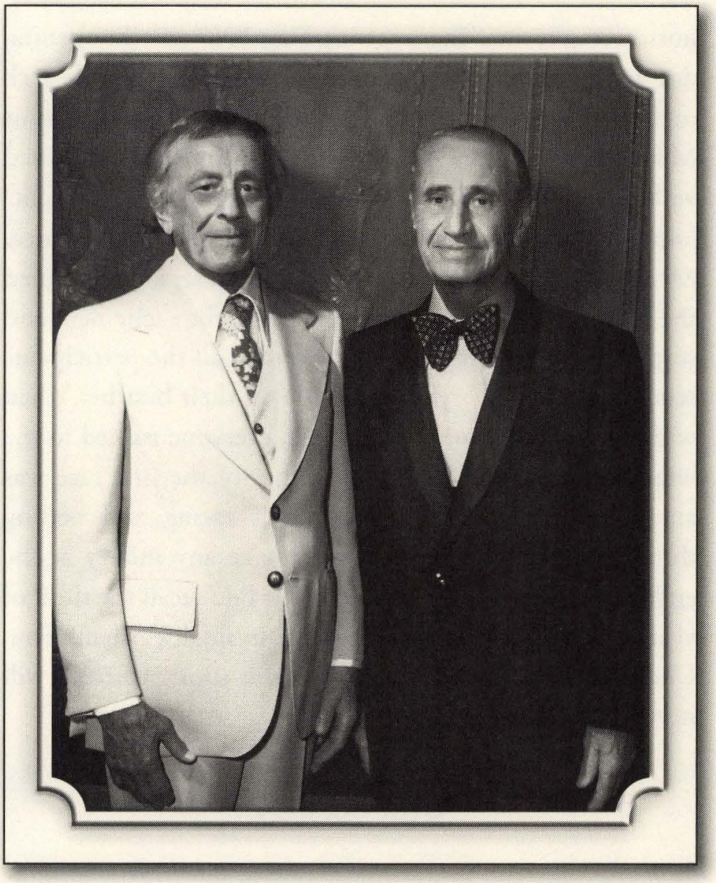
I enjoyed driving around my "borrowed" car unbeknownst to my uncle, until the day he decided to change his schedule. When he entered the parking lot, his car was nowhere in sight. To his shock, he was told that his nephew had taken his car. I was summoned to his office the next morning, sure that he was planning on firing me for taking advantage of his kindness. With cheeks flaming with embarrassment, I apologized and tearfully promised never to do such a thing again. Instead of berating me, my uncle calmly answered, "No problem, but do you have a driver's license?" When I replied to the contrary, he made a phone call and directed me to an office a few blocks away where I could obtain a legal license. And that is how I got my first driver's license.

What did I learn from Uncle Joe through this incident, and why am I writing about it? His reaction to my misdeed showed what a good-hearted, rare individual he was. He always went out of his way to help others. I had wronged him, and it would have been enough that he didn't explode

at me or fire me. He did not have to arrange a driver's license for me. I didn't deserve it. Neither did he have to take me under his wing, giving me a job and providing me with all my needs. But he was a member of the Menashe Sutton tribe. Was he my father's brother? You bet. Uncle, I will never forget you.

Uncle Jack was also one of the Menashe Sutton tribe. My first meeting with him in New Orleans is still so clear in my mind. We were introduced in the Roosevelt Hotel, where Jack M. Sutton's store prominently occupied the front entrance and lobby of the hotel. It was definitely the most elegant store I had ever seen.

During my stay in New Orleans I forged a solid friendship with my cousins Ronny, Joe, and Dicky (my cousin Mike was practicing medicine at the time). I would often have lunch with my cousins in the dining room of the elegant Roosevelt Hotel. They always had a round table in the back reserved for their stock broker or any other of their guests, including me. Live music would softly play *My Fair Lady* tunes while we lunched. After our meal, my cousins would lead me to the store to visit Uncle Jack. The first time I met him, I remember thinking that he was the classiest man I knew. He was wearing a finely tailored white suit and a striking red tie. He looked like a king. His style, refinement and elegance were so impressive that I still have a picture in my memory of how he looked that day. When I mentioned my father to him, his eyes filled with tears. It took him some time to regain his composure.



Uncle Joe and Uncle Jack Sutton in the Waldorf Astoria at my son Henry's Bar Mitzvah (May 1, 1975)

Horseracing was nicknamed "The Sport of Kings," and the players were always from the high ranks of society. My classy Uncle Jack belonged to that society. As a good sport who was young at heart, he enjoyed participating in the

horseracing events. Thanksgiving Day, 1957 was the opening day at Fair Ground racetrack of New Orleans. Uncle Jack took me along to the racetrack together with my cousins Mike, Ronny, Joe, and Dicky Sutton. The track was crowded with excited spectators. Uncle Jack and his friend "The Turk" joined the owners and trainers in the horse paddock area. My cousins and I hung out at the clubhouse, as we scanned the schedule for the day. And then began the excitement and suspense. At three minutes to post time all the participants scrambled around, trying to decide on their best bet. Then with only one minute to post time, everyone rushed to the windows with their bets. The winner of the first race was announced, followed by continuous racing and betting throughout the entire day. Did I make any money at the end of the day? I can't remember. But I do recall the thrill of visiting a racetrack for the first time in my life. Thank you, Uncle Jack, for introducing me to this sport. Uncle, I will never forget you.



A Sabra's Viewpoint

It is possible that, at a young age, one does not attach importance to family history, and this has perhaps become one of the characteristics of us Sabras. Many of us were eager to shape an image of the new Israeli Zionist and pioneer, and therefore denied the religious Diaspora roots of our parents and grandparents.

Incidentally, many parents who left Europe after the Holocaust or left Arab countries after the War of Independence found it difficult to speak of and tell their children about what had happened "there." Perhaps for that reason, they certainly did not succeed in coping with a confrontation between the religious-Diaspora

mentality they had brought with them from their own homes and the secular-Israeli lifestyle that had taken root in this country.

The results were often harsh. A breach was created between the accounts of generations-old family history and life in the present and, frequently, by the time people woke up and began to ask questions and to document what had really taken place — it was too late. No one was left to tell.

To my great satisfaction and delight, both the Sutton and Angel families grew up in "tribes" in Jerusalem in warm and loving families, and were able to absorb values of religion, tradition, and family.

When I studied at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, I ate lunch every Tuesday with my uncle Yossi at the home of Savta Mazal, and we had many interesting conversations. She was an impressive lady — intelligent, warm, loving, and, of course, a terrific cook.

This was the house on Ussishkin Street in Jerusalem to which we, as children, went every Friday afternoon, as did all our cousins with their parents. Ester and Michel, Jacques and Aviva, Rose and Raphael, Shula and Yosef, Yafa and Eli, as well as Rachel and Yossi, the younger and still unmarried uncles and aunts.

My grandfather Raphael died in 1964 and my grandmother Mazal shortly after.

Both Raphael and Mazal were born in Jerusalem; The Sutton family had left Haleb some time toward the end

of the 19th century and had come to live in the Old City of Jerusalem. They returned to Haleb during the First World War so that my grandfather would not be mobilized into the Turkish army. The Suttons returned to Palestine when the war ended and consolidated their business of importing textiles mainly from Alexandria in Egypt. They bought land, shops, and houses in Jerusalem when the residents of the city established the new neighborhoods outside the walls.

My family — my parents Rose and Raphael and my brothers Amnon and Udi and I — went to America in 1955. We spent two weeks as the guests of Aunt Rachelle in her home in Brooklyn, with Sylvia, Manny, Henry and Alan. I have very fond and vivid memories of our stay to this day. Sadly, however, the family ties weakened.

Your phone call came as a delightful surprise. I had no idea that my dearly loved grandmother Mazal had a brother and that he and his large family lived in the United States.

Now we, the grandchildren of Savta Mazal, are 60 years old and trying to return to our roots. That is why I staged and produced a documentary film entitled: *Tu Dise Angel* about my father's family.

I very much appreciate your initiative in telling us about your father, Hillel Menashe Sutton, the aristocrat, and I thank you for the opportunity to reconnect with the extended family.

I hope that we can avail ourselves of this opportunity in

the future and come to know one another more closely, and maintain the family ties.

Yours, with warmest regards,
(Avi) Avraham Angel Sutton

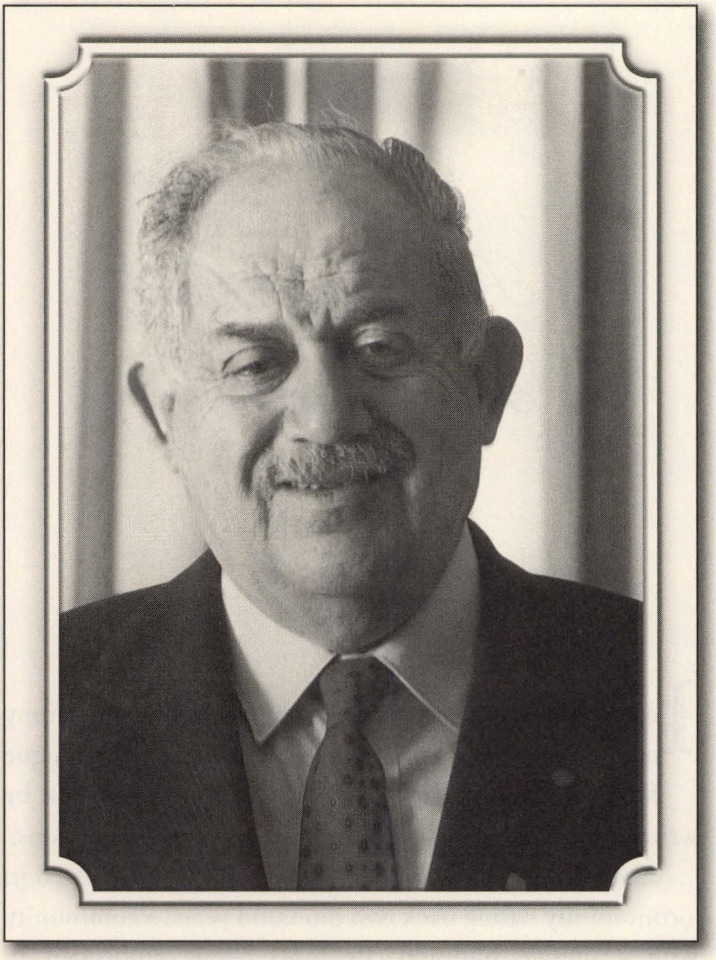


A Message to the Future Generations

I consider it a privilege to add a few personal words of my own to the history of Hillel Menashe Sutton's unique family. I believe that Al has achieved a blessed task by writing down the story of the family for future generations.

The Sutton family that left Aleppo was deeply rooted in a community dating back two thousand years: a community with a unique tradition, its roots firmly embedded in religion, with extensive family ties and prosperous businesses throughout the world.

Our ancestors were men of strong character. As businessmen, they had the ambition and the capability



Danny Angel

to provide their large families with economic security in the terms of those days, and concurrently were involved

and active in the life and charitable institutions of the community.

Based on the experiences of my own life, I know that it is far from easy and cannot remotely be taken for granted that one will simply pass on to future generations the traditions and values of the family as shaped by our forefathers.

That is why Al's book is so important. It is not merely the story of Hillel the Aristocrat — it is far more. Its readers in generations to come will find that it contains wisdom, courtesy, and moral values that will shape their lives in accordance with the tradition of the aristocratic family — the Suttons.

This link with the past and the story of the family's history will invest the lives of the young generation with a wealth of content in the present, and will strengthen them in continuing along this path in the future, throughout the generations to follow.

Dear children, in his book, Al recounts your link to the Angel family — a family of Ladino speakers, keepers of tradition, who lived in the Old City of Jerusalem and went on to become active partners in the Haganah, the IZL (Etzel), the Jewish Brigade, and the Israel Defense Forces, evolving into important businessmen in the domain of bakeries — successful businessmen and benefactors who set their seal on voluntary work and on ceaseless efforts on behalf of the community in Israel.

Al, I thank you for doing me the honor of remembering me in your book.

I send you my blessings from the peak of my almost 90 years, and I hope that we will continue to enjoy good health and a long life and that we will continue to enjoy our growing families.

Yours, with my blessing,
Danny Angel
Executive Chairman
Angel Bakeries, Jerusalem



His Image Has Inspired Me

I recently returned from one of the most amazing trips I ever experienced in my life. I went on a four-day journey back in time to Aleppo and Damascus. Our people's own history came alive before my very eyes.

Our first stop was the old synagogue in the Bahsita neighborhood. Tradition states that this synagogue dates back to the time of King David. The synagogue is made up of many distinct areas, including an outdoor summer synagogue and two indoor synagogues, one on either side (one of which was clearly extended). There is a very special area where the *Keter*

Aram Soba was stored. There were actually seven *Heikhalot* to store the *Sifrei Torah*. The *Me'arat HaSadikim* was where great scholars and benefactors were buried in different areas alongside the synagogue.

We also went to the Jamilieh neighborhood. I saw the synagogue, which was in use until about 15 years ago, as well as the school and *mikveh*. There were many important artifacts. I had the pleasure of also seeing the house that my grandfather, your father, lived in. It was across the street from the mosque, a large corner house with a central entrance and many rooms on either side, and three outdoor courtyards, as well as a huge basement. It was truly exhilarating to see that house.

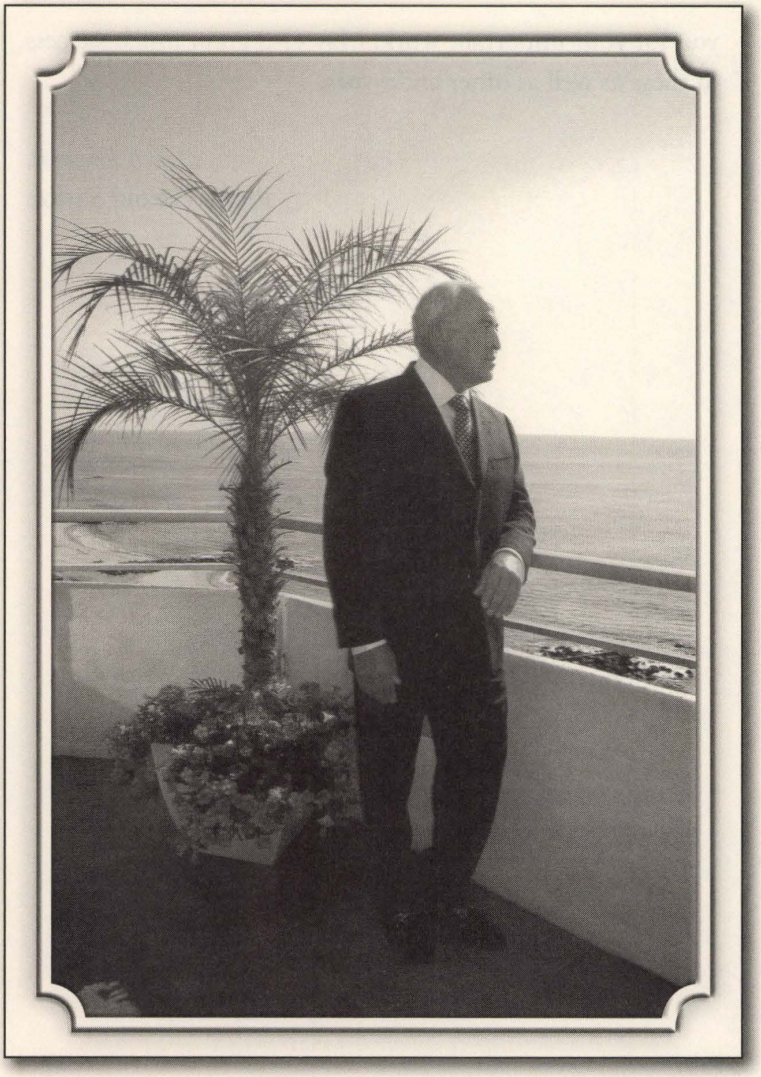
Dear Uncle Al, I want to take this opportunity to thank you on my behalf and on behalf of the whole family, for tirelessly working on your book about your father, Hillel Menashe Sutton, *a"h*. Although I was never privileged to meet him, he has always been a larger-than-life spiritual figure for me. His image has inspired me from the beginning to take the path in life I have chosen. I am always proud to remember that, at times, my grandmother would tell my father about me, in Arabic, "Like his grandfather." Those statements truly helped make me who I am. I truly believe that it is his spirit that guides me on my path in life.

Seeing Aleppo and the many synagogues in Damascus, Jobar, and the great cemeteries of the great rabbis buried there, reminded me of the rich religious, spiritual, and cultural heritage from which we come. Once again, thank

you for your important work. May G-d grant much success in these as well as other endeavors.

Tizkeh L'misvot,
Rabbi Harold Sutton





Abraham Sutton looking East

Al Sutton's Farewell Letter

This book crowns the list of the many exciting things I have encountered during my life. Unbeknownst to me, as I began the first rounds of research, I was also embarking on the most unforgettable journey. This journey made me travel through my emotions as I relived my family's challenges. There were days during the writing that I just couldn't stop crying. Then there were the restless days of frenzied writing. I couldn't relax until I had gotten all those memories down on paper. This journey has reunited me with old friends and relatives as I traveled and researched. This journey has presented me with the most wonderful days of my life.

As I am bidding the book goodbye and sending it off into the world, I am beginning to feel lonely. The book no longer belongs only to me. It is now up to you, dear readers, to enjoy it and make it yours. Perhaps reading about a life of the past is abstract and difficult to relate to. My father's story is history, but by using the present to learn about the glory of the past, we can glean some of the mysteries of tomorrow.

Now that the book has been published, I have something new to look forward to: the thoughts and experiences that you readers will share with me. Working on this book has taught me never to forget where I came from, and I hope that this lesson will be passed on to my children and to all my readers. I hope that I have ignited within you a spark of the past and stirred up some of your fading feelings and memories. Dear readers, please write to me about these thoughts. They mean a great deal to me as they will help me cope with a job accomplished but not completely closed. Feel free to contact me with your remarks and criticisms.

Abraham Sutton



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In the spring of 2007, I approached Rabbi David Sutton and told him that I had finally decided to write a book about my father. Rabbi Sutton had already sparked my thoughts with his publication, *Aleppo: City of Scholars*. I decided then to travel to Israel and collect any data available about my father's era in Aleppo, but I had very few leads to follow. One contact that Rabbi Sutton gave me made all the difference: Rabbi Avraham Ades in Bnei Brak. Rabbi Ades devoted many hours of research and came up with so much information about my family background. I deeply thank both Rabbi Sutton and Rabbi Avraham Ades. Rabbi Avraham Ades has done tremendous research on the era of Aleppo in the 18th and 19th centuries. He was able to discover my

great-grandparents and follow through my father's life in Syria. Thanks to Rabbi Ades, I obtained valuable documents about my father's life that my family didn't know existed.

But Rabbi Sutton didn't just step out of the picture. Upon my return from Israel, I wrote my book as quickly as possible so as not lose any information I had obtained. By the summer's end, my book writing was completed. Then Rabbi Sutton's work began. The book had to be edited and refined. Rabbi Sutton chose none but the best: his daughter, Leah Choueka. Leah did fabulous work from beginning to end. Both Rabbi Sutton and Leah saw this book from the ground up to its printing. I owe them much credit. I would also like to thank Rabbi N. Spirn for his excellent translation of the Eulogy for my father's wife Shefika. It is a very deep sermon and he put forth much effort in the translation.

Menahem Yedid has been a friend for over fifty years. We both know each other from Tel Aviv and from his later visits to the United States. Menahem Yedid was a member of *Knesset* — the Israeli parliament. He is a prestigious member of the *Halebi* community in Tel Aviv. He founded the Aleppo Heritage Center and is the head of the Aleppo community and its synagogues, *Ohel Yisrael* on 159 Ben Yehuda Street and *Tiferet Rafael* (where *Ahavat Zion* was founded) on 4 Aharonson Street. Menahem Yedid assisted me in all my requests and beyond. Upon my departure from Israel in the spring of 2007, he loaded me with precious books that I deeply appreciate. May Menahem Yedid live long in health and happiness.

The Angel family is a special one, especially when it comes to the life of my family. I met Danny Angel for the first time in June 2007. He truly is an angel! I thank Danny for his help and bless him with a long and healthy life.

Avi Angel is also an angel. His parents were Rafael and my father's niece, Rose, who provided us with bread in Jerusalem during the 1948 war. There are no words I can express to thank them for this great deed of sustenance. I wish all the best to Avi and his entire family.

Rabbi Elie Abadie gave me much encouragement to write this book by extending an open invitation to the Edmond J. Safra Synagogue for a book-signing event. Rabbi Abadie is an old friend and colleague, and I cherish our relationship. His wisdom and elegant, prestigious approach are something I have always admired. I am indeed privileged to be connected to Rabbi Abadie.

I have to give special thanks to all those involved in the intricacies of publishing a book. I thank Moshe Deutsch for his masterful job of typesetting and pagination. I never appreciated the talent that goes into the graphics of a book. Special thanks to Eli Kroen, firstly for his expertise in the cover design, for his delicate work in touching up all the photographs, and for his advice in the minute details of the graphics — no detail was too small for this graphic genius. No book is perfect, but after Mrs. Felice Eisner finished proofreading this work, I have high hopes for perfection; she dotted every I and crossed every T. Thank you.

There were many others who assisted me in writing

this book, too many to mention. My deep appreciation is extended to them all.



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Rabbi David Sutton — *Aleppo: City of Scholars.*
Menahem Yedid — *Treasures of the Aleppo Community.*
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Born in Israel, **Abraham (Al) Sutton** is a businessman, an investor, an active community member, and a staunch supporter of the State of Israel. He resides with Paulette, his wife of forty-nine years, in New York, New Jersey, and Florida. He has three married children and five grandchildren.

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Advance Praise for

THE ARISTOCRAT

With this wonderful book, ***The Aristocrat***, **Al Sutton** paints a vivid picture of his esteemed father, Hillel Menashe Sutton. In 1949, when Rabbi Sutton died suddenly in Tel Aviv, over a thousand people packed the synagogue of Ahavat Zion, as one rabbi after another gave eulogies attesting to his strong and abiding faith, love of family, benevolence toward others, and lifetime of good works for the community.

Al Sutton was only eleven when Hillel Sutton died and this book was born when a renowned rabbi from Jerusalem asked, "Do you know who your father was?" This question triggered a powerful need to know more about his beloved father and led Al on a journey of discovery, from Aleppo, Syria, where Rabbi Hillel Sutton was a leading member of the Sephardic community, to Jerusalem, and finally to New York City. As Al Sutton interviewed family, friends, and contemporaries, Hillel Sutton came alive to his son in new ways. The result is an extraordinary memoir, a paean of a son's love and respect, a deeply felt tribute to abiding faith, and a gripping story of a life's journey. By the time you finish ***The Aristocrat***, it is clear that Al Sutton does, indeed, know who his father was.

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